THE TOOLS OF RECOVERY

Helping us live and work the Twelve Steps

The Twelve Steps
1. We admitted we were powerless over food—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure
them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we
understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that
out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message
to compulsive overeaters and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Permission to use the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous for adaptation granted by AA World Services, Inc.

The Tools of Recovery
As we work the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve Step program of recovery from compulsive overeating, we have found that a number of tools are available to assist us. We use these tools—a plan of eating, sponsorship, meetings, the telephone, writing, literature, action plan, anonymity, and service—on a regular basis, to help us achieve and maintain abstinence and recovery from our disease.

In Overeaters Anonymous (OA), the definitions of “abstinence” and “recovery” are: “1. A abstinence is: The act of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight. 2. Recovery: is the removal of the need to engage in compulsive eating behaviors. Spiritual, emotional, and physical recovery is achieved through working and living the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve Step program.”

A Plan of Eating
As a Tool, a plan of eating helps us abstain from compulsive eating, guides us in our dietary decisions, and defines what, when, how, where, and why we eat.

There are no specific requirements for a plan of eating. OA does not endorse or recommend any specific plan of eating, nor does it exclude the personal use of one. (See the pamphlets Dignity of Choice and A Plan of Eating for more information.) For specific dietary or nutritional guidance, OA suggests consulting a qualified health care professional, such as a physician or dietitian.

Many of us find it essential to take guidance from our sponsors to develop a plan of eating that
reflects an honest desire to achieve and maintain abstinence. Each of us develops a personal plan of eating based on a honest thorough appraisal of his or her past experience. Many of us find it essential to take guidance from our sponsors to develop a plan of eating that reflects an honest desire to achieve and maintain abstinence.

Although individual plans of eating are as varied as our members, most OA members agree that some plan—no matter how flexible or structured—is necessary.

This Tool helps us deal with the physical aspects of our disease and achieve physical recovery. From this vantage point, we can more effectively follow OA’s Twelve Step program of recovery and move beyond the food to a happier, healthier, and more spiritual life.

Sponsorship

Sponsors are OA members who are living the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous to the best of their ability. They are willing to share their recovery with other members of the Fellowship and are committed to abstinence. They are committed to abstinence and are willing to share their recovery with other members of the Fellowship.

We ask a sponsor to help us through our program of recovery on all three levels of our program of recovery: physical, emotional, and spiritual. Sponsors continually renew and reaffirm their own recovery by working with other members of OA and sharing their experience, strength, and hope. Sponsors continually renew and reaffirm their own recovery. Abstinent members who are considering becoming a sponsor for the first time might review the suggestions offered in OA pamphlets on sponsoring.

Ours is a program of attraction. Find a sponsor who has what you want and ask that person how he or she is achieving it. A member may work with more than one sponsor and may change sponsors as needed. However, many of us choose to work with just one sponsor. In either case, it’s helpful to avoid changing sponsors frequently.

Meetings

Meetings are gatherings of two or more compulsive overeaters who come together to share their personal experience, and the strength and hope OA has given them. There are many types of meetings, but fellowship with other compulsive overeaters is the basis of them all. Meetings give us an opportunity to identify our common problem, confirm our common solution, through the Twelve Steps, and share the gifts we receive through this Twelve Step program. In addition to face-to-face meetings, OA offers telephone and online and many other types of virtual meetings that are useful in breaking down through the deadly isolation caused by distance, illness, or physical challenges. Likewise, OA recovery events such as conventions, retreats, and workshops offer valuable opportunities to support program growth, understanding, and a sense of fellowship.

Telephone

Member-to-member contact helps us share on a one-to-one basis, work the Steps, and avoid the experience of isolation that is so common among us. Many members call, text, or email their
sponsors and other OA members daily. As part of the surrender process, this Tool helps us learn to reach out, ask for help, and extend help to others. Telephone or electronic contact also provides an immediate outlet for those hard-to-handle highs and lows we may experience. Members should are reminded to respect anonymity when leaving any type of voicemail or sending any type of electronic message.

Writing
In addition to writing our inventories and the list of people we have harmed, most of us have found that writing has been an indispensable Tool for working the Steps and other aspects of our program. Many members commit to writing daily food and action plans as well as regular Tenth Step inventories and gratitude lists. Further, putting our thoughts and feelings down on paper, or describing a troubling or joyful incident, helps us to better understand our actions and reactions in a way that is often not revealed to us by simply thinking or talking about them. In the past, compulsive eating was our most common reaction to life. When we put write about our difficulties, down on paper, it becomes easier to see situations more clearly and perhaps better discern any necessary action.

