

NEWCOMERS MEETINGS: A LEADER'S KIT

*A guide for leaders and other OA members
interested in meetings for beginning members*

CONTENTS

Types of Meetings	1
Meeting Arrangements.....	1
Suggestions for Leaders and Speakers	2
Meeting Topics	2



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OA Board-Approved Literature
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The kit includes the following items:

A Guide for Sponsors (#200)
A Lifetime of Abstinence (#155)
In OA, Recovery is Possible (#135)
A New Plan of Eating (#144)
Fifteen Questions (#755)
Many Symptoms, One Solution (#106)
OA Handbook for Members, Groups, and Service Bodies (#120)
OA Literature Order Form
Pocket Reference for OA Members (#435)
Strong Abstinence Checklist and Writing Exercise (#415)
Think First (#109)
To the Family of the Compulsive Eater (#240)
To the Man (#290)
To the Young Person (#280)
Tools of Recovery (#160)

Newcomers meetings introduce newcomers to the basics of our program. Topics include the three-fold nature of the disease of compulsive eating (physical, emotional, and spiritual); abstaining from compulsive eating; the Twelve Steps; the Twelve Traditions; and the Tools of Recovery.

TYPES OF NEWCOMERS MEETINGS

1. *Public information.* These meetings are usually open to professionals, family, and friends as well as newcomers. The topics are usually covered in one or two specially scheduled two- to three-hour meetings.
2. *A newcomer series.* Usually a one-hour session is devoted to each topic, with additional sessions scheduled as needed. Typically a series includes six meetings, but may range from four to twelve. They are generally scheduled before regular meetings, although they can take place separately and apart from regular meetings. When coupled with a regular OA meeting, members who usually attend the regular meeting can participate in the newcomers meetings and invite newcomers to accompany them to the regular meeting. A few groups prefer to have the newcomers and regular meetings simultaneously, in nearby rooms.
3. *OA weekly meetings designated as newcomers meetings.* These meetings focus on the basics, and the series runs continuously.
4. *Combination of public information and newcomer series.* A public information night or afternoon is followed by a scheduled newcomer series.

MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

The purpose of newcomers meetings is to welcome newcomers and give them the opportunity to listen to the experience, strength, and hope of recovering members. Newcomers are also encouraged to participate in discussions and to ask questions. Most newcomers meetings begin with a long-term, abstaining member sharing about the disease of compulsive eating and our program of recovery, followed by discussion and a time for questions and answers. While OA members are invited to attend these meetings to greet and share their recovery with newcomers, the meeting is for newcomers and should not be dominated by the leader or by other OA members who happen to attend. The leader is responsible for seeing that it does not turn into a discussion between experienced OA members.

Newcomer participation is encouraged by an intimate, informal, friendly atmosphere, usually with chairs in a circle or around a large table, or if the seating arrangements are primarily theater style, by including a break to encourage more personal sharing.

Newcomers need access to resources. We suggest that you have a good supply of current meeting lists at any newcomers meeting. A literature order form are included in this kit, as well as some newcomer literature. Groups have the option of either distributing packets at one time or providing pamphlets or pocket cards to newcomers when relevant to a particular meeting topic. In addition, members might contribute old *Lifeline* issues to give or lend to newcomers. We suggest that newcomers meetings display an ample supply of OA literature for newcomers to purchase.

SUGGESTIONS FOR LEADERS AND SPEAKERS

1. Arrive early to welcome newcomers.
2. Inform the group that OA is a Twelve Step program patterned after Alcoholics Anonymous.
3. Introduce the speaker to share his or her story. Be sure to note that the speaker shares only from personal experience and expresses individual opinions; no one speaks for the OA Fellowship as a whole, or even for the group.
4. The speaker qualifies, tells his or her story, and incorporates the topic of the meeting. In qualifying, describe your identification as a compulsive eater—your obsession, compulsive behaviors, and body when you came to OA and the length of your abstinence. Describe your recovery on all three levels. Letting newcomers know what it was like when you came to the program and what it's like now will help the newcomer to identify and believe change is possible. Sharing what you did to put down the food and maintain abstinence provides insight into what they might do to recover.
5. Assure participants that their anonymity will be respected and their participation and sharing will be held in confidence. Inform newcomers that anyone who has a desire to stop eating compulsively is welcome at all OA meetings, but some meetings are closed to non-members (professionals, family, friends, etc.). However, by group conscience, non-members may be invited.
6. Follow guidelines for sharing (see the *Suggested Meeting Format* for guidelines and definition of cross talk).
7. Refer to OA literature in leading, discussing and/or answering questions to familiarize newcomers with the value of our literature.
8. In closing, refer newcomers to literature to further explain the topic. Remind them that “opinions are those of the speakers and not OA as a whole,” and to respect one another’s anonymity. Be sure to invite newcomers to check out the list of meetings and to attend as many as they can. Encourage the exchange of phone numbers. Above all, tell them to “keep coming back.”

