

Suggested Recovery-from-Relapse Meeting Format

The meeting to begin at _____.

1. “Welcome to the Recovery-from-Relapse meeting of Overeaters Anonymous. My name is _____, and I am your leader for this meeting.”

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. “Welcome. This meeting format has been specifically designed to address recovery from relapse. Our goal is to create an environment of support by providing access to available sponsors with long-term abstinence and to encourage renewed recovery through a fresh perspective on how to work the Steps, including:

- Working toward strong abstinence by using sponsors.
- Reading and studying available OA-approved literature.
- Working ALL of the Twelve Steps.
- Living in Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve by working ALL the principles of the program.

“This meeting urges us to accept the idea that a plan of eating and the Twelve Steps, together, provide the best opportunity for success. It is also suggested that, in addition, the use of all the Tools of recovery greatly improves the quality of that success. The Twelve Steps of OA are our solution to freedom from compulsive overeating and compulsive food behaviors. They work when we work them; our recovery depends on it.”

4. “Let’s go around the room and introduce ourselves by first names.” [*Welcome everyone present.*]

5. “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.”

6. “I’ve asked _____ [*preselected volunteer*] to read Our Invitation to You, which includes the Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous.”

7. “I’ve asked _____ [*preselected volunteer*] to read the Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous.”

8.

“The following reading is from our OA pamphlet *Members In Relapse*:

We all need to be loved and accepted, not because we are abstinent, not because we are at goal weight, but for who we are. This is especially true of OA members who are still suffering. They have been in program for some time, perhaps for months, maybe even years, but either they have not yet attained abstinence or they are in relapse. When asked what helped them most, people who have gone through this painful experience agree on one thing: being loved and accepted—even when they were compulsively overeating, even when they were falling apart emotionally, even when they themselves felt hopeless and unlovable—was the key to their eventually loving and accepting themselves.”

9.

TOOLS

“In OA, the Statement on Abstinence and Recovery is ‘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 the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve-Step program.’ The OA Tools of recovery help us work the Steps and refrain from compulsive eating. The nine Tools are: a plan of eating, sponsorship, meetings, telephone, writing, literature, action plan, anonymity, and service. For more information, read the *Tools of Recovery* pamphlet.

“We will now circulate our telephone list. Please write down your number, and we suggest you take down two or more numbers to call during the week. We will keep this list circulating throughout the meeting.”

10.

You may wish to choose one of the following suggestions to be used every week or alternate among them on different weeks of the month.

- **Leader or guest speaks for fifteen to twenty minutes, sharing experience, strength, and hope on relapse and recovery.** Other topics could be “The Solution is in the Steps,” “Recovery in God’s Time, Not Mine,” “Positive Action Strengthens Recovery.”
- **Meeting members decide on the format that works best for them**, such as speakers, readings, reading and writing, or alternating these activities.
- **Leader begins a story from OA’s *A New Beginning: Stories of Recovery from Relapse***, which is available as an e-book, **or a story from chapter 8 of *Taste of Lifeline***, “Recovery from Relapse,” pp. 123–137. Each member reads one or two paragraphs and may share on the reading.
- **Use “Been Slipping and Sliding? A Reading and Writing Tool,”** in the *Twelfth-Step-Within Handbook*, Appendix D, pp. 20–23, or as a free download on oa.org. Leader can choose one question as the topic; members can take turns reading paragraphs from the suggested reading. The remainder of the meeting time can be used for reading and discussion or discussion only on the question.

11.

SPONSORS

“We cannot work this program by ourselves. We have found it indispensable to call on the support of a sponsor for guidance in working our threefold program of recovery. Sponsorship is one of our keys to success. Sponsors are OA members committed to abstinence and to living the Steps

and 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 that member how she or he is achieving it. Would all abstinent sponsors please identify themselves.”

12. SEVENTH TRADITION

“According to our Seventh Tradition, we are self-supporting through our own contributions. Our group expenses are _____, _____, and _____. We send monthly contributions to our intergroup, service board, region, and the WSO 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 \$3 or more.”

13. REPORTS

Secretary’s report, treasurer’s report, and any OA-related announcements.

14. RECOVERY INSURANCE POLICY (optional)

“This meeting uses the *Recovery Insurance Policy*, a commitment between two members to support each other’s recovery. It can be found on our literature table; you may wish to take time during our break or after the meeting to make a pledge to an OA friend.”

[Find the Recovery Insurance Policy attached and as a download on oa.org.]

15. FIVE- OR TEN-MINUTE BREAK (optional)

[If your meeting chooses to have a break, you can ask volunteers to serve as greeters to speak with newcomers or those returning to the meeting.]

“May we have two volunteers to serve as greeters? Please see these members during the break for any questions you may have.”

16. SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR SHARING

[We suggest you read the following before members begin sharing. Your group may modify this to better suit its needs.]

“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 and compulsive food behaviors, 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.

“**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.

“This meeting is now open for sharing. Please limit your sharing to _____ [*suggest three to five minutes*] so more members may have a chance to share.” [*Optional: You may appoint someone to be a timer to remind members when the time has elapsed.*]

17.

CLOSING

“By following the Twelve Steps, attending meetings regularly, and using the OA Tools, thousands have changed their lives. We offer hope and encouragement.

[To the newcomer, we suggest attending at least six different meetings before deciding if OA is for you.]

“This meeting is a place for OA members to come together to share their experience, strength, and hope and to gain hope from those who have experienced recovery from relapse. 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. We hope that this meeting has given you renewed hope, strength, and encouragement. Please keep coming back, no matter what.

“Thank you for allowing me to be your leader. After a moment of silence, will those who wish, please join 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.’*]

[*Meetings may last one hour, one-and-a-half hours, or up to two hours.*]

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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This is a pledge between two OA members to support and be accountable to one another. If you think this agreement could be helpful for you, fill out your name and other information as the "I" on one side of the form and have another OA member complete the other half. Cut the forms apart and exchange sides. Place the agreement in a prominent spot to remind you of your commitment to recovery and service.

RECOVERY INSURANCE POLICY

I, _____ on this day do hereby give _____ (a recovering OA member) permission to take me to a meeting if she/he does not receive a phone call from me within _____ days of our last conversation; or if she/he does not see me at an OA meeting within the last _____ weeks. She/he has the right to use all means of communication to contact me, including contacting _____ (a friend/relative) for assistance. This agreement may only be terminated after we have had contact and mutually agree to end this agreement.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
My address: _____

My phone numbers: _____
My email: _____
Friend/relative's phone no.: _____

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 action 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 the 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 any more. 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 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 nonprofessional, 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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