



Temporary Sponsors: Newcomers' First Twelve Days

What is the purpose of the *First Twelve Days* in OA?

- To help newcomers, returning OA members, and other members learn about the OA Twelve Step recovery program by using this personal, short-term introduction to Overeaters Anonymous.
- To help sponsees learn how the OA recovery program might help them to stop hurting themselves with food.
- To help members who may be ready to sponsor but are reluctant to do so. This is an opportunity for a member to help a newcomer in a very structured way and to experience what it might be like to be a regular sponsor.

This program takes place during twelve sessions, which may or may not occur in twelve consecutive days. For instance, you may want to schedule calls on weekdays only. You also may want to look ahead at the sessions, and if you are uncertain about how to discuss any of the topics with the sponsee, you may want to ask your sponsor or another OA member for ideas.

During your calls, share the experience, strength, and hope you have because of the solution offered by working the Twelve Steps of OA. Without dominating the conversation and without judging the sponsee, share just enough to draw them out, answer their questions, and encourage their unique process of discovery and recovery.

Books that are not OA-approved, as well as diets and other programs, are outside issues.

Remember, it is not your responsibility to force someone to be abstinent (nor is it possible). The journey of the sponsee is between that person and their Higher Power. A sponsor is there for support.

First Twelve Days Instructions

The readings for this program are from the pamphlet *Where Do I Start? Everything a Newcomer Needs to Know*. Both the sponsor and the sponsee should have a copy of this pamphlet.

Day	Subject and Reading for Sponsee	Discussion Question(s)
1	Fifteen Questions: Read “Dear Newcomer” through “You Are Not Alone,” on pages 1–3.	Ask and Discuss: Review the Fifteen Questions on pages 1–2. Ask your sponsee to circle the questions they relate to. Discuss their responses. Stress to your sponsee the importance of working the Steps as a vital part of a lasting recovery.
2	Requirements: Read “What are the requirements for OA membership?” on page 23. Next, read pages 24–25, starting with “Who runs OA?” through “What are the Twelve Traditions?”	Ask and Discuss: What led your sponsee to OA? What does/do “eating compulsively” and/or “compulsive food behaviors” mean to the sponsee? Does your sponsee have a desire to stop? Discuss. Listen to your sponsee’s concerns about OA. Discuss.
3	Symptoms: Read “Many Symptoms, One Solution” on pages 4–5, then “Welcome Home” on pages 28–30.	Ask and Discuss: Ask your sponsee to write about symptoms they have experienced. How early did these symptoms start? Discuss.
4	Abstinence: Read “Abstinence—Our Primary Purpose,” ^{1, 2} “The Tools of Recovery,” and “A Plan of Eating” on page 5.	Ask and Discuss: Ask your sponsee to write about which compulsive eating or compulsive food behaviors concern them the most. Discuss.

¹ Overeaters Anonymous accepts the following definitions of “abstinence” and “recovery”:

Abstinence 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 and working the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve Step program on a daily basis.

² In the context of OA members’ individual abstinences, “Our Primary Purpose” references the primary purpose of each OA member, which is found in the OA Preamble: “Our primary purpose is to abstain from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors and to carry the message of recovery through the Twelve Steps of OA to those who still suffer.”

In contrast, Tradition Five is about an OA group’s primary purpose and states: “Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers.”

Day	Subject and Reading for Sponsee	Discussion Question(s)
5	<p>Meetings: Read “Meetings” on page 6, then “How much does OA membership cost?” and “How does OA support itself?” on pages 22-23.</p>	<p>Ask and Discuss: Suggest that your sponsee make a plan to attend six meetings. This can include face-to-face, phone, online, or videoconferencing meetings.</p>
6	<p>OA Fellowship: Read “Can I stop eating compulsively on my own just through reading OA literature?” on pages 22–23.</p>	<p>Ask and Discuss: Ask your sponsee to write about their feelings concerning receiving help from other members in OA. Discuss. Suggest that they start contacting members listed on the <i>Where Do I Start?</i> pamphlet provided or their meeting’s contact list.</p>
7	<p>Action Plan and Other Tools: Read “Telephone,” “Writing,” “Literature,” and “Action Plan” on page 6.</p>	<p>Ask and Discuss: Help your sponsee draft an action plan for the next several days that will help support their recovery. Discuss.</p>
8	<p>Draft a Food Plan: Read “Disclaimer” on pages 30–31, then pages 7–18, starting with “Further Information: A Plan of Eating” through “Structure and Sanity.”</p>	<p>Ask and Discuss: Suggest to your sponsee that, together, you draft an initial food plan that will support them. Discuss, and be sure to tell your sponsee that no sponsor is acting in the capacity of a health care professional.</p>
9	<p>Anonymity: Read “Anonymity” on page 7, then “Why does OA place such emphasis upon ‘anonymity?’” on page 26.</p>	<p>Ask and Discuss: Discuss the concept of “anonymity.” Discuss the meaning of “humility.”</p>
10	<p>Are You Convinced? Read “What is compulsive eating?” through “Can’t a compulsive overeater just use willpower to stop excessive eating?” on pages 19–21.</p>	<p>Ask and Discuss: Now that your sponsee has been introduced to the OA program and has taken some actions, does your sponsee now consider themselves to be a compulsive eater? Ask them to write their thoughts and feelings on this subject. Discuss.</p>
11	<p>Higher Power: Read “What is meant by ‘a Power greater than ourselves?’” through “Is OA a religious society?” on pages 21–22. Then, read “Structure and Sanity” on page 18.</p>	<p>Ask and Discuss: Ask your sponsee to write about their understanding of a Higher Power. If they struggle with the concept of a Higher Power, are they open to the idea that a Higher Power can simply be the OA meeting group? Has their food history been characterized by their own willpower going out of control? Might the concept of connecting with a Power greater than oneself help their recovery? Discuss.</p>

Day	Subject and Reading for Sponsee	Discussion Question(s)
12	What's Next? Read "Service" on page 7, then "Sponsorship" on page 5. Lastly, read "Conclusion" on pages 18-19.	Ask and Discuss: Ask your sponsee to write about their experience of their first twelve days in OA and discuss. Review their action plan for how they will move forward. ³

Remember: In Overeaters Anonymous, there is hope and help. Together we can recover! If you have questions, comments, or suggestions, please email info@oa.org.

Find and download *Temporary Sponsors: Newcomers' First Twelve Days* at oa.org/sitemap/ under "Group Resources."

OA Promise

I put my hand in yours . . . and together we can do what we could never do alone! No longer is there a sense of hopelessness, no longer must we each depend upon our own unsteady willpower. We are all together now, reaching out our hands for power and strength greater than ours, and as we join hands, we find love and understanding beyond our wildest dreams.



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³ Upon the conclusion of the twelfth session, you will want to offer either to continue as the individual's regular sponsor or assist this person in finding such a sponsor.