MEETING TOPICS

1. The disease of compulsive eating (physical, emotional, spiritual)

Read Our Invitation to You and/or include the following points in your introduction:

- We suffer from the disease of compulsive overeating. We are not immoral, weak-willed, bad, or disgusting—and we are not alone.
- We have a progressive disease characterized by an obsession of the mind and compulsive behavior. Our common problem is threefold: physical, emotional, and spiritual.
- The concept of compulsive eating as a disease is spelled out in all our literature. Especially pertinent is the OA book *Overeaters Anonymous, Third Edition* (particularly “Our Invitation To You,” pages 1–5, and the Appendices, pages 229–251). The book *Alcoholics*

Anonymous, Fourth Edition, on which our program is based, gives many parallel insights into addiction as a disease. Let newcomers know that Our Invitation to You is often read as part of the meeting format.

- We have found that the disease of compulsive eating can be arrested, one day at a time, but cannot be cured. Point out that once the “diagnosis” is accepted we can follow the OA “prescription” for recovery: abstinence and the Twelve Steps
- Discuss with newcomers:
 - The symptoms of the disease of compulsive eating.
 - The differences between normal eaters and compulsive eaters. The discussion on pages 4–5 of *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition* can be very useful and powerful in this connection.
 - Our powerlessness over controlling compulsive eating with misdirected willpower.
 - The miracle of recovery through the Twelve Steps: the freedom from the food obsession, and the freedom to not want to eat foods that used to beckon to us.
 - The importance of being willing to follow the OA program rather than insisting on prior intellectual understanding of the problem.
- OA does not pretend to be a medical program or a storehouse of nutritional knowledge. Members who want information of this nature must seek it from other sources. OA does not endorse any particular food plan. The pamphlet *A New Plan of Eating* provides guidance.
- Our primary purpose is to abstain from compulsive eating and to carry the message of recovery. We need to support every OA member, instilling hope, trust, freedom, and joy, rather than feelings of guilt, fear, and hardship. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively, which is Tradition Three. OA does not weigh members, sign them up, monitor their eating habits, or keep tabs on them in any way. The important thing is to keep coming back and work the program with others. (See “How Do You Become a Group Member?” in the *OA Handbook for Members, Groups, and Service Bodies*.)

2. How to abstain from compulsive eating one day at a time

Abstinence is the action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight. OA members have different plans of eating. Many follow a specific food plan; others are comfortable with eating moderate meals or simply not bingeing or purging. Some OA members weigh and measure their food. Our plans vary in the number of meals and foods to include or exclude. The OA pamphlet *A New Plan of Eating* provides suggestions on how to meet individual needs.

The leader or speaker is encouraged to share his or her own story of becoming abstinent. The process of abstaining from compulsive eating is a one day at a time, one hour at a time, even one minute at a time process. The pocket card *Think First* contains suggestions on how to avoid compulsive eating.

Members attending the meeting may add their suggestions to the following methods of abstaining from compulsive eating one day at a time:

- Focus on “just for today”: abstain for just this 24 hours, this hour, or this minute, if necessary.
- Get a sponsor and stay in touch on a daily basis—even several times a day if necessary. Talking about food specifics can be helpful, and sharing feelings and personal problems is also important.
- Some members find that postponing compulsive eating—until this afternoon, tonight, or tomorrow—and continuing to postpone it helps them get and maintain abstinence.
- Attend as many meetings as possible.
- Call other OA members, newcomers, or people with more experience. You help the person you call as much as you help yourself.
- Look for someone else to help. Sharing how OA has been a benefit to us is how members “keep” their recovery.
- Read OA and AA literature, keeping it around the house and carrying some in your purse or pocket.
- Pray—in whatever way is meaningful for you, even if you’re “acting as if.”
- Change routines, especially at times most conducive to compulsive eating. This helps to change old patterns.
- Make a list of things to do instead when you have thoughts about food or the urge to eat compulsively, and then do one of them.
- Get together with other OA members for non-eating activities or to enjoy an abstinent meal.
- Begin working the Twelve Steps.

