

Overeaters Anonymous

Ask-It Basket archive
2010 – 2019

Rev. March 2020

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ABOUT

This Ask-It Basket Archive is revised periodically.

It includes Ask-It Basket responses written by members of the OA Board of Trustees from January 2010 through December 2019. Responses ending with a month-and-year date appeared in *Lifeline* magazine at oalifeline.org/. Other responses were composed to answer questions submitted by delegates at OA's annual World Service Business Conference. Since 2015, only questions and responses from WSBC appear.

Revised March 2020

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Please read the following definitions of acronyms used in this archive:

BOT – Board of Trustees
BRM – Board Reference Manual
IG – Intergroup
NSB – National Service Board
OA – Overeaters Anonymous
WSBC – World Service Business Conference
WSO – World Service Office

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ANONYMITY—ONLINE—IN BLOGS

As we are all trusted servants of the Traditions, what is the proper procedure when we see a breach of Tradition Eleven on the internet? I'm talking specifically of blogs, when people reveal they are in OA and use their full names and/or other peoples' names. Do we mention it to our trustee, call the WSO, or tell the offender ourselves?

As an OA member, it is my responsibility to speak up gently for the protection of all our Traditions. In this case, I think I would email the person separately and gently ask if he or she has considered what happens when a blogger with a real name and picture identifies as an OA member: a break of Tradition Eleven. I would include my region trustee in the email. I could suggest that bloggers say, "a Twelve Step group" without actually saying which one. Using a generic term frees people to talk about their experiences without breaking anonymity.

Probably bloggers have not thought of talking about OA in such a way. It could be that some bloggers believe Tradition Eleven does not apply to them. If they persist, and especially if they are using the OA logo or sharing pictures and full names of others, it would be important to pass the information on to your trustee and World Service Office. I try to remember that when I see Tradition breaks, I tend to overreact and come across to others as a bit fanatical. So, I try to do it gently; people are more open when I proceed that way.

—WSBC 2016

ANONYMITY—PHOTOGRAPHY

Even with permission, is it a violation of Traditions to photograph a group of people, such as all the region delegates, and email the photo to each person in it? Should the person emailing the photos caution the recipients not to distribute the photo or post it on any social media?

I would suggest it is not a violation to take such a photo and email, print, and distribute it to people in the photo, or even to others within OA. Photos become a violation of Traditions when we publicly identify people as OA members. But part of the risk of using today's internet is that it is easy for things to get out among many people, which poses a possible break of anonymity. Participants should be made aware of this before photos are taken and emailed so they may give informed consent.

Email is never truly secure. However, we are not famous people, and reporters are probably not trying to find ways to hack our pictures and publish them.

Some OA members would choose not to be in a photo or take and email a photo because of the internet risk. The risk is small. I would suggest: know the risk and go for it.

—February 2014

ANONYMITY—PHOTOGRAPHY AT PUBLIC INFORMATION EVENTS

Recently, at two wellness fairs, our pictures were taken at our well-identified OA booth. At one of the fairs, we were asked about being photographed, but not at the other. We assume the photos were taken on behalf of the organizations running the fairs. We

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were not asked for our names, nor did we furnish them, but we have no knowledge about how those photographs might be used. I am beginning to feel uneasy as I feel we might be in direct contradiction of Tradition Twelve.

Here's the good news: you were not identified by name, so you are anonymous in the media if the sponsor of the health fair publishes the photo in a newsletter or uses it in any promotional material. If they were to send the photo to a newspaper to publish, the newspaper would most likely contact you before going to print; most newspapers will not print a photo without knowing the names of the people in the picture.

In the future, you may want to talk about what it means to be anonymous with the photographer ahead of time and try to take a picture with your faces turned away. As with everything in life, "progress, not perfection." We learn as we go. It seems to me that, because you withheld your names, your anonymity is intact. Also, thank you for your wonderful service carrying the message! Way to go!

—WSBC 2018

BARIATRIC SURGERY—AN OUTSIDE ISSUE

At a recent convention, three people shared that they'd had gastric bypass surgery and referred to it as "only a tool." This worried me. What did newcomers in the audience think? What is the OA trustees' take on this issue?

Thank you for your inquiry. What we share at a meeting or a convention is a personal decision. Our sharing is sometimes misunderstood or misinterpreted, which is the risk in a Fellowship that "remains[s] forever nonprofessional" (Tradition Eight). We have no experts. Our program allows and encourages us to speak from our hearts and experience, which are always unique.

If something troubles me in another person's sharing, I speak with that person after the meeting. While I can't change what's been said, speaking with that person gives me freedom from my feelings about his or her words.

According to Tradition Ten, OA has no opinion on outside issues. Since bariatric surgery is an outside issue, we as a Fellowship have no opinion on it, and the BOT will not address it.

I know people who have decided to have the surgery and others who have decided against it. Of the people I know who have had the surgery, some have lost and kept off their weight and others have not maintained a normal weight for a significant period of time. But, of the people who use the Steps, Traditions, and Tools of Overeaters Anonymous, "rarely have we seen a person fail . . ." ([*Alcoholics Anonymous*](#), 4th ed., p. 58).

—September/October 2010

BARIATRIC SURGERY—MENTIONING IN MEETINGS

A lot of people in OA these days have had, or are planning to have, some type of weight-loss surgery. Is this considered an "outside issue?" If it is, as a leader or moderator, how should I explain the necessity of not mentioning this procedure in meetings?

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Surgeries, like medications, are outside issues. We have no opinion on these and so we do not discuss them in OA meetings—that is, we make no mention of who, what, or where. However, if we are sharing as part of our experience (not strength and hope) and just mention surgery fleetingly, that would probably be acceptable—just as we share that we tried different diets.

The experience of others helps us to see the wider picture—diversity—of our disease. The strength and hope of others help us to see the solution to our disease.

—WSBC 2016

BOARD OF TRUSTEES—ACCOUNTABILITY

How is the BOT held accountable?

The word “accountable” means to be responsible or answerable to someone for some action. The OA Fellowship elects the members of the BOT to represent OA as a whole. [The Twelve Concepts of OA Service](#) provide a clear definition of the BOT’s accountability. The First Concept states that “the ultimate responsibility and authority for OA world services reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.”

Our OA Bylaws, both [Subpart A](#) and [Subpart B](#), outline the rights and responsibilities of the BOT and the WSBC delegates. The WSBC delegates represent their local and regional service bodies, and thus each individual OA member.

Every OA member has the right to question decisions made at OA’s different service levels. The [inverted pyramid](#), which represents those different service levels, guides us to the level at which to direct that questioning. The ultimate role of the BOT is to follow the will of our Fellowship’s members.

—March/April 2011

BOARD OF TRUSTEES—BOARD REFERENCE MANUAL—AS A TRUSTEE GUIDELINE

I understand the Board Reference Manual is not generally of interest to the delegates, but does it contain “confidential” information that keeps it from being made available?

The Board of Trustees is given the responsibility of performing their duties by the members of OA in OA, Inc. [Bylaws, Subpart B](#) (Article IX, Section 2). The Board Reference Manual (BRM) is a “living” document that defines the trustees’ duties, responsibilities, and procedures. It is a guideline that helps the trustees perform their duties efficiently. The BRM is based on the OA Bylaws and policies, which are established and revised by the membership at WSBC, where the attending delegates represent the body of OA as a whole. The Trustees cannot amend or rescind the OA bylaws or policies. Only the delegates at WSBC have that authority.

The Board Reference Manual is not confidential. By definition, confidential means secret. At WSBC, the Board Meeting is open to all delegates—in 2016, there were several motions presented. These motions were debated, amended, and passed or failed by the trustees. The subsequent results and summaries are now available at oa.org/world-service-business-conference.

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The BRM Board Committee, as part of their statement of purpose, reviews the BRM for inconsistencies, inaccuracies, and changes made by the BOT motions. This review looks for entries with confusing language, considers amending policies that need further clarification, and checks for policies not in keeping with current practices. This review is then presented in the form of a motion, which the entire BOT discusses and votes on, similar to the motions presented at WSBC. The results of those motions, if adopted, are then updated in the BRM.

—WSBC 2016

BOARD OF TRUSTEES—BOARD REFERENCE MANUAL—AS PRIVATE (NOT SECRET)

Can you explain in a satisfactory manner why the Board Reference Manual is shrouded in such secrecy? The explanation given at WSBC referring to the document being a living document that frequently changes is not sufficient. We have technology today. I would hope the BRM is easily saved as a PDF and shared. Even if the document, in electronic format, is only updated and made available on a quarterly basis, that would be better than never showing a soul outside of the BOT. This is a dear desire of the Fellowship, and if I recall correctly, the BOT serves this Fellowship and not the other way around.

The Board Reference Manual is a collection of agreed-upon policies and procedures by and for the OA Board of Trustees. It is true that there are frequent changes and the BRM is not posted on oa.org. It is a private, working, business-procedures document, but I do not agree that it is a secret document.

In my recovery, I have personal things that I share with my sponsor and select program friends that would not be appropriate to share at meetings. These are private, but not secret. While it is true that we are only as sick as our secrets, I do not believe telling everything to everyone is necessary. Developing differing levels of privacy rather than the extremes of being completely shut down or indiscriminately open has been a healthy development for me. As Step Five says, only one other human being is required to hear the inventory.

The material posted on oa.org is put there to assist the board and the Fellowship in implementing OA's primary purpose of carrying the message to those who still suffer from compulsive eating. I am not sure how the BRM—a document relevant to so few people (seventeen trustees and certain WSO staff)—would be useful for that purpose. There is such a thing as too much detail. And there is already a great deal of material posted on oa.org that I believe is underutilized.

In the three years I have served on the BOT, no one has ever asked to even see the BRM.

Much of my job as a trustee is to respond to various queries and requests for assistance from OA members, so I find it difficult to think in terms of OA members serving me. The awareness that my job as trustee is to serve the Fellowship at large has been an enormous privilege and responsibility that has strengthened my recovery in more ways than I can count. It may sound clichéd, but what service I have given out has been returned to me many times over.

—WSBC 2014

BOARD OF TRUSTEES—HEARING ALL VOICES

How can the Board of Trustees safeguard against one “pushy” trustee dominating the board, and make sure that more humble committee members’ voices are also heard? My fear is that pushy behavior will silence the voices of BOT members who might represent worldwide groups more accurately. Our Fellowship has a service structure of an upside-down triangle; all voices need to be heard.

Tradition Two of Overeaters Anonymous states: “For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.” When we practice Tradition Two, we remember that our service boards are led by our collective Higher Power. No one person has more influence than another.

Any member of the Board of Trustees may have a strong opinion, but all the other trustees are practicing their own recoveries and have their own opinions of how the World Service Office and OA assets need to be managed. All work is done in Executive Committee meetings by discussion and vote and should reflect substantial unanimity. We work toward consensus, something we can all live with. Each member is allowed time to share ideas while others listen respectfully and consider outcomes from the place of “What’s best for OA as a whole?” There have been many years when BOT members held varying opinions on what would work better, or differently.

OA has survived for the past fifty-seven years using this method of governance. We are still grateful for those who came before, no matter what their personal beliefs about how things need to be. Hearing those minority voices keeps us stronger.

Together we can.
—WSBC 2017

BOARD OF TRUSTEES—INCUMBENT CANDIDATES

Please explain the practice of the OA BOT for affirming incumbent candidates for reelection. What grounds does the BOT consider to affirm or not affirm?

The OA Board Reference Manual, Section 1, B-5, page 1.2, Affirmation of GST [General Service Trustee] Nominees for Re-Election states:

“1. The board approved the following as the definition of their affirmation of the application of sitting trustees: a. The BOT affirms that this candidate possesses the OA service-related experience qualifications listed on his/her resume. b. The candidate has served the Fellowship of OA as a member of the Board of Trustees in a responsible manner, by meeting or exceeding the minimum standard of performance of this trustee position. c. The term ‘affirmation’ does not constitute an endorsement of this candidate by the Board of Trustees.”

Please note the BRM further provides guidelines for the affirmation process, including completion of applications, questions of the candidate, a written ballot, and the vote recorded in the minutes. For the purposes of the question posed, it was unnecessary to outline those procedures.

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Grounds for not affirming a particular GST Nominee for reelection may be as follows:

- The candidate has not served in a responsible manner (by missing meetings, failing to prepare and submit the required reports in a timely fashion, or filing incomplete or past-deadline expense reports).
- The candidate has not satisfied minimum standards of performance for the GST position.
- The candidate has experienced a relapse and has returned to compulsive overeating or compulsive eating.

The BOT gives careful and thorough consideration to such occurrences to ensure a fair and impartial decision of either affirming or not affirming a candidate.

—May 2011

BOARD OF TRUSTEES—RELIANCE ON WORLD SERVICE OFFICE STAFF

Can you explain why members of the BOT had to refer so many questions to the WSO staff [at the WSBC 2014]? The BOT are our trusted servants, not the employees. It is disconcerting to see how much the BOT now relies on the staff. It did not used to be this way, and we could be headed down a very dangerous path if this trend continues.

Tradition Eight says, “Overeaters Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.”

Concept Eleven says, “Trustee administration of the World Service Office should always be assisted by the best standing committees, executives, staffs and consultants.”

When questions arise at WSBC, the Board of Trustees takes the task of providing accurate and appropriate answers very seriously. It is occasionally tempting, in the alleged interest of efficiency, to provide an answer based on memory. That is rarely a good idea. All answers should be as absolutely accurate as possible, which in many cases requires input from the staff. The staff has many sources of information from the WSO and Overeaters Anonymous available to them. It is not the job of the trustees, nor should it be, to keep up with all that data during the WSBC business sessions.

Generally speaking, it would be impossible for any Trustee to keep in memory:

- the "in stock" count of particular pieces of literature
- the basic cost of any given piece of literature
- the time frame for designing and/or producing an "if this passes" piece of literature
- the day-to-day intricacies and issues of upgrading and maintaining oa.org
- all the nuances of our ever-evolving world of technological communications
- the most recent numbers and/or tally of current public awareness or public information efforts
- and much, much more.

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The WSO staff most assuredly works for the Overeaters Anonymous Fellowship. They are directed by the BOT and the Executive Committee, and, maybe most importantly, by the WSBC.

It's not standard procedure in any organization for the BOT to know the minute details of the day-to-day business, but rather the BOT looks at the big picture and gives direction and oversight to the staff.

It also bears mentioning that the Trustees answer all questions related to the Traditions.

A large part of the reason the WSO staff is in the room at business sessions is to be a resource. It goes without saying that the WSO staff is absolutely the best source of accurate data and current information.

—WSBC 2014

BUSINESS MEETINGS—EVALUATIONS AND FEEDBACK

Do regional business meetings distribute questionnaires about how the meeting went?

In my Region (Ten), we find the suggestions and feedback given at our annual region assembly very helpful as we plan the next event. We give out evaluation forms at the beginning of assembly and encourage region representatives to fill them in as the assembly progresses.

It is usual practice for most meetings or events to evaluate how the meeting or event went. Doing a survey or questionnaire allows meeting attendees to give feedback so that things that went well can be continued, things that didn't go well can be addressed, and suggestions for future topics or processes can be put forward.

—WSBC 2014

BUSINESS MEETINGS—NUMBER OF MEMBERS AND HOW TO VOTE

How many people should be in a business meeting at group level in order to make decisions? Can we also vote by email?

How a group conducts its group conscience is entirely up to that group. Tradition Four tells us that "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole."

If you are interested in suggesting that your group consider a virtual way to hold a group conscience meeting, the first step would be to make a proposal to the group in advance. That way, all regularly attending members are aware of the topic and can attend the meeting where this will be discussed and decided upon. Until the group conscience has determined that some sort of other method is acceptable, the meeting must be held in the way it has been conducted in the past.

I suggest you review and share the [Guidelines for a Group Conscience Meeting](#) with your group members prior to this meeting so they will all be informed of the importance of group conscience meetings and also the impact the decision may have on the meeting.

While I am not aware of any single face-to-face meeting that holds its group conscience with members attending via phone, email, or other electronic means, I do know

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that virtual groups and some service bodies hold their meetings in this manner. Intergroups have intergroup reps that phone in due to distances that make travel difficult for them to attend otherwise. I'm sure that is not usually the case in local groups, but there may be extenuating circumstances that could preclude an active member of a group from attending, while still wanting to have a voice and a vote in the way the meeting operates.

Concept 12(d) states, "all important decisions shall be reached by discussion, by vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity." This means that the majority of your members must be in agreement with this change, so remember that the first action is to have the topic discussed and agreed upon before the change is implemented.

—WSBC 2015

BUSINESS MEETINGS—REGIONAL—PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION

Does everyone have a voice at a Region Business Conference?

Each region is different. Typically, members with a voice at region assemblies include the elected representatives, members of the Region Steering Committee, and sometimes the region trustee. Whether they have a voice or not, all members of Overeaters Anonymous are welcome to attend their region assembly.

—WSBC 2014

BUSINESS MEETINGS—UNFINISHED BUSINESS

At the end of a business assembly, what happens to the proposals and amendments that are not addressed? Do the makers of the motions have to resubmit them next year?

According to Robert's Rules of Order, which OA uses at the World Service Business Conference, any time a business meeting is adjourned that will not meet again within a quarterly time frame, or when the close of that meeting ends the terms of some or all of the members, the unfinished business at the time of adjournment falls to the ground.

In terms of WSBC, which meets only on an annual basis, any unfinished business is lost. If a service body wants to resubmit a motion for the following year, it must go through the process as defined in OA, Inc. Bylaws, [Subpart B](#), Article XIV – Bylaw Amendments. All proposed motions must be postmarked no later than December 10.

—WSBC 2014

BYLAWS—PURPOSE

Why does OA have bylaws since AA and other Twelve Step programs do not?

Every fellowship has its own structure and rules. AA has bylaws for its general service board. Compulsive Eaters Anonymous–HOW also has bylaws. OA is incorporated (OA, Inc. Bylaws, [Subpart A](#)) and, as such, has corporate bylaws. The collective group conscience of OA at the WSBC has determined that bylaws should be in place to help carry the message of recovery through the Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous (OA, Inc.

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Bylaws, [Subpart B](#), Article V, Section 1). There are also countries that require service bodies to have bylaws.

—WSBC 2014

BYLAWS—REQUIREMENTS FOR SERVICE BODIES

In my country, Italy, the last time bylaws were sent to the WSO for approval was in 2006. Do we have to update the English translation of our bylaws and send them for approval, and, if so, how often?

Updated bylaws are to be submitted when they are amended so that the WSO has an up-to-date version, as covered in OA, Inc. Bylaws, [Subpart B](#), Article VI, Section 2B. The requirement for bylaws to be in compliance in order for a service body to register WSBC delegates was rescinded in 2014 because it proved to be burdensome for service bodies, staff, and trustees. Therefore, resubmitting bylaws annually for Trustee review, even if no changes were made in order to register delegates, is no longer needed. There is no set requirement for bylaws to be amended in a certain time period per Tradition Four. Additionally, bylaws can be submitted in their native language.

Many service bodies review bylaws on a regular basis, but changes may not be necessary. If bylaws did need to be frequently amended, I'd suspect those bylaws might contain unnecessary detail that would be better included in a policy manual. For example, bylaws that specify that an intergroup must meet once a month on Sunday at 7:30 p.m. would have to go through a full bylaws amendment procedure to change that day or time. It would be more appropriate for details of meeting days and times to be placed in a policy manual that could be easily changed as needed; the actual bylaws could make a more general statement that the service body meets on a regular basis.

Members with bylaws questions may consult with their regional or virtual services trustee. In addition, the [Sample Intergroup/Service Board Bylaws](#) on oa.org are intended to be helpful guides for service bodies to follow in revising or creating bylaws.

—WSBC 2014

COMMITTEES—REQUIREMENTS FOR JOINING

Can I join the ad hoc Front Door Website Revamp Committee?

The ad hoc committee has been dissolved and the responsibilities have been moved to the Website Review Committee for 2019-2020. Having moved those responsibilities to a Board committee changes the requirements for the participation on the committee. Only trustees and former trustees can participate on board committees. However, the chair of the Website Review Committee appreciates and welcomes your desire to participate in this process.

—WSBC 2019

CONCEPTS—ORIGINS

When were the Twelve Concepts first written? Have they ever been revised?

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The Twelve Concepts for AA World Service were written by Bill W. and adopted by the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1962. An ad hoc committee was struck in the late 1980s to develop concepts for OA World Service. It was composed of trustees and WSBC delegates. The committee was created due to several “two hatters” (e.g., OA members who were also AA members) who were interested in adopting a set of principles similar to AA. Because the AA Concepts were developed to describe the service structure of AA, they were therefore not usable by OA due to our different service structure. The Concepts for OA Service were presented and adopted in 1994 by the WSBC. In 1998, they were moved from the Policy Manual to Subpart B. Since adoption, there have been two motions submitted and discussed by the WSBC to amend the Concepts. Neither were adopted by the WSBC.

—WSBC 2019

FELLOWSHIP—CENSUS 2013

Our NSB wants to know details about the 2013 survey.

The survey was part of the Strategic Plan 2008–2013. We did a census survey in 2008 to get a baseline number; then, in 2013, we conducted another survey to compare for growth. As you could see in the Managing Director’s Report on page 194 of the 2014 WSBC binder referring to the Strong Meetings on the Strategic Plan, the goal was that by 2013 the member base of OA would increase by at least 20 percent.

In 2008 we had a census that indicated that OA had almost 54,000 members attending weekly meetings worldwide. Virtual meetings were not included in the count at that time. In 2013, the census showed an increase to about 60,200 (+11.5 percent), including virtual meetings. If we did not consider virtual meetings, the total of meetings decreased by 12.5 percent: to about 47,300 as measured by this survey. However, significant growth did occur in the virtual realm during this time.

—WSBC 2014

FELLOWSHIP—NUMBERS WORLDWIDE

Is OA increasing in group numbers or decreasing currently?

As of this writing, our group numbers have not decreased; they remain at about 6,500 consistently. OA did a census in 2008 and 2013. The number of members at face-to-face meetings (in the US only) fell from 41,500 members in 2008 to 34,700 in 2013, which might suggest a 16.4 percent drop in membership, but this did not consider the significant rise in virtual membership. The average attendance at US face-to-face meetings was nine members per meeting. Outside the US, the number of members grew from 12,400 in 2008 to 12,600 in 2013 (See *A Step Ahead*, First Quarter 2014.) Online meetings were not counted in 2008 but numbered nearly 13,000 in 2013.

My suggestions are:

- Keep working Step Twelve: Carry the message to compulsive eaters. This includes being a sponsor and encouraging new sponsors. Keep trying to reach out to the

public to attract newcomers to our meetings. Reach out to professionals so they can encourage compulsive eaters to come to OA. Have strong meetings so that members stay and grow in the program. Use the [Strong Meeting Checklist](#) on oa.org. Give service.

- Help all members become and remain abstinent.
- Work the Tools and the Steps.
- Tradition Eleven suggests attraction not promotion. Using [OA media materials](#) and reaching out to professionals is important.
- Keep coming back.
- Pray about it.

I wish I had some sort of great new insight that could help us grow in recovery and increase our membership—this was the best I could come up with. Thank you for your question.

—WSBC 2015

FELLOWSHIP—WORLD MAP

I suggest that the [OA world map of regions](#) gets some change. We could use a real world map, using colors or using stripes (for black/white prints). The current map is very far from geographical reality and is hard to understand.

I must confess I agree with this—I will find out a way to pass this on to the BOT.
—WSBC 2015

GROUP CONSCIENCE—ABSTINENCE REQUIREMENT—VOTING

If an OA group does not allow non-abstinent members to vote at group conscience meetings, does this violate any OA Traditions or Concepts of Service (namely, Tradition Three and/or Concepts Three, Four, and Twelve)?

The Third Tradition, whose spiritual Principle is identity, relates only to requirements for membership. It does not refer to additional requirements that a group may develop for the effective transaction of group business.

Many groups institute attendance and/or abstinence requirements for participation in group conscience meetings and serving the group. For instance, the appointment of a group Treasurer who offered to do the service at their first or second meeting might not be a good choice for fulfilling this service. This may extend to participation in, and the right to vote at, scheduled group conscience meetings.

This doesn't apply to on-the-fly group votes such as opening a window or turning on air conditioning when it's too warm in the room. This refers to groups who have monthly or quarterly scheduled group conscience meetings to handle issues affecting the group: elections of trusted servants, changes to the meeting format, and other significant changes. It also works best when a group holds a separate business meeting rather than one in the midst of a recovery meeting.

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Concept Three, “The right of decision, based on trust, makes effective leadership possible,” allows the delegation of these decisions to the group, as long as doing so doesn’t affect OA as a whole. This concept allows a group of interested members (who fulfill any previously adopted requirements for attendance or abstinence) to make decisions for the group as a whole. If every decision had to be brought to a general meeting, very few decisions would be made.

Concept Four, “The right of participation ensures equality of opportunity for all in the decision-making process,” allows all members to participate *as long as they fulfill any requirements that may have been set by the group*. For example, a group may decide ahead of time that members who wish to participate in a group conscience meeting must have attended the meeting for more than a month and have at least sixty days of abstinence. What cannot be added is any requirement that they must go to some number of *specific* meetings (other than the one holding the group conscience); nor can there be any requirement that their abstinence be defined by using a specific food plan.

Concept Twelve (e) states: “No service action shall ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy.” This has nothing to do with participation in a group conscience vote unless a group determined to “ban” a person from group conscience decisions forever. People make mistakes—in life as well as within Overeaters Anonymous. When this happens, a person may be removed from a position, but gossip regarding the removal, or deciding that the person can no longer participate at all due to their mistake, would exceed the guidance of this concept.

So, a group may implement guidelines and requirements for participation in that group’s decisions; just be aware that these requirements cannot be used to exclude members for any non-recovery-related issue, nor can they be specific to the exclusion of an individual.

—WSBC 2018

GROUP CONSCIENCE—DIFFICULT DISCUSSIONS—APPLYING CONCEPTS AND TRADITIONS

Our morning meeting has a longtime member who is emotionally attached to saying the Lord’s Prayer and changing the wording of AA literature. He adamantly defends his right to do so, citing Tradition Four and the group’s autonomy. A few group members follow his lead when we take an informal group conscience. These are people who don’t do service above the group level and don’t want to, but who do conduct a newcomer’s meeting. My question is this: When even one member is discouraged by repeated violations of Traditions, is taking a group conscience even possible?

I understand your frustration. You might want to raise these issues with your group in a more formal way. (I suggest that when you do raise these issues, you also explain that you are considering OA as a whole; explain that groups that do not follow OA Traditions and ignore group conscience suggestions often end up being weak, and eventually disband.) It might be useful to ask these questions:

- Does my group read the OA Traditions regularly as part of its format?

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- Does my group carry out a regular [Group Conscience business meeting](#)?
- If we don't do these things, can I, as a member, ask that they be done?
- Can I also ask for a [Group Inventory](#) to be put on the agenda of that Group Conscience meeting?

If you need to provide an explanation of why a Group Conscience Meeting is necessary, you might say, "I would like us all to consider whether our group actions are carrying the OA message of recovery in the best way possible. It never does any harm for us all to do this once in a while to keep our minds open as to how we might possibly improve."

In the Group Conscience Meeting, you might suggest reviewing the [Strong Meeting Checklist](#). (This can be found, along with other resources, at oa.org/document-library.) It's often hard to raise issues that make us unhappy. Our legitimate grievances can be met with silence or provoke opposition. It's worthwhile, however, to persevere and share the reasons we are not happy. In my experience, this is when I have to pray that my HP gives me the right words, so I can speak up with love and kindness to uphold our Traditions and keep OA strong. I might ask that the Traditions be added to our meeting's topics. I might suggest that all sponsors "do" the Traditions with sponsees and also look at [The Twelve Concepts of OA Service](#) with them.

