

Ask-It Basket 2019

- 1) *What will happen to the Lifeline subscribers after publication ceases next year? Will they get a refund if their subscription still has years left?* The plan is to make available to members who have time left on their *Lifeline* subscriptions a refund, pro-rated to the amount or percentage of their subscription that remains after the date when the printing of paper copies of *Lifeline* ceases. The subscribers who wish to receive a refund will be able request one.
- 2) *When were the Twelve Concepts first written? Have they ever been revised?* The Twelve Concepts for AA World Service were written by Bill W. and adopted by the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1962. An ad hoc committee was struck in the late 1980s to develop concepts for OA World Service. It was composed of trustees and WSBC delegates. The committee was created due to several “two hatters” (e.g., OA members who were also AA members) who were interested in adopting a set of principles similar to AA. Because the AA Concepts were developed to describe the service structure of AA, they were therefore not usable by OA due to our different service structure. The Concepts for OA Service were presented and adopted in 1994 by the WSBC. In 1998, they were moved from the Policy Manual to Subpart B. Since adoption, there have been two motions submitted and discussed by the WSBC to amend the Concepts. Neither were adopted by the WSBC.
- 3) *I am a long-time member of OA. Another slightly longer-time member has had issue with me for 20 years. Every 4-5 years she is unable to restrain herself from touching me in a sensuous way (i.e., slapping my hand, whispering comments in my ear, throwing objects at me and, most recently, grabbing the side of my head to pull me closer so that she can whisper in my ear despite my resistance). Each time I told her not to touch me again or not to do that and she apologized, and it stopped for a while. This last time, I made the mistake of asking if we needed to talk and ended up hearing a long list of my perceived misdeeds, some from over a decade ago! When I protested her judgment/criticism as being too onerous and suggested bullying, she scoffed. I mentioned a fear that she might be waiting for me in the parking lot with a gun and she said, “Do you know how many times I’ve had a gun pointed in my face?” So, she seems unreasonable and unstable to me and I haven’t felt like I can be safe to share in a meeting with her. But she goes to ALL the local meetings and will not agree to not attend even one. I have prayed over it, talked to sponsor and written Steps but cannot escape her presence. What do I do? Dear long-time OA member: The situation you describe sounds very uncomfortable, especially having happened several times over the past 20 years. You mention that after all your Step work you “cannot escape her presence.” The Serenity Prayer would suggest that the alternative would be to accept her presence, but I see from what you write that you feel unsafe around her, and that puts your attendance at your local OA meetings in jeopardy. If you truly fear for your safety or your life, I encourage you to remove yourself from any meeting she’s at, notify the meeting of the situation, and contact the police. Police are trained to deal with such cases. Based on your sense of this person as disruptive, your groups could consider how to apply OA’s [Guidelines for Addressing Disruptive Behavior Affecting OA Meetings](#) to the situation, remembering to place principles above personalities and maintain the anonymity of others. Note however, our Tradition of anonymity (Tradition Twelve) should never be used to cover up unsafe behavior of any kind. I understand that you’ve done a lot of work on this already, but I’m wondering if you’ve used the [Conflict Resolution Worksheet](#) to*

reflect on and document your work. Given that you cannot change her, I would encourage you to explore things you can change. If you feel unsafe at your local OA meetings, you could attend meetings further away from your home that she does not attend. Or you could attend different types of OA virtual meetings—phone meetings, online meetings, or non-real-time meetings. All these types of meetings can be found on the [Find a Meeting](#) feature. Or you can call or meet OA friends and have brief OA meetings one-to-one—it only takes two! I pray that you find peace in your OA meetings.