3. How It Works: The Twelve Steps as a suggested program of recovery

To introduce newcomers to the Twelve Steps, read or paraphrase “How It Works” from *Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition* (the Big Book), Chapter 5.

Assure newcomers that OA is a spiritual program and does not follow any religious doctrine. Members practice the spiritual principles of the program with a personal Higher Power of their own understanding.

Emphasize that the Twelve Steps are the basis of our program of recovery. We try to work on them—and let them work on us—for the rest of our lives, one day at a time. There are no “musts” in OA; these Steps are simply suggested, based on the experience of recovering OA members. They evolved in AA as a result of experience in recovery.

Share how you have worked the Steps and how they have helped your recovery. Encourage newcomers to study the Steps with their sponsor and OA friends and to apply them in their daily lives. We do not expect to be perfect at doing this, just to make progress.

The pamphlet *To the Newcomer* provides an introduction to our Twelve Step program of recovery. Since the source of the Twelve Steps is Alcoholics Anonymous, we encourage newcomers to read the Big Book for themselves in addition to OA literature. Be sure to have

copies of *Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition*; *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition*; and *The Twelve Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition* available to lend, sell, or give away.

4. *The Twelve Traditions*

While OA functions with very little obvious organization, adherence to the Traditions assures the survival of the Fellowship. Applying the Traditions to our relationships in and out of OA strengthens our spirituality and helps maintain abstinence. *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition* along with AA's *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and *AA Comes of Age* are excellent sources of information on the origin and importance of the Traditions. OA's pamphlet *The Twelve Traditions* provides a good introduction for the newcomer.

Leaders may relate their own experience in using the Traditions to help newcomers understand the importance of anonymity; principles before personalities; group conscience; self-support; OA's non-affiliation with other organizations; and our sole membership requirement, a desire to stop eating compulsively. Leaders might share how living the Traditions helps them stay abstinent.

It is equally important to point out what OA does not do. For example, OA does not solicit members or attempt to convince anyone to join the Fellowship. Nor does it keep membership files, participate in research, follow up on its members, give medical or psychological advice, offer any kind of social services or counseling, accept reimbursement for its services, or accept contributions from non-OA sources.

Since the Traditions are significant for our personal recovery and the Fellowship's survival and growth, this topic is of great importance at newcomers meetings.

5. *The Tools of Recovery*

The nine Tools of Recovery—a plan of eating, sponsorship, meetings, telephone, writing, literature, action plan, anonymity, service—are described in our pamphlet, *The Tools of Recovery*. The pamphlet is not meant to be read aloud at the meeting, but to be used as a basis for the explanation of each Tool and how the Tools have contributed to working the Steps and maintaining abstinence. When sharing your experience, strength, and hope, include how the Tools have supported your recovery.

Special attention should be given to sponsorship: what it is, how to get a sponsor, when and how to change sponsors. In addition to the Tools pamphlet, newcomers and sponsors can find helpful information in the pamphlets *A Guide for Sponsors* and *Sponsoring Through the Twelve Steps*.

6. *More about OA*

A complete session may be devoted to each of the topics below, or they may be incorporated into other sessions.

- Literature

Newcomers are interested in knowing about every possible source of help available in OA. One of the most important things we can do for newcomers may be to introduce them to the publications available from the World Service Office. Note that *Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition* is often referred to as the Big Book and *Overeaters Anonymous, Third Edition* is called the Brown Book. *Alcoholics Anonymous* and publications about our illness and the OA program are available from the World Service Office. Recovery CDs are also available from WSO, and information and inspiration are posted on the OA website, oa.org. We suggest that you have a good supply of approved literature available. Describe these publications and how you have used these sources to support your recovery. Encourage newcomers to read them.

- Spiritual awakening

Discuss what this experience has meant for others, beginning with Bill W., cofounder of Alcoholics Anonymous. See *Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition*, pages 8–14, 569–570, and the chapters “We Agnostics,” “Working with Others,” and “A Vision for You.” Also pertinent is “Step Twelve” in *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition*. Encourage newcomers to discover what “spiritual experience” means for them, and emphasize that this is a deeply personal matter. Suggest that they read *Overeaters Anonymous, Third Edition* to learn about the experiences of other OA members. The experiences of AA members are recorded in AA’s book *Came to Believe*.