During any difficult discussion of group conscience, at any level, it's useful to mention the fact that OA decides things in a fair manner, and we are guided by these Twelve Concepts. In particular, Concept Four guarantees the right of participation for all. "The right of participation ensures equality of opportunity for all in the decision-making process." And Concept Twelve (d) states, "All important decisions shall be reached by discussion, by vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity." You can have a list of these Concepts in front of you so that members can see them, and a list of the Traditions as well. Then you can ask the group to consider each Tradition when a member feels that some action of the group is not in alignment.

Regarding that one member's insistence on saying the Lord's Prayer: I believe this is not in alignment with many of the Traditions. OA is for all compulsive eaters, not just those to whom this prayer would appeal. In a Group Conscience Meeting, you could explain that Service Concept Two applies to this situation: "The OA groups have delegated to World Service Business Conference the active maintenance of our world services; thus, World Service Business Conference is the voice, authority, and effective conscience of OA as a whole." A policy adopted by WSBC (1993a) discusses prayer at meetings:

"We, the 1993 Business Conference of Overeaters Anonymous, suggest that OA meetings and events be closed with one of the following: the Serenity Prayer, the Seventh Step Prayer, the Third Step Prayer, or the OA Promise: I Put My Hand in Yours."

Two things to note about policy 1993a: the key word "suggested" and the fact that the Lord's Prayer is not included. I suggest including this direct quote from the [Business Conference Policy Manual](#) in the group conscience discussion of this issue.

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Regarding that same member's changing the wording of AA literature: I believe this too is not in alignment with many OA Traditions, and may in fact be illegal. In your Group Conscience Meeting, you could explain that Alcoholics Anonymous literature is protected by copyright law: AA material is © Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. If we change it, any of it, we are contravening copyright. AA has given OA express permission to adapt the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions, but nothing more.

You might cite this excerpt of a letter from the AA General Service Office, dated January 22, 2010, addressing this issue:

“Although the First and Second Editions of *Alcoholics Anonymous* are in the public domain of the United States, it has always been Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. (“AAWS”) Board’s position to request the cooperation of other Fellowships based on A.A.’s Steps, Traditions, etc. in protecting the integrity of the A.A. message as conveyed in *Alcoholics Anonymous*. AAWS has historically permitted the adaptation of the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions by other Fellowships. However, when it comes to other A.A. materials, the Board does not feel that it is appropriate for other Fellowships to substitute any other words where the words such as “alcoholics”, “alcoholism” appear in the original text.”

In any meeting, OA’s Traditions are important. We are a program of honesty. When someone is leading a meeting for newcomers, it’s of utmost importance that they follow OA Traditions and the policies that have been agreed upon by the Fellowship as a whole.

—WSBC 2017

GROUP CONSCIENCE—DONATING TO OTHER OA GROUPS

My home weekend meeting is very strong. One member started a new weekday meeting that does not have any funds. Our intergroup provides some support for new meetings, such as free [Newcomer Packets](#). The member asked our meeting to donate a piece of literature to the new meeting. Some people objected, saying this would break the Seventh Tradition because each group should be self-supporting. Others disagreed, saying we should practice the Fifth Tradition and help carry the message with our extra literature. Who, if anyone, is right?

First, take a moment to celebrate that you are in an area with a healthy meeting and have people interested in starting a new meeting. Even more exciting is that your local fellowship knows the importance of the Traditions, has an awareness of what they say and is trying to apply them to meetings. The greatest thing is that your local fellowship is comfortable enough to voice their concerns about how they should apply the Traditions.

You have mentioned a new group, a healthy group, and an intergroup. I assume the healthy group has a Seventh Tradition collection and the group used some of those funds to purchase literature. That literature belongs to the healthy group to do with as it sees fit. Many groups, by group conscience, have donated [The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous](#) to local libraries, which is a great way to reach out to the still-

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suffering compulsive eater. If the healthy group decided by group conscience to donate literature to the new meeting, it is well within the spirit of the Traditions.

Tradition Seven states, “Every OA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.” The key word for this conversation is “outside.” An example of an outside contribution would be accepting free OA meeting room space; that would be inappropriate.

The members of the OA Fellowship support and reach out to each other in many different ways; for example, by donating money to the Delegate Support Fund to send delegates to WSBC from intergroups unable to cover that expense. Other OA meetings and healthy service bodies reach out to less fortunate areas within the Fellowship.

Your new group has already accepted assistance from within the Fellowship by accepting Newcomer Packets from the intergroup. Your healthy group probably donated part of the money your intergroup used to purchase those Newcomer Packets.

There is no harm in accepting a hand from ourselves. Reaching out our hands to each other is who we are and what we do.

—May 2014

GROUP CONSCIENCE—GUESTS AT CLOSED MEETINGS

Recently our local OA meeting received a request from someone at a nearby college to attend our “closed” meeting. This person is studying eating disorders and would like to bring one of her students. Is this a Traditions break, an anonymity break, or a request the group conscience can decide?

This seems to be a matter of Tradition Four, whose Principle is group autonomy. The group voted to be closed. A member is entitled to ask the group to reconsider the decision. In doing so, the group should be given at least two weeks’ notice that they will be discussing the topic at the business meeting.

The group could vote to allow “openness” for just this one time; to allow for openness on a case-by-case basis; to just make itself an open group; or to hold to its decision to stay closed.

It may not seem so good to flip-flop on a decision month after month, but after trying a meeting one way, it is a sign of group health for its members to at least consider options. The group’s decision may remain as it was, and that is fine too. Reasoning it out by group conscience is always the key.

—November 2012

GROUP CONSCIENCE—ISSUES NOT ADDRESSED BY THE TRADITIONS

A member of our OA group who has years of recovery in OA and in another Twelve Step program wants our meeting to include this question from her other fellowship: “Whoever is abstinent today, raise your hand.” She believes it might motivate struggling members to stay abstinent so they can raise their hands. We have discussed this at length in our group conscience meetings, asked the question for a couple of months, left it out for a month, and then voted to leave it out. Some members object to the question because they believe it is shaming for those who can’t raise their hands. I

feel the question is an invasion of my privacy. We cannot find a Tradition that helps us figure this out. What does the Board think of this?

The Traditions do not speak to the specific issue your group has considered. However, because all who have a desire to stop eating compulsively are welcome in OA, what might be an appropriate practice for another Twelve Step group could make OA members feel unwelcome in an OA meeting.

Tradition Four offers OA groups the freedom to find their own way and learn from their own experiences. Your group has made effective use of this Tradition by trying the practice for a while and reconsidering it at a group conscience meeting before voting against it. The group conscience has spoken on this issue and should be followed in the spirit of unity.

You can visit oa.org to find "[Border Guards: Tradition Four Issues](#)" and download a free summary of this 2006 WSBC Forum on the Fourth Tradition.

—December 2010

GROUP CONSCIENCE—LAPSED TREASURER HOLDING GROUP FUNDS

Our group treasurer stopped attending meetings and did not return our Seventh Tradition funds. She is still an OA member and attends other meetings. Her sponsor and she told us she had lost the money, and she agreed to return it. She has failed to pay. Are there guidelines we can follow in such a situation? What do the Traditions say in this respect?

At a meeting I attend, we had a similar situation. For a few months, we tried to contact our treasurer for return of the money, but after a while, we voted to stop trying.

In a program that stresses spirituality and honesty as essential elements for recovery, we don't like to think our trusted servants could be less than trustworthy. Tradition Four is most applicable in these situations: "Each group is autonomous except in matters that affect other groups or OA as a whole." Your group can decide in group conscience how much time and energy the members want to expend trying to recover the missing funds and at what point to let go.

Tradition One reminds us our common welfare should come first. You mentioned in your message that two possible solutions had been discussed: 1) to ask for an explanation, if not the money, and 2) to drop the subject with her.

One "correct" action does not exist. In group conscience, your group can decide which of these solutions (or possibly a different, third solution) most enhances the group's common welfare. Consider: how would continuing to ask for an explanation and repayment strengthen or weaken your group? How would dropping the subject strengthen or weaken your group?

Your group might also consider the common welfare of its intergroup. Traditions Eleven and Twelve do not prohibit a group from sharing the facts. We can speak out if we know for certain an individual has harmed an OA group. Our knowledge can prevent further harm: for example, if it would prevent this person from becoming treasurer in a new group. This is not done in the spirit of punishing the member, but in the spirit of protecting the common welfare of OA as a whole.

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Your group could also consider safeguards that would prevent this from happening again.

—May 2010

GROUP CONSCIENCE—MENTIONING SPECIFIC FOODS AT MEETINGS

A member of our group has asked that we have a group-conscience meeting. She requests that we not mention the names of specific foods or places during meetings. What is the WSO position on this? Are there any written materials on this issue?

Thank you for writing to ask about mentioning specific foods in OA meetings. OA does not have formal guidelines on this issue. This question prompts many contrasting views within the Fellowship and is best settled by each group's conscience. Tradition Four states, "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole." Many OA meetings do allow the mention of specific foods, while many others do not.

Tradition One states, "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon OA unity." [*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition*](#) states, "In OA meetings, individuals are lovingly guided to keep the needs of the whole group in mind as we share our experience, strength, and hope" (p. 92). OA does not dictate what a group's needs should be.

[*A Commitment to Abstinence*](#) states, "Avoid cultivating or dwelling on thoughts about any real or imagined pleasure once derived from certain foods and avoid talking about them" (p. 2). Mentioning a food in passing is different from talking about the "derived pleasure." If a share mentions abstaining from a certain food as being central to recovery, it is one thing. If the share focuses on the food and not the solution, it is something else.

Tradition Twelve reminds us to "place principles before personalities." [*The OA Handbook for Members, Groups and Service Bodies*](#) states, "Four principles seem to lead away from trouble and toward growth: (1) unity within the group; (2) harmony among the members of the group, other OA groups, and the rest of the community; (3) a hearing for all points of view; and (4) understanding that speakers' talks and pitches are not open to comment or debate. In other words, wholehearted practice of the Twelve Traditions" (p. 21).

Again, we come back to the good of the group as a whole. It is up to your group to decide whether it is for the good of the group as a whole to ask that specific foods not be mentioned, or to decide the opposite.

—January 2013

GROUP CONSCIENCE—READING STEPS AND TRADITIONS AS WRITTEN

Is it possible to have something written about copyright laws so when members don't read our Steps and Traditions as written we have something else to cite besides our Traditions? I am thinking about what AA sent us to help us understand why we read their literature as written from their texts.

Overeaters Anonymous is a legal entity incorporated in the state of New Mexico. Therefore, OA, Inc. has certain legal responsibilities. OA, Inc. owns the copyrights on our literature. One corporate responsibility for OA is to keep records that show it is actively protecting its copyrights. This action protects the OA's interests in court should a conflict regarding copyright infringement arise.

A group that registers with WSO agrees to abide by the definition of a group as stated in OA, Inc. [Bylaws Subpart B](#), Article V, which includes the wording "1) As a group, they meet to practice the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, guided by the Twelve Concepts of OA Service." The Steps, Traditions, and Concepts are approved by the group conscience of OA as a whole, which is defined as World Service Business Conference in Concept Two. If a group is changing the words in the Steps and Traditions, they are no longer practicing the Steps and Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous. They are practicing an individual version of them.

Our personal recovery depends on the survival of the OA fellowship by focusing on what we have in common (Tradition One—Unity) instead of on differences of interpretation. Groups are autonomous in such matters as meeting format, but changes to fundamental principles are seen as having an effect on other groups and OA as a whole (Tradition Four). Tradition Twelve reminds us that program principles take precedence over individual considerations.

—WSBC 2015

GROUP CONSCIENCE—READING STEPS AND TRADITIONS AT EVERY MEETING

I thought we should read the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions at every meeting. Some groups don't. One of my groups voted not to have meetings on the Traditions because people wouldn't come with that focus. The Traditions have meaning for me, so I don't feel I belong there anymore. Should we read the Traditions and Steps at every meeting?

Policy statements from the World Service Business Conferences of 1996 and 1999 offer guidance here, and WSBC is OA's group conscience as a whole. "We, the 1999 WSBC of OA suggest that at the beginning of every meeting, OA's Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions be read" (Overeaters Anonymous, Inc. [Business Conference Policy Manual](#). (See p. 8 for the latest iteration, 1996a.) This suggestion governs many, if not most, meetings. But we also practice Tradition Four's Principle of autonomy: "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole." Thus, some groups have voted to read only the corresponding month's Tradition, and others do not read any, often because they are lunchtime meetings with time constraints.

The definition of an OA group includes the statement, "As a group, they meet to practice the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous . . ." (Overeaters Anonymous, Inc. [Bylaws Subpart B](#), p. 4). If the group acknowledges this intention and follows the Traditions' principles, they do not have to read the Twelve Traditions. More problematic would be a group that reads the Traditions and proceeds to ignore them.

This Ask-It question reveals a deeper concern. If members view the Traditions as "business" or a list of organizational rules, some members will groan, sigh, or even yawn

when others read them or when a meeting focuses on them. What a loss, when members could instead experience what the Traditions are really about! They are about intimacy and teach us how to relate to other people. OA's [*Service, Traditions and Concepts Workshop Manual*](#) reminds us that "The Traditions . . . apply to the part of our lives where we deal with others" (p. 21).

As we embrace the OA program, we understand quickly that each Step has a corresponding Principle and that living a Step helps us examine whether we are practicing the Step's Principle in all our affairs. It is the same for the Twelve Traditions, where each embodies a Principle to help us relate to others: unity, trust, identity, autonomy, purpose, solidarity, responsibility, fellowship, structure, neutrality, anonymity, and spirituality. Each Tradition is a study in human relations and teaches us how to be present with another, both one-on-one (in friendship, parenting, and OA's basic group of two) and in larger groups. The Traditions help us break out of the isolation our disease encourages.

When we view the Traditions as guideposts to intimacy, we can welcome them in meetings and in life.

—Sept/Oct 2012

GROUP CONSCIENCE—THEFT OF GROUP FUNDS

A member stole funds from my home meeting. Another member has a phone video of this person admitting to the theft. I know both members. The person with the evidence is wondering if we should press charges. The amount is about \$50.

I consulted other BOT members to determine their experience with this issue, and they had several thoughts and suggestions.

Tradition One says, "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon OA unity." What impact would pressing charges have on the unity of the group? No BOT member knows of any group, intergroup, or region that has pressed charges when funds went missing. That does not mean your group cannot do it. Tradition Four gives your group the right to press charges, but for \$50 that seems a bit extreme, and your group might possibly find itself in a public controversy that would not be in harmony with Tradition Ten. A group conscience might be wise to find a way to prevent a future recurrence.

An intervention with this person, the person who has the video, and one other person would also be appropriate. The damage this theft has done and will do to the person who took the funds is of concern. This kind of thing can eat away at one's recovery. The individual needs kindness and compassion, not accusations, and needs the opportunity to make restitution. An incident of this type could cause someone to leave the group and possibly OA, with dire consequences if he or she is a compulsive eater. Everyone deserves a chance to make amends, make restitution, and be forgiven.

Such a conversation is not easy, but we need to be responsible guardians of the Traditions. Concept 12e could be a guide:

"Compassion: (e) No service action shall ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy.

"Sometimes a member may act inappropriately or be unable to fulfill the duties of an elected service position. As a Fellowship and individually, we make every attempt to act

with compassion. If an individual's behavior is such that it is no longer appropriate for that person to continue in the position to which he or she was elected or appointed, we may have to request or insist that the individual resign. However, before taking such an extreme step, we should consult with others to ensure that every means of support and encouragement has first been made available" ([The Twelve Concepts of OA Service](#), p. 15).

—June 2013

GROUP CONSCIENCE—VOTING PROCEDURE

Is there an OA bylaw requiring the entire meeting group to vote three successive times on steering committee decisions?

No such requirement exists in the OA bylaws, Conference Continuing Effects Motions, Steps, Traditions, or Concepts of service. The [OA Handbook for Members, Groups and Service Bodies](#) and Traditions Two and Four in the OA [Twelve and Twelve](#) are great sources of information for groups trying to determine how to take a group conscience.

Rationale and history may exist behind this practice if your group conscience has made it a requirement. Your region trustee and intergroup and region chairs might be able to help you find answers if you contact them.

—June 2010

GROUPS—ABSTINENCE REQUIREMENT—SHARING

Many meetings in my area suggest that members have ninety days of abstinence before sharing. I believe this practice discourages newcomers from speaking at meetings. For eighteen years I have been a member of another Twelve Step program where the newcomer is the most important person in the room and is strongly encouraged to share at meetings. Does the WSO condone this requirement?

OA has no ninety-day abstinence requirement to have a voice at a meeting. Have you suggested that these meetings also sponsor a newcomer meeting, workshop, or event where newcomers would be free to share, question, and participate?

According to our Bylaws, and Tradition Three, a group cannot require anything for membership beyond a desire to stop eating compulsively. This gives members a voice. If you feel a group does not honor this Tradition, perhaps you should speak with your intergroup or region officers. Trustees are available to speak with groups or to provide "Service, Traditions, and Concepts" workshops to talk about these questions.

I am not aware of any ninety-day groups in my area. However, we do use the slogan "Bring your message to the meeting and your mess to your sponsor." People come to meetings for many reasons, including socialization and fellowship. They come in pain, and our meetings' primary purpose is to work OA's Twelve Steps toward recovery and help the compulsive eater who still suffers. When a meeting asks for "positive pitches" or strongly suggests that non-abstinent people close their mouths and open their ears and minds, I believe the intent is to let the solution come forth from within the group rather than more discussion of the problem, which other members in pain already know too well.

Ask-It Basket archive 2010 – 2019

The meetings you describe seem focused on recovery and operating in the belief that one cannot transmit what one does not have; that is, one cannot carry a message one is not living. For me, the message is that there is a solution and this program works. A person “in the food” shows the disease, not the recovery. The only proof I have that this program works is my 65-pound (30-kg) weight loss, deep personality changes based on “huge emotional displacements and rearrangements” ([*Alcoholics Anonymous*](#), 4th ed., p. 27), and sixteen years of abstinence.

But, for me, if I’d had no opportunities to share as a newcomer, I would have been disheartened. In 1996, a group composed of mostly longtimers with two, five, and fifteen years of abstinence asked me to qualify after only thirty days of abstinence. “You want to hear from me?” was my thought, and their collective response was “Yes!” Their attention was a great gift and kept me coming back all these years.

The newcomer *is* the most important person in the room. I believe your groups want the newcomer to hear the recovery message, stop trying to direct events, and start listening to how others achieved ninety-plus days without bingeing, purging, or restricting. However, if no groups in your area allow newcomers or non-abstinent people to share without first achieving that ninety-day requirement, your intergroup should address this. OA is a “big tent.” We can and should provide forums for all to work this program according to their conscience and experience.

—December 2013

GROUPS—ABSTINENCE REQUIREMENTS—SERVICE

A group in our area requires members to be abstinent seven days before chairing a meeting. I thought Tradition Three stated, “The only requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively.”

Your statements are not contradictory. As Tradition Three reminds us, anyone with a desire to stop eating compulsively is welcome in the OA rooms. Tradition Four upholds the autonomy of a group, permitting a group to require its trusted servants to have extended abstinence. Most established groups have abstinence requirements for the service positions of chair, treasurer, and secretary, because group members rely on leaders living in the sanity of recovery rather than the insanity of the disease.

To address your example, the group chair is the caretaker of group order and meeting procedure. Awareness, serenity, and sanity are useful qualities for this service. When a person is active in the disease, we recommend that that member’s first concern be gaining relief from the addiction—taking care of self before taking care of others.

—February 2011

GROUPS—ACCEPTANCE OF OTHER HPs

In an OA meeting, many people speak of “my Higher Power, whom I call God.” But one person says, “my Higher Power, whom I call Jesus.” It makes many of us uncomfortable, but we are not sure what, if anything, to do about it. Do you have any suggestions?

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Step Eleven talks of “a spiritual relationship with a Power that is greater than ourselves alone,” but we do not promote or favor any particular concept of that Higher Power. We are allowed to express our beliefs however we choose. The focus of Tradition One is on unity. No matter what our beliefs, we are welcome in OA.

According to Tradition Three, OA members come from many different backgrounds, races, religions, etc. We have different opinions. We have experienced different forms of compulsive eating behaviors. But anyone who wants to stop eating compulsively is welcome in our meetings. We would also specifically urge you to delve into Tradition Ten. The story on page 152 of *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition*, about a worldwide newspaper columnist’s mistaken understanding [that a belief in Jesus is an aspect of OA’s program] is directly on point. The discussion around that story might illuminate the issues at play here.

Additionally, there is much to read in AA literature on this subject. The first example that comes to mind: Just as we accept atheists and agnostics (see Chapter 4 in the Big Book, entitled “We Agnostics”), we accept those whose ideas of a Higher Power differ from our own.

Acceptance is woven through the fabric of the Overeaters Anonymous program of recovery. We would urge you to find it in your hearts to accept that this person’s Higher Power definition is as valid as your own. Would you have problems with a member whose Higher Power was Allah? Or with a Sikh member wearing a turban? We hope not. Your situation is not all that different.

We hope that your group can walk through the discomfort of differences and grow more open and accepting from the experience of having done so.

—WSBC 2019

GROUPS—ATTRACTING NEW MEMBERS

How do we attract new members under the age of 50? Additionally, how do we attract men? We need help in our area; we need to attract new members.

There is a [Group Inventory](#) and the [Strong Meeting Checklist](#) at oa.org/document-library and an [Intergroup/Service Board Inventory](#). There is also the [OA Handbook for Members, Groups and Service Bodies](#) available at the OA Bookstore. Your region chair and region trustee are resources. The region trustee could be invited to facilitate a “Service, Traditions, and Concepts” workshop with a focus on how to grow the diversity of your meetings.

There is a [Young Persons in OA](#) Committee and several committees to help with [Public Information](#) and [Professional outreach](#). Contact the World Service Office for additional information.

Attracting men to OA has been an issue throughout its history. The numbers vary, but 14 percent is a reasonably consistent proportion of men in OA.

The [Public Information Manual](#) is another valuable resource you may find useful.
—WSBC 2015

Ask-It Basket archive 2010 – 2019

GROUPS—DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GROUPS AND MEETINGS

Please distinguish between an “OA group” and an “OA meeting.” Are they distinct? Are the terms synonymous? And how?

The terms “OA group” and “OA meeting” are often used synonymously. [*The OA Handbook for Members, Groups and Service Bodies*](#) includes this definition:

“Meetings/Groups (used interchangeably): Two or more compulsive eaters gathered together to share their experience, strength, and hope within the framework of the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts of OA Service.” (p. 2)

The [*OA Bylaws, Subpart B*](#) defines OA Groups in Article V. Part of this definition is as follows: (underlining added)

“A group may be formed by two or more persons meeting together...”

A few passages from [*The OA Handbook for Members, Groups and Service Bodies*](#) that may help distinguish between a “group” and a “meeting” are as follows:

“Usually a group in a small town has only a few members. What often happens is that the OA members come to a group meeting once a week to share their experience, strength, and hope in working the Twelve Step program.” (p. 10)

“Schedule two meetings a week. Make one the regular meeting and the other a Step-study or some other format, such as literature study or writing.” (p. 10)

“If your group is too isolated to allow for visiting groups and speakers, try for a meeting or two devoted to listening to recorded talks from OA conventions or special events.” (p. 10)

“Devote some meetings to a study of OA books, such as *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*; OA pamphlets; and *Lifeline*, as well as *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Big Book) and other OA-approved AA literature.” (pp. 10-11)

“As soon as a group is established, plan an open meeting for the community...” (p. 11)

“Once a group has been started, it is essential to provide continuity for the meeting. Make sure that at least one person is at the meeting place every week on the day and at the time designated...”

The *Handbook’s* index has subheadings for both “Groups” and “Meetings.” Under “Meetings,” a subheading for “Meeting Types” leads the reader to specialized meeting types such as “Speaker,” “Newcomers,” and “Special-Focus Meetings.” (pp. 25-26)

The ways that the terms “Groups” and “Meetings” are used seems to indicate that “Group” refers to the people—the OA members. “Meeting” refers to the parameters within which the group operates— “Tuesday, Noon, Big Book Study,” for example. So “Meetings” are registered with a time, place, format, etc., while “Group” refers to the people who attend the meetings.

—WSBC 2016

GROUPS—ENCOURAGEMENT TO AFFILIATE

Please suggest ways to encourage unaffiliated groups to affiliate (other than asking them to!).

Providing unaffiliated groups with the advantages of affiliation is persuasive. Groups that affiliate with a service body (such as an intergroup, virtual service board, national service board, language service board, or region) have a voice and a vote—their delegates can go to the [World Service Business Conference](#) and participate in the group conscience of OA as a whole. Affiliated groups have the opportunity to bring motions through their service bodies to the WSBC, share their point of view, and make changes within Overeaters Anonymous.

Through teamwork, affiliated groups have a more potent opportunity to carry the message. They have an opportunity to utilize and contribute to the services provided by their service bodies. Benefits include sharing membership and financial resources so members may be more fully served. Examples include sponsor and speaker lists, websites, workshops, newsletters, problem solving, chances to hear ideas that have worked for other groups, and opportunities for fellowship.

Synergy and service are good words to use to describe the reason for affiliation. The sum is greater than each of its parts. Together we can do what we could never do alone.

—WSBC 2016

GROUPS—GROUP AUTONOMY

What can we do when an OA-HOW, OA Primary Purpose, or a Vision for You group is telling members not to go to regular OA meetings, and/or breaking Traditions again and again?

Thank you for your question. Each group is autonomous and gets to decide its policies for itself; we hope that these decisions will be in alignment with our Twelve Traditions. If you attend these meetings, I suggest you ask for a business meeting to discuss the Traditions. My intergroup had an issue with one meeting, so we worked with our trustee and some of our members attending the meeting. After attending and bringing it to the attention of the meeting, nothing was changed. As a result, the meeting was removed from our directory. We also reported it to our trustee. In our opinion, this meeting was breaking Traditions One and Four. If the meeting is hurting OA as a whole, action needs to be taken.

In addition, a genuine OA group member should not give ultimatums to members. The group needs to make sure that the meetings have in their meeting format that there are various types of meetings, and that newcomers should attend five to six different meetings to see what might work for them.

—WSBC 2019

GROUPS—INSURANCE

In Italy, groups must have insurance for meetings to cover such things as possible accidents. Is this necessary in the US?

It is up to the meeting place to determine whether or not a group needs insurance. It is becoming more common for groups to purchase insurance, but there is no US law requiring groups to be insured.

—WSBC 2014

GROUPS—LIMITS TO AUTONOMY

Do any OA bylaws strongly suggest we should not be autonomous with certain items, such as Steps or Traditions? Is there anything we need to keep “as is”?

The [Bylaws](#) of Overeaters Anonymous, Inc. make clear that even Steps and Traditions may be modified, but only by vote of the Fellowship and approval of three-fourths of registered groups responding within a six-month period (providing at least 55 percent of registered groups respond). With this high bar, it is doubtful that our Fellowship will ever modify the Steps or Traditions.

In the case of groups, not changing the Steps or Traditions isn't just a “strong suggestion.” Rather, the very definition of an OA group relies on its promise that the group meets to practice the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, guided by [The Twelve Concepts of OA Service](#). If a group chooses not to do this by changing the Steps, Traditions, or Concepts, then by definition it is no longer an OA group. It has defined itself out of the Fellowship.

While Tradition Three specifies the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively, Tradition Four states that each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole. Groups known to have ignored Traditions often do not survive.

And yet, some do survive with protocols and practices that strongly suggest more requirements than our Traditions allow. In the Overeaters Anonymous, Inc. [Business Conference Policy Manual](#), Continuing Effects Motion 1988b contains our Statement on Abstinence and Recovery, and policy 2010a specifies our Statement on Approved Literature. Tradition One's Principle of unity strongly suggests that members and groups observe these and the many other policies. When groups fail to do this, it weakens our strength as a cohesive organization. Nevertheless, since OA has no “musts” within our program, each group is free to follow its own conscience.