- 4) *Would it be possible for hybrid meetings to be listed as a separate entity on oa.org (just as we have separate listings for online meetings, face-to-face meetings, etc.)?* The hybrid meetings are meetings that will appear on the F2F meetings and virtual meetings (online or phone meetings). A non-real-time meeting is not hybrid, but two separate meetings. Our purpose is to note that each meeting is a hybrid meeting. We thank you for the suggestion regarding hybrid meetings. The WSO staff and trustees are currently working on this. This could be an item in the advanced search (are you looking for hybrid meetings?).
- 5) *I'd like to feel free to refer men to oamen.org. But only will if it's a bona fide OA resource. Is it Conference, board, approved?* As an individual OA member, you are free to refer men to oamen.org. This website is the work of a subcommittee attached to a virtual intergroup of OA. It is not a committee or subcommittee of the Board of Trustees. The members of this committee which have created oamen.org are free to contact the region chairs and ask them to spread the word about their website. Their stated aim is to increase opportunities for more men to become involved in OA. The Board of Trustees, whose role is in part to act as guardians of the Twelve Traditions, does not advocate on behalf of any committee, group, or service body. Other than the Conference Seal of Approval, which can only be conferred on pieces of literature by delegates at the World Service Business Conference, there is no “official” recognition or level of approval given by the WSO or the Board of Trustees to things not created and reviewed by the Board of Trustees or one of its committees or subcommittees. The Board of Trustees would not normally comment, positively or negatively, neither approving of nor disapproving of publications, websites, or group practices, except in cases where it becomes aware that such things may be in violation of the OA Traditions.
- 6) *What can be said to members who constantly push the Big Book as the way to recovery over the OA literature?* We are unable to change the way people feel, or their passion in what works best for them—it's a personal choice. What we can do is to encourage people to support OA literature and refer to it regularly ourselves as we share. In short, be the example yourself in what you might like to see in others.
- 7) *How can an OA member distinguish between literature ordered on Amazon for which OA receives a royalty from that which it does not?* One way to tell it is our account is that the author is listed as “Overeaters Anonymous,” and the link for the author is clickable and takes you to a page with all of our offerings. If the author link is not clickable, then it's a reseller and we won't receive a royalty. You can also tell it's a reseller because a field will appear that says, “Seller Information” and the seller will be someone other than OA.

- 8) *In an OA meeting, many people speak of “my Higher Power, whom I call God.” But one person says, “my Higher Power, whom I call Jesus.” It makes many of us uncomfortable, but we are not sure what, if anything, to do about it. Do you have any suggestions?* Step Eleven talks of “a spiritual relationship with a Power that is greater than ourselves alone.” But we do not promote or favor any particular concept of that Higher Power. We are allowed to express our beliefs however we choose. The focus of Tradition One is on unity. No matter what our beliefs, we are welcome in OA.
- Tradition Three: OA members come from many different backgrounds, races, religions, etc. We have different opinions. We have experienced different forms of compulsive eating behaviors. But anyone who wants to stop eating compulsively is welcome in our meetings.
 - We would specifically urge you to delve into Tradition Ten. The story on page 152 about a worldwide newspaper columnist’s mistaken understanding [that a belief in Jesus is an aspect of OA’s program] is directly on point. The discussion around that story might illuminate the issues at play here.
 - Additionally, there is much to read in AA literature on this subject. The first example that comes to mind: Just as we accept atheists and agnostics, [see Chapter 4 in *Alcoholics Anonymous*, entitled *We Agnostics*], we accept those whose ideas of a Higher Power differ from our own.
 - Acceptance is woven through the fabric of the Overeaters Anonymous program of recovery. We would urge you to find it in your hearts to accept that this person’s Higher Power definition is as valid as your own. Would you have problems with a member whose Higher Power was Allah? Or with a Sikh member wearing a turban? We hope not. Your situation is not all that different.
 - We hope that your group can walk through the discomfort of differences and grow more open and accepting from the experience of having done so.
- 9) *I am a meeting rep to my intergroup soon to be treasurer to my intergroup. I am a rep for my intergroup to my region. I am a delegate for my intergroup to world service. Can I also have a service position on virtual?* Depending on the interpretation of your question (service position on virtual), there are several issues to consider. If you are asking if someone can take a service position at a virtual meeting, then the answer is yes. Service at the meeting level serves the individual meeting and any person who the meeting feels is qualified to be appointed/elected to a group position is eligible. If you’re asking about serving at a virtual intergroup, service board, and/or region, concurrent with serving at a face-to-face intergroup, service board, and/or region, the answer is a bit more involved. First, are there any mandates in the bylaws and/or policies of your face-to-face intergroup, service board, or region that would prevent you from holding a position in another intergroup, service board, and/or region? For instance, there are intergroups that have provisos stating that a person cannot serve in an intergroup-elected position (e.g., committee chair, region rep, WSBC delegate, or officer) of more than one intergroup. Are there any mandates or policies of the virtual intergroup? The same issue may apply for them as well. Second, can you separate the needs and desires of your face-to-face service body from your virtual service body? Although a vast majority of these are identical, representing multiple service bodies can sometimes be confusing to the individual and problematic to the different service bodies. Finally, how much time do you have to provide this type of service? Overcommitment can become an issue for many recovering compulsive

eaters. Sometimes it is better to give less, but more focused service than spreading ourselves too thin and finding that we are unable to fulfill our service commitments. If you have the time and clarity to serve in this way, and there are no procedural issues, then the answer to your question is absolutely.