- Service

Service is the basis of our program of recovery and the essence of spiritual growth. Explain briefly the service structure (intergroup, region, WSO), particularly explaining the local intergroup and what it does. Newcomers may find useful information in the pamphlet *OA Handbook for Members, Groups, and Service Bodies*. Leaders and speakers may find the *Service, Traditions, and Concepts Workshop Manual* a supplemental resource. Share how service has contributed to your recovery.

- History

- The original AA experience as described in *Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition* and *AA Comes of Age*.
- How OA evolved from AA. Leaders may familiarize themselves with OA history by reading the book *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams* and “Rozanne’s Story” in *Overeaters Anonymous, Third Edition*.

- The family and significant others

The leader and other OA members share on how they needed to help their non-OA relatives understand compulsive eating and the recovery process and how they overcame difficulties. The pamphlet *To the Family of the Compulsive Eater* was written to assist newcomers in explaining the disease, the process of recovery and how the family can help.

- Pithy wisdom

The Serenity Prayer and OA slogans, which include:

- Abstinence is the most important thing in my life without exception.

- Easy does it.
- Let go and let God.
- Live and let live.
- Keep it simple.
- One day at a time.
- Nothing tastes as good as abstinence feels.

Suggested Meeting Format

We have found that consistent use of this format keeps meetings focused on OA recovery, reinforces our program, and encourages unity. It also provides a reassuring feeling of continuity—an important factor in member retention. Each group may modify this format to better suit its needs.

The meeting to begin at _____.

1. “Welcome to the *[day and time]* _____ meeting of Overeaters Anonymous. My name is _____. I am a compulsive eater and your leader for this meeting. Please silence your phones at this time.”

2. “Will those who wish, please join me in the Serenity Prayer:
God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.”

3. “As we extend the heart and hand of the OA Fellowship to those who still suffer, let us be mindful of OA’s Unity with Diversity Policy, which respects our differences, yet unites us in the solution to our common problem. Whatever problem you may have with food, you are welcome at this meeting, regardless of race, creed, nationality, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, or any other attribute.

“Are there any compulsive eaters here besides myself?”

“Is there anyone here for the first, second, or third time? Would you please tell us your first name so we can welcome you? If you are returning to OA or are visiting from another area, please tell us your first name so we can also welcome you.” *[Welcome each person by name.]*

“We encourage you to:

- get a sponsor to help guide your recovery;
- develop a plan of eating and, if you wish, write it down and report daily to your sponsor; and
- read OA-approved literature to develop a working knowledge of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.”

4. “**The following is the OA Preamble:**
Overeaters Anonymous is a Fellowship of individuals who, through shared experience, strength, and hope, are recovering from compulsive overeating. We welcome everyone who wants to stop eating compulsively. There are no dues or fees for members; we are self-supporting through our own contributions, neither soliciting nor accepting outside donations. OA is not affiliated with any public or private organization, political movement, ideology, or religious doctrine; we take no position on outside issues. 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.”

5. *[Ask someone to read “Our Invitation to You,” which includes the Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous. Then ask someone to read The Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous. Some meetings may also decide to read The Twelve Concepts of OA Service or to read the Concept corresponding to the month of the year.]*

[Optional: “We will now read an abridged version of ‘Welcome Home’ from the book A Taste of Life-line.”]

6. **“THE DEFINITIONS OF ‘ABSTINENCE’ AND ‘RECOVERY’ IN OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS:** 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.”
(Business Conference Policy Manual, 1988b [amended 2019, 2021])

7. **TOOLS:** “The OA Tools of Recovery help us work the Steps and refrain from compulsive overeating. The nine Tools are: a plan of eating, sponsorship, meetings, telephone, writing, literature, an action plan, anonymity, and service. For more information, read *The Tools of Recovery* pamphlet.”
[Or read The Tools of Recovery (abridged) included with this meeting format.]

8. **SPONSORS:** “Sponsorship is one of our keys to success. Sponsors are OA members committed to abstinence and to living the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions to the best of their ability. Sponsors share their program up to the level of their experience, and they strengthen their recovery through this service to others. To find a sponsor, look for someone who has what you want and ask how he or she is achieving it. Will all abstinent sponsors please identify themselves?”

9. *[Pass the meeting record book around and ask members to sign their names with contact information, if they would like. Pass the record book around a second time so members may write down contact information to call or write later.]*

10. **LITERATURE:** “Only OA-approved literature is displayed at this meeting. Many OA members find that reading our literature on a daily basis further reinforces how to live the Twelve Steps.”