Tradition Four is not just lip service. We mean it, as strongly as we mean Tradition One. Living and working our program while moderating the tension between these two Traditions and their Principles of unity and autonomy helps us grow in understanding and mature together as we trudge this road of recovery.

—August 2013

GROUPS—NONREGISTERED AND NONAFFILIATED

There is a group that calls itself OA and uses OA literature but refuses to register with the WSO or to affiliate with the national service board of the relevant country. What can or should we do to protect the name and message of OA? Or should we do nothing and let them be? (Needless to say, they have no recovery.)

It is good to try and encourage them to register as an OA meeting and affiliate with their intergroup or national service board. You can contact them and ask why they don't want to be affiliated. Emphasize the benefits of registration and affiliation.

On the other hand, if they choose to not register as an OA meeting, we cannot do or enforce anything as they are an outside organization. Because they are not part of OA, they can do whatever they find works for them.

However, if they are not registered, they are not supposed to call themselves an OA meeting. They can call themselves anything they like *except* an OA meeting.

In short, encourage them to register with WSO and to affiliate with the NSB and explain the benefits. If they decline, inform them that they are not allowed to call themselves an OA meeting and request that they stop using the OA name in association with their meeting.

—WSBC 2014

GROUPS—REQUIREMENTS AT MEETINGS

At my first OA business meeting, I heard that for a group to be considered an OA group, it must read the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions at each regular meeting. Is this correct? I know it is suggested, but couldn't our group decide to read "How it Works" and one Tradition, or some other configuration, instead?

I, too, have heard this rumor about reading the Steps and Traditions at meetings. The [Bylaws of Overeaters Anonymous, Inc.](#) state clearly what makes an OA group.

“These points shall define an Overeaters Anonymous group:

As a group, they meet to practice the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, guided by the Twelve Concepts of OA Service.

All who have the desire to stop eating compulsively are welcome in the group.

No member is required to practice any actions in order to remain a member or to have a voice (share at a meeting).

As a group they have no affiliation other than Overeaters Anonymous.

It has affiliated as an Overeaters Anonymous group by registering with the World Service Office.” (Bylaws Subpart B, Article 5.1)

This says that “they meet to practice the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions,” not that these must be read aloud at every meeting. But it may disappoint some members when only one Tradition is read. All the Traditions work together and understanding them works best when all are read at every meeting.

But your group may choose to read “How It Works” and one Tradition, rather than reading all the Traditions. If a group reads non-OA Steps and Traditions, then it might not

be an OA group. Additionally, it is against Tradition to change the wording of the Steps or Traditions. I have attended meetings where the group did not include the Traditions, and I am sure I have been to meetings where groups did not read the Steps.

Reading all Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions at each meeting is an activity that can help a meeting be stronger, but this is an area where Tradition Four is most relevant: “Each group is autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole.” The members of the group agree among themselves that this is what they want to do.

I would also urge reading [The Twelve Concepts of OA Service](#) and remembering Tradition Twelve: “Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all these Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.”

Does your group meet to practice the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of OA? Is your group registered with the WSO? Are all who want to stop eating compulsively welcome? Are members required to practice any actions in order to share or be a part of the group? Does your group have any other affiliations? If your answers are “yes” to the first three questions and “no” to the last two, then you are an OA group.

—March/April 2014

GROUPS—RESOLVING GROUP OR INTERPERSONAL PROBLEMS

What can we do when an OA member who became involved at the intergroup and region levels, and beyond, acts at meetings as if she is a VIP? She has done little to contribute to local groups, arrives late, never leads, and often monopolizes sharing time. She is no more a VIP than we who have kept the local groups going every week. OA has no VIPs.

While the Traditions do not specifically address each of your concerns, our literature makes several suggestions regarding how to address problems within a group. The First Tradition comes to mind when solving any group issue. In OA’s *Twelve and Twelve*, it speaks of individual recovery being dependent on OA unity and states, “However, unity isn’t always easy to maintain” and “. . . individuals are lovingly guided to keep the needs of the whole group in mind as we share our experience, strength and hope” ([The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition](#), p. 92).

It is advisable to first speak with your sponsor when feelings about the group or any group member emerge. Since members are often unaware of how their sharing is affecting the group, speaking with the person in private is also a good suggestion. You may discover this person has given up some group service in order to do service beyond the group level.

A group inventory is always in order when group problems arise, and a member of your group can request and schedule one.

—August 2011

GROUPS—SELF-SUPPORT AND THE TRADITIONS

Is a group or intergroup able to change the Suggested Meeting Format by deleting the suggested Seventh Tradition contribution? In our Public Information materials or meeting formats, is it okay to say that OA is “free”?

Tradition Four states, “Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole.” The [Suggested Meeting Format](#) is “suggested.” Many groups change or adapt it to suit the specific needs of their group. Some groups do not use it at all. From this standpoint, you can leave any part of it out that you choose.

Tradition Seven states, “Every OA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.” Two important words in Tradition Seven are “every” and “fully.” Some OA groups, especially virtual groups, do not believe they need to mention Tradition Seven because their group has no direct expenses. The “self” in “self-supporting” can be extended to refer to OA as a whole, not simply the individual group. “Self” includes all OA: our intergroups, service boards, regions, and World Service.

Even if individual groups themselves have no expenses, our Seventh Tradition reminds us it is important to support our Fellowship as a whole. Our World Service Office needs our support to help carry the message to other compulsive overeaters. The World Service Office maintains the OA website and provides worldwide meeting lists so people can find our meetings. The World Service Office prints and distributes our OA literature. Without the World Service Office, OA would be just a bunch of fragmented groups and would quickly fall apart.

Tradition Seven says that *every* group ought to be fully self-supporting; it does not leave any groups out. There are no exceptions. “Fully” indicates that we keep the needs of the entire Fellowship in mind, not simply the needs of the individual group. We do not accept outside donations, but Overeaters Anonymous never demands that members contribute. The [OA Preamble](#) says, “There are no dues or fees for members; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.” [The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition](#) states that “We, as individuals, are fully self-supporting only when we do what we can, when we can, giving back some of the help we have been given in OA” (p. 135).

Is it okay to say that OA is “free” in our PI materials or meeting formats? We are a program of honesty. Saying that OA is “free” would not be an honest statement. “Self-supporting” does not equal “free.” To say that OA is “free” would give members, newcomers, and people investigating OA an incorrect impression. It is more accurate to continue using the term “self-supporting” in PI materials and meeting formats.

Members are still free to choose for themselves whether or not to donate. However, it is an important reminder to all members that an important part of our recovery is to take responsibility both inside and outside Overeaters Anonymous meetings.

Step Twelve indicates we “practice these principles in all our affairs.” The [program Principle](#) behind Tradition Seven is responsibility. Every member of OA, every OA group, and every OA service body has the responsibility to do what we can, when we can— in monetary contributions and in service—to support OA as a whole.

—WSBC 2017

GROUPS—SPECIAL TOPIC/FOCUS—APPROVED RESOURCES

I'd like to feel free to refer men to oamen.org, but only if it's a bona fide OA resource. Is it Conference- and/or Board-approved?

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As an individual OA member, you are free to refer men to oamen.org. This website is the work of a subcommittee attached to a virtual intergroup of OA. It is not a committee or subcommittee of the Board of Trustees. The members of this committee that have created oamen.org are free to contact the region chairs and ask them to spread the word about their website. Their stated aim is to increase opportunities for more men to become involved in OA. The Board of Trustees, whose role is in part to act as guardians of the Twelve Traditions, does not advocate on behalf of any committee, group, or service body. Other than the Conference Seal of Approval, which can only be conferred on pieces of literature by delegates at the World Service Business Conference, there is no “official” recognition or level of approval given by the WSO or the Board of Trustees to things not created and/or reviewed by the Board of Trustees or one of its committees or subcommittees. The Board of Trustees would not normally comment, positively or negatively, neither approving of nor disapproving of publications, websites, or group practices, except in cases where it becomes aware that such things may be in violation of the OA Traditions.

—WSBC 2019

GROUPS—SPECIAL TOPIC/FOCUS—GROWTH

Are there certain groups with special-topic emphases (OA H.O.W., 90-Day, and the like) that are growing more than others?

I have to say that I have been in OA more than thirty years, and I have seen OA H.O.W. meetings come to an area, grow really big, and then peter out; I have seen regular meetings grow strong and large, then slowly die back to just a few members. I have seen a specific meeting limp along with three solid members for nine or ten years and suddenly get strong for the last four years and have five to seven members consistently. My general opinion is that everything just ebbs and flows.

—WSBC 2015

GROUPS—SPECIAL TOPIC/FOCUS—WEBSITES

Can a special-topic group have an autonomous website?

Yes. Members of service bodies at all levels of OA service may consider developing a website. The WSO, OA regions, service boards, intergroups, groups—as well as individual OA members—have all developed various websites to disseminate information about our Fellowship.

The [Website Development Guidelines](#) are found on oa.org.

—WSBC 2014

INTERGROUPS—FILLING SERVICE POSITIONS

What happens if an intergroup (and its groups) doesn't have a member willing to become secretary?

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When I was Intergroup Chair and there was no secretary, I asked someone to be “acting secretary” just for that meeting. This tactic could be repeated until the secretary job was filled. If someone is willing but feels intimidated, I have also found it helpful to point out that a secretary doesn’t have to do the equivalent of stenography and write down everything verbatim. All that is needed beyond time, place, and attendance is a general summary of committee reports, the motions made (including the maker of the motion), and whether the motion passed or not. I also offer my help with the minutes if needed. I was very reluctant to raise my hand and volunteer when I was new to service. If approached privately, I felt free to voice any concerns. Often this was enough so that I felt comfortable accepting the job. Likewise, for a meeting or group, the secretary position could be filled week to week until a member is found to take the position for six months. Encouraging privately is an appropriate approach as well.

—WSBC 2015

INTERGROUPS—HELPING MEMBERS TO STOP EATING COMPULSIVELY

What can an intergroup do when a group member does not want to follow the OA principles (e.g., does not want to stop eating compulsively)? What can we do as an intergroup? What can we do as longtimers?

The principles of the Fellowship are in Step Twelve. Helping a member decide to stop eating compulsively is part of carrying the message. There are numerous pieces of literature dealing with relapse either in whole or in part. Many regions have a Twelfth Step Within Committee and you would be advised to establish a contact through your region chair.

Workshops on becoming and staying abstinent are valuable. Your region trustee could be invited to conduct that type of workshop. Panels at open or special meetings are very useful. Reading the Statement on Abstinence and Recovery at your meetings reinforces the message. Reading [Our Invitation to You](#) can be powerful.

The most powerful method of all is for each of you to embody the message in Step Twelve. That is the power of example embodied in Step Twelve and Tradition Five.

—WSBC 2015

INTERGROUPS—INCREASING ATTENDANCE AT INTERGROUP MEETINGS

In our area, fewer than half our groups have reps that show up at intergroup meetings. If we try to deal with it during intergroup, we’re preaching to the choir. If we visit group meetings to encourage attendance, how and when do I say my piece? During the meeting, and if so, during announcements or during my share? Or should I try to get people to listen after the meeting? Should we just put a piece in the newsletter and hope for the best? Or should we ask to be the speaker one week and do it then?

Members that attend intergroup can encourage members at any meetings to become intergroup reps and attend intergroup. When announcements are made, they explain the function of the intergroup rep and let them know that this is the way meetings have a voice and vote at the monthly intergroup meetings. Some meetings announce this each week. The

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repetition of letting people know what's going on helps members to remember events.

It is good practice to announce the intergroup meeting time, place, and date in the monthly newsletter as well.

—WSBC 2015

INTERGROUPS—NONPROFIT STATUS

Are there any intergroups that have achieved nonprofit status?

The WSO does not keep track of the nonprofit status of intergroups.

—WSBC 2014

INTERGROUPS—SENDING DELEGATES WITHOUT SERVICE BOARD CONSENT

Can an intergroup send a delegate to the region assembly or to WSBC without the consent of a national service board?

Probably yes, depending on what their particular country's national service board bylaws say. Normally the NSB "sits" as a service body between intergroups and that region; they assist with organizing translation of OA literature and "national" events and concerns. However, any intergroup is free to send reps to region meetings and delegates to WSBC and choose them as they please, unless there is something in the agreed-upon bylaws of their particular country that that says otherwise.

—WSBC 2015

INTERGROUPS—TREASURER REPORTS AND TRANSPARENCY

Our intergroup treasurer feels that the Treasurer's Report presented at intergroup meetings is sensitive information, so the hardcopy report is destroyed instead of taken back to our groups. Some of us have asked for more transparency. The treasurer told us that members could misinterpret the report's information, so they must contact the intergroup treasurer should they have questions or concerns. We would appreciate your input.

The [Intergroup Treasurer Guidelines](#) state, "The intergroup treasurer keeps clear, simple records and reports to the intergroup and member groups how much money is coming in and how it is spent." Another tool that might be beneficial to you is the [Intergroup or Service Body Inventory](#). You might also want to order item #120, [OA Handbook for Members, Groups and Service Bodies](#).

The simplest answer to your question is to talk to your WSBC delegate. If your intergroup has sent a delegate to the WSBC or if you can locate a former delegate in your area, that person may have the delegate binder from that event. The binder includes a complete listing of all OA groups and shows how much they donated in the last year. It also includes the World Service budget for the current year and compares it to the previous year's budget. The delegate binder also includes an in-depth financial report for OA.

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All OA funds should always be transparent at every level of service, including intergroup and group meetings.

—December 2011

LIFELINE—SUBSCRIPTION CESSATION

What will happen to the Lifeline subscribers after publication ceases next year? Will they get a refund if their subscription still has years left?

The plan is to make available to members who have time left on their *Lifeline* subscriptions a refund, prorated to the amount or percentage of their subscription that remains after the date when the printing of paper copies of *Lifeline* ceases. The subscribers who wish to receive a refund will be able request one.

—WSBC 2019

LIFELINE—SUBSCRIPTIONS

If Lifeline receives more subscribers, could it be possible to keep it going?

Lifeline has been reviewed every year and is just not viable. It has served only 8 percent of our overall membership. We try to make decisions based on the greatest good for the greatest number.

—WSBC 2019

LITERATURE—ALTERNATIVES TO HARDCOPY LITERATURE SALES

Has the Board of Trustees and World Service Office been working on a new business plan that would relieve OA from its dependence on literature sales? Perhaps we could shift to selling services through technology, rather than paper-based products.

Yes, the staff and the BOT continue to research cost-effective and profitable ways to publish OA literature using technology. The [Voices of Recovery e-Workbook](#) (2012) was the first OA book available via electronic media. Today, all OA books are available through electronic vendors (except some workbooks, which are available only through the OA bookstore).

OA will continue to explore all possibilities, especially as technology advances. It should be noted that our profit margin is much lower with electronic sales, as sales prices are governed by e-book vendors.

—WSBC 2016

LITERATURE—ANOREXIA AND BULIMIA

A member in my region went looking for literature on anorexia and bulimia on the OA website. Is there any in print? Where can it be found? Online?

Great question. I double-checked with a friend who has recently started a meeting for anorexics and bulimics in my area. She also happens to be the Intergroup Literature

person. My friend recommends the [“Focus on Anorexia and Bulimia Packet”](#) at [bookstore.oa.org](#) (#725). She also says there are many stories of recovery by people who suffered from anorexia and bulimia in the new [Overeaters Anonymous, Third Edition](#) (#980). *Overeaters Anonymous, Third Edition* is also available as an [audiobook](#), an e-book in Kindle and Nook formats, and a [downloadable MP3 file](#). The packets are only available as paper packets.

—WSBC 2016

LITERATURE—COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT

What are the consequences of copyright infringement?

If OA’s copyright is infringed, we have the right and responsibility to inform the party of our copyright rights and insist by friendly request (or a Cease and Desist order from our attorney) that the infringement stop. There are other legal avenues to pursue if the party does not comply. Similarly, if OA infringes another’s copyright, then they have every right to ask OA to cease and desist and to pursue legal action.

There is a more important aspect of this issue. We, as OA, are bound by other criteria besides the law. We are bound by the Principles of the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts—such as Honesty, Integrity, Unity, Trust, Responsibility, Conscience, and Humility. A full list may be found on the [Program Principles page](#) under [Working the Program](#) at [oa.org](#). These are our guides in how we conduct our business and our lives.

—WSBC 2016

LITERATURE—DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BOARD AND CONFERENCE APPROVAL

Why is some literature Board-approved and some Conference-approved? How is it decided who will approve a piece of literature?

Board-approved Literature consists of literature that has been approved by the Board of Trustees. This literature consists of either one or both of the following: literature that has originated from a board or Conference committee and is not intended for the Fellowship as a whole (an example is the [Twelfth-Step-Within Handbook](#)) and/or literature that has been compiled from already-existing OA-approved literature or *Lifeline*. Examples of this type of Board-approved Literature would be [The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous](#) or [Abstinence, Second Edition](#).

Conference-approved Literature is literature written by the Conference Literature Committee and approved by the full Conference Literature Committee, the Board of Trustees, and by substantial unanimity of the delegates at World Service Business Conference. This type of literature is written for the Fellowship as a whole. An example would be [The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition](#).

For other examples of the two types of literature, see the [OA-Approved Literature List](#).

Any proposal for a new piece of literature goes to the Conference-approved Literature Committee. A proposal form can be requested from the WSO and it will then be sent to the Conference-approved Literature Committee for further evaluation.

—WSBC 2015

LITERATURE—ELEVATION OF AA OVER OA LITERATURE

What can be said to members who constantly push the Big Book as the way to recover over OA literature?

We are unable to change the way people feel, or their passion in what works best for them—it's a personal choice. What we can do is to encourage people to support OA literature and refer to it regularly ourselves as we share. In short, be the example yourself of what you might like to see in others.

—WSBC 2019

LITERATURE—ENCOURAGING USE

Is there some sort of workshop or list of activities that encourages the use of OA literature?

The [*Twelve Step Workshop and Study Guide*](#) walks OA members through the use of [*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition*](#), as well as [*Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed.*](#) (the Big Book). It also uses the AA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions book, our own [*Overeaters Anonymous, Third Edition*](#) (the Brown Book), and OA's daily readers [*Voices of Recovery*](#) and [*For Today*](#).

Although the [*Twelve Step Workshop and Study Guide*](#) is designed to facilitate a fifteen-week workshop series, members are using this guide in many creative ways: for instance, while working with sponsors and sponsees; creating “overview” workshops on how to work the Steps; during workshops on individual Steps, and many others.

I would also suggest giving a literature presentation at any intergroup/service board meeting or any special workshop. Discussing our literature would be an effective way to introduce members to a wide variety of available resources. At oa.org/guidelines, you'll find suggestions for developing [newsletters](#), [translating literature](#), or creating [locally-produced literature](#). You'll also find the [OA-Approved Literature List](#), which lists all Board- and Conference-approved books, pamphlets, PI materials, and periodicals available through the OA bookstore (visit bookstore.oa.org).

—WSBC 2017

LITERATURE—FUTURE OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS LITERATURE

Is there a long-term aim among some of the members of the BOT to stop the use within the OA Fellowship of AA literature and replace it with only OA literature?

There is no short- or long-term aim to remove the use of AA literature within OA. While the WSBC, various literature committees, and the WSO staff have worked hard to create and produce a variety of quality OA literature to help the compulsive overeater, individuals are encouraged to use whatever literature works best for them.

—WSBC 2014

LITERATURE—“HOW MIRACLES CAN HAPPEN”

In our meeting, we read a piece called “How Miracles Can Happen”? Where does this reading come from? Is it OA-approved literature?

“How Miracles Can Happen” is a letter written by program founder Rozanne and the members of her group. They created this form letter to respond to the 7,000 letters they received when OA was mentioned in Dear Abby on February 25, 1965. That day, a grateful recovering member’s letter had appeared in Dear Abby’s national column and offered OA’s post office box address. You can find the story and read “How Miracles Can Happen” in [*Beyond Our Wildest Dreams*](#) (pp. 179–183).

Beyond Our Wildest Dreams (#998) is OA’s history book; it is considered OA Conference-approved Literature. Find it at bookstore.oa.org.

—WSBC 2017

LITERATURE—IDENTIFYING OA-APPROVED LITERATURE

Is the presence of the OA symbol on literature the only way to know that literature is OA-approved? What if a group decides in a group conscience to use a piece of literature that is not OA-approved?

Many ways exist for OA members to verify whether a piece of literature is approved. The following is not an all-inclusive list:

- The [*OA-Approved Literature List*](#) at oa.org/guidelines lists OA-approved literature.
- All OA-approved literature carries the OA or AA Conference Seal of Approval, or the statement “OA Board-approved Literature.”
- Overeaters Anonymous sells only OA-approved or AA-approved literature as listed at bookstore.oa.org.

The OA Guidelines’ *OA-Approved Literature List* states the OA policy on using non-approved literature:

“Policy Statement on OA-/AA-approved literature adopted by Conference 2010: In accordance with our Traditions, we suggest OA groups maintain unity and honor our Traditions by selling and displaying only approved books and pamphlets at meetings. This includes OA Conference- and Board-approved Literature; AA Conference-approved Literature; and locally produced OA literature. Locally produced literature must be developed according to the *OA Guidelines for Locally Produced Literature*, and should be used with the greatest discretion. Local literature should be considered temporary and discontinued when OA literature approved for general use is available to cover the topic.”

The Policy statement on literature that is not OA-approved adopted by WSBC in 1993 states:

Ask-It Basket archive 2010 – 2019

“It is the group conscience of the 1993 World Service Business Conference that the sale or display of literature other than OA-approved literature as described in WSBC Policy 1982b [replaced by WSBC Policy 2010a above] is an implied endorsement of outside enterprises, and therefore is in violation with Tradition Six.”

Displaying non-OA materials in an OA meeting dilutes OA’s message and is not in keeping with Traditions Six and Ten. We carry our OA message of recovery through OA’s Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and nine Tools. Anything else we bring into the OA meeting distorts the message. As our *Twelve and Twelve* states in Step Twelve, “Also, we’ve found it less confusing to others if we make it a habit when sharing about the program to concentrate on our OA experience, rather than on aspects of our experience not related to OA” ([*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition*](#), p. 84).

Displaying non-OA-approved literature at OA meetings gives the newcomer a confusing picture. As a Twelve Step recovery organization, we need to offer the newcomer (and the rest of us) material pertaining to Overeaters Anonymous.

Tradition Ten tells us we have no opinion on outside issues; non-OA-approved literature is an outside issue (no matter how “good” it might be). Each of us is free to read whatever he or she wishes and to make private recommendations to friends and sponsees. However, as members of an OA group, we ought to decide what message we want our group to carry and how best to do so. If we stick to our primary purpose, carrying the OA message, we avoid controversy and make our meeting a place where the OA message, clear and simple, is carried to those who still suffer.

OA encourages groups within its Fellowship to abide by its Traditions, bylaws, and policies. Displaying outside literature at OA meetings is at odds with the principles the Twelve Traditions embody; however, through its group conscience, each group is free to decide for itself what literature to use at meetings.

—January 2012

LITERATURE—IN SPANISH

If a group needs OA literature in Spanish, how will they get it after all the Spanish literature at the WSO has been given away?

The WSO has stopped offering printed literature in Spanish because it was not selling, and after ten years of sitting in the WSO warehouse was becoming dated. There just isn’t a large-enough demand for printed literature in Spanish within the USA and shipping it to our Spanish-speaking members outside the USA was expensive.

A Spanish Language Service Board (SLSB) has been in operation for some time: they are now registered with the WSO as a virtual service board to serve the entire Spanish speaking Fellowship. Members of the SLSB will work together to translate literature and materials. They will supply electronic files of translated literature to individual Spanish language service boards worldwide. It is these service boards, in individual Spanish speaking countries, that will publish and distribute OA literature in Spanish. Groups can then obtain literature in Spanish from their local service board. Spanish speaking members from the USA will be able to purchase literature from these service boards as well.

Ask-It Basket archive 2010 – 2019

—WSBC 2018

LITERATURE—MAKING LITERATURE AVAILABLE ONLINE

What would happen if we made the OA Twelve and Twelve freely available online? Might we be able to spread the message of recovery even better this way?

For the fiscal year 2014, OA, Inc. projected US\$184,400 in sales for all types of [The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Second Edition](#) (electronic and multiple paper sizes.) Actual income generated was \$164,758, a difference of almost \$20,000 (2015 Delegate Binder: Appendix C: Page 1). This meant that the corporation had to find \$20,000 from other resources to end the year with a balanced budget.

If the OA [Twelve and Twelve](#) book had been “freely available online,” OA would have had to find \$164,758 in other financial resources to cover projected projects and expenses in 2014. Also, the 2014 budget would have been without the projected \$184,400 income, which would have caused crucial and projected projects to be cancelled or delayed due to a lack of funding.

For fiscal year 2015, projected revenue for the OA *Twelve and Twelve* is \$160,000. If that book was offered for free, projects such as the OA public awareness campaign, region trustees’ workshops, literature development and printing, and professional exhibit funding would have to be cut back, thereby affecting OA’s ability to reach out to the compulsive eater who still suffers—our primary purpose. OA is not only self-supporting through its own contributions; it also must rely on literature sales to help carry the message.

—WSBC 2015

LITERATURE—MULTIMEDIA RECORDINGS OF SPECIAL EVENTS

Are any of the following recordings OA-approved literature:

- ***Local intergroup events, Share-a-Thons, etc.***
- ***Region events (our own and other regions), or***
- ***OA meetings/events that members can download from other intergroup websites in and out of our region?***

If they are not OA-approved literature, can meetings still use or sell these recordings?

The 2012 WSBC amended Policy No. 2010, a Statement on Approved Literature ([Business Conference Policy Manual](#), revised July 2012, p. 14). It now reads:

“In accordance with our Traditions, we suggest that OA groups maintain unity and honor our Traditions by using, selling, and displaying only approved books and pamphlets at their meetings. This includes OA Conference- and Board-approved Literature; AA Conference-approved books, booklets, and all future editions thereof, with original edition copyright 2010 or earlier; and locally produced OA literature. Locally produced literature must be developed according to the [OA Guidelines for Locally Produced Literature](#), and should be used with the greatest discretion. Local literature should be considered temporary and discontinued when OA literature approved for general use is available to cover the topic.”

Ask-It Basket archive 2010 – 2019

Recordings of OA functions such as the ones you mentioned would come under the same category as locally produced literature. Members may use, or download for use from an OA website, any recordings of members' personal shares at regional or local events.

Before recording an OA event, someone should make an announcement reminding members present of the intent to record, so members can use an alias if they so choose. Also, members wishing to share should sign a release form before they speak at the event. Some service bodies have used recordings by member volunteers as fundraisers. The service body should check with the professional recorders regarding their policies for future use by the service body.

—September/October 2013

LITERATURE—OA ROYALTIES ONLINE

How can an OA member distinguish between literature ordered on Amazon (for which OA receives a royalty) from that which it does not?

One way to tell it is our account is that the author is listed as "Overeaters Anonymous," and the link for the author is clickable and takes you to a page with all of our offerings. If the author link is not clickable, then it's a reseller and we won't receive a royalty. You can also tell it's a reseller because a field will appear that says, "Seller Information" and the seller will be someone other than OA.

—WSBC 2019

LITERATURE—ONLINE RETAILERS

When the OA Twelve and Twelve, Second Edition is sold from Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Apple, or other businesses, is there a concern about not adhering to Tradition Six?

Tradition Six states, "An OA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the OA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose."

OA doesn't own printing presses, package delivery services, or meeting spaces. We depend on business, churches, hospitals, and other public and private entities for a range of services that help OA members carry our message of recovery. These are not endorsements, but rather the use of special workers (as referred to in Tradition Eight). Special workers help us do the things we cannot do or choose not to do, so that we can focus on carrying the message—because carrying the message is the only job that must be done by OA members and not special workers.

