

# OA GUIDELINES



## Guidelines for Membership Retention

Our **OA Responsibility Pledge** states:

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

Where are the people who were at your first meeting? How many of them are still coming to OA? There are many things that each of us and our groups can do to keep people coming back. In an effort to *extend the hand and heart to those who share our compulsion*, we offer the following suggestions for membership retention.

- Study *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition*. The Steps and Traditions strengthen our recovery and keep us living in the solution.
- Focus on the miracle of physical, emotional, and spiritual recovery.
- Remember that anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our program.
- Remember that there are no special requirements for members to share. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively.
- Warmly welcome back returning members. In fact, reach out to everyone at meetings with love. Make outreach calls.
- Participate in group inventories; use both the *OA Group Inventory* and *Strong Meeting Checklist*, available as free downloads on [oa.org](http://oa.org).
- Send strong speakers to meetings in areas where attendance is declining or there is a lack of abstinence.
- Play recordings and podcasts of speakers from OA events.
- Make meetings and special events fun!
- Keep a good supply of OA-approved literature at meetings.
- Focus on OA recovery and how using the Twelve Steps and Traditions help you deal with life.
- Encourage and support OA Step study meetings; use the *Suggested Step Study Meeting Format* available as a free download on [oa.org](http://oa.org).
- Welcome newcomers to your meetings. Have volunteers telephone newcomers to answer any questions they may have.
- Hold newcomers' meetings.
- Start and support a recovery from relapse meeting based on the meeting format available in the *Twelfth-Step-Within Handbook*, p. 9, and as a free download on [oa.org](http://oa.org).
- Have a regular group conscience meeting.
- Have the service body sponsor a Service, Traditions, and Concepts Workshop.
- Encourage your service body to regularly distribute a newsletter to keep all groups informed about area events.
- Start and end your regular group meetings on time. Meet on holidays too! Our disease never takes a holiday!
- Have volunteers telephone, email, or text members who haven't been at the meeting for a while. Build a network of support.
- Create a phone chain for the entire group, especially during the holidays; put all members' names in a hat and have each person draw one name to call.
- Provide service opportunities that have no abstinence requirement at the group level so everyone can benefit from doing service!
- Rotate service positions, no matter what.
- List all area meetings in both large and small local newspapers.
- Encourage members to post information cards about meetings in grocery stores, libraries, and other public places.
- Share that sponsoring and doing service are rewarding and exciting ways to benefit *your* recovery.
- Hold sponsorship workshops so members aren't

- afraid to sponsor.
- Stick to the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, OA Tools, and OA-approved literature when sponsoring.
  - Share about your progress in working and living the Steps. When sharing your experience, share your strength and hope.
  - Be an example of recovery. This is a program of attraction, not promotion.
  - Encourage people in their recovery; support those who don't "get it" right away.
  - Give recovery coins or celebrate success as often as possible.
  - Remember that our common solution is the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of OA.
  - Emphasize abstinence from the beginning, making sure that members know that it is NOT OKAY to binge.
  - Speak your truth at any level.
  - Let go of judgment of another's recovery or relapse.
  - Be open to new ideas or changes.
  - Ask people to do service.
  - Avoid overloading yourself with service work; try for balance.
  - Share your experience.
  - Remind members not to cross talk during meetings.
  - Welcome all who attend the meetings, being careful not to form cliques.
  - Put principles before personalities.
  - Rotate service rather than allow one person to continually lead or run the meeting.
  - Limit sharing time so all have an opportunity to speak. Problems can be shared one-on-one outside the meeting.
- Keep it simple; people are more important than rules.
  - Stick to the message of OA; leave outside issues at the door.
  - Honor everyone's anonymity.
  - Remember that what is said in your meetings stays in your meetings.
  - Social gatherings are welcome before or after meetings, but during the meeting, focus on the program.
  - Use OA-approved literature. Using outside literature implies endorsement.
  - Reach out to help a group member in trouble; remember—relapse is not contagious. Recovery is!
  - Work together to reach common goals.
  - Let go of expectations of yourself and others.

Most of all, *do it with love* and  
**KEEP COMING BACK, NO MATTER WHAT!**

These suggestions are not intended to be all-inclusive. We can take many other positive actions in order to encourage members to keep coming back. Share what works, and what doesn't, with your fellow OA members around the world through OA newsletters, letters to your region or WSO, and Convention!

OA is a Fellowship in which thousands of compulsive overeaters find and share recovery. It is a program of attraction and a positive way of living. *Together* we can recover, and together it works when we all **keep coming back!**

OA Board-Approved

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