11. **REPORTS:** *[Secretary makes announcements; presents coins and medallions, if customary. Intergroup representative’s report and Treasurer’s report are to be given once a month.]*

12. **SEVENTH TRADITION:** “According to our Seventh Tradition, we are self-supporting through our own contributions. Expenses are _____, _____, and _____. We send regular contributions to our intergroup or service board, our region, and the World Service Office to help carry the message to other compulsive overeaters. Give as if your life depends on it! We encourage OA members to give as much as they are able, to help our group be self-supporting. The suggested contribution is US\$5.00 or more.”

13. **OPTIONAL FIVE- OR TEN-MINUTE BREAK:**

- Welcome newcomers and visitors.
- Offer newcomer pamphlets.
- Draw attention to OA literature.
- Take time for fellowship.

14.

SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR SHARING: *[We suggest you read the following before members begin 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.”

15.

STATE THIS MEETING’S CHOICE: *[Some meetings vary or combine options, as decided by group conscience. Sample options are listed below.]*

Step and Tradition Meetings: “This is a Step meeting. We are reading Step _____ and/or Tradition _____.” *[Leader begins reading from The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous. Members share about the Step or Tradition.]*

Topic Meetings: “This is a topic meeting. Today’s OA program topic is _____.” *[Members are invited to share for three to five minutes on the topic.]*

Speaker Meetings: “This is a speaker meeting.” *[Leader describes his or her story for about twenty minutes and shares experience, strength, and hope. Members are invited to share for three to five minutes.]*

Literature Meetings: “This is a literature meeting. Today we are reading _____.” *[Choose from any OA-approved literature. Members may read and share, or read and then share at the end.]*

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

16.

CLOSING: “By following the Twelve Steps, attending meetings regularly, and using the OA Tools, we are changing our lives. You will find hope and encouragement in Overeaters Anonymous. To the newcomer, we suggest attending at least six different meetings to learn the many ways OA can help you.

“There are many different types of meetings, all of which are available to support your recovery from compulsive eating. We welcome you to this meeting whenever you would care to attend. There are other face-to-face meetings and virtual (phone and technology-based) meetings that you may find helpful. Information about these meetings can be found on oa.org.

“The opinions expressed here today are those of individual OA members and do not represent OA as a whole. Please remember our commitment to honor each other’s anonymity. **Whom you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here.** Let us all reach out by phone or email to newcomers, returning members, and each other. Together we get better.

“Thank you for asking me to be your leader. After a moment of silence, will those of you who wish please join us in _____.” [*Select one of the following suggested closings: Serenity Prayer, Seventh Step Prayer, Third Step Prayer, or the OA Promise ‘I put my hand in yours....’*]

OA Responsibility Pledge

Always to extend the hand and heart of OA
to all who share my compulsion;
for this I am responsible.

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Our Invitation to You

We of Overeaters Anonymous have made a discovery. At the very first meeting we attended, we learned that we were in the clutches of a dangerous illness, and that willpower, emotional health, and self-confidence, which some of us had once possessed, were no defense against it.

We have learned that the reasons for the illness are unimportant. What deserves the attention of the still-suffering compulsive overeater is this: There is a proven, workable method by which we can arrest our illness.

The OA recovery program is patterned after that of Alcoholics Anonymous. As our personal stories attest, the Twelve Step program of recovery works as well for compulsive overeaters as it does for alcoholics.

Can we guarantee you this recovery? The answer is up to you. If you will honestly face the truth about yourself and the illness; if you will keep coming back to meetings to talk and listen to other recovering compulsive overeaters; if you will read our literature and that of Alcoholics Anonymous with an open mind; and, most important, if you are willing to rely on a power greater than yourself for direction in your life and to take the Twelve Steps to the best of your ability, we believe you can indeed join the ranks of those who recover.

To remedy the emotional, physical, and spiritual illness of compulsive eating, we offer several suggestions, but keep in mind that the basis of the program is spiritual, as evidenced by the Twelve Steps.

We are not a “diet club.” We do not endorse any particular plan of eating. In OA, abstinence is the act of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight. Once we become abstinent, the preoccupation with food diminishes and in many cases leaves us entirely. We then find that, to deal with our inner turmoil, we have to have a new way of thinking, of acting on life rather than reacting to it—in essence, a new way of living.