When we ship a package via the US Postal Service, it is not an endorsement. It is a practical acceptance that we need our "special worker" postal service to get a package to a member. Online booksellers are the same. Using these services is acceptance of the need for the services these special workers offer.

—WSBC 2018

Ask-It Basket archive 2010 – 2019

LITERATURE—QUOTATIONS FROM NON-OA SOURCES IN DAILY READERS

I would like to understand why we use quotations from outside OA in For Today and Voices of Recovery.

[*For Today*](#) was produced in 1980 when there was very little OA literature available from which to quote. [*Voices of Recovery*](#), produced in 2002, is full of OA quotes and references, as AA requested that no quotes from AA literature be used. Both books received the OA Conference Seal of Approval from their respective WSBC delegates. *For Today* (#984) and *Voices of Recovery* (#986) are still so popular that writing workbooks, providing a question a day related to that day's reading, have recently been produced. To purchase, go to the oa.org bookstore and look for the [*For Today Workbook*](#) (#974) and [*Voices of Recovery Workbook*](#) (#996).

—WSBC 2014

LITERATURE—SALE OF NON-OA-APPROVED LITERATURE

Why can't groups sell literature that is not OA Board- or Conference-approved?

Our Sixth Tradition states, "An OA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the OA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose." Selling non-OA-approved literature at meetings creates confusion for the newcomer. As a Twelve Step recovery program, OA's obligation is to offer our members literature pertaining to Overeaters Anonymous.

The 2012 WSBC, OA's collective conscience, adopted the following amended Statement on Approved Literature: "In accordance with our Traditions, we suggest that OA groups maintain unity and honor our Traditions by using, selling, and displaying only approved books and pamphlets at their meetings. This includes OA Conference- and Board-approved Literature; AA Conference-approved books and booklets (and all future editions thereof) with original edition copyright 2010 or earlier; and locally produced OA literature. Locally produced literature must be developed according to the [*OA Guidelines for Locally Produced Literature*](#), and should be used with the greatest discretion. Local literature should be considered temporary and discontinued when OA literature approved for general use is available to cover the topic."

OA's responsibility pledge states, "Always to extend the hand and heart of OA to all who share my compulsion; for this I am responsible." One way to extend OA's hand and heart is through OA-approved literature. If we were to litter OA's tables with literature from any other source, it would imply OA's endorsement of outside (potentially controversial) issues, with possible exposure to legal responsibility. This would jeopardize OA's unity and prevent us from fulfilling our primary purpose: to abstain from compulsive eating and carry our recovery message to still-suffering compulsive eaters. Members can find the [*OA-Approved Literature List*](#) at oa.org.

OA has such a powerful, life-saving message. Why dilute its impact with literature from outside sources?

—August 2012

Ask-It Basket archive 2010 – 2019

LOGO—USE AS TATTOO

Would it break any OA tradition to get the OA logo as a tattoo? Does the visibility of the tattoo matter?

Here in part is the Copyright Policy of OA, Inc.: “All OA literature, including digital media, and the OA logo are protected under US copyright law, and that copyright is owned solely by Overeaters Anonymous, Inc.” The policy doesn’t say anything about personal use, such as a tattoo; it only refers to OA literature.

Regarding the visibility of the tattoo, you are the judge of your own anonymity.

—WSBC 2016

LOGO—USE BY SERVICE BODIES

Our intergroup wants to make a public information tablecloth for wellness fairs. Can we use the OA logo?

You may request permission to use the OA logo. Go to the [Copyrights Requests](#) page and download the “Permission to Use the OA Logo” form. Complete the form and send it to the WSO.

—WSBC 2014

MEAL PLANS—OA CHOICES

Why did OA do away with the grey sheet and orange sheet? Why don’t we have anything for whole food-based, plant-based, or vegan meal plans? Also, if three meals a day is the standard, why do we include four meals?

The pamphlet was reviewed and discussed by the Board of Trustees and the delegates at two World Service Business Conferences. The food plans were given to a professional nutritionist. The grey sheet was by far the most popular plan in the Fellowship. The high protein/low carb plan was the result of the suggestions made by the nutritionist to amend that food plan. This was based on what was considered to be reasonable at the time. It was determined that there were too many possibilities to then subdivide plans to accommodate vegan, food allergies and intolerances, medical requirements, etc. The thought was that any plan would be discussed with a health care professional and be adapted to individual needs. It was clear there was no appetite to return to the color chart of food plans (blue, orange, grey). The plans took into account three meals per day and an optional snack. Not everyone follows 3-0-1.

—WSBC 2019

MEETINGS—ACCEPTABLE LITERATURE FOR READING

At our January OA meeting, a member read from another Twelve-Step program’s daily reader. Another member felt that, while the information was pertinent for our discussion, it was inappropriate to use any literature other than OA-approved material. We took a group conscience but couldn’t decide on suggested guidelines for

literature at our meetings. Some felt all AA literature should be included; others felt that only literature specific to OA should be allowed. Please explain what the general guidelines are and why.

The following OA policies are found in the [Business Conference Policy Manual](#), which is given to each WSBC Delegate and posted on the WSBC page at oa.org. The policies listed below address the issue of outside literature.

“It is the group conscience of the 1993 World Service Business Conference that sale or display of literature other than OA-approved literature (as described in WSBC Policy 2010a) is an implied endorsement of outside enterprise and therefore in violation with Tradition Six” [1993b (amended 2010)].

“Statement on Approved Literature: In accordance with our Traditions, we suggest that OA groups maintain unity and honor our Traditions by using, selling and displaying only approved books and pamphlets at their meetings. This includes OA Conference- and Board-approved Literature; AA Conference-approved books, booklets, and all future editions thereof, with original edition copyright 2010 or earlier; and locally produced OA literature. Locally produced literature must be developed according to the [OA Guidelines for Locally Produced Literature](#), and should be used with the greatest discretion. Local literature should be considered temporary and discontinued when OA literature approved for general use is available to cover the topic” [2010a (amended 2012)].

You can find the complete list of OA-approved literature, including AA literature that is OA-approved, in the [OA-Approved Literature List](#) at oa.org.

—July 2014

MEETINGS—ADDRESSING A PROBLEMATIC ISSUE

I am on the board of our intergroup. I've just been told that a newcomer came to one of our meetings and nobody so much as said hello to her. When I visit that meeting, how should I address this? During the meeting? Privately? If so, who should I draw aside and when? Should I just write their rep a letter and hope they address it themselves? Or should I call their contact person? Please help me figure out what to do.

This is very unfortunate, especially for a newcomer or even an experienced member moving in from another area.

When I need to give “bad” news to a group or individual, I try always to remember several things. First, the actual circumstance may have been very different than was reported; to the people in the meeting, this instance may not have felt like deliberate snubbing or pointed unawareness. Most of the time, people do not intend to break Traditions, nor to form cliques that keep others out.

There would be a couple of ways to approach this. I think I would visit the business meeting. I would let the meeting know in advance that you wanted to speak with them about an issue and ask when their business meeting was. I would be careful to give them the benefit of the doubt. I might say that it was reported that a newcomer came and that no one spoke to her or helped her feel welcome; but *that I was NOT there*, so I really do not know what happened. I would ask if they were willing to try to create a stronger meeting by doing a group inventory (See the [Strong Meeting Checklist](#) and/or [Group Inventory](#)). I

would suggest that a couple of other people lead the group inventory and let them know I would also be willing to do so. The best attitude you can have is this: a snub may or may not have happened, but they can make their meeting stronger either way.

Another option would be to check on who attends the meeting and see if one or two of those members would be willing to introduce this concept of a group inventory to the meeting.

Much will depend on how the people in the meeting react. Some people seem to believe that their meeting is fine just the way it is, even when they are not welcoming—but many people would love to have a stronger meeting with more outreach and lots of newcomers. OA is a volunteer organization, and we really cannot force people to do it correctly. If the people there do not want to change, we can't make them do so.

If people in that specific meeting do not want to change the meeting, you might do an overall push from intergroup encouraging all meetings to conduct group inventories. Perhaps general peer pressure from other groups will get them to take a look at themselves. For more suggestions, see the [OA Handbook for Members, Groups and Service Bodies](#) (#120) for sale at bookstore.oa.org.

—WSBC 2015

MEETINGS—ADDRESSING OBJECTIONABLE BEHAVIOR

How should an OA member express objections to something that is happening in a meeting (e.g., when somebody talks too much or makes noise)? By making an announcement, taking a group conscience, or bringing up the issue in a business meeting?

Page 96 in the OA [Twelve and Twelve](#) asks the question “Does our group encourage members to speak briefly, or do we allow some to dominate discussions by speaking so much that others don't get their turns?” Many meetings have timekeepers. When the person's time is up, the timekeeper jangles keys or uses a timer sound on a smartphone. The leader of the meeting gently reminds those who continue to speak to wrap up their sharing. If a member is interrupting the meeting or making undue noise, the leader of the meeting will gently ask the person to stop.

As an initial step, raise your issues at a business meeting. The group conscience will decide whether or not to amend the meeting format and make an announcement. Before you do anything, it is always best to speak with your sponsor.

—WSBC 2015

NOTE: OA has another resource to consult: the [Guidelines for Addressing Disruptive Behavior Affecting Overeaters Anonymous Meetings](#).

MEETINGS—ANNOUNCEMENTS—APPROPRIATE CONTENT

Can anyone make any announcement at the close of a meeting? What if the service body has objections to it?

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This question requires more information. Is the announcement from an OA member and OA-related? Is the announcement personal? From the statement referring to the service body, it assumes that the service body is aware of the question and has reason to object to the announcement. If a person makes an announcement despite their service body's objections, anyone may ask that person to stop per Traditions Six and Ten.

—WSBC 2015

MEETINGS—CROSS TALK—GIVING FEEDBACK WHEN REQUESTED

During a group discussion about cross talk and feedback, I heard that years ago you could give feedback if someone requested it in a meeting. I had never heard of giving feedback in a meeting. What is OA protocol?

Years ago, we did give people feedback and do some cross talk, especially if people asked for it. We did not understand the importance of keeping the meeting a safe place for people to share without anything coming back at them. People even had discussions in a couple of meetings.

After attending OA meetings without cross talk for more than fifteen years, I attended a Twelve Step meeting that did not observe the tradition of 'no cross talk.' I remember feeling fear about sharing my emotional pain. I feared someone would try to tell me what to do or feel or that it was not okay to have my own ideas. Like many of us, I have had people in my past tell me what to feel or think.

Since my experience at that meeting, I have been a strong proponent of no cross talk in meetings. Having a place where it is my turn to say whatever works for me without other people telling me what they think is wonderful. Then I need to shut up and listen to what other members say, without judgment or comment. Sometimes people go overboard criticizing those who roll their eyes or nod their heads, which some members interpret as cross talk. I am grateful today that we discourage cross talk within the meetings. I love having this safe place to share.

An excellent statement on cross talk is in the [Suggested Meeting Format](#):

"Feedback, cross talk and advice-giving are discouraged here. Cross talk during an OA meeting is giving advice to others who have already shared, speaking directly to another person rather than to the group, and questioning or interrupting the person speaking/sharing at the time."

—December 2012

MEETINGS—DISPLAYING A PICTURE OF ROZANNE

May we put a framed picture of Rozanne on the wall of our meeting room now that she has passed away? If affirmative, would you give us a picture we could copy or print? (In most AA meetings, there are framed pictures of Bill W. and Dr. Bob on the meeting room walls.)

In OA we recommend that meetings honor the Traditions. Tradition Twelve suggests we focus on principles rather than personalities. I suggest the meetings study Tradition Twelve and then take a group conscience (Tradition Two) to decide if the

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meeting wants a photo of Rozanne displayed at the meeting. According to Tradition Four, the meeting has a right to make a choice for the meeting, as long as the choice doesn't affect OA as a whole.

If the meeting decides to have a photo on the wall, there is only one photo of Rozanne in the Archives at WSO, which may or may not work to be copied and printed. It may be possible for you to copy a frame from the video interview with Rozanne.

—WSBC 2015

MEETINGS—INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

I was depressed when I came into OA. It took me some time to realize I had a disease that centered in my mind. To make any progress, I found I had to change my way of thinking. I could not do that, only God could. Why don't I hear this in meetings at the WSBC?

Do you mean the various OA recovery meetings that took place at the WSBC or the debates and discussion of various issues before the WSBC? Actually, my answer is the same in either case. I too have sometimes thought I would like to hear more of X, Y, or Z in OA meetings. I feel it is God who puts those thoughts in my mind as a prompt, and that if I want to hear more of "whatever" in meetings, I can simply say whatever it is I want to hear. For example, if I want to hear more about abstinence in meetings, then maybe I need to pitch about abstinence. If I want to hear more about the Steps in meetings, then probably I need to pitch or talk about the Steps. If you want to hear more about God helping change our thinking, my suggestion is to talk about how this has happened for you.

—WSBC 2014

MEETINGS—LISTING—HYBRID GROUPS

Would it be possible for hybrid meetings to be listed as a separate entity on oa.org, just as we have separate listings for online meetings and face-to-face meetings?

The hybrid meetings are meetings that will appear on both the face-to-face meetings and virtual meetings (online or phone meetings) lists. A non-real-time meeting is not hybrid, but two separate meetings. Our purpose is to note that each meeting is a hybrid meeting. We thank you for the suggestion regarding hybrid meetings. The WSO staff and trustees are currently working on this. This could be an item in the advanced search (i.e., "Are you looking for hybrid meetings?").

—WSBC 2019

MEETINGS—MODIFYING LANGUAGE IN AA- AND OA-APPROVED LITERATURE

Is it a suggestion or a "must-do" that we not substitute the words "food" for "alcohol" and "compulsive overeater" for "alcoholic" when our OA meeting has a Big Book study?

OA's group conscience has decided we should read aloud only OA-approved literature at OA meetings. This includes OA Conference- and Board-approved Literature and AA Conference-approved Literature. Although OA has not reviewed and approved AA literature, we deem that their group conscience approved its contents. When we read AA literature and change the words, neither OA nor AA has approved that literature.

Ask-It Basket archive 2010 – 2019

At OA's founding, members asked permission from AA to modify its Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions for use in OA. AA graciously granted that permission. Those are the only things we have the authority to change. At OA's inception, no OA literature existed, so the Fellowship used AA's [Big Book](#) and the AA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. To better understand how AA concepts could apply to compulsive eating, members would often change the words when reading aloud from AA literature during meetings.

Today, AA World Service asks that we respect their literature and group conscience by reading their literature, such as the Big Book, as written, without changing the words. AA also asks that we read excerpts from their literature in context, which means that we read it from the actual literature as printed, not from a typed sheet of paper. Of course, when we share in meetings about the passages we read, we are free to share our experience, strength, and hope in our own terms related to compulsive eating. If we want to read only literature that uses terms related to food and compulsive eating, we have a wealth of OA literature from which to choose that doesn't require changing the words.

It is also common practice in some OA meetings to change the words of OA's Twelve Steps when reading them aloud. People replace "God" with "Higher Power" and "Him" with a gender-neutral term, and they add "we" at the beginning of all the Steps. When we make those changes, we are amending the Steps. Our [OA, Inc. Bylaws, Subpart B](#), Article XIV, Section 1 clearly spells out the amendment process. Amendments to the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions must be adopted by two-thirds of the delegates at the WSBC, and that vote must be ratified by three-fourths of the registered Overeaters Anonymous groups responding within six months of notification, provided at least 55 percent of the registered groups have responded. Clearly, no individual member, group, or OA service body can amend the Twelve Steps or Twelve Traditions by themselves because the Steps and Traditions belong to all of us.

One could argue that Tradition Four allows each group to do what it wants, as long as it doesn't affect other groups or OA as a whole. True, but we also have Tradition One: "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon OA unity." We have Tradition Two: "For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." Concept Two states, in part, "World Service Business Conference is the voice, authority, and effective conscience of OA as a whole."

If I insist upon changing the wording of OA or AA literature to suit myself, I am displaying the same selfishness and self-will that landed me in OA in the first place! As one trustee wrote, "From my vantage point and experience, there is a tendency to mold the OA program of recovery to the molds of individual members and their ways of doing things. I am reminded: if my way worked, I would not be in OA or need to be. Obviously, my way did not work. So I am quite willing to work on changing me, which is a challenge, and not try to revamp OA or AA to suit me. When a physician gives me a prescription for treatment of an illness, I am well advised not to make any attempts to rewrite it."

If I believe OA's literature needs to be amended, I am encouraged to participate in our collective group conscience by serving as a delegate to the WSBC. Failing that, I am committed to respecting the group conscience of both OA and AA by reading the literature as it is written, from the original source, without any creative editing on my part.

—March/April 2012

MEETINGS—NUMBER OF ATTENDEES WORLDWIDE

How do we know the number of individuals attending face-to-face meetings and virtual meetings?

It is difficult, if not impossible, to accurately say at any given time the number of people attending OA meetings, both face-to-face and virtual. The most recent count of OA meetings shows about 6,800 regular meetings, with about 600 of those virtual.

There are no comprehensive statistics on the numbers of people attending individual meetings regularly. OA does not have the resources to conduct ongoing research on this. We know from experience that numbers of attendees at all meetings vary. Using an average of twelve to twenty members per meeting, we could project between 80,000 and 100,000 members attending meetings worldwide. This approximation has no statistical value and can serve only as a very rough estimate.

While statistics on eating disorders vary widely regionally and in reliability, there seems to be agreement that in general populations around the world, between 2 and 3 percent suffer from binge eating disorder; in the range of 1 percent for anorexia (generally more prevalent among females); and bulimia directly affects about 1.5 percent of women and 0.5 percent of men in the US. A reasonable conclusion would be that at present only a tiny percentage of those suffering from eating disorders become part of OA and attend meetings regularly.

—WSBC 2018

MEETINGS—PATTERNED AFTER ALATEEN

Has OA ever investigated the practices of Alateen to see if we might pattern meetings and/or other support after them in order to address the needs of children, teens, and their families? With childhood obesity on the rise, this seems to be an area where we could and should reach out.

The short answer is no. It would not be productive to pattern meetings for very young members after Alateen for several reasons, including legal matters. We can only welcome those who qualify, regardless of age.

—WSBC 2019

MEETINGS—QUALITY

Do you have any specific suggestions on how to encourage a climate of recovery in our meetings (other than the [Suggested Meeting Format](#))? In many AA meetings, non-sober members are not allowed to share. OA favors giving a voice to everyone. Does this mean that sharing about a lack of abstinence is okay? Would it be okay to ask people their length of abstinence at the start, and for the speaker to then call on those with the longest abstinence to share first, before getting to non-abstinent members (if they share at all)?

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In strong meetings, members share things that give hope, and they share things we can all identify with. I think this creates a “climate of recovery.”

Some meetings have a group conscience and decide to suggest that members have a certain length of abstinence before they share. According to Tradition Four, groups are autonomous, so they can do this. However, Tradition Three says, “The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop eating compulsively.” This means that groups cannot require members to be abstinent in order to speak.

I have been encouraged to begin my shares by “identifying.” That means saying how long I have been in program, how long I have been abstinent, how long I’ve been at my healthy body weight, and how much weight I have lost or gained to get to a healthy body weight. Saying this gives hope that recovery is possible. I believe that sharing this information at the beginning of my share is a good thing.

Sometimes newcomers may be better able to relate to someone who is newly abstinent rather than longtimers who may have forgotten what it used to be like.

As you mentioned, the [Suggested Meeting Format](#) is a good guideline to help achieve a climate of recovery. I’ll quote a few suggestions from that format:

“SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR SHARING: As you share your experience and strength in OA, please also share your hope. Please confine your sharing to your experience with the disease of compulsive eating, the solution offered by OA, and your own recovery from the disease, rather than just the events of the day or week. If you are having difficulties, share how you use the program to deal with them. If you need to talk more about your difficulties and seek solutions, we suggest you speak to your sponsor and other members after the meeting.”

Some of us say, “Share the message at the meeting and the mess with your sponsor.” Others say, “We ask for ‘positive pitches’ or strongly suggest that non-abstinent people close their mouths and open their ears and minds.” Sharing that you are having trouble becoming abstinent is one thing, but bragging about it and expecting sympathy is not positive or helpful to the meeting. The intent is to let the recovery solution come forth from within the group, rather than let time go towards listing the problems of addiction, which other members in pain already know too well. Again, the [Suggested Meeting Format](#) offers good guidelines:

“Feedback, cross talk and advice-giving are discouraged here. Cross talk during an OA meeting is giving advice to others who have already shared, speaking directly to another person rather than to the group, and questioning or interrupting the person speaking or sharing at the time.

We ask everyone to respect our group conscience. This meeting has decided that the chair for each meeting has the discretion to suggest to anyone sharing that he or she is off topic or is speaking too long. This meeting asks you to accept this suggestion in order to keep the meeting on track.”

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[We suggest you add here any other guidelines your group conscience has decided to follow.]

This means that the meeting leader should kindly try to get the meeting back on track if a newcomer shares too long or goes too far off track. We have all suffered from “terminal uniqueness” when we first came into the rooms (and many of us have control issues too).

Some groups decide to use a timer for shares. This is a non-judgmental way to help limit any shares that may go off track. Many meetings go around the circle with shares so everyone gets a chance. This makes everyone feel welcome. I think this is a better way than having the speaker choose who gets to speak next.

Allowing a newcomer to speak can help them realize they are not alone, and it helps us all remember what we used to be like. Many newcomers will be disheartened if they are not allowed to share. They are “home,” and we should try to make them feel that way.

The [Strong Meeting Checklist](#) says just that. Are we welcoming? Do we follow a format? Do we hold a regular group conscience meeting? Do we avoid cross talk and advice giving?

—WSBC 2014

MEETINGS—REGISTRATION—HYBRID GROUPS

Is the board planning to look into whether meetings such as hybrid groups can be registered twice? Is that legal?

This is a new type of meeting, and there will have to be time and thought given to how it will be managed within our bylaws. The Board of Trustees will be discussing this issue at subsequent meetings, but the BOT cannot decide for all of OA about how to handle such meetings and their representation. You are welcome to introduce a motion for next year’s WSBC to bring this to the group conscience of OA as a whole.

—WSBC 2018

MEETINGS—SPECIAL-FOCUS—ABOUT

I am a woman, and a man asked me to help him with his food. I told him to try to find a man’s help, but he said his neighborhood only has women’s meetings. I have been in program thirty-seven years, and I don’t understand the different special-focus meetings, such as Anorexic/Bulimic, Men’s, and so on. Is having a women’s meeting permissible?

The gentleman’s statement may pertain to a women’s special-focus group or to his own personal observations. Special-focus meetings (a women’s special-focus group, for example) fit within OA’s primary purpose of carrying the message to the still-suffering compulsive overeater. These meetings may register as Overeaters Anonymous groups. The qualifications and definition of a group are listed in [OA Bylaws, Subpart B](#):

Section 2 – Qualifications:

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Any person may become a member of Overeaters Anonymous who has a desire to stop eating compulsively.

Article V – Overeaters Anonymous Groups Section 1 – Definition

These points shall define an Overeaters Anonymous group:

- As a group, they meet to practice the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, guided by the Twelve Concepts of OA Service.
- All who have the desire to stop eating compulsively are welcome in the group.
- No member is required to practice any actions in order to remain a member or to have a voice (share at a meeting).
- As a group they have no affiliation other than Overeaters Anonymous.
- It has affiliated as an Overeaters Anonymous group by registering with the World Service Office.

Otherwise the gentleman might just live in an area where the members attending the local meetings are predominantly women. Some members travel outside their local area in order to find a group that better meets their diverse recovery needs/wants. Attending special OA events, such as conventions, retreats, and marathons often provides an opportunity to meet members from different areas.

—May 2012

MEETINGS—SPECIAL-FOCUS—BARIATRIC SURGERY

I would like to ask the Board of Trustees to restore “Bariatric Surgery” as an option for special-focus meetings.

A little background is necessary to understand the context of this request. When an OA meeting is newly registered, or when an existing meeting changes, the contact person for that meeting enters appropriate information on the oa.org [Find a Meeting](#) page. Information required includes meeting time, location, and language, and an option is available to identify the meeting as a special-focus meeting. Until late 2016, “Bariatric Surgery” was one of the options available, along with “100-Pounders,” “Anorexia/Bulimia,” “Black,” “Gay/Lesbian/Bi/Trans,” “Health Issues,” “Lesbian,” “Men,” “Women,” “Women’s Anorexia/Bulimia,” and “Young Persons.”

On November 19, 2016, the Board of Trustees passed a business motion to remove “Bariatric Surgery” from among the options. This was the reason given: “While it is understood that many OA members have had bariatric surgery, whether or not a member has had the procedure [is] an outside issue to recovery in Overeaters Anonymous.” At the time, there were only two “Bariatric Surgery” special-focus meetings registered with the World Service Office. It was pointed out that these meetings could be registered under “Health Issues,” just like meetings dealing with diabetes or heart disease. In addition, there is a “Meeting Notes” space for each registered meeting where the contact person can enter appropriate, detailed information about that meeting. Nothing precludes any contact person from putting in notes about bariatric surgery. The fewer special-focus and special-

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topic categories OA has, reasoned the Board of Trustees, the more we can focus on our common issues rather than our differences.

OA's [Business Conference Policy Manual](#), representing the group conscience of OA, passed the following policy motion: (1994b, amended 2008):

The Fellowship of Overeaters Anonymous recognizes the existence of special-focus meetings (i.e., gay and lesbian meetings, women's meetings, men's meetings, 100-pounders, maintainers, old timers, and people of various cultural backgrounds, etc.) which have been formed of persons who can more readily identify with fellow OA members with similar attributes. According to the Traditions, bylaws, and policies of OA, the only requirement for membership is the desire to stop eating compulsively. We ask each person attending a meeting to respect and consider the group conscience. All registered meetings shall welcome and give a voice to any person who has the desire to stop eating compulsively.

This policy motion affirms the fact that some members find it easier to identify with persons who have similar attributes; it requests that anyone attending such a meeting respect and consider the desire of those who formed the meeting to encourage that identification; and also requests that all meetings give voice to anyone who wishes to attend and share, regardless of whether that person has the same attributes. There is a balancing of interests in this motion—the need to allow people to identify among themselves alongside the need to allow individual members to feel welcome at any meeting.

The Board of Trustees' decision to remove "Bariatric Surgery" from among the options affects only the way such meetings are listed by the World Service Office on the oa.org [Find a Meeting](#) page and in correspondence. It does not, nor can it, prohibit any meeting from designating its own special focus, or any intergroup or region from listing that special focus, even if that focus is not listed on oa.org. Nor does it prevent adding a particular group's special interest in "Meeting Notes."

Given that this is a request to the Board of Trustees, it will be considered by the BOT at one of their upcoming informal meetings; it will be noted whether the consensus that supported removing the "Bariatric Surgery" option continues to exist.

—WSBC 2017

MEETINGS—SPECIAL-FOCUS/TOPIC—MEETING FORMAT

I'm visiting from Europe and wondering how special interest groups in the USA run their meetings.

Tradition Four states, "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole." Each group is free to find the meeting format that best suits the needs of the group. Most OA groups use or adapt the [Suggested Meeting Format](#). In addition to the Suggested Meeting Format, other meeting formats in the documents section that are likewise used (and adapted as needed) include [Lifeline Meeting Format](#), [Newcomer Meeting Guidelines and Format](#), [Recovery From Relapse Meeting](#)

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[Format](#), [Suggested Young Person's Meeting Format](#), [Suggested Step-Study Meeting Format](#), and [Suggested Telephone Meeting Format](#).

—WSBC 2014

MEETINGS—SPECIAL-FOCUS—RELIGION

Some at my church are interested in starting an OA meeting. I know OA supports a God of our own understanding, and I don't want to change that. However, would there be harm in a Christian meeting at my church open to everyone, even if they don't have the same faith? I've noticed online Christian groups and other special-interest groups. Also, would there be a problem using the Lord's Prayer in closing? If we aren't a registered OA meeting, would using OA materials for this purpose be harmful?