- 10) *Can we have a survey, like what young persons' survey did recently, to ask our membership what they want to see on the new revamped oa.org website before we spend/invest \$50K? This will help embrace the membership on new updates that they had an opinion and impact. It will reach young people, IT people, and virtual members.* A survey was taken in 2015 when the redesign of the website was last under consideration. There were 132 responses to the question, "What features would you like in an OA app?" While an app was determined to be outside the scope of the project for which funds were allocated, the ideas were used to create pages for the redesigned website. As many of the items were incorporated into the website as possible within the allotted time and budget. We still have the list and will review it for any additional items that could be implemented today with the improvements in web tools. Of course, members are always welcome to send in their ideas to the Website Review Committee for consideration. Just use the contact us feature on oa.org and the committee will receive them.
- 11) *Can I join the ad hoc Front Door Website Revamp Committee? (Heidi B., Central Colorado IG)* The ad hoc committee has been dissolved and the responsibilities have been moved to the Website Review Committee for 2019-2020. Having moved those responsibilities to a board committee changes the requirements for the participation on the committee. Only trustees and former trustees can participate on board committees. However, the chair of the Website Review Committee appreciates your desire to participate in this process and welcomes your desire to participate in this process.
- 12) *I'd like to host a workshop in 2020 on web technology on how groups can use web technology. (Heidi B., Central Colorado IG)* Committees are established for both WSBC and Convention. This is something that could be considered by those committees as they establish the content and participants of each program.
- 13) *I would like a connection between Steps/Traditions and Concepts. Example: Step One, Tradition One, Concept One; Step Two, Tradition Two, Concept Two.* Without being able to obtain some clarification with regard to the context for this question or how possibly the response might be used, I will do my best. Please remember this response is from this trustee and does not represent an OA as a whole. I looked at the spiritual principles of each of the Steps, Traditions and Concepts side by side to see if there was an obvious connection. No specific immediate relationship jumped to my attention and I found no OA literature that addresses such a connection. Sharing some of the context of these three beautiful gifts of wisdom to the Fellowship, let me say that the Steps were written first and were, and still are, primarily for each of us to work in our individual program of recovery. The Traditions followed a few years later as OA experienced all forms of growing pains in doing service together in group and with other service bodies. We all have learned that we can and do use the Principles and wisdom in each Tradition in our own personal lives as well as while providing service within OA. Years later, the Concepts were approved to address the level of service below (going down the inverted pyramid we have all come to love and respect) that involved the

World Service Office and conducting the business of OA. Again, the Spiritual Principles and the wisdom within each Concept can be applied to our home and working lives, and our lives within our community. There is a natural progression—individual recovery, recovery within a smaller entity such as with each other, and then widening to include our service and our lives in general. I see that as the spiritual connection. Even though a one-to-one correlation between the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts is not apparent to me, please know that the literature we have on the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts could easily be used to create a workshop that could be included in journal or discussion topics. Scenarios could be developed where the group, individually or as whole, discuss which Step, Tradition, or Concept may provide some guidance—often it is a combination of guidance from more than one source that could apply. These discussions would undoubtedly generate the connection being requested.