From this vantage point, we begin the Twelve Step program of recovery, moving beyond the food and the emotional havoc to a fuller living experience. As a result of practicing the Steps, the symptoms of compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors are removed on a daily basis, achieved through the process of surrendering to something greater than ourselves; the more total our surrender, the more fully realized our freedom from food obsession.

Here are the Steps as adapted for Overeaters Anonymous:

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.

“But I’m too weak. I’ll never make it!” Don’t worry; we have all thought and said the same thing. The amazing secret to the success of this program is just that: weakness. It is weakness, not strength, that binds us to each other and to a higher power and somehow gives us an ability to do what we cannot do alone.

If you decide you are one of us, we welcome you with open arms. Whatever your circumstances, we offer you the gift of acceptance. You are not alone anymore. Welcome to Overeaters Anonymous. Welcome home!

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

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The Tools of Recovery (abridged)

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

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. (See the pamphlet *A New Plan of Eating* for more information.) This Tool helps us deal with the physical aspects of our disease and achieve physical recovery.

Sponsorship

We ask a sponsor to help us through all three levels of our program of recovery: physical, emotional, and spiritual. Find a sponsor who has what you want and ask that person how they are achieving it.

Meetings

Meetings give us an opportunity to identify our common problem, confirm our common solution, and share the gifts we receive through this Twelve Step program. In addition to face-to-face meetings, OA offers telephone and other types of virtual meetings that are useful in breaking through the deadly isolation caused by distance, illness, or physical challenges.

Telephone

Many members call, text, or email their sponsors and other OA members daily. Telephone or electronic contact also provides an immediate outlet for those hard-to-handle highs and lows we may experience.

Writing

Putting our thoughts and feelings down on paper, or describing a troubling or joyous incident, helps us better understand our actions and reactions in a way that is often not revealed by simply thinking or talking about them.

Literature

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.

Action Plan

Creating an action plan is the process of identifying and implementing attainable actions to support our individual abstinence and emotional, spiritual, and physical recovery. This Tool, just like our plan of eating, may vary widely among members and may need to be adjusted as we progress in our recovery.

Anonymity

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities (Tradition Twelve). Anonymity assures us that only we, as individual OA members, have the right to make our membership known 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).

Within the Fellowship, anonymity means that whatever we share with another OA member will be respected and kept confidential. What we hear at meetings should remain there.

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 attending meetings, sharing, and putting away chairs. All members can also give service by putting out literature, welcoming newcomers, hosting a virtual meeting, or doing whatever is needed to help the group. Members who meet specified requirements can give service beyond the group level by serving at the intergroup, service board, region, or world service level.

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."

See the full *Tools of Recovery* pamphlet for more information.

OA Board-approved.

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Welcome Home (abridged)

Have you ever wished you could lose ten pounds (5 kg)? Twenty (9 kg)? Forty (18kg)? A hundred (45kg) or more? Have you ever wished that once you got it off you could keep it off? Welcome to OA; welcome home!

Have you sometimes felt out of step with the world, like a homeless orphan without a place where you really belonged? Welcome to OA; welcome home!

Have you ever wished your family would get to work or school so you could get busy eating? Welcome to OA; welcome home!

Have you ever awakened first thing in the morning and felt happy because you remembered that your favorite goodie was waiting for you in the fridge or in the cupboard? Welcome to OA; welcome home!

Have you ever looked up at the stars and wondered what an insignificant person like you is doing in the world anyway? Welcome to OA; welcome home!

Have you ever cooked, bought, or baked for your family and then eaten everything yourself so you wouldn't have to share? We know you in OA because we are you. Welcome to OA; welcome home!

Have you ever wanted to hide in the house, without going to work, without getting cleaned up or even getting dressed, without seeing anyone or letting anyone see you? Welcome to OA; welcome home!

Have you ever hidden food under the bed, under the pillow, in the drawer, in the bathroom, in the wastebasket, the cupboard, the clothes hamper, the closet, or the car so that you could eat without anyone seeing you? Welcome to OA; welcome home!

Have you ever been angry, resentful, defiant—toward God, your mate, your doctor, your mother, your father, your friends, your children, the salespeople in stores whose looks spoke a thousand words as you tried on clothes—because they were thin, because they wanted you to be thin, and because you were forced to diet to please them or shut them up or make them eat their words and their looks? We welcome you to OA; welcome home!

Have you ever sobbed out your misery in the dark night because no one loved or understood you? Welcome to OA; welcome home!

—*A Taste of Lifeline*, pp. xiii–xvi

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.

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