This is not the first time starting a meeting with a special focus on a particular religion has come up. Meetings that focus on members' special needs are acceptable and in harmony with the Traditions. Special-focus meetings are an opportunity for members who share a life issue in addition to compulsive overeating to come together. Young people, gay and lesbian members, and members in relapse are some examples. But meetings focused on outside issues such as alcoholism or specific religions would not be acceptable special-focus meetings or in harmony with Tradition Six.

Page 12 of the *OA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition*, says, "OA only suggests that we remain open to spiritual growth and show tolerance for others by neither criticizing nor promoting specific religious doctrines in OA meetings." Even with a disclaimer, Christ-based sharing in an OA meeting could imply an OA endorsement of Christian religions.

It is helpful to remember that OA exists because various religious organizations were unable to free their practitioners from the chains of our disease. To use OA meetings to support the practices of specific religions is to fail to recognize the unique message of OA, which is available to people of any religious persuasion.

Using the Lord's Prayer to close an OA meeting is a matter of group conscience. It is helpful to remember that, because the Lord's Prayer is associated with specific religious beliefs, it can be a barrier to unity for those who are not affiliated with those religions. Our First Tradition tells us our recovery depends on OA unity, and any action that threatens that unity threatens our recovery. Thus the 1993 WSBC, as the group conscience for OA as a whole, voted to suggest OA meetings and events close with the Serenity Prayer, the Seventh-Step Prayer, the Third-Step Prayer from the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, or the OA Promise "I Put My Hand in Yours." (See "[Prayers and Meditation](#)" at oa.org.)

I live in an area where one religious preference is dominant. We are careful to keep our shared faith out of our OA meetings. It does not matter that we are all members of the same religion and no one present would object. Outside the meetings, we are free to talk of how our religion impacts our recovery and vice versa.

The online Christian groups you mention fall into this category. These are not registered OA meetings. They are informal groups that have gathered together in order to share recovery in terms of their religion. These groups are free to use OA material if they choose, as long as they honor copyright laws.

—June 2014

MEETINGS—SPECIAL-FOCUS—WHO CAN ATTEND

The general practice in my religious tradition is that women don't share personal experiences with men (except their fathers, husbands, and sons). When a man joins our meeting, which began with only women, it can cause conflict. Is it appropriate under the OA Traditions to have meetings limited to women only?

We understand and empathize with your group. According to the Twelve Traditions, OA Bylaws, and OA policies, the only requirement for OA membership is the desire to stop eating compulsively. OA asks, but does not require, members to honor the focus of special-focus meetings.

All registered meetings welcome and give a voice to any person who has the desire to stop eating compulsively. At the time of registration, OA asks meetings to abide by the complete definition of an OA group. One aspect of that definition is that all who have the desire to stop eating compulsively are welcome. (See [Overeaters Anonymous Bylaws, Subpart B](#), Article V, Section 1: Overeaters Anonymous Groups Definition.)

If a non-disruptive man genuinely wishes to attend any OA meeting, you cannot ask him to leave, but you can register your meeting as a special-focus “Women’s Meeting,” which makes the meeting’s intent clear.

—July 2012

MEETINGS—TIME LIMITS ON SHARING

I released 50 pounds (23 kg) when I joined OA, but then I had a slip. The two- to three-minute maximum share time at meetings meant I couldn't share enough to get the group's unconditional support. Tradition Five talks about mutual support, but this meeting has none because we're not allowed to spill our guts and get the support of twenty people instead of just our sponsors. Help!

A group is a gathering of members in varying degrees of serenity, pain, or distress who come together to receive and carry the message of recovery. Two to three minutes is a good amount of time within which to ask members with physical, emotional, and spiritual availability to come forward after the meeting to give unconditional support for the next hour, day, night, or week.

Without timed sharing, a few individuals may corner the meeting’s asset (time). For every ten- or fifteen-minute share given to the extent of one person’s burning desire, four others would have to give up their share time. While it might feel supportive to the person sharing, this practice may not be of mutual support to the members whose time would be taken.

Unwritten traditions exist that are as sane and sound as the Twelve Traditions. One of these is to “bring our message to the meeting and our mess to our sponsor.” The program encourages us to reach out for our sponsor’s strength and guidance when we are stuck in our recovery. Sometimes we must unburden ourselves within the group, lest we leave the meeting and binge or do worse to ourselves. As group members, we are entitled to unburden ourselves. Experience suggests members should do this infrequently, and

qualifiers should do this rarely, if ever, since the qualifier's role is to carry the message of recovery. When the qualifier "spills" rather than shares experience, strength, and hope, this can be disheartening to a group and individuals seeking recovery at the meeting.

In a room full of positive pitches, one or two pitches may express palpable pain and a heartfelt need to speak. A two- to three-minute share reaching out for help alerts members with sufficient recovery to reach back to the member outside the group setting to offer the understanding, empathy, and unconditional support that that member requires.

—September/October 2011

MEETINGS—USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES

In some meetings, newcomers use electronic devices such as smartphones and computers to take notes. Someone unfamiliar with smartphones might think a person was sending text messages nonstop. I understand the use of these devices for note taking is a group-conscience decision, but has the BOT addressed this issue? Comfort levels differ in the use of these devices, and members using them appear fragile. Do you have any suggestions?

To my knowledge, the BOT has not discussed the subject of using handheld devices during OA meetings. You are correct when you say the decision to allow their use in meetings is a matter of group conscience. Much of our OA literature is now available for use on computers and other devices, and electronic devices are becoming more and more common for reading and writing.

Quite a few activities could be considered either innocuous or distracting in meetings: taking notes with a pencil and paper; knitting; eating; or bringing a cute, sleeping newborn. As is the case with any issue, the first step is for the distracted member to explain in private his or her concerns to the member causing the distraction.

In the example you described, the issue could first be discussed in private, giving the newcomer a chance to clarify whether he or she is using the device to take notes. If the members cannot resolve it in private, the next step would be to discuss the issue during a group-conscience meeting.

In one meeting I attended, a member had a laptop and was furiously typing. The members of this group did not appear to be bothered by her rude and disruptive behavior, which annoyed me. Then I realized the person next to her was deaf. This member was typing the shares for the deaf member to read so she could be part of the meeting. What a wonderful service this member was giving! Initial perceptions can be inaccurate. A mention during announcement time could help clarify matters in such a situation.

Though using electronic devices to take notes during meetings is a minor concern, you may find that an excellent document titled [*Guidelines for Addressing Disruptive Behavior Affecting Overeaters Anonymous Meetings*](#) could help your group address this and other issues.

—July 2013

MEETINGS—VIRTUAL AND ONLINE—TRADITIONS AND LITERATURE

Do Google meetings or other online meetings follow some rules/Traditions? Is it allowed to upload (on the online meeting) OA literature? Other literature?

Thank you for the question about aligning online meetings with the OA Traditions. Any registered OA meeting agrees as a group to meet to practice the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of OA guided by the Twelve Concepts of OA Service, whether in a face-to-face or virtual format. The Traditions are designed to keep meetings on track, functioning in such a way as to nurture the recovery of all compulsive eaters who seek help in this Fellowship.

OA has an [OA-Approved Literature List](#) that clearly spells out which literature is appropriate for use in meetings so OA groups may maintain unity and honor our Traditions. That being said, there is another issue of how much of this literature may be uploaded for display at an online OA meeting.

OA does not have a written policy that covers this use of OA literature specifically. However, OA does have specific copyright policies—review them at the [“Copy Requests” page](#) on oa.org. In part, this page states that all registered OA groups and service bodies have permission to reprint any OA material currently on the OA website (downloadable PDF files or text), including the following material, without submitting a written request to WSO:

- The Twelve Steps of OA
- The Twelve Traditions of OA
- The Twelve Concepts of OA Service
- The OA Preamble
- The OA Promise “I Put My Hand in Yours”
- The Responsibility Pledge
- *Fifteen Questions*
- *About OA*
- “Welcome Home,” from [Taste of Lifeline](#), pp. xiii–xvi
- Excerpts copied from service manuals by trustees and chairs in order to perform their service duties
- OA material currently posted on the OA website
- Articles appearing in [Lifeline](#), *A Step Ahead*, and the *Professional Community Courier* (for limited group and personal use)

In general, OA has not in the past given permission to OA members/groups/service bodies to reprint entire pieces of literature (like loops quoting the daily readings in [For Today](#) or [Voices of Recovery](#)) because that would discourage members from purchasing the books and thus would interfere with OA’s ability to be self-supporting through its literature sales. So if an online group plans to use photocopies of literature in an online meeting, they should submit a [Reprint Request Form](#) explaining the use and the reason. The Chair of the Board of Trustees will decide if it is appropriate, based on whether the material in which the reprint will appear accurately reflects OA’s mission and is in OA’s best interest.

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If you feel that this is too restrictive and interferes with an online group's ability to fully function, contact the Virtual Services Trustee through the WSO to discuss the idea of amending OA's copyright policy.

—WSBC 2015

MEETINGS—WRITING DURING

During a spiritual meeting, how do you handle members writing on paper? Is it against the Twelfth Tradition?

Taking notes during meetings is not against our Traditions. If this spiritual meeting includes spiritual guidance and meditation, other members might be disturbed by papers being shuffled during quiet times. Our First Tradition states, "Our common welfare should come first;" that does not mean my common welfare (or any individual's). It might be a good idea to bring this issue up in a group conscience context at a business meeting. As always in our program, everyone has a voice—and substantial unanimity decides.

—WSBC 2017

MEMBERS—CYCLE OF ADDICTION

I would like to ask about the cycle of addiction. Before considering feelings, should we consider the thoughts that generate feelings that can lead us to obsession and the first compulsive bite?

Do thoughts inspire emotions or do emotions set off thoughts? Is that first compulsive bite a response to a thought or an emotion or both? I suspect the distinction between these two is small, if it exists at all. For myself, I think I feel something before I think about it. I believe you are free to define your own personal cycle of addiction that explains how you experience your disease.

—WSBC 2016

MEMBERS—DEFINITION OF OA BIRTHDAY

When does an OA birthday start? Is it at the time a person joins OA and admits he or she is powerless over food? Or is it when the person becomes abstinent? I have been told yes or no for both times. Please clarify.

This is not an easy question to answer. Many of us received similar questions. Some members consider their OA birthday the day they first attended an OA meeting; others consider it to be when they acknowledge Step One applies to them; and still others use the date their abstinence began.

If the intention of an OA birthday is to show others the program really works and to recognize the achievement of the celebrant, then the preferred choice would be to use the date his or her continuous abstinence began. Demonstrating that the program works is

important. A member who is in the throes of his or her disease and chooses to celebrate an anniversary does not achieve this purpose.

The Fourth Tradition, which is about the Principle of autonomy, implies that each of us has the freedom to choose the definition of our own OA birthday. It is preferable that OA members celebrating their OA birthday clarify what they mean: the anniversary of that member's first meeting, the acceptance of Step One in the member's life, or the date their continuous abstinence began. Many OA members choose to celebrate their abstinence birthday, which demonstrates that the program works when you work it.

—January 2010

MEMBERS—DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

What can we do with members who display such disruptive behavior that they frighten other members into leaving the group? These members have no sponsors and refuse to cooperate—what can we do when everything we tried has not worked?

Unfortunately, this sort of situation crops up on occasion. Members don't get well instantly.

Although having a sponsor is very helpful in these situations, having a sponsor is not required for membership in OA. Tradition Three tells us, "Nobody is expelled from OA for not working the Steps, not getting a sponsor, not respecting the Traditions, or not adopting the Tools and practices many of us employ" ([*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition*](#), p. 108).

It appears that two Traditions (One and Three) contradict each other here. In some cases, we may need to choose which has priority. Ideally, we might be able to find some way we can honor both Traditions at the same time. Tradition One tells us that the survival of the group has to come first, because without the meeting, other members will lose the opportunity to recover. Tradition Three tells us to welcome everyone who wants to stop eating compulsively. All members can work the program as they choose—but this does not come at the expense of the OA group.

The first consideration is the good of the Fellowship and its survival. While each member has the freedom to work the program as he or she chooses, that freedom may not come at the expense of the OA group. If a member's actions are disruptive or dangerous, the OA group needs to protect itself. If it doesn't, the meeting may fold, and everyone will lose the opportunity for recovery.

Groups and members may always refer to the "Guidelines" page at oa.org/guidelines to read or download OA's [*Guidelines for Addressing Disruptive Behavior Affecting Overeaters Anonymous Meetings*](#).

—WSBC 2016

MEMBERS—DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR—INTERPERSONAL ABUSE

I am a longtime member of OA. Another slightly longer-time member has had issues with me for twenty years. Every four to five years she is unable to restrain herself from touching me in a sensuous way (i.e., slapping my hand, whispering comments in my ear, throwing objects at me, and, most recently, grabbing the side of my head to pull

me closer so that she can whisper in my ear despite my resistance). Each time, I told her not to touch me again or not to do that and she apologized, and it stopped for a while. This last time, I made the mistake of asking if we needed to talk and ended up hearing a long list of my perceived misdeeds, some from over a decade ago! When I protested her judgment/criticism as being too onerous and suggested bullying, she scoffed. I mentioned a fear that she might be waiting for me in the parking lot with a gun and she said, "Do you know how many times I've had a gun pointed in my face?" So, she seems unreasonable and unstable to me and I haven't felt like I can be safe to share in a meeting with her. But she goes to ALL the local meetings and will not agree to not attend even one. I have prayed over it, talked to sponsor, and written Steps, but cannot escape her presence. What do I do?

The situation you describe sounds very uncomfortable, especially having happened several times over the past twenty years. You mention that after all your Step work you "cannot escape her presence." The Serenity Prayer would suggest that the alternative would be to accept her presence, but I see from what you write that you feel unsafe around her, and that puts your attendance at your local OA meetings in jeopardy.

If you truly fear for your safety or your life, I encourage you to remove yourself from any meeting she attends, notify the meeting of the situation, and contact the police. Police are trained to deal with such cases. Based on your sense of this person as disruptive, your groups could consider how to apply OA's [Guidelines for Addressing Disruptive Behavior Affecting OA Meetings](#) to the situation, remembering to place principles above personalities and maintain the anonymity of others. Note, however, that our Tradition of anonymity (Tradition Twelve) should never be used to cover up unsafe behavior of any kind. I understand that you've done a lot of work on this already, but I'm wondering if you've used the [Conflict Resolution Worksheet](#) to reflect on and document your work. Given that you cannot change her, I would encourage you to explore things you can change. If you feel unsafe at your local OA meetings, you could attend meetings further away from your home that she does not attend. Or you could attend different types of OA virtual meetings—phone meetings, online meetings, or non-real-time meetings. All these types of meetings can be found on our Find a Meeting feature at oa.org. Or, you can call or meet OA friends and have brief OA meetings one-on-one—it only takes two! I pray that you find peace in your OA meetings.

—WSBC 2019

MEMBERS—GOSSIP

How can we encourage each other to not gossip at Conference (or any other time)?

It's a seemingly innocent question—yet this is so crucial to the existence and integrity of Overeaters Anonymous. Anonymity, both a Tradition and a Tool, is essential at any OA meeting. Every member, newcomer or returning, needs to feel protected and safe from gossip in OA. Knowing that what is being shared in confidence will be respected and remain private results in members sharing more deeply, leading to recovery. Without that safeguard, members are reluctant to share freely.

How to prevent gossip? First, it might be listed in the [Suggested Meeting Format](#).

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Some meetings say, “Who you see here, what you hear here, let it stay here.” Some meetings state the importance of anonymity, reminding those present of its importance. Newcomers might have no understanding of anonymity and freedom from gossip. These concepts can be explained while newcomers are being greeted and given [newcomer literature](#).

If someone is known to be gossiping, a longtimer might call or speak privately with that person and explain the importance of anonymity. Sponsors can and should be excellent resources for explaining and upholding anonymity, discussing different instances of anonymity with each and every sponsee.

Gossiping destroys trust and discourages people from sharing. Anonymity builds trust, shows caring, and demonstrates respect for individuals and for issues being shared. As our Twelfth Tradition states, “Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all these Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.”

—WSBC 2017

MEMBERS—ENCOURAGING LONGTIMERS TO ATTEND MEETINGS

Please suggest ways to incentivize longtimers to attend meetings and thus provide hope to the newer members.

We all need to reach out to members—longtimers and new members alike—and encourage attendance at OA meetings. The 2009 WSBC adopted that: December 12 (12/12) each year be designated as OA’s International Twelfth Step Within Day. In some areas, the twelfth day of every month is their own Twelfth Step Within Day. Yet any day is a wonderful day to reach out. We are all encouraged to reach out to members within the Fellowship. We all need to be models and examples of reaching out. If we haven't seen someone in a long time, we can and should call them or send an email or text. If someone crosses your mind—do the same. A [Group Inventory](#) might be helpful. Together we can. We all need to do our part.

—WSBC 2015

MEMBERS—OA BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION COINS—APPROVAL FOR CHANGES

Was there ever a coin celebrating ten minutes of OA abstinence? A fellow in our Region Two intergroup said she got one about thirty-six years ago (1982) that had the OA logo on it. So, if one was approved then, does there need to be another approval process now? I ask because a fellow in our intergroup is all excited about updating (modernizing) the “wow factor” of our coins by acknowledging specific lengths of abstinence. Is there someone she can contact? What is the process?

Thank you for asking questions regarding recovery coins. No, there has never been an OA-approved 10-minute coin. As you indicated in your question, in about 1982 there was a locally produced 10-minute coin that had an unauthorized use of the OA logo on it. A few years ago, an OA member in Region Two produced some similar 10-minute coins, but approval to use the OA logo was not requested. Instead, the local source chose to print the Serenity Prayer on the back of the coin.

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You asked if there needs to be another approval process now. The answer is that any use of the OA logo does have to be approved through the WSO, and any registered group or service body can apply to customize and use a version of the logo. Essentially, you create a customized logo by including the name of the requesting service body under the existing OA logo, then seek approval to use it. Please see oa.org/site-map and click “[Copyright Requests](#)” to visit the page that has all the necessary details and forms.

OA does produce specific recovery [coins](#) for each of these years: 1-20, 25, 30, 35, and 40 (Business Policy Manual 2008f). Please know that OA has a solution for your member’s interest in being able to acknowledge any length of abstinence.

Please also be aware that OA has a document called [Guidelines for Locally Produced Literature](#) that contains detailed information on how to produce literature and other products that meet the needs of your group or service body.

—WSBC 2018

MEMBERS—OA BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION COINS—CUSTOMIZING FOR LONGTIMERS *Is it possible to create tokens to celebrate more than forty years of abstinence, especially since the OA program is going to turn 60?*

Actually, this issue has already been mentioned within the board and will hopefully be discussed at the August Board of Trustees meeting. What must be determined is the project’s feasibility, considering unit cost, sale price, and postage and handling. However, there is already a viable solution in the OA bookstore!

The [Anniversary Medallion](#) (#4800-CN) is a beautiful medallion with a bright finish. “Overeaters Anonymous” is on one side and an OA promise on the other; there’s also space to engrave length of abstinence or an OA birthday. This coin can be engraved to mark not only forty-five-, fifty-, and fifty-five-year anniversaries, but also anniversaries of those in-between years, such as twenty-six, twenty-seven, twenty-eight, and so on. Find this lovely medallion at the [oa.org bookstore](#).

—WSBC 2016

MEMBERS—OA BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION COINS—CUSTOMIZING YEARS *We would very much like to have OA coins available to celebrate every year of abstinence, not just every five. Is it possible? If not, why not? It is important to acknowledge and celebrate every year.*

This issue has been discussed with the Board of Trustees and the World Service Office Publications Manager. After researching the cost per unit and the sale price (including postage and handling), it was decided that OA, Inc. would not earn enough return on money spent—the cost was too high. The WSO does not receive enough inquiries for these items to justify buying and maintaining a stock; therefore, the Board of Trustees decided it would not be a good use of OA funds.

However, there is already a viable option in the OA bookstore: item #4800-CN, the [Anniversary Medallion](#). This celebration coin can be personalized for anybody. It has

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“Overeaters Anonymous” engraved on one side and an OA promise on the other, and, best of all, has space to engrave years of abstinence or any other OA birthday. Look for #4800-CN at bookstore.oa.org.

—WSBC 2017

MEMBERS—OBESITY IN RECOVERY

In my group, there are several people who talk up the Steps, Traditions, and abstinence—but also are very obese. This has been going on for more than twenty years. One of them doesn’t ever talk about food. They are all very involved in recovery. Is there anything I can do, besides pray, to change the situation? I believe they are abstinent but am sure they just eat the wrong foods. It is not my idea of what the program teaches us.

The best thing we can do—in all things—is be the best example we can be. We each define our own abstinence. We each work our program in our own way with the help of a sponsor and a Higher Power. We can pray for others and for our groups, but the results are out of our hands. At times I also like to remind myself of Step One. If I’ve truly accepted that my own life has become unmanageable, I can’t possibly know what’s best for others.

—WSBC 2016

MEMBERS—SHARING—NAMING RELIGIOUS LEADERS

At some face-to-face and phone meetings, members sometimes share enthusiastically and at length about their religious leaders by specific names other than “God” and “HP.” Is this a breach of any Tradition? How might a moderator discourage this sharing, if indeed it is inappropriate?

I looked through the Traditions and could not find one that applied. I like to think of our members as loving and tolerant, as it says in the [Big Book](#). If the member is not quoting some outside literature, but just enthusiastically describing their own Higher Power, they are not dishonoring any OA Tradition. If you find a problem with their content or their enthusiasm, ask for a group conscience and see what other members think.

—WSBC 2018

MEMBERS—TIME FOR SERVICE AND STEP WORK

How much time do you think a member should dedicate to service in order to be healthy and balanced? How do I reconcile OA work with my family, my friends, my job, and my exercise?

What healthy and balanced service looks like for each OA member is personal: it depends on individual circumstances and how the service impacts life’s manageability.

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Tradition Four reminds us to strike a healthy balance between responsibility for ourselves and responsibility to each other.

My first and best service is to get and stay abstinent. I must keep my abstinence first, or I will lose what I love and the gifts I've been given. Doing what I need to do regarding a plan of eating and working the Steps to keep spiritually fit is my top priority. After that, I look to things that support my recovery, like sponsoring and doing service at my meetings. I have been taught that if I want to keep what I've been given, I need to give it away.

Your question suggests you may feel like an over-doer or an under-doer when it comes to service. Talking to a sponsor who knows your recovery, family, and work life may be helpful in creating a Service Action Plan to set a sane and sound ideal for service. If your service commitments are making your life (or the lives of the people who rely on you) unmanageable, perhaps it is time to try something different. If you have time in your life to give more, ask for the support of your family and friends, taking their needs into consideration, then volunteer for something that fits your availability.

OA's Responsibility Pledge states "Always to extend the hand and heart of OA to all who share my compulsion; for this I am responsible." There are many ways, large and small, for an OA member to do service. I'm sure if you look within and ask for help, you will find the healthy, balanced service that suits you and your personal situation.

—February 2016

O-ANON—SEPARATE FELLOWSHIP

What is the history of O-Anon? Does it still exist? If so, is it a separate entity of OA (like Al-Anon is to AA)?

O-Anon still exists as a separate fellowship. For more information, go to their website: o-anon.org.

—WSBC 2015

OUTSIDE ISSUES—BODY MASS INDEX

Does OA take the position that the BMI is an accurate measure indicating healthy body size? I ask because it is referenced in the new [Overeaters Anonymous, Third Edition](#), Appendix B, as statistical data in a footnote.

As stated in Tradition Ten, "Overeaters Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues." The footnote is from statistically respectable organizations and journals and is meant to provide more recent data since the statistics quoted in [Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition](#) (Appendix B, "A Disease of the Mind," p. 234) were from 1980.

—WSBC 2014

OUTSIDE ISSUES—MEDICATION USE

An OA member with longtime recovery and abstinence has had emotional problems and is taking medications by choice. At meetings she shares that her large weight loss is because of the medications, which cause an inability to eat. She is very thin. I feel the

OA message is lost when members talk about anti-anxiety and depression pills. Once someone said, "I think I need that, too." Is mentioning medication a break of our OA Traditions?

Medication use is an outside issue. As such, OA doesn't have an opinion on it. The member in question is sharing her story, which includes her choice to take medication (presumably at the guidance of health professionals). The [Suggested Meeting Format](#) includes the following disclaimer to prevent member confusion between a personal share and OA's opinion: "The opinions expressed here today are those of individual OA members and do not represent OA as a whole."

A greater issue may exist here. It is unclear whether this individual is proposing the use of these medications for others and for weight loss. She may be sharing her concern in OA meetings about her inability to eat and the resultant weight loss. Others see only her weight loss and are envious, whereas the weight loss is actually a medical and health problem for her. It may be good to approach the member with a spirit of love and concern, supporting her in what may be a difficult time. Part of the conversation could be a discussion of Tradition Ten.

—January 2011

PHYSICAL RECOVERY—CONCERNS ABOUT OTHER MEMBERS

I believe we each determine our own abstinence. Do you think that is sick? Can we challenge people who are obviously still over- or underweight after several years of serving as a delegate to the WSBC?

This is really a difficult to answer, and I am not sure I have the right answer. We need to be very careful when we judge and approach another member about their body size. Individually, we may approach a delegate who we think is still over- or underweight after several years as a delegate to the WSBC. Approaching privately is the loving and kind way to handle this situation. If you are concerned, ask if everything is okay and listen to the answer. Remember, a healthy body weight is a medical issue and not ours to determine.

—WSBC 2014

PHYSICAL RECOVERY—GROWTH OF FELLOWSHIP

OA is not growing because the current OA service structure members are not displaying sufficient physical recovery. Can't the trustees find the answer?

[This Ask-It Basket submission has been abbreviated to suit this format.]

Our primary purpose is to abstain from compulsive eating and to carry the message of recovery through the Twelve Steps of OA to those who still suffer.

I agree the problem with obesity is growing. That is why we are redoubling our efforts to get the message out. The board has a three-year strategic plan that is intended to address this problem and encourage more recovery in meetings. The message must filter through service bodies and groups, but most importantly, from sponsors to sponsees.

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Both the BOT and many of the region boards have physical recovery requirements, which are met.

When I came into program twenty-five years ago, I wanted to be thin in the worst way. I thought that would solve all my problems. My sponsor said to me, “Thin is not necessarily well.” I thought she was crazy—thin was well! After twenty-five years in program, I finally know what she meant. This is a threefold disease. Yes, physical recovery is the attraction. But I can be thin on a diet. The emotional and spiritual parts are my program of recovery. They teach me to live life on life's terms without compulsively overeating.

Our trusted servants are living their lives through the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts. They are doing service to help others, so that they also find recovery in the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts.

The trustees find the answers by doing as the Fellowship dictates through the WSBC and the group conscience of the Fellowship.

It is a *we* program, not a program of us and them. Together we can!

—WSBC 2014

PHYSICAL RECOVERY—NEWCOMERS' PERCEPTION OF FELLOWSHIP

What do you suggest we say to newcomers who feel discouraged by overweight or obese members who claim to be abstinent or say they are longtimers, but are not in the process of losing weight or maintaining healthy weight?

To begin addressing newcomers' concerns, share with them OA's Third Tradition: “The only requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively.” Elaborate by quoting OA's Statement on Abstinence and Recovery: “Abstinence in Overeaters Anonymous is the action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight. Spiritual, emotional, and physical recovery is the result of living the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve Step program” ([Business Conference Policy Manual](#), 1988b, amended 2002, 2009, 2011).

OA members are in various stages of the compulsive-eating illness and recovery. Our program cautions us not to judge another member's abstinence, program, or recovery. A helping hand extended to move them along the OA road of recovery helps members, as does accepting them where they are. Emphasize the stability of the OA program and point to your success and the success of countless numbers of compulsive overeaters experiencing recovery on all three levels: physical, emotional, and spiritual.