- 14) *The Second Tradition says, “no one who considers himself a member of the group is prevented from speaking or voting.” The Fourth Tradition says, “in order to ensure that the autonomy of the group would be respected...about sharing on voting.” Is it a Tradition break that only trustee servants can vote?* It can be frustrating when meetings aren’t conducted the way we think they should be or, perhaps, the way we are used to. There are no rules or specific requirements for how voting is done for the group conscience meeting. Traditions Two and Four are excellent resources for determining the guidelines for a group conscience. There is no one right way. I have been in group conscience meetings where everyone attending had a voice and a vote. I have been in other group conscience meetings where everyone attending had a voice, but only trusted servants (those with specific qualifications) were allowed to vote. And, I have attended group conscience meetings where only trusted servants were allowed a voice or vote. Groups and service bodies at different levels may have different requirements for participation. For instance, the group conscience at BOT meetings, the WSBC, and regional assemblies have more specific requirements than those of individual OA meetings. Part of Tradition Four gives groups the freedom and autonomy to “make their own mistakes and learn from them.” The only limitations in Tradition Four are “does it harm OA as a whole” and is the group “free from outside influence.” Tradition Nine also states that we may create...committees directly responsible to those they serve.” This means that “trusted servants” must act for the good of the group (and OA as a whole) in certain functions. As it states in the chapter on Tradition Nine in *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition*, p. 147. “Meetings that are far from perfect can still offer us the miracle of recovery.” A member who believes the Traditions are not being honored has a responsibility to speak up, even if what they say is not popular. However, if that member continues to feel uncomfortable with the way a meeting is being conducted and is not allowed to have a voice in making changes, that member has the freedom to find another, perhaps stronger, group to join. I also suggest reading the pamphlet, *Twelve Concepts of OA Service*, for further guidance.
- 15) *Has the BOT given consideration to using virtual technology to allow WSBC delegates to attend and vote virtually? It would allow for a greater number of delegates to participate.* Thanks for your question. Yes, last year the BOT had an initial discussion about the possibility of virtual attendance, but our understanding is that this we will need a higher budget, more hands, and a hotel with better internet. The Virtual Region is working virtually as it is easier for each individual to meet virtually (one internet connection for each member)

instead of F2F and virtually. There are regions that are trying to have both types of attendance but there are difficulties that include the hotel connection, the necessity that all microphones have a computer, that someone runs the computer (for example the chair, the center mic, and both pro and con mic), and someone to “speak” (write) with the members who are connected virtually to give them some kind of voice and understanding. To have a voice and vote, there is a workshop that could be so important as the “All About Conference” to attend too. Something important to consider is language. Those members, where English is not their first language, require the sound to be good enough to help them understand. This is a dream and may be in the future.

- 16) *If Lifeline receives more subscribers, could it be possible don't stop? Lifeline* has been reviewed every year and is just not viable. It has served only 8 percent of our overall membership. We try to make decisions based on the greatest good for the greatest number.
- 17) *What can we do when a group of a given inner OA school (OA-HOW, OA Primary Purpose, A Vision for You) is telling members not to go to regular OA and breaking Traditions again and again?* Thank you for your question. Each group is autonomous and gets to decide its policies for itself; we hope in alignment with our Twelve Traditions. If you attend these meetings, I would suggest you ask for a business meeting to discuss the Traditions. My intergroup had an issue with one of the meetings We worked with our trustee and some of our members attending the meeting. After attending and bringing it to the attention of the meeting, nothing was changed. As a result, the meeting was removed from our directory. We also reported it to our trustee. In our opinion, this meeting was breaking Traditions One and Four. If the meeting is hurting OA as a whole, action needs to be taken. In addition, a genuine OA group member should not give ultimatums to members. The group needs to make sure that the meetings have in their meeting format that there are various types of meetings, and that newcomers should attend five to six different meetings to see what might work for them.
- 18) *What should we do when a child comes to our meeting either alone or with a parent? What is our policy? If asked by a parent what they should do for their child, where should we direct them?* Overeaters Anonymous suggests that a responsible adult [parent or guardian] accompany children, who are under the legal age of 18, and wish to attend a face-to-face OA meeting. OA considers young people to be in the 18 to 30 age group, so even if a group was labeled “for young people,” it is not a meeting for children under 18 years of age. In addition, we have learned there are light years of difference between wanting to change weight or eat normally and being able to surrender to achieve these goals. The true “desire to stop eating compulsively” usually cannot be instilled in a child by a concerned adult or parents, no matter how lovingly and tenderly they try. Nor can we in the OA Fellowship give anyone the desire to stop this behavior or thinking. The willingness to do so must come from within. This may take years of painful experience of trying to stop on one's own. Younger people are often dealing with peer pressure, which can make it more difficult for them to follow a food plan. Also, suggest literature resources we have to offer younger children. These are [*Billy's Story*](#) and [*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions: A Kid's View*](#). With this information, even at this young age, a seed can be planted and as a result, a person may eventually embrace the program and recover. Other literature for young people include:
- *To the Parents and Concerned Adults* (placard)

- *To the Family of the Compulsive Eater* (pamphlet)
I hope this helps.