Literature
Reading literature daily further reinforces how to live the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of the OA recovery program. We read OA-approved literature, which includes numerous books, study guides, pamphlets, wallet cards, and selected Alcoholics Anonymous texts. All this material provides insight into our disease and the experience, strength, and hope that there is a solution for us. OA literature and the OA-Approved Literature List are available at oa.org.

We read OA-approved books such as Anonymous, Third Edition; The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition; Voices of Recovery; For Today; and Alcoholics Anonymous (the Big Book). We also study and read OA-approved pamphlets and Lifeline, our magazine of recovery. Many OA members find that reading literature daily further reinforces how to live the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. All our literature provides insight into our problem of eating compulsively, strength to deal with it, and the very real hope that there is a solution for us.

Action Plan
An creating an action plan is the process of identifying and implementing attainable actions, both daily and long-term, that are necessary to support our individual abstinence and emotional, spiritual, and physical recovery. While the plan is ours, tailored to our own recovery process, most of us find it important to work with a sponsor, a fellow OA member, and/or an appropriate professional to help us create it. This Tool, like our plan of eating, may vary widely among members and may need to be adjusted as we progress in our recovery.

Along with working the Steps on a daily basis, an action plan may incorporate the use of the other OA Tools to bring structure, balance, and manageability into our lives.

For example, a newcomer's action plan might focus on planning, shopping for, and preparing food. Some members may need a regular fitness routine, to improve strength and health, while others may need to set exercise limits in order to attain more balance avoid compulsive
behaviors. Some of us may need an action plan that includes time for meditation, and relaxation, and working our program. Our plan provides strategies for balancing work, personal interactions, and time with family and friends, and our program. Others may need help organizing their homes, dealing with their finances, and or addressing medical, dental, or mental health issues.

Along with working the Steps on a daily basis, an action plan may incorporate use of the other OA Tools to bring structure, balance, and manageability into our lives. As we use this Tool, we find that we develop a feeling of serenity and continue to grow emotionally and spiritually while we make measurable progress, one day at a time.

**Anonymity**

Anonymity, referred to in Traditions Eleven and Twelve, is a Tool that guarantees we will is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities (Tradition Twelve).

The protection of anonymity offers each of us freedom of expression and safeguards us from gossip. Anonymity assures us that only we, as individual OA members, have the right to make our membership known within our community to others.

Anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television and other public media of communication means that we never allow our faces or last names to be used once we identify ourselves as OA members (Tradition Eleven). This protects both the individual and the Fellowship.

Another aspect of anonymity is that we are all equal in the Fellowship, whether we are newcomers or longtime members. Our status makes no difference in OA; we come together simply as compulsive overeaters.

Within the Fellowship, anonymity means that whatever we share with another OA member will be held in respected and kept confidencial. What we hear at meetings should remain there. However, we understand that we must not allow anonymity to limit our effectiveness within the Fellowship. Anonymity does not mean secrecy. It is not a break of anonymity to use our full names within our OA groups or OA service bodies. Also, it is not a break of anonymity to enlist Twelfth Step help for group members in trouble, provided we are careful to refrain from discussing any protect specific personal information.

Another aspect of anonymity is that we are all equal in the Fellowship, whether we are newcomers or seasoned longtimers. And our outside status makes no difference in OA; we have no stars or VIPs. We come together simply as compulsive overeaters.

**Service**

Carrying the message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers is the basic primary purpose of our Fellowship; therefore, it is the most fundamental form of service. Any form of service—no matter how small—that helps reach a fellow sufferer adds to the quality of our own recovery.
Members who are new to OA can give service by getting to attending meetings, sharing, and putting away chairs. All members can also give service by putting out literature, talking to welcoming newcomers, hosting a virtual meeting, or and doing whatever is needed to help be done for the group. Members who meet the specified abstinence requirements can give service beyond the group level in such activities as by serving at the intergroup representative, committee chair, service board, region representative, or Conference delegate world service level.

There are many ways to give back what we have so generously been given. We are encouraged to do what we can when we can. We are promised “A "a life of sane and happy usefulness"—is what we are promised as the result of working the Twelve Steps. Service helps to fulfill that promise.

As 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.”

The Twelve Traditions
1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon OA unity.
2. 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.
3. The only requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers.
6. 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.
7. Every OA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Overeaters Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. OA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Overeaters Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence, the OA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television and other public media of communication.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all these Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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[Conference Seal of Approval goes here]

*Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition, p. 130
How to find OA
Visit the OA website at www.oa.org, or contact the World Service Office at 1-505-891-2664. Many local telephone directories also include local listings for Overeaters Anonymous.