Suggest they attend different meetings, seek recovering members who have what they want, and ask those members for help. Suggest the value of reading our excellent OA literature, such as [To the Newcomer](#), [Abstinence, Second Edition](#), and [Overeaters Anonymous, Third Edition](#). As we come to meetings, we learn and practice as best we can, staying focused on our own recovery and letting others stay focused on theirs.

—January 2014

PHYSICAL RECOVERY—SERVICE BODY VOLUNTEERS

Many of our intergroup members, including officers, have been overweight or obese for years without gradual weight loss. Should we be concerned that our intergroup's lack of physical recovery may portray a poor image of recovery? What, if anything, can we say or do about this?

About thirteen years ago, trusted servants at my intergroup were also overweight. My sponsor warned me not to go to this intergroup, but I did. Later I became treasurer and eventually chair.

Each month I put this item on the agenda: "What are we doing to support each other in our recovery?" No one responded the first or second month, so we tabled the item. At our third meeting, I made it clear we wouldn't do any other business until we addressed our lack of recovery.

We started out by becoming call buddies for one another. Then we began a monthly speaker meeting right after intergroup, so we could hear some experience, strength, and hope after we concluded our business. The average size of our trusted servants began to go down! Some did quit, but most stuck around and got excited again about their recovery. Someone cared enough to not only talk about it, but also do something about it.

When it came time to amend our bylaws, we voted to change the abstinence requirements from six months to a year. Our intergroup is now healthy, with strong participation from groups and a board that exemplifies recovery on all three levels.

In other words, don't say anything; take action! Seek to do service on the board and support your fellows to recover. Solicit your sponsees to do service too. You can make a difference by your actions. Just talking about the problem will do nothing to bring about a solution. Action will!

—May 2013

PLAN OF EATING—ATHLETICS TRAINING

I'm training for a marathon, and many sources advise eating sugary things during a race or long run to maintain energy. Since my food plan doesn't include sugar, I need help. Are there any OA members I could get in touch with who have experience with this?

As you know, most conventional wisdom does not apply to us as compulsive eaters. Few doctors talk about food as an addictive substance, and very few will suggest a spiritual program for recovery from obesity or bulimia. Their opinions do not make our experience invalid or inaccurate. It's just our truth.

If your food plan doesn't include sugar, then it wouldn't be helpful for you to follow others' suggestions about which snacks to eat during a run. I encourage you to find other kinds of snacks that will meet your nutritional needs during the marathon, while still maintaining your plan of eating. Perhaps as you're training, you could test some different combinations of snacks. Something different may meet your nutritional needs. Maintaining conscious contact with your Higher Power, working with your sponsor, and maybe chatting at meetings will give you the answer you need.

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Unfortunately, I don't know any long-distance runners, so I can't provide you with any names. But good luck in your fitness endeavors! Isn't it a miracle to be able to have this conversation?

—March/April 2010

PODCASTS—FULL LISTING

Is there a podcast list that includes all of our OA podcasts?

For the podcasts listed on our oa.org website, please visit oa.org/podcasts. Otherwise, I used a popular search engine, searched under “OA podcast,” and came up with three different sources of OA podcasts. Results included the list on oa.org, a list from the Los Angeles Intergroup, and one from the Baltimore Area Intergroup. I know for a fact that we have podcasts on our Region One website, and they did not show up on the search. So, your question leads me to another question: how do we tag our OA podcasts so they are more likely to show up on a search? I know that podcasts can be fabulous introductions to the OA Twelve Step program. I spoke with one newcomer who listened to eighty hours of our podcasts before he ever came to a meeting, so I know that they can be very helpful to newcomers and to longtimers. We will research how we can better label our podcasts so they come up on general searches.

—WSBC 2019

PROFESSIONAL OUTREACH—SCOPE

Within the Traditions, can an OA Public Information Committee or an individual write to a city official or the President of the USA about the existence of OA?

Yes, it is within the Traditions for a member or committee to contact people who might benefit from knowledge of Overeaters Anonymous in a professional capacity. Doing a mailing campaign to city officials or other high-profile individuals falls within the scope of Tradition Eleven. Over the years, our Public Information and Professional Outreach Committees have contributed to the following materials, which give guidance on ways to carry out such a project and stay within the boundaries of OA's Traditions (These are available at bookstore.oa.org or as downloads from oa.org/document-library):

- The [Professional Outreach Manual](#) (#772) is filled with ideas on how to get the word out to professionals and institutions about our organization.
- The [Professional Presentation Folder](#) (#870) might also be something you want to consider sending. It contains a cover letter plus [Compulsive Overeating: An Inside View](#), and other materials:
- The [Professional Community Courier](#) newsletter
- [When Should I Refer Someone to Overeaters Anonymous?](#)
- The [Membership Survey Report](#)
- OA's [Public Information Service Manual](#) (#762) is full of ideas for engaging the media and other suggestions for carrying the message out to the public.

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Regarding a letter to city or national officials, my one concern is how we sign the letter. What about anonymity? When reviewing Appendix 1, I found this footnote. “Signing your full name is not a break in anonymity. It is your decision whether or not to use your full name or last initials. However, using your full name does make it easier for future contacts.”

I hope you will follow through on the commitment to do such a mailing, as it is truly the act of carrying out our primary purpose.

—WSBC 2014

PUBLIC INFORMATION—BLOGGING

Can OA do a blog, like the one in Japan, in the USA?

OA has blogs written by trustees who post through their region websites. They state the trustee’s first name or say “Region Trustee” instead of a name, and do not include personal information. There are other blogs out there too, posted by individual OA members. I have not seen the Japanese blog, and without a link to view it, I cannot comment on its substance.

—WSBC 2016

PUBLIC INFORMATION—ONLINE MARKETING

Has OA considered using digital marketing strategies that would allow for capturing lead data? For example, Facebook ads could direct users to a landing page where OA captures users' information (first name, email address) in exchange for more information. This is a common and often successful tactic for growing a database of users. OA could then market to them by email, nurturing them with more information about OA periodically. Once we plant that virtual seed, we can continue to water it!

I would be very surprised if Banyan Communications—the firm OA has hired to distribute our PSAs on radio and TV and design our Facebook ads—has not suggested this to the WSO staff. I am sure the staff turned down this idea for the same reason I will cite. According to Tradition Eleven, “Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity . . .”

The point of the Facebook ads and the public service announcements is to inform the public about OA and to take them to the OA website. This is enough! When people click on a Facebook ad or one of the ads in the online journal of [*Today's Dietitian*](#), they arrive at the OA website. All our information is there and available. Email marketing is probably a great marketing technique, but it would be considered promotion rather than attraction, and therefore not in harmony with the OA Traditions.

—WSBC 2014

PUBLIC INFORMATION—PSAs

Are there any public service announcements planned for 2019? Any media ads—TV, radio, or print?

We are continuing an ongoing Facebook ad campaign in a variety of English-speaking countries around the world. Thanks to increased funding, the Professional/Public Awareness Committee is able to expand our activities in the coming year. There are several exciting directions we are exploring. Your support of OA is what has given us this opportunity. Please stay tuned to the WSO Bulletin to hear what develops. We want our members to be aware of what's going on so they can provide local support to all efforts to carry the message.

—WSBC 2019

SERVICE BODIES—IMPROVING NATIONAL SERVICE BOARD COMMUNICATION

Please suggest ways to improve communication (a) between groups and a national service board and (b) within a national service board.

I do not belong to a national service board so can only share from my experience of being in a region that is very diverse and geographically spread out, and from hearing what happens in other regions.

To assist communication within our region, our region board holds regular Skype teleconference meetings; at these meetings we have time set aside where committee chairs are invited to participate. We also have a service body support committee that organizes Skype teleconferences for our service bodies to participate in, in order to share information about what's working well as well as problem-solve together. Old-style written communication—letters—are still sent to the service bodies and unaffiliated groups in our region. Another communication tool we have is the *News Sheet*, our region newsletter. Our *News Sheet* committee creates a colorful and news-y quarterly bulletin to distribute electronically to all region representatives, service bodies, interested members who have signed up, and unaffiliated groups in our fellowship to help us all stay in touch. I've heard how the Virtual Services trustee has a regular time set aside when she is online and available to take calls from OA members in the virtual fellowship.

The [*Twelfth-Step-Within Handbook*](#) has a Service Body Inventory that may be helpful for a national service board to adapt and use at its next gathering. Likewise, the Group Inventory in the same book can also be used within meetings. One question specifically asks whether all service positions are filled. Does each group have a representative linked into the service body to facilitate communications both ways?

The revised manuscript of the [*OA Handbook for Members, Groups and Service Bodies*](#) that has just received the Conference Seal of Approval has many great suggestions that I'm sure will be helpful. You can find it at bookstore.oa.org.

Thank you again for your question. It has prompted me to think of how I can work to improve my own communication with my region board, committees, region representatives, service bodies, unaffiliated groups, and the local fellowship.

—WSBC 2015

SERVICE BODIES—WSO FUNDING FOR UNBUDGETED PROJECTS

Would it be possible for an intergroup to ask for financial support from the WSO to cover its cost of relocation?

The World Service Office, by direction from the BOT, works from a budget. There is no provision for this type of assistance. Tradition Four encourages group autonomy, so financial assistance from the WSO would not be in harmony with the spirit of that tradition. Occasionally there are requests for assistance from groups that are struggling, and assistance has been provided with literature and subscriptions to [Lifeline](#) magazine, but never money. You may want to check with your region or the groups that make up your intergroup to see how they may help you in your time of transition.

—WSBC 2014

SERVICE—ENCOURAGING OTHERS TO DO SERVICE

How do you suggest we can incentivize and encourage members to do service beyond the group level?

Sponsors should encourage sponsees to do service. My sponsor set a good example by doing service at intergroup, and she encouraged me. That is how I started.

Service should be fun instead of drudgery. If service bodies have fun, then its members will enjoy doing service and keep coming back.

Carpool or give someone a ride to intergroup or region. This allows fun and fellowship on the way to and from the meeting. On the way, you can listen to OA CDs (available at bookstore.oa.org) or audio files from oa.org/podcasts.

Use the principles of the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts to solve problems that arise in service bodies, especially Tradition Twelve, which reminds us to “place principles before personalities.”

Do service at the group level. It isn’t hard. Start small if necessary. Put out chairs. Confidence in giving service within a group will give members confidence to do service beyond the group level.

Ask someone to be a group representative. Don’t wait for them to volunteer. Suggest someone who you think will be good at it.

Have two group representatives from your group. Then the time commitment won’t seem so bad. One can be a representative and the other an alternate. Or, the two representatives can split the time.

Practice rotation of service in the group, intergroup, and other service bodies. This gives others a chance to give service. Set term limits for group positions and other service body positions. This also gives people a chance and the same person doesn’t do all the work or get burned out.

If you are an intergroup or region officer, delegate responsibilities. Don’t try to do it all yourself. This gives others an opportunity to serve. Make an effort to create jobs that require different levels of commitment. Give the newcomer to intergroup something to do. This gives him or her a sense of responsibility and ownership and keeps the member coming back. Have many different jobs available at intergroup with different skills. If you

are an officer, think about succession planning. Suggest and encourage certain people do certain jobs. Don't wait for them to volunteer.

Some group representatives to intergroup don't have to be abstinent to serve. Other positions may require abstinence. This allows a newcomer to see what abstinence looks like and encourages them to "stick with the winners."

Practice Step Twelve. Doing service is carrying the message. Service beyond the group level can reach even more people than being a sponsor. When my home group dwindled down to two members, I was afraid the meeting would close. One of the reasons I became active in intergroup was so I would have a meeting to go to, even if my home group closed.

OA members attending business meetings (region and world service) often are helped with paying room, board, and travel expenses. If I had to pay for these things out of my own pocket, I probably couldn't afford it and wouldn't go.

Intergroup is a fabulous arena in which to grow my program, learn new skills, strengthen my abstinence, and to carry the message among groups. Intergroup rep might be considered the first service position beyond the group level. But all service positions—group, intergroup, assembly, WSBC delegate, and even trustee—are critical to our helping each other recover from our compulsive eating.

Service keeps me abstinent. What more could I want?
—WSBC 2014

SERVICE—MULTIPLE RESPONSIBILITIES

I am a meeting rep for my intergroup, soon-to-be treasurer for my intergroup. I am a rep for my intergroup to my region. I am a delegate for my intergroup to world service. Can I also have a service position on virtual?

Depending on the interpretation of your question (service position on virtual), there are several issues to consider. If you are asking if someone can take a service position at a virtual meeting, then the answer is yes. Service at the meeting level serves the individual meeting and any person who the meeting feels is qualified to be appointed/elected to a group position is eligible. If you're asking about serving at a virtual intergroup, service board, and/or region, concurrent with serving at a face-to-face intergroup, service board, and/or region, the answer is a bit more involved.

First, are there any mandates in the bylaws and/or policies of your face-to-face intergroup, service board, or region that would prevent you from holding a position in another intergroup, service board, and/or region? For instance, there are intergroups that have provisos stating that a person cannot serve in an intergroup-elected position (e.g., committee chair, region rep, WSBC delegate, or officer) of more than one intergroup. Are there any mandates or policies of the virtual intergroup? The same issue may apply for them as well. Second, can you separate the needs and desires of your face-to-face service body from your virtual service body? Although a vast majority of these are identical, representing multiple service bodies can sometimes be confusing to the individual and problematic to the different service bodies. Finally, how much time do you have to provide this type of service? Overcommitment can become an issue for many recovering compulsive eaters. Sometimes it is better to give less, but more focused service than

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spreading ourselves too thin and finding that we are unable to fulfill our service commitments. If you have the time and clarity to serve in this way, and there are no procedural issues, then the answer to your question is absolutely.

—WSBC 2019

SERVICE—REQUIREMENTS

If a member refuses to introduce him- or herself as a compulsive overeater, instead simply as an “overeater,” can he or she take on service positions, such as newcomer information coordinator? Does it make a difference if the member has a sponsor and says he or she is working the Steps?

Members may call themselves whatever they want. Over the years I have heard many variations in OA meetings (compulsive, compulsive overeater, compulsive eater, compulsive under-eater, compulsive over-exerciser, grateful, “I am a member of this Fellowship,” “I am changing my relationship to food,” sugar addict, carbohydrate addict, food addict, compulsive about everything, recovered bulimic, restrictor, anorexic... you name it). As Tradition Three says, “The only requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively.”

For service positions, it is up to the group conscience what the requirements are for each position. Usually the requirements are based on time in the program and period of abstinence. Willingness to serve also helps. To encourage doing service, it is good to have positions that have little or no requirements, such as setting up chairs. According to Tradition Four, “Each group is autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole.” The requirements for a position can vary widely from group to group.

If a member has a sponsor, is working the Steps and is willing to do service, then the member and the group are very fortunate when there is a service position to be filled. Since service is a Tool that enhances our program of recovery on all levels for OA as a whole, it seems wise to create as few barriers as possible to doing service. From group experience it usually becomes clear what each position requires. In the [*OA Handbook for Members, Groups and Service Bodies: Recovery Opportunities*](#), the section called “Getting Things Done in Your OA Group” has many wonderful suggestions. For instance, in section 14 (“What Are Some Good Qualifications for Service Volunteers?”) it states that, “Experience has shown that giving members a job solely to help them maintain abstinence does not work; instead the group’s welfare should be of primary concern in choosing members to fill the service positions. A review of Traditions One [unity] and Two [trusted servants] is helpful at election time. Service volunteers should fully realize that giving service to a group may sometimes involve doing tasks whether they feel like it or not.”

You may want to get a copy of this useful pamphlet for your group. It is available for purchase at oa.org in the bookstore, item #120.

—WSBC 2014

SERVICE—UNDERTAKEN BUT NOT DONE WELL

What about members who undertake service and refuse assistance, even when it affects their service? Either their service is not done at all, or it is done in such a

manner that the message is not received by the compulsive overreiter who needs help or still suffers. What can other members do about this without becoming controlling?

Concept Three of the [Twelve Concepts of OA Service](#) reminds us that when “working within their job descriptions, trusted servants have the right to decide how to do their jobs.” Trust is the Principle of Concept Three and we are encouraged to trust members to “act and lead responsibly.” This Principle of trust in our **trusted** servants is essential to effective leadership.

On the other hand, ours is a “we” program, and none among us can do it alone. One of the ways we practice the Principle of humility is by accepting help from our fellow members. As you point out, refusing to accept help when it is needed can be a disservice to others.

But ours is also a program of rigorous honesty—therefore I suggest you first consider praying about your own judgment to be sure you are not seeing in this person a reflection of your own character defects. Often, because of causes and conditions in my own life, I project onto others attitudes not their own.

If after prayer and reflection your conscience is clear and your motives sincere, you may wish to consider Tradition One and the Principle of unity (which helps us examine how we can relate to and work with others for the good of OA as a whole). You may wish to offer assistance with a very specific task to get the working relationship started. If it is a task that seems like drudgery, all the better!

The [OA Handbook for Members, Groups, and Service Bodies](#) can also be very helpful in dealing with service-related issues. It reminds us that “No problem has to lead to serious trouble for any group, since OA experience shows that goodwill, honesty, selflessness, and a spirit of love and service will prevail if we make an honest effort to “place principles before personalities” (Tradition Twelve)” (p. 29).

—WSBC 2016

SERVICE—UNWANTED ‘HELP’ FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

What should we do when members responsible for a committee not only deal with their committee, but also give opinions and instructions to others (without being asked), under the pretext that they want to help as much as they can? This creates pressure on other members who do service; they feel controlled and become frightened about doing their service.

Thank you for your question and your willingness to do service. I would refer to [The Twelve Concepts of OA Service](#) (an online version can be found at oa.org on the [Twelve Concepts page](#)). The Principle of Concept Three is trust. When we are working in our service position, we are trusted to act and lead responsibly. We work within the job description and have the right to decide how to do our jobs. We all have different ways of doing things. Concept Nine (Ability) talks about letting people “grow” into service positions. Concept Ten (Clarity) talks about having clearly defined written job descriptions to avoid misunderstood job responsibilities or multiple people doing the same job. Written job descriptions also help avoid conflict. Tradition Two tells us that our leaders do not govern but that we have one authority, a loving God as expressed in the group conscience.

You may want to talk with these members individually or have a group conscience meeting with the committee about this issue.

—WSBC 2016

SERVICE—WHEN AND HOW TO START

How can we encourage members to do service? Many take the view that they can't do service before they recover!

When we first come into Overeaters Anonymous, we want recovery to be about us; then our sponsor mentions service. Service gives back to the program and helps us too. In order to keep what we have, we have to give back what was so freely given.

All members, both newcomers and longtimers, are encouraged to do service to help their recovery. Newcomers can set up chairs or carry the literature for a meeting or the key to a meeting. Some meetings have coffee, which newcomers can set up. They can also make outreach calls to other members, participate in readings at meetings, make announcements, and visit their intergroup.

I was encouraged to go to intergroup by my sponsor. I didn't need to be abstinent to go and see what an intergroup was all about. I went as a meeting rep. There were all kinds of things I could do without any abstinence requirements at all, like helping plan recovery events. I was good with computers, so I made flyers. I was able to place flyers and pamphlets in our local libraries and hospitals. My service helped carry the message to the still-suffering compulsive overeater. When I did reach required abstinence times, I was voted in as secretary of our intergroup. I also became the region rep for our Region Eight assembly. My love of service and OA took off from there. I served in many positions on the intergroup board and in my region. Here I am today—an OA trustee.

I love the journey of recovery. I meet so many people I never would have met otherwise. Doing service means we can trudge together on that "Road of Happy Destiny" the Big Book mentions ([Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., p. 164](#)), and carry the message to other compulsive eaters; it is our primary purpose.

[Another trustee answers:]

Your second sentence, "Many take the view that they can't do service before they recover" captures one of the many paradoxes in our program. Those who wait to be recovering or abstaining before they give service miss the fact that many who do service are gifted with recovery/abstinence along the way.

We can remind members that service is one of our [Tools](#) of recovery; it can also be included in another Tool: action plan. A sponsor can request that all his or her sponsees do some level of service. When encouraging members to do service, include many ideas. For instance, members can help set up chairs and put them away at the end of meetings (they will undoubtedly share with others while doing this service). A newer person can become a "speaker getter" for the group or be that group's literature person. Two or more newer members can work as a team to do a service—this practice generates support and helps with commitment, and service becomes fun! All the while, any person who has a dilemma about putting service, recovery, or abstinence first gets to put aside intellectual argument and instead live in the solution.

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Always remember that any person giving service can ask their Higher Power to be with them; that way they are working Step Eleven whether they realize it or not. Please remember, too, that we humans want to be asked to help.

—WSBC 2017

SEVENTH TRADITION—BUDGET SHIFT AND MAKING CONTRIBUTING EASIER

What is OA World Service's future plan to shift from a budget depending on selling literature in paper form to a new business plan to raise funds? It seems imminent that OA will need to make a shift along with our changing culture.

That is a great question. I have always been bothered by the fact that we project our income based on past history, and then cut expenses to meet that number. We are doing some things to make donating easier, such as the automatic recurring contribution (ARC) on the OA website. If you would like to participate in that program, go to oa.org/contribute and click "Make this a recurring gift." Supporting OA is really all of our responsibility. The best your Board of Trustees can do is to share what we anticipate in expenses, and then our members can step up to the plate and increase their Seventh Tradition contributions to meet that number. What can you do at your group, intergroup, and region level to encourage members to contribute more?

—WSBC 2015

SEVENTH TRADITION—EXEMPTING NEWCOMERS

Some of our group members suggest we should discourage newcomers from contributing to the Seventh Tradition basket in the spirit of considering them as "guests." Others thought this could be a violation of anonymity by treating some members in a different way. Does OA have an opinion on this matter?

The answer depends on the situation. Some years ago, my home group was struggling to get started. All Seventh Tradition contributions went to rent. We received free literature from our intergroup. One day a visiting member told the newcomers not to donate to the Seventh Tradition and to take a Newcomers Packet of charge. As a result, we did not have enough money for rent; I had to make up the shortfall. What is appropriate for one meeting may be inappropriate for another. In this situation, we must look at more than one Tradition and try to find a balance.

Tradition Three poses no requirement on anyone to do anything to be an OA member, and that includes putting money in the basket or paying for literature. Some groups can afford to distribute free packets to newcomers and to discourage newcomer donations. Each group has autonomy (Tradition Four) to decide what works best in its situation. A group struggling to pay rent would be unable to become self-supporting (Tradition Seven) if it discouraged newcomer donations or distributed free literature. It might have a group conscience and decide to ask newcomers for a voluntary donation toward the cost of newcomer literature. Other meetings might tell newcomers not to donate but instead to buy literature. Group conscience determines how to treat everyone equally while considering special circumstances.

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The key word is “voluntary.” In OA we ask for voluntary Seventh Tradition donations to support the meeting, but we never turn anyone away for lack of funds. OA has no dues or fees. For example, I have seen a marathon donation basket with a sign that said “Suggested donation _____. Can’t pay? Don’t stay away.”

“There is no requirement for any member to contribute, although most do. Those who can are usually willing to give generously to make up for those unable to give at present” (*OA Handbook for Members, Groups and Service Bodies: Recovery Opportunities*, p. 12). A meeting can give newcomers a warm welcome without discouraging donations or giving them free literature. In my story, the visitor paid attention to Tradition Three but forgot the Seventh Tradition Principle of self-support and the Fourth Tradition Principle of autonomy.

For more information on group money matters, please consult the *OA Handbook for Members, Groups and Service Bodies: Recovery Opportunities*, the *OA Twelve and Twelve* chapter on the Seventh Tradition (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition*, p. 131) and the free pamphlet, *Seventh Tradition of OA*.

For possible wording to adapt for your group’s use, consult the recently revised *Suggested Meeting Format*.

—November 2013

SEVENTH TRADITION—LIMITS TO CONTRIBUTIONS

Regarding OA’s new Translation Fund, is there a limit to the amount one can contribute to this fund per year? What is it?

“Give as if your life depends on it!” A member may contribute up to US\$5,000 per year to the general fund *and* up to US\$5,000 per year to any special or restricted fund. (Restricted funds include the Delegate Support Fund, the Professional Exhibit Fund, and now the Translation Fund.) OA will also accept a bequest in any amount from the will of a deceased member.

Visit oa.org/contribute and choose the appropriate designation to make a donation to the Translation Fund or any other OA fund. Find more information in the *Seventh Tradition of OA* pamphlet.

—WSBC 2017

SEVENTH TRADITION—OUTSIDE CONTRIBUTIONS IN MEMORIAM

Our [Seventh Tradition of OA](#) pamphlet states, “OA is fully self-supporting, accepting contributions only from OA members” (p. 1). If a member’s family offers a donation in his or her memory, is this a break in our Traditions? If the group does not obligate itself and accepts the donation with no strings attached, how could that be a problem?

In spite of the family’s generosity, accepting a donation in a deceased member’s honor would not adhere to Tradition Seven. Unless another member of the family is an OA member, accepting the donation would be considered accepting money from an outside enterprise. While this may seem insensitive, it is important that this Tradition be rigorously upheld in order to protect the integrity of OA.

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OA may accept bequests in any amount from the will of a deceased member.
—July 2011

SEVENTH TRADITION—WORLD SERVICE OFFICE

During a phone meeting, I heard it's important to send our Seventh Tradition to the WSO because OA world service is losing money as more phone meetings replace face-to-face meetings. Is this accurate, or is world service losing money because of decreasing OA membership?

It is important that OA meetings make Seventh Tradition contributions, and it's good you are hearing this in your meetings. The rest of your message presumes the world service is losing money, which it is not.

World service revenue has always been and continues to be the deciding factor in what projects world service will take on in any given year. The OA Executive Committee is conservative when it determines the annual budget. Our committees, world service staff, and trustees work hard to stay within their budgets. For many years now the world service expenses have been less than the world service revenues, ending each year in the black.

Could OA use more contributions? Absolutely! World service cannot address many projects each year because it must stay within budget. Translation projects, trade shows, and public information are just a few of the areas where we could invest more money and reach out to the still-suffering compulsive eater.

Is OA world service losing money? Definitely not! Is it important for OA groups and individuals to make Seventh Tradition contributions to world service? Absolutely!

—February 2012

SPEAKERS—FINDING SPEAKERS—BY MAKING INQUIRIES OF SERVICE BODIES

Is there a list of willing speakers on oa.org that notes their past experience (for example, bingeing or anorexia)? Where would one find this list?

There is no such list on oa.org. According the World Service Office, there once was a Twelfth Step Within Speakers list, but the Twelfth Step Within Committee decided at WSBC 2016 that they would no longer support the document. They had difficulty keeping the spreadsheet up-to-date, even on an annual basis. They felt that the handling of speaker information is better left to local intergroups, service boards, and regions.

To inquire about finding available speakers in your area, try contacting representatives from your intergroup or service body.

—WSBC 2017

SPEAKERS—FINDING SPEAKERS—BY FOLLOWING GUIDELINES

Our intergroup is planning a retreat and would like to know if the WSO keeps a list of approved leaders and speakers for OA events. If not, how should we choose a leader or speaker?

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The WSO does not maintain a general list of approved speakers, but some regions and service bodies do maintain such lists.

The WSO makes guidelines available for service bodies planning OA events. [Guidelines for OA Events](#) details things to keep in mind when choosing speakers and organizing your event:

- Don't pay a speaker's fee beyond reimbursement for travel, food, and lodging because that would be a violation of our Traditions (p. 2).
- Avoid putting speakers on a pedestal, keeping in mind principles before personalities [Tradition Twelve] (p. 2). The 1990 WSBC passed a motion suggesting that OA bodies "refrain from publishing the names or titles of speakers/leaders at OA functions in all informational materials (flyers, newsletters, etc.).
- "Ask 'two-hatters' (OA members who work professionally in the field of eating disorders or are members of other Twelve Step programs) to speak from their personal experience as recovering compulsive eaters in Overeaters Anonymous. This makes a more effective presentation and avoids implied endorsement of an outside enterprise" (p. 2).
- Inform prospective speakers they cannot sell their own literature, recordings, or other products at an OA event.
- Contact your region office or other intergroups in your region for help finding experienced speakers (p. 4).
- Take topics from OA and AA literature (p. 4).
- Remember "the group sponsoring the event determines the eligibility requirements for speakers" (p. 4). It's a good idea to discuss abstinence requirements with potential speakers before the event.
- Be aware that "only OA members may be used as speakers" (p. 5).
- Do not hesitate to ask invited speakers and leaders about their plans for the event. Give speakers specific guidance on which types of activities are desirable and which are not (p. 4).