- 19) *Has OA ever investigated the practices of Alateen to see if we might pattern meetings and/or other support to address the needs of children, teens, and their families? With childhood obesity on the rise them seems to be a place we could and should reach out.* The short answer is no. It would not be productive to pattern meetings for very young members after Alateen for several reasons including legal matters. We can only welcome those who qualify, regardless of age.
- 20) *Why did they do away with grey sheet? Why did they do away with orange sheet? Why don't they have anything for "whole food plant based or vegans?" If it's three meals a day, why do they give four meals?* The pamphlet was reviewed and discussed by the Board of Trustees and the delegates at two World Service Business Conferences. The food plans were given to a professional nutritionist. The grey sheet was by far the most popular plan in the Fellowship. The high protein/low carb plan was the result of the suggestions made by the nutritionist to amend that food plan. This was based on what was considered to be reasonable at the time. It was determined that there were too many possibilities to then subdivide plans to accommodate vegan, food allergies and intolerances, medical requirements, etc. The thought was that any plan would be discussed with a healthcare professional and be adapted to individual needs. It was clear there was no appetite to return to the color chart of food plans (blue, orange, grey). The plans took into account three meals per day and an optional snack. Not everyone follows 3-0-1.
- 21) *At my first WSBC in 2010, we discussed the option of virtual attendees. Nine years later, where are they? We could have a much greater attendance with virtual delegates.* Thank you for this question. I agree that virtual attendance is something to consider in the future. I cannot see in the very near future that we can have delegates attending and participating virtually. So far, we have Regions Eight, Ten, and Virtual with virtual attendees at their assemblies. They have also found solutions to the ballot voting problem that came with virtual attendance. These may seem like baby steps, but these could be considered a starting point for WSBC virtual attendance. Having attended a Board of Trustees meeting in February 2019, that was totally virtual, I know the dedication and concentration needed over several hours. It was very tiring to look at a screen of a mosaic of members (22+) with the concentration needed over three to four hours. Also, to be considered was the need to extract ourselves from family and phone (environmental) interference. The WSBC is held (Thursday and Friday 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.) over two and a half days so that would be just that much harder. There would need to be different members from different time zones prepared to set aside days of sleeping at unusual hours; they would need to be so committed that they extract themselves from all environmental distractions and would need to commit to the whole two and a half days. Then there is the cost of the extra internet coverage and all the sound system required to cater for bringing in members virtually. We are not a corporation with unlimited funds. I do believe that the WSBC will become more efficient in the future whether or not it becomes partially virtual. I can see that there could be a system where observers could see the Business Conference via a platform but not have speaking or voting

rights in the near future. I hope this discussion/response brings more questions than answers as I believe this is a healthy discussion.

- 22) *Any public service announcements already or planned for 2019? Any media ads – TV, radio, print?* We are continuing an ongoing Facebook ad campaign in a variety of English-speaking countries around the world. Thanks to increased funding, the Professional/Public Awareness Committee is able to expand our activities in the coming year. There are several exciting directions we are exploring. Your support of OA is what has given us this opportunity. Please stay tuned to the WSO Bulletin to hear what develops. We want our members to be aware of what's going on so they can provide local support to all efforts to carry the message.
- 23) *Is there a podcast list including all OA podcasts like laig oa?* I used a popular search engine, searched under "OA podcast," and came up with three different sources of OA podcasts including those on oa.org, from the Los Angeles Intergroup and from the Baltimore Area Intergroup. I know for a fact that we have podcasts on our Region One website, and they did not show up on the search. So, your question leads me to another question: how do we tag our OA podcasts so they are more likely to show up on a search? I know that podcasts can be fabulous introductions to the OA Twelve-Step program. I spoke with one newcomer who listened to eighty hours of our podcasts before he ever came to a meeting so I know that they can be very helpful to newcomers and to longtimers. We will research how we can better label our podcasts so they come up on the searches.