Establishing a clear understanding of a leader's expected conduct is of the highest importance to your planning committee. Make your best effort to ensure speakers possess the experience and maturity to best benefit the Fellowship as a whole.

—August 2010

SPECIAL EVENTS—MAINTAINING THE TRADITIONS AT ACTIVITY EVENTS

We are considering special activities for our intergroup to bring people together: having a yoga teacher (who is a member of OA) lead yoga with sharing afterward, having events in which the group does Zumba and other dancing, or playing games. The focus is not on the Steps and Traditions; we would pass the basket. Do these events adhere to the Traditions?

The suggestions you have for a fun night to bring OA members together sound like great ideas.

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I recently participated in a variety night for a local intergroup (you need not follow this format). It began with two speakers who presented brief talks on having fun in recovery. Then OA members performed a variety of entertainment, including a skit, songs, stories, dramatic reading, belly dance, and sing-along. For many of us, recovery can be too serious, so it seems appropriate to include some fun events.

A potential problem could arise if the individuals leading the activities mention where they teach. They should NOT be seen as promoting any outside enterprise and therefore should not mention any outside enterprise. Perhaps the flyer could emphasize the fun and dancing and in smaller font say “yoga” and “Zumba” without emphasizing them.

Game nights sound great too. At some holiday OA open houses and marathons, I have often seen games or cards as optional activities.

—November 2011

SPECIAL EVENTS—ORGANIZING A RETREAT

What does it take to organize a retreat? Can we just organize a weekend in a hotel where we will have meetings and meditation?

I suggest that you take a look at the [Guidelines for OA Events](#) on the oa.org website. There is a lot of good information there. Quite often it is a committee sponsored by the local intergroup/service board that organizes these events. Getting a committee together and finding a venue are the first steps. I suggest speaking with someone from your intergroup or a nearby intergroup that has done this service before to get ideas. Good luck in this endeavor. Retreats are a wonderful opportunity for OA recovery.

—WSBC 2015

SPECIAL EVENTS—RUNNING A WORKSHOP

Can somebody run a workshop if she/he hasn't attended one, just by taking workshop questions from the oa.org website?

Workshops are usually presented by an intergroup. The presenters are abstinent members of the intergroup. Region chairs, trustees, and speakers from other intergroups may also be asked to lead a workshop. The oa.org website has workshop ideas on the [“Group Resources”](#) page and at oa.org/document-library under “Workshops and Fellowship Ideas.” Intergroups create workshops with the materials found on the oa.org website and using OA literature. The presenters have not necessarily attended previous workshops on the topic(s) they are presenting.

—WSBC 2015

SPONSORS—ANONYMITY AND SPONSEE RELATIONSHIPS

At one meeting I attend, sponsors sometimes present sponsees with medallions and make speeches praising them. Should sponsorship relationships be anonymous? I've heard some meetings ask members not to discuss sponsors' or sponsees' identities to

protect anonymity. Does OA offer any guidance in this area? Sometimes I feel left out at meetings when folks praise their sponsees at anniversary times.

OA has no official policy on methods of sponsorship or the anonymity of the sponsorship relationship. OA's pamphlet [A Guide for Sponsors](#) states, "Styles of sponsorship vary from person to person. We are each free to approach it in our own way" (p. 6). Therefore, this matter is strictly between the sponsor and sponsee, unless the meeting's group conscience has decided against identifying one's sponsor and sponsee. In meetings I have attended for many years, we celebrate Birthday Night and recognize sponsees with a candle or card. Often this is the only time a member's sponsor or sponsee is identified, but it's up to the individual sponsors and sponsees.

—July 2010

SPONSORS—BACKGROUND CHECKS OF SPONSEES

Should a sponsor use internet search tools to check a sponsee's background without telling them? This seems to be a violation of the basic principle of anonymity, but I wanted to check with a higher authority.

When trustees receive such a complex question, we ask for the experience, strength, and hope of other trustees.

In response to this query, the BOT's collective reasoning covered the entire range of responses. For some, internet search engines are commonplace tools used to learn about their friends and acquaintances. For others, using an internet search to find out information about an OA member without that member's permission is a break of anonymity and does not honor our Traditions. Still others considered that this question reveals emerging issues that we are still coming to understand.

In terms of sponsorship, I do not believe I should use investigative services to find out about a sponsee rather than asking them about themselves and allowing the relationship to develop. We all have lives. We all have histories. I believe rooting out information that a sponsee has chosen not to provide to me exceeds the bounds of sponsorship. And part of the sponsee recovery process is for sponsees to work the Steps, make their own searching and fearless moral inventories, identify their defects of character and ask for their removal, make amends, and carry the message.

The gift of anonymity removes the labels of who we are, where we live, how much we earn or own, what we may have published, and what deeds we might have done. Anonymity also protects us from wrong information based on others who may have our same name but are not us. All of these are outside issues to our one shared purpose: a desire to stop eating compulsively. Not honoring this principle introduces complexities of life that do not serve our primary purpose.

If you can explain to me how investigating sponsees on the internet will help them find recovery, I might reconsider. Barring that, the purpose of sponsorship is to assist another compulsive eater to recover from our disease. Delving into personal history beyond that seems outside the range of who we are and what we do.

—February 2013

SPONSORS—SETTING REALISTIC LIMITS

Please suggest ways to help longtime sponsors manage the daily tasks of supporting all their sponsees and still taking on new ones. Sometimes there are just too many and the task feels overwhelming!

I understand this feeling of “overwhelm” in sponsoring. I have belonged to groups where there are many more people needing sponsors than there are people who are willing to sponsor.

If you have not already read it, [A Guide for Sponsors](#) is an excellent resource. Items 10 and 11 directly relate to your question. Item 10 says, in part:

“Although sponsoring supports your recovery, be realistic on how many individuals you can help. Ask yourself how available you can be to each person. Don’t neglect personal needs, family time, or job demands, etc. You are the best judge of these issues and can enlist your own sponsor for help.”

As much as we would like to say “Yes” when sponsoring is overwhelming, we may need to say “No.” Have you discussed your feelings of overwhelm with your own sponsor? You might discuss how much time you are realistically able to spend each day sponsoring others. You could look at how much time you are spending with each person you sponsor.

I enjoy talking with the people I sponsor and find that I need to set a timer to remind me when time is up. If there is something important that needs to be discussed, we set up another time when we can discuss the issue further. I have a list of standard questions that I ask at the beginning of each phone call so that we discuss the most important issues first. Item 11 says, in part:

“If, however, you are already sponsoring your “limit,” you may be unable to give the new sponsee the time and attention needed. Introduce the person to other people in recovery. Often someone you sponsor would be ideal.”

I have found that this is a good way to get the people I sponsor into sponsoring. (Sometimes they need a “gentle nudge.”) I remind the people I sponsor that I am always available to them as a resource when needed.

With the permission of the people I recommend, I will say, “I am sorry. I am at my limit at the moment, but I can give you the names of other people I know who are sponsoring. I am always available for outreach calls.”

—WSBC 2015

SPONSORS—SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND APPROPRIATE OPENNESS

What should we do when a sponsor is gay, keeps it secret, and supports members of the same sex? (It has been noted that this person has entered into sexual relationships with members of the Fellowship.)

The sponsor-sponsee relationship is one based on trust; many of us never trusted anyone until we found a sponsor. According to [A Guide for Sponsors](#), “We do not

recommend a sponsor-sponsee relationship between people who are—or could be—sexually attracted to each other.” (p. 11)

If there are legitimate concerns about this sponsor—or any sponsor—behaving inappropriately toward sponsees (regardless of anybody’s sexual orientation), I would start by treating this situation like one with a disruptive member. I would ask the person in question’s sponsor to speak with him or her. If the person does not have a sponsor, I would ask an experienced member from the same home group, someone the person respects, to initiate a one-on-one discussion. Doing this face-to-face would be preferable, but if it seemed too threatening, I would consider a phone call.

If this failed, I would have a meeting after the meeting, two-on-one, with the person to discuss appropriate behavior toward sponsees. If there was still a problem, I would contact the intergroup. A group conscience could be appropriate, bringing members from the intergroup in to help. If this didn’t work, I would contact my trustee.

—WSBC 2016

SPONSORS—WHEN A SPONSEE IS NOT WORKING THE STEPS

In what ways can I better serve a sponsee who is not working the Steps? Should I continue working with them no matter what? Or let them go with love and tell them to come back when they’re ready? Or take another approach?

There are, of course, many approaches to sponsoring in Overeaters Anonymous. Some of us are very structured in working with sponsees. Others of us vary the Tools we use based on the particular needs of the person we are sponsoring. It is not a secret that working the Twelve Steps is key to long-term abstinence and recovery in OA. Without the Steps, we would just be another “diet with fellowship,” and there are those who use OA that way—at first.

Overeaters Anonymous offers many wonderful resources for understanding and support in sponsoring. Hopefully, one or more of these will help you find the answers you are looking for. The first and most readily available resource is your own sponsor, who likely has more experience than you have. And, knowing you, your sponsor will be a good sounding board for your specific concerns.

The OA bookstore (bookstore.oa.org) carries a [Sponsorship Kit](#) (#210), which includes the pamphlets [The Tools of Recovery](#) (#160), [Sponsoring Through the Twelve Steps](#) (#220), [A Guide For Sponsors](#) (#200), the [Strong Abstinence Checklist and Writing Exercises](#) (#415), a list of other abstinence resource materials, a packet of [Lifeline](#) stories about sponsorship, and the wallet card [Twelve Stepping a Problem](#) (#420). The wallet card might be the tool to use first when reviewing the situation with your own sponsor, and also as a way to approach your sponsee. You might ask them if they would like to use the wallet card with you to help clarify the obstacles they’re up against in working the Steps. Other wonderful resources are also available at oa.org/document-library.

Every sponsoring relationship can be an opportunity for emotional and spiritual growth for both sponsor and sponsee. Hopefully, these suggestions will help guide you to understanding, clarity, and a decision that works for both of you.

—WSBC 2018

SPONSORS—WHEN A SPONSOR SLIPS

Should sponsors let their sponsees know when they have a slip? Should they share their struggles in meetings? When would a sponsor have to leave a sponsee?

I have never had a slip, so I must answer this from a sponsee's point of view. I would want to know if my sponsor wasn't abstinent. My preference is to work with someone who is abstinent. About struggling, I've heard that we should take our message to the meeting and our mess to our sponsor. I love when people share their struggles in a meeting, when it is followed by what they did for a solution, such as using the [Tools of Recovery](#). No one but a sponsor and sponsee should decide when to stop working together, but if my sponsor was struggling, I'd prefer to return to our previous relationship of mutual support.

—WSBC 2015

SPONSORS—WORKING STEPS THE QUICK WAY

Can sponsors work the Steps the "quick way" with sponsees, even if they haven't worked the Steps this way themselves?

There are many approaches to sponsorship and the pamphlet [A Guide for Sponsors](#) gives a lot of good information. I am not sure what you mean by the "quick way," but if you are referring to the new document "[Twelve Stepping a Problem](#)," I don't see why not. Our literature suggests that as sponsors we share our experience, strength, and hope up to the level of our own recovery. We can't give away what we don't have. It would certainly be beneficial for you to experience the "quick way" yourself before working the Steps that way with your sponsee. Perhaps you can talk to your own sponsor about this. There are no rules, only suggestions, about how to sponsor.

—WSBC 2015

STEPS—CONNECTIONS WITH TRADITIONS AND CONCEPTS

I would like a connection between Steps/Traditions and Concepts. Example: Step One, Tradition One, Concept One; Step Two, Tradition Two, Concept Two

Without being able to obtain some clarification with regard to the context for this question or how possibly the response might be used, I will do my best. Please remember this response is from this trustee and does not represent an OA as a whole.

I looked at the spiritual principles of each of the Steps, Traditions and Concepts side by side to see if there was an obvious connection. No specific immediate relationship jumped to my attention and I found no OA literature that addresses such a connection. Sharing some of the context of these three beautiful gifts of wisdom to the Fellowship, let me say that the Steps were written first and were, and still are, primarily for each of us to work in our individual program of recovery. The Traditions followed a few years later as OA experienced all forms of growing pains in doing service together in group and with other service bodies. We all have learned that we can and do use the Principles and wisdom in each Tradition in our own personal lives while providing service within OA. Years later, the Concepts were approved to address the level of service below (going down the inverted pyramid we have all come to love and respect) that involved the World Service Office and

conducting the business of OA. Again, the Spiritual Principles and the wisdom within each Concept can be applied to our home and working lives, and our lives within our community. There is a natural progression—individual recovery, recovery within a smaller entity such as with each other, and then widening to include our service and our lives in general. I see that as the spiritual connection.

Even though a one-to-one correlation between the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts is not apparent to me, please know that the literature we have on the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts could easily be used to create a workshop that could be included in journal or discussion topics. Scenarios could be developed where the group, individually or as whole, discusses which Step, Tradition, or Concept may provide some guidance—often it is a combination of guidance from more than one source that could apply. These discussions would undoubtedly generate the connection being requested.

—WSBC 2019

STEPS—DELINEATION OF “THE EXACT NATURE OF OUR WRONGS”

What does Step Five mean by “the exact nature of our wrongs”?

When trying to understand an OA Twelve Step Principle, it's best to review the entire Step in context with other Steps. Step Five says, “Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”

“Exact nature” means being precise in our disclosure of the harm we have done to others and ourselves recorded in Step Four (commonly called the “Fourth-Step Inventory”). OA literature suggests rigorous honesty in our assessment of bad deeds or wrongs done. In this way we do not rationalize our behavior as being okay.

As part of our recovery from compulsive overeating, OA suggests we write a fearless moral inventory describing in detail the harm we have done to others and ourselves when we practiced our disease. This inventory is like a retail manager's assessment of on-hand saleable goods. After completing this list, we take action to rectify any losses or liabilities by reviewing the list with God and another human being.

We all have God-given instincts, such as the drive to succeed, be loved, and be recognized. But when our obsessive-compulsive behavior fuels these instincts, we are apt to leave a wreckage of human cargo in our wake, harm others and ourselves, and be unable to move forward until we chart the events that make us use negative behavior to meet our needs.

Admitting the exact nature of our wrongs involves charting the path and tactics we used to survive when we were in the midst of compulsive overeating, examining how these actions damaged us and those around us, and understanding how those actions have outlived their usefulness. Step Five asks us to disclose these damaging behavior patterns to God, ourselves, and another human being so we may replace these habits with more positive actions.

—June 2011

STEPS—MODIFYING STEPS LANGUAGE

Can the present tense instead of the past tense be used when reading or writing the Steps? For instance, “We admitted we were powerless over food—that our lives had

become unmanageable” would be “We admit we are powerless over food—that our lives are unmanageable.” The tense change would not change the meaning of the Steps.

At OA’s founding, members requested AA’s permission to modify its Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions for use in OA. AA graciously granted that request, permitting OA to change “alcohol” to “food” and “alcoholic” to “compulsive overeater.” The OA Steps, Traditions, and Concepts are protected by OA copyright and OA bylaws. The Steps may be amended per [OA, Inc. Bylaws, Subpart B](#) (Article XIV, Section 1). A motion to amend the Steps may be submitted by any registered service body, trustee, the Region Chairs Committee, or the Conference Bylaws Committee.

Concept Two of the [Twelve Concepts](#) states “The OA groups have delegated to the World Service Business Conference the active maintenance of our world services; thus, the World Service Business Conference is the voice, authority, and effective conscience of OA as a whole.”

However: If I insist upon changing the wording of OA literature to suit myself, then I am displaying the same selfishness and self-will that landed me in OA in the first place! As one trustee wrote, “From my vantage point and experience, there is a tendency to mold the OA program of recovery to the molds of individual members and their ways of doing things. I am reminded if my way worked, I would not be in OA or need to be. Obviously, my way did not work. So I am quite willing to work on changing me, which is a challenge, and not try to revamp OA to suit me.”

Do we infringe copyright by rewording the Steps in present tense?

If the “we” refers to a meeting, intergroup, or region that changes the wording of the Steps, then that body is not only infringing copyright, but also not honoring the Principles of our program. Tradition One incorporates the Principle of unity. “Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon OA unity.” Tradition Four represents the Principle of autonomy: “Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole.” This is a “we” program; I am not alone anymore.

When an autonomous meeting uses the Twelve Steps in present tense, is this affecting other groups or OA as a whole?

Yes. That meeting is not honoring the OA Bylaws or the Traditions. There is a process in the [OA Bylaws Subpart B](#) (Article XIV, section 1) by which the Steps or Traditions could be amended. The meeting is not autonomous in this matter. Again, Tradition One states: “Our common welfare should come first; **personal recovery depends upon OA unity.**” Tradition Four reminds us that “Each group should be autonomous **except** in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole.”

—WSBC 2016

STEPS—TURNING FOOD OVER TO A HIGHER POWER

How does a person turn his or her food over to a Higher Power, and what does it mean to turn one’s food over to a Higher Power?

In Step Three of [*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition*](#), much is written about turning the food problem over to a Higher Power. That chapter states, “If we want to live free of the killing disease of compulsive eating, we accept help without reservation from a Power greater than ourselves” (p. 17). The chapter proceeds to discuss the willingness to adopt a new attitude about weight control, body image, and eating.

The following are two quotes of interest from that chapter: “As we become aware of what our eating guidelines should be, we ask God for the willingness and the ability to live within them each day. We ask and we receive, first the willingness, and then the ability. We can count on this without fail” (p. 21) and “As we work the Steps, using the Tools of the program—a plan of eating, literature, writing, meetings, the telephone, sponsorship, anonymity, and service—we find the help we need” (p. 21).

Rereading this chapter, working the Steps with a sponsor, and using the OA Tools of Recovery are the best ways I know to turn my will, life, and food over to my Higher Power.
—November 2010

TRADITIONS—BREAKS—AT WSBC

What does the Board of Trustees/World Service Business Conference think about breaking Traditions in the meetings at WSBC? Examples occur when members mention specific religions and/or food organizations.

Since we are all guardians of the Traditions, we hope things like this would not happen. Yet, since we are all human, at times there might be a slip of the tongue along these lines. Hopefully, we as members will watch what we share. This is true at the WSBC as well as during other forms of OA service. The Board of Trustees and World Service Business Conference cannot govern, yet more and more we hope we each can learn to honor these vital spiritual principles of our OA Traditions. May we each do our part.

—WSBC 2016

TRADITIONS—BREAKS—BY MEMBERS

How do you think we should handle it when a member, especially a newcomer, breaks a Tradition? By group conscience or in a more informal way?

There are two possible approaches. First, if it is a newcomer, allow for understanding and flexibility; newcomers may not be entirely familiar with the Traditions, therefore possibly he or she did not even know a Tradition was compromised. If a longtime member does not honor a Tradition, perhaps just a friendly reminder will do, or even a Traditions workshop if there are questions about the Traditions. A couple of experienced group members could take those members aside and have a chat about the Traditions. Always remember that region trustees and region officers are often funded to provide workshops in your area.

—WSBC 2015

TRADITIONS—BREAKS—VOTING PROCEDURES

The Second Tradition says, “No one who considers himself a member of the group is prevented from speaking or voting.” The Fourth Tradition says, “in order to ensure that the autonomy of the group would be respected... about sharing on voting.” Is it a Tradition break that only trusted servants can vote?

It can be frustrating when meetings aren't conducted the way we think they should be, or perhaps the way we are used to. There are no rules or specific requirements for how voting is done for the group conscience meeting. Traditions Two and Four are excellent resources for determining the guidelines for a group conscience. There is no one right way. I have been in group conscience meetings where everyone attending had a voice and a vote. I have been in other group conscience meetings where everyone attending had a voice, but only trusted servants (those with specific qualifications) were allowed to vote. And, I have attended group conscience meetings where only trusted servants were allowed a voice or vote. Groups and service bodies at different levels may have different requirements for participation. For instance, the group conscience at BOT meetings, the WSBC, and regional assemblies have more specific requirements than those of individual OA meetings.

Part of Tradition Four gives groups the freedom and autonomy to “make their own mistakes and learn from them.” The only limitations in Tradition Four are “Does it harm OA as a whole?” and asking whether the group is “free from outside influence.” Tradition Nine also states that we “may create... committees directly responsible to those they serve.” This means that “trusted servants” must act for the good of the group (and OA as a whole) in certain functions. As it states in the chapter on Tradition Nine in *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition*, p. 147, “Meetings that are far from perfect can still offer us the miracle of recovery.” A member who believes the Traditions are not being honored has a responsibility to speak up, even if what they say is not popular. However, if that member continues to feel uncomfortable with the way a meeting is being conducted and is not allowed to have a voice in making changes, that member has the freedom to find another, perhaps stronger, group to join. I also suggest reading the pamphlet *The Twelve Concepts of OA Service* for further guidance.

—WSBC 2019

TRADITIONS—PURPOSE

Why is it important for OA groups to follow the Traditions?

It is important because the Traditions are the glue that holds us together. The Traditions were not just created to sound good. They address the following issues that allow Overeaters Anonymous to exist and work:

- Unity is critical to recovery.
- We rely on a Higher Power; we have trusted servants, not governors.
- We cannot exclude anyone who has the desire to stop eating compulsively.
- We have autonomy, but we must consider the greater good.
- The only thing we can do is carry the message of recovery from compulsive eating to those who suffer; we cannot solve other problems.

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- We have only one purpose: recovery from compulsive eating.
- We must pay our own way in time, energy, and money, and not depend on others.
- We are not experts on anything but our own experience.
- We need service boards, but they must not direct; rather they must follow the dictates of the group conscience.
- We avoid controversy by not attaching ourselves to other causes.
- If we are not an attraction, nothing we say and no degree of promotion will serve the compulsive eater.
- No individual is an OA spokesperson. We are about spirituality.

“Developed through long and sometimes painful experience, the Twelve Traditions embody the same principles for living as do the Twelve Steps” (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition* p. 89). The Traditions are the principles of group recovery.

—February 2010

TRANSLATIONS—APPEARANCE OF TRANSLATED LITERATURE

Can the additional costs of formatting translated books and pamphlets so that they appear the same as the original English version be included in fund allocations?

I have the privilege of serving on the International Publications and Translations Committee. Three times each year, service bodies in the process of translating OA books or pamphlets who need financial assistance can apply for funds from the Translation Assistance Fund. The deadlines for [Translation Fund applications](#) are February 1, June 1, and October 1. The Translations Assistance Fund is allocated to help with all the costs of translations, including formatting, printing, and distributing translated OA material, as much as funds allow. It is hoped that service bodies will make translated documents look as similar as possible to the English originals. See further information regarding the translation and licensing process on the [Literature Translations](#) document at oa.org.

—WSBC 2014

TRANSLATIONS—LICENSES 1 AND 2—OVERVIEW

Who created OA’s permission forms for translations—the License 1 and License 2 Agreements? How can we simplify the translation process to better carry the message?

The International Publications and Translations Committee (made up of Board of Trustee members) has oversight of OA’s translation and licensing agreements; the committee receives input from the World Service Office staff and OA’s legal advisors, experts in the areas of rights and licensing. In 2015, OA’s translation licensing system was reviewed and simplified from a three-step process to a two-step process.

Each stage of the translation process requires a licensing Agreement. [License 1](#) gives permission to translate a particular piece of literature and to circulate that translation to validate its accuracy. [License 2](#) gives permission to publish and distribute the approved translation. These licenses are formal legal agreements between a service body and OA, Inc.

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They state exactly what OA and the service body are each agreeing to do. Only these licenses grant a service body permission to translate and distribute OA's copyrighted material—if someone without permission is translating and distributing literature, they are breaking the law and possibly affecting OA's ability to be self-supporting.

OA literature, its print and digital media, and the Overeaters Anonymous logo are protected under US copyright law, and that copyright is owned solely by Overeaters Anonymous, Inc. No one, including OA members or service bodies, can legally reprint text, reproduce digital media, or publish excerpts from OA literature without written permission from the WSO. For further information, and a list of exceptions ("Items not needing written permission"), refer to ["Copy Requests."](#)

OA, Inc., OA members, and World Service Office staff spend a considerable amount of time and money developing our literature. Revenues from literature sales make up a large portion of OA's income. If service bodies translate and distribute OA literature without a license agreement, it could become difficult for our Fellowship to prevent people outside OA from misusing our literature or making profits for themselves. For further information and downloadable agreement forms, see [Literature Translations](#).

The launch of OA's new website in 2015 included adding a Select Language button to the homepage of oa.org. The Select Language option makes possible the immediate translation of oa.org Web pages into many languages. License 1 and License 2 Agreements can be translated by members to assist with their application process— but the forms must be submitted in English.

—WSBC 2017

TRANSLATIONS—LICENSES 1 AND 2—IN LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH

Why are OA's translation Agreements—Licenses 1 and 2—not offered as e-Documents that could be automatically translated themselves?

License 1 and License 2 Agreement forms must be submitted to the World Service Office in English as this is the language our WSO staff uses. There is no point in submitting either form in a different language; these translation, publication, and distribution agreements are "governed and construed under the laws of the State of New Mexico and the United States of America," and must appear in that country's language: English.

Many service bodies involved with translation work have translated these forms into other languages, just to serve as templates to help members fill in the English forms correctly. The need to translate these forms is important, but as there are so many languages in the world, the WSO cannot provide translations for them all. This is where web-based translation applications can help. Google Translate and others keep improving their translation capabilities over time.

An announcement at the end of the 2017 WSBC business session made clear the OA policy that all English-language downloadable documents on the oa.org website may be translated freely, provided that the translating body sends an official copy of the translated document to the WSO to be archived. See the oa.org to find out more about [Literature Translations](#) and [Copy Requests](#).

—WSBC 2017

TRANSLATIONS—ROYALTY LETTERS

What are Royalty Letters? They're mentioned in the International Publications/Translations Committee Report.

Royalties are payments from OA service bodies that publish and sell OA literature and materials. This process is normally carried out by service bodies that translate and publish our literature in languages other than English. However, some service bodies use the English text, apply for License 2 to publish and distribute the literature, and then have it printed locally. This normally happens in places where the cost of postage is high (for instance, in international groups), and where large print runs can be an advantage.

The rate for royalties payable to WSO is 10% of revenues from sales. It had become apparent that not all service bodies were aware that royalties are due; thus, it was decided to contact the service bodies by letter as a reminder. Reminder letters are now automatically generated and sent out by WSO prior to WSBC and royalty payments are tracked in detail. It is hoped that these letters will encourage payment of royalties due to OA, Inc. in the spirit of our Seventh Tradition.

—WSBC 2016

TRANSLATIONS—COSTS AND ASSISTANCE—TRANSLATION AS SERVICE

Can a member be paid to translate OA literature?

The simple answer is yes.

However, the Translation Assistance Fund does not have sufficient resources to cover all requests that come from non-English-speaking OA fellowships across the world. Applicants are asked how much can be contributed by their service body, and should seek funds from other sources as well, such as neighbouring intergroups, regions, fundraisers, and service boards.

The application form specifically includes expenses for the translation of a piece of literature/material (i.e., translator fees, proofreading, duplicating, designing, printing, and shipping). [Translation Guidelines](#) and the [Translation Fund Application](#) for service bodies to apply for financial assistance from the Translation Assistance Fund are available at oa.org.

Much of the service work done to translate a piece of literature is not recompensed; it is part of the service work we do for the OA fellowship. Members who form a translation committee need to liaise with the WSO about the formal licensing process and establish priorities for their translation work. They also compile a glossary, which is a list of program terms in their local language. For example, members have included Higher Power, abstinence, plan of eating, food plan, sponsor, surrender, one day at a time, relapse, and program to ensure consistency in resulting translations. The local fellowship is involved as they review the draft and give feedback before the final translation is developed and printed.

Best wishes in your translation endeavors. Please connect with the International Translations and Publication committee via the WSO if there is any way we can be of assistance.

—WSBC 2015

UNITY WITH DIVERSITY—RESOURCES

What advice can the board offer to reach out and help three underserved groups: people of color, anorexics, and bulimics?

OA has incredible literature that addresses these groups in general and some specifically. The literature is an avenue to begin a dialogue within a meeting or intergroup to evaluate whether all who suffer from this disease are being given the opportunity that OA offers for recovery. There is another aspect to reaching out: we are all responsible to extend the hand and heart of OA to all who share [our] compulsion. A few tools to help with reaching out are:

- [Strong Abstinence Checklist](#)
- [Unity with Diversity Checklist](#)
- [Strong Meeting Checklist](#)

Pamphlets also are great sources and available from bookstore.oa.org. Below is a short list of suggestions, but there are plenty of other materials available that might be helpful too.

- [A Common Solution: Diversity & Recovery](#) (#265)
- [Focus on Anorexia and Bulimia Packet](#) (#725)
- [Black OA Members Share Their Experience, Strength, and Hope](#) (#285)
- [OA Members Come in All Sizes](#) (#110)

The key to inclusivity and unity can be found in the OA promise that says, “I put my hand in yours and together we can do what we could never do alone.”
—WSBC 2014

VIRTUAL FELLOWSHIP—ISOLATION AND PHYSICAL RECOVERY CONCERNS

As the virtual Fellowship grows, how do we avoid enabling our fellows with regards to physical recovery? In the virtual world, it is much easier to hide and be in denial about really working toward or maintaining a healthy body weight. Also, how do we guard against isolation?

When I go to a meeting, I love receiving hugs. I love seeing people, but most important for me is to hear the message of faith, strength, and hope. And these three things, so important to my recovery, I receive at both virtual and face-to-face meetings: faith, strength, and hope.

Tradition Three says: “The only requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively.” Whether abstinent or not, a person is always welcome at any OA meeting. If a person is eating, it is difficult for them to keep coming back! If a member in relapse feels more welcome at a virtual meeting, we are grateful and remember that we all have this disease and we all want to feel accepted. In a meeting, I feel accepted and know that nobody will judge me—this helps me.

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Tradition Five says: “Each group has but one primary purpose, to carry its message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers.” Whether virtual or face-to-face, any meeting’s primary purpose is to carry the message. I understand that it’s better for a person to be at a virtual meeting, receiving their medicine and working on their recovery, than not to be at a meeting at all.

My first exposure to OA was in virtual meetings. Virtual meetings may make the program feel more available and less fearsome to members who otherwise would never come to OA. Also, this is a program of honesty. It isn’t always true that when a person is thin, they are also abstinent. We are not only overeaters. We may have other manifestations of the disease. Monitoring others’ physical recovery is not my work in OA.

There are many members who only have virtual meetings and who found recovery. They have a fellowship and ways to connect after meetings to help prevent isolation. In the chapter on Tradition Five in [*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition*](#), we read: “OA members have the ability to help our fellow compulsive eaters in ways that no normal eater can” (p. 120). This truth can be found in both virtual and face-to-face meetings.

Using the [Tools](#) helps support recovery in all types of meetings. Having a sponsor helps a member stay accountable with food and work the Steps. Attending meetings allows the member to hear the message of recovery and find a sponsor. Literature provides the basis for recovery and helps the member identify with others. Writing assists with working the Steps. The phone (and other methods of electronic communication) helps members avoid isolation and get support.

Both virtual and face-to-face connections give our fellows an opportunity to recover.

—WSBC 2018

WEBSITE—FUNCTIONALITY ON MOBILE DEVICES

Will the website update include being mobile-friendly? Considering that OA wants to attract and retain a younger demographic, many of whom use mobile devices as their primary computer, we need to ensure this is a priority for the update.

Thank you for acknowledging OA’s desire to reach the whole spectrum of compulsive eaters. We have budgeted to improve the OA website mobile application this year. Our first priority is to improve the Find A Meeting part of the website so it will work on mobile devices.

—WSBC 2014

WEBSITE—SURVEYING THE MEMBERSHIP

Can we have a survey, like what the young persons survey did recently, to ask our membership what they want to see on the new revamped oa.org website before we spend/invest \$50,000? This will help embrace the membership’s opinions and impacts on new updates. It will reach young people, IT people, and virtual members.

A survey was taken in 2015 when the redesign of the website was last under consideration. There were 132 responses to the question, “What features would you like in

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an OA app?” While an app was determined to be outside the scope of the project for which funds were allocated, the ideas were used to create pages for the redesigned website. As many of the items were incorporated into the website as possible within the allotted time and budget. We still have the list and will review it for any additional items that could be implemented today with the improvements in web tools. Of course, members are always welcome to send in their ideas to the Website Review Committee for consideration. Just use the Contact Us feature on oa.org and the committee will receive them.

—WSBC 2019

WEBSITE—TESTING BY VOLUNTEERS

Will there be a group or subcommittee within OA that is familiar with technology and can serve as alpha and beta testers for the updated website?

Thank you for your interest in having a vital and user-friendly OA website. Yes, we will be doing extensive testing with OA member participation prior to the launch.

—WSBC 2014

WORKSHOPS—REQUIREMENTS

I'd like to host a workshop in 2020 on web technology on how groups can use web technology.

Committees are established for both WSBC and Convention. This is something that could be considered by those committees as they establish the content and participants of each program.

—WSBC 2019

WORKSHOPS—REQUIREMENTS

Can a member call himself “recovered” and offer a self-created workshop called “The Cure,” meaning that he is cured for good, forever?

Members may call themselves whatever they want and may identify themselves as a member in OA in whatever manner that serves them. I myself would not call myself recovered or cured. I have this fatal disease of compulsive overeating that is never cured, only arrested one day at a time by my diligent work using the Steps, Traditions, Concepts, and Tools of OA, plus reliance on a power greater than myself to guide my recovery. That said, another member of OA may have a very different experience and process in her or his recovery.

According to Tradition Eleven, OA is a program of attraction rather than promotion. This means we make no promises of weight loss or gain, beauty, gainful employment, sane behavior, or useful living. We only offer our own experience, strength, and hope from working the Steps and Tools, guided by the Traditions and Concepts of OA. If that is “the cure” the workshop leader is representing, then there is nothing in our guidelines that

prohibits such a workshop. If the workshop is based on non-OA-approved literature, however, then the workshop cannot be called an OA workshop.

Tradition One suggests that in the spirit of unity we use only OA-approved literature, which has been defined by the Overeaters Anonymous, Inc. [Business Conference Policy Manual](#), Policy 2010a. It says, “In accordance with our Traditions, we suggest that OA groups maintain unity and honor our Traditions by using, selling and displaying only approved books and pamphlets at their meetings. This includes OA Conference- and Board-approved Literature; AA Conference-approved books, booklets, and all future editions thereof, with original edition copyright 2010 or earlier; and locally produced OA literature. Locally produced literature must be developed according to the [OA Guidelines for Locally Produced Literature](#), which can be found on oa.org and should be used with the greatest discretion. Local literature should be considered temporary and discontinued when OA literature approved for general use is available to cover the topic.”

—WSBC 2014

WORKSHOPS—TOPICS—MINDFULNESS

Is it permissible for an intergroup to present a workshop or other program on “mindfulness,” even though mindfulness is not a Tool and not otherwise referenced in OA literature?

Using Step Nine and Tradition Four can help us improve our programs, and mindfulness could be thought of as part of these. Working Step Nine takes a lot of careful consideration (“mindfulness”); when we make amends, we must be mindful that the situation is handled in an appropriate and kind way. We need to carefully consider how this should be approached and be aware of it.

The question of whether it is appropriate to use mindfulness as a workshop topic can be answered by applying Tradition Four. Each group is autonomous and may do things in different ways, e.g. having different meeting formats, yet we need to be mindful and aware so that we do not contradict this Tradition and harm our program by bringing outside issues into the meetings. I believe that mindfulness would make a good workshop topic as long as the workshop does not state that mindfulness is one of the nine OA [Tools](#), since it is not.

—WSBC 2018

WSBC—DELEGATE SUPPORT FUNDING PROCESS

The WSBC Motions Review Committee’s “Comments” about New Business Motion D state that several applications for funding were subsequently funded by regions. Can you explain some of the reasons that these applications were rejected (other than reasons already stated, e.g., “second delegate” or “received after deadline”)?

New Business Motion D Committee Comments provided this 2012 information:

- Nineteen applications
- Thirteen funded with delegate support funds

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- Three funded by the applicants' respective regions
- One denied due to this being the second delegate sent
- One withdrawn
- One received after deadline

All [Delegate Support Fund applications](#) submitted to the WSO are also sent to the applicants' respective regions for evaluation and funding if possible. The three funded by their regions were not rejected by the WSO Delegate Support Fund but funded first by their region. There is cooperation between the DSF Committee and the region/virtual services trustees and chairs to fund as many applications as possible with the funds available.

—WSBC 2014

WSBC—LITERATURE SALES

Can Conference-approved Literature be made available at the WSBC for purchase?

Delegates can preorder literature and pick it up when they register at Conference. There have been times in the past when we sold literature at Conference, but it was a great deal of extra work for the staff during an already-busy week. So the decision was made to establish the preorder-and-pick-up arrangement, which takes much less staff time and still allows delegates to return home with any and all literature items.

—WSBC 2014

WSBC—OA MEETINGS

Are the OA meetings at the WSBC open to everyone in the Albuquerque area? Or open only to delegates?

Yes, the OA meetings at the WSBC are open to all OA members, including delegates and local members in the Albuquerque area. Anyone who has the desire to stop eating compulsively is welcome to attend.

—WSBC 2014

WSBC—PARTICIPATION FROM SPECIAL-FOCUS GROUPS

Can special-topic groups participate at WSBC?

Typically, groups do not participate at WSBC. Groups form intergroups and service boards, which can and do participate. All OA groups, special-topic and otherwise, are considered exactly the same when it comes to participation at WSBC. Refer to the [Bylaws, Subpart B](#), Article X, Section 3 – Delegates, which outlines the qualifications for delegates and how delegates to WSBC are selected.

—WSBC 2014

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WSBC—PROCEDURE—QUESTIONS AND DEBATE ON THE FLOOR

How do we make clear to delegates that engaging in debate during the question period is not in the spirit of honesty and arriving at a good group conscience? There are three pros and three cons, and we work very hard to make that fair. Other forms of questioning/debating are a type of bullying.

A better question is, how do we educate the board chair to recognize debate from the center mic? People are allowed to ask their questions. It is the chair's job to only answer those questions that are really about information and not about opinion. I also wonder if some delegates even recognize that they are practicing debate when trying to get their point heard.

Perhaps some role-playing exercises during the "All About Conference" workshop would help. It has been a goal of the members planning this workshop to do some procedural education prior to delegates' arrival at Conference. To that end, there are now a series of brief videos available on the WSBC page: oa.org/site-map; click "[World Service Business Conference](#)." These videos will be modified as necessary and delegates will be encouraged to review them prior to WSBC, so that at the "All About Conference" workshop less time will need to be spent on repetitive information giving and more time can be used to apply the knowledge by doing exercises such role-playing.

—WSBC 2018

WSBC—QUESTIONS DURING PRESENTATION OF NOMINEES

During the presentation of nominees, shouldn't priority to ask questions be given to people who haven't already spoken?

Good point. Currently there is nothing in the WSBC Standing Rules to handle your concern. The BOT will be discussing this for the 2016 WSBC Standing Rules.

—WSBC 2015

WSBC—REASONS FOR STRUCTURED PROCESSES

Is the WSBC/BOT tendency to restrict discussion and employ structure rules (only one question, limited time for discussion, required committee participation) in response to shrinking membership/financial insecurity?

No, not at all. According to OA, Inc. [Bylaws, Subpart B](#), Article X – Meeting of Delegate, Section 7 – Parliamentary Authority (2015 WSBC delegate binder, p. 99): "All meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the latest edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, where not in conflict with the laws, Articles of Incorporation, these bylaws, or special rules (standing rules) that delegates may adopt."

There is much business to be conducted in a limited amount of time. Almost 200 delegates from around the world assemble to conduct this business. One question per delegate allows as many different people to ask as many questions as possible. If time allows, and there are no other individuals wishing to ask a question, a delegate may ask a second question.

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Debate, discussion, and questions have always had an appropriated time, to ensure that as much business as possible is conducted during the business conference. If there were no such guidelines, it could be possible that the conference might never move beyond the first piece of business.

Regarding committee participation, there is no “requirement” but an expectation. Since there are so many delegates gathered for Conference, substantial OA work can be completed during this time, as well as arrangements made for follow-up work throughout the year. In addition, service bodies (or the delegate support fund) have made a financial commitment to delegates to further the business of OA. Participating on a committee results in multiple ideas and projects to “extend the hand and heart of OA to all.”

—WSBC 2015

WSBC—REFERENCE SUBCOMMITTEE

I understand the role that the Reference Subcommittee plays in consolidating and clarifying motions and amendments. I believe their voting and recommending how to vote makes members of this committee “VIPs” instead of equal members. Can you please explain this discrepancy with Traditions that I see?

I believe you are referring to Tradition Twelve; this section I believe explains that there is no discrepancy.

“When we keep the Twelfth Tradition, no one person or group of people is ever given special status in OA. Our leaders have no special honors; they’re simply our trusted servants” ([*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition*](#) p. 166).

In the case of the Reference Subcommittee, its members have been given a job to do by the members at the World Service Business Conference. According to *Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised* (pp. 633-640), it is recommended that a conference the size of the WSBC have such a committee to assist the members of the conference by reviewing the motions and reporting on their discussion. This helps the rest of the delegates by ensuring that motions are worded in the most effective way (without taking time to do it during the business meeting). Once the Reference Subcommittee has completed their review of a motion, it is appropriate for the committee to report their recommendation to the delegates.

Information on the Reference Subcommittee is found in the OA, Inc. [Bylaws, Subpart B](#) (Article XI, Section 2), which state:

- a) The Reference Subcommittee shall be composed of the Bylaws Committee delegate chair and representative of the Board of Trustees who shall be the cochairs; and the representatives selected from each region and the virtual service boards to serve on the Bylaws Committee.
- b) The Reference Subcommittee shall meet at times designated on the Conference schedule or agenda, and other times as required by the Conference. The Reference

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Subcommittee will meet on the day prior to the conclusion of scheduled new business to consider emergency new business.

- d) The Reference Subcommittee shall further operate according to guidelines developed by the Bylaws Committee and approved by the Board of Trustees.

This shows that the members of the subcommittee come from throughout the world; they represent the Fellowship at large. They meet up to six times during the two-day business-session portion of the conference week. The Reference Subcommittee meetings are open to all delegates who wish to observe how the committee works.

Here is part of an overview of Reference Subcommittee procedures, which comes from the Board Reference Manual (6.10):

The initial items to come before the Reference Subcommittee shall be determined by the Reference Subcommittee co-chairs using the following selection process (when appropriate, consideration will be given to the order in which the items will appear on the Conference agenda):

- Similar motions.
- Divided or controversial items as determined by results of the agenda questionnaire.
- Confusing or questionable items requiring clarification.
- Items referred from the Conference body or maker of the motion.
- Items referred from the Bylaws Committee.
- Any item automatically sent to the Reference Subcommittee as a result of Conference rules.
- Time permitting, any items of business remaining on the Conference agenda not previously discussed.
- Items referred from the chair of the Board of Trustees.

Reference Subcommittee procedures include voting on recommendations to Conference. Recommendations may include (but are not limited to): “adopt,” “adopt with amendments,” “defeat,” “no recommendation,” or “refer to committee.” Recommendations to adopt or defeat may be made in cases where there are no more than two dissenting voters. The Bylaws Committee trustee cochair informs the Conference of the Reference Subcommittee’s recommendations as well as the vote count of each item.

The only member of the Reference Subcommittee who addresses the Conference is the trustee cochair, and that is simply to report on the recommendations of the committee. Because they are only performing the task they have been assigned, I believe the members of the Reference Subcommittee are acting as trusted servants, not VIPs.

—WSBC 2016

WSBC—SERVING ON THE BYLAWS COMMITTEE

Why do you have to be invited to be on a committee? I wanted to be on the Bylaws Committee because I have a strong desire to learn about them. But I was told I needed to be invited. In the [OA Bylaws](#), Article XI, Section 2 – Bylaws Committee, the last

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sentence of the first paragraph says: “In addition, other delegates attending WSBC may choose to serve on the Bylaws Committee.”

You are correct that the Bylaws Committee is made up of delegates from around the world who indicate that this is the committee they wish to serve on at the World Service Business Conference. I welcome you to indicate that committee as your first choice on your registration form in the future.

To further explain, let’s take a look again at Article XI, Section 2 – Bylaws Committee, which currently reads: “The Bylaws Committee shall be composed of one or two delegates from each region, selected either at the regional assembly or by a method practical to the region. One or two delegates shall also be selected from the collective virtual service boards by a method practical to them. In addition, other delegates attending WSBC may choose to serve on the Bylaws Committee.”

What may have caused confusion about needing an invitation is the sentence in Article XI, Section 2, which states: “The Bylaws Committee shall be composed of one or two delegates from each region, selected either at the regional assembly or by a method practical to the region.”

This direction is intended to remind the regions of their responsibility to provide members for the Reference Subcommittee, which is active only during the Conference business meetings and does not make up the entire Bylaws Committee. Members who serve on the Reference Subcommittee are always expected to serve on the Bylaws Committee, but unless they are appointed by their region to do so, members who serve on the Bylaws Committee are not members of the Reference Subcommittee.

In addition, 1991a of the [Business Conference Policy Manual](#) states in part that “committee membership will be limited to a delegate cochair, a trustee cochair, and two or more delegates from each region, up to thirty members at WSBC.” As with all committees, the WSO staff tries to balance the number of committee members so that no more than thirty delegates serve on a single committee. This is done in an effort to ensure all committees have the volunteers they need to perform their business for that year, but: it is the desire of everyone involved that a delegate be given their first choice of committee whenever possible.

—WSBC 2015

WSBC—SEVENTH TRADITION COLLECTION

Does the Seventh Tradition at the WSBC come from intergroups or delegates?

Most of the donations taken during the Seventh Tradition are from the individual delegates. That was certainly the case this year at WSBC 2014, as \$4,455.36 was donated during the three days of business sessions. A special thank-you goes out to these delegates who place such a high value in Tradition Seven for their generosity in not only giving money but also service.

Some service bodies, especially those outside the continental US, make special contributions during the WSBC since there are such serious restrictions on US dollars. Some bring large amounts of cash for royalties on literature, and some need a receipt for a

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Seventh Tradition cash donation. Occasionally a contribution check in the Seventh Tradition collection is from a service body, so it does happen from time to time.

—WSBC 2014

WSBC—STANDING RULES AMENDMENT

Should “How to request a written ballot” be included in the Standing Rules?

I cannot answer this question because the decision to add this information would be up to the entire World Service Business Conference. I can, however, suggest this: if you feel strongly that something should be added to the Standing Rules, bring forward a motion for it at the beginning of next year’s Conference. The Standing Rules are amendable only by the Conference body, but anyone may bring forward a motion to change the rules.

—WSBC 2016

WSBC—VIRTUAL ATTENDANCE

Has the BOT given consideration to using virtual technology to allow WSBC delegates to attend and vote virtually? It would allow for a greater number of delegates to participate.

Thanks for your question. Yes, last year the BOT had an initial discussion about the possibility of virtual attendance, but our understanding is that this we will need a higher budget, more hands, and a hotel with better internet. The Virtual Region is working virtually, as it is easier for each individual to meet virtually (one internet connection for each member) instead of face to face and virtually. There are regions that are trying to have both types of attendance, but there are difficulties that include the hotel connection, the necessity that all microphones have a computer, that someone runs the computer (for example the chair, the center mic, and both pro and con mic), and having someone to “speak” (write) with the members who are connected virtually to give them some kind of voice and understanding. To have a voice and vote, there is a workshop that could be so important as the “All About Conference” to attend too. Something important to consider is language. Those members, where English is not their first language, require the sound to be good enough to help them understand. This is a dream and may be our reality in the future.

—WSBC 2019

WSBC—VIRTUAL ATTENDANCE

At my first WSBC in 2010, we discussed the option of virtual attendees. Nine years later, where are they? We could have a much greater attendance with virtual delegates.

Thank you for this question. I agree that virtual attendance is something to consider in the future. I cannot see in the very near future that we can have delegates attending and participating virtually. So far, we have Regions Eight, Ten, and Virtual with virtual attendees at their assemblies. They have also found solutions to the ballot voting problem

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that came with virtual attendance. These may seem like baby steps, but these could be considered a starting point for WSBC virtual attendance.

Having attended a Board of Trustees meeting in February 2019 that was totally virtual, I know the dedication and concentration needed over several hours. It was very tiring to look at a screen of a mosaic of members (22+) with the concentration needed over three to four hours. Also, to be considered was the need to extract ourselves from family and phone (i.e. environmental) interference. The WSBC is held (Thursday and Friday 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.) over two and a half days, so that would be just that much harder. There would need to be different members from different time zones prepared to set aside days of sleeping at unusual hours; they would need to be so committed that they extract themselves from all environmental distractions and would need to commit to the whole two and a half days.

Then there is the cost of the extra internet coverage and all the sound system required to cater for bringing in members virtually. We are not a corporation with unlimited funds. I do believe that the WSBC will become more efficient in the future whether or not it becomes partially virtual. I can see that there could be a system where observers could see the Business Conference via a platform but not have speaking or voting rights in the near future. I hope this discussion/response brings more questions than answers as I believe this is a healthy discussion.

—WSBC 2019

WSBC—VOTING BY INFORMED DECISION

A particular intergroup has instructed all its delegates to vote the same as one specific delegate of that intergroup. This seems impractical since we are given no opportunity to confer. Please advise.

Thank you for asking this important question. I am assuming that you are saying that your intergroup is telling its delegates how to vote at WSBC.

You are correct in saying that when an intergroup instructs its delegates how to vote, the delegates are not able to listen during conference and make an informed decision based on what is discussed during debate. Page 100 of [*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*](#) (Tradition Two) states in part, “In order to reach an *informed* group conscience, we affirm each group member’s right to take part in the discussions, and we listen to everyone attentively with open minds. The purpose of our discussions is to make sure that the decision reached by the group takes into account all pertinent information. If we are to reach an informed decision, the group will need to take into account everybody’s needs and ideas. For this reason, OA groups give all viewpoints a full hearing—even minority viewpoints.”

Intergroups elect delegates to be “trusted servants.” They represent their respective intergroups to be “servants” for OA as a whole. Their intergroups “trust” them to make an informed decision.

As a trusted servant for my intergroup, I was sent as a delegate to WSBC. While there, I was serving OA as a whole. It was my job to listen to what others had to say, and my intergroup trusted me to make the decision that I thought was best for OA as a whole.

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I listened and participated during my intergroup meetings as we discussed a particular motion for WSBC. My intergroup's unanimous opinion was for me to vote "yes." I went to Conference knowing and agreeing with the opinion of my intergroup. During Conference, a person with a minority opinion said something at the "con" microphone that my intergroup had not known or considered. It completely changed how I viewed the issue and I voted "no." When I returned home, I reported my decision and reasons for it to my intergroup. When they heard my explanation, they agreed with my decision.

Concept Four states: "The right of participation ensures equality of opportunity for all in the decision-making process." Telling delegates how they must vote denies them full participation and promotes inequality in the decision-making process.

Tradition Four states: "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole."

Concept Two states: "The OA groups have delegated to World Service Business Conference the active maintenance of our world services; thus, the World Service Business Conference is the voice, authority, and effective conscience of OA as a whole."

[*The Twelve Concepts of OA Service*](#) states on page 4, "Delegates of the WSBC know the will of the service bodies that elect them to service as their representatives. However, because delegates hear a broad range of ideas presented on the Conference floor, they are not obligated to vote according to that service body's will. They may change their position on an issue when presented with multiple perspectives or when motions are amended that alter the direction of the issue at hand."

There are not many issues that could affect OA as a whole. According to Concept Two, telling delegates how they must vote could certainly be one of them.

Restricting the voting of a delegate would appear to me, at the very least, to be contrary to the spirit of Tradition Two and Concepts Two and Four. This may be an issue that you would like to discuss at your next intergroup meeting.

—WSBC 2015

WSBC—WHAT 'RESCINDED' MEANS

In this year's WSBC Binder, pp. 60-64 is Appendix A-Rescissions. Each listing starts with "It was adopted that" and ends with "(Rescinded ____ (year)." What does Rescinded ____ (year) indicate? Does it mean that the adoption has been taken back? That is what all the people I asked say they think is implied, yet for example I'm not aware that 2010b "Action Plan" as a tool was somehow taken away. Please can you explain and clarify?

To adopt means to accept formally or officially; approve. Rescission means to appeal or cancel. The rescinded year indicates the year the guideline, policy, etc. was cancelled, thereby no longer relevant or no longer in effect. In many cases, a policy is rescinded because it is later addressed elsewhere. For example, the policy adding the Action Plan tool was rescinded because a new policy was adopted that lists all the tools:

2011b: It was adopted to: Include the Tools of recovery of OA in the Conference Policy Manual. The following are the Tools of recovery of OA: A Plan of Eating,

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Sponsorship, Meetings, Telephone, Writing, Literature, Anonymity, Service and Action Plan.

This was also the case with the Twelve Concepts, which were originally in the Business Conference Policy Manual (1994c) but then moved to the [OA Bylaws Subpart B](#), Article III; they were rescinded from the policy manual because they were no longer needed there.

—WSBC 2015

WORLD SERVICE OFFICE—SITE CHOICE

Why was New Mexico, USA chosen to be the site of OA's World Service Office?

In her book [Beyond Our Wildest Dreams](#), our cofounder Rozanne talks about this process. The main office of OA was located near Los Angeles, California USA for thirty-five years. At that time, the Fellowship continued to grow but, due to local and national shifts in economy, its income had decreased, so OA, Inc. performed a business relocation study. The decision was made to move to Rio Rancho, New Mexico, just outside Albuquerque (USA).

The new World Service Office building and warehouse opened its doors on November 11, 1994. If you are interested in the history of OA, I suggest reading *Beyond our Wildest Dreams* (#998 at bookstore.oa.org).

—WSBC 2017

YOUNG PERSONS—ATTENDING

What should we do when a child comes to our meeting either alone or with a parent? What is our policy? If asked by a parent what they should do for their child, where should we direct them?

Overeaters Anonymous suggests that a responsible adult (parent or guardian) accompany children, who are under the legal age of 18, and wish to attend a face-to-face OA meeting. OA considers young people to be in the 18 to 30 age group, so even if a group was labeled “for young people,” it is not a meeting for children under 18 years of age.

In addition, we have learned there are light-years of difference between wanting to change weight or eat normally and being able to surrender to achieve these goals. The true “desire to stop eating compulsively” usually cannot be instilled in a child by a concerned adult or parents, no matter how lovingly and tenderly they try. Nor can we in the OA Fellowship give anyone the desire to stop this behavior or thinking. The willingness to do so must come from within. This may take years of painful experience of trying to stop on one's own. Younger people are often dealing with peer pressure, which can make it more difficult for them to follow a food plan. Also, suggest literature resources we have to offer younger children. These are [Billy's Story](#) and [The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions: A Kid's View](#). With this information, even at this young age, a seed can be planted and as a result, a person may eventually embrace the program and

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recover. Other literature for young people includes *To the Parents and Concerned Adults*, a placard, and *To the Family of the Compulsive Eater*, a pamphlet. I hope this helps.

—WSBC 2019