OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS®

Suggested Step-Study Meeting Format

***Note**: This format may be used as part of a Step study or as part of an OA meeting. OA and AA literature are primary references for working the Steps. However, numerous OA members have requested an OA-approved format for studying the Steps. As a result, the Board-Approved Literature Committee created this document. If you are conducting your Step study as a meeting, the following introduction format may be useful.*

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 membership retention. Your group may modify the format to suit its needs.

The meeting to begin at _____.

1. "Welcome to the *[day and time]* _____ Step-study meeting of Overeaters Anonymous. My name is _____. I am a compulsive overeater and your leader for this meeting."

2. "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. *[If this is a regular OA meeting, the leader would say:]*
"Whatever problem you may have with food, you are welcome at this meeting. Are there any compulsive eaters here besides myself? Is anyone here for a 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
   - 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.]*

6. *[Ask someone to read "The Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous."]*

7. "According to our Seventh Tradition, we are self-supporting through our own contributions. Our group number is _____. Please use the group number when making your contribution. Expenses are _____, _____, and _____. We send monthly contributions to our intergroup or service board, 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 donation is $3.00 or more."

8. "Tonight we are discussing Step _____." *[Leader may hand out the references for this Step.]*

9. *[Toward the last 5-10 minutes of the meeting, the Leader closes the sharing and then states:]*

10. "In conclusion, we would like to stress the importance of anonymity to this group. The Steps are essential to our recovery; our freedom to share deeply at these meetings is important to working the Steps."

11. "In addition, the opinions expressed here today are those of individual OA members and do not represent OA as a whole."

12. "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.']*

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

SESSION ONE: STEP ONE

Step One: We admitted we were powerless over food—that our lives had become unmanageable.

On page 60 of the Big Book (*Alcoholics Anonymous,* 4th ed.) we find the following pertinent ideas:

(a) "That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives."
(b) "That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism."
(c) "That God could and would if He were sought."

Suggested readings for discussion and sharing:

Books:
The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 1-7
The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 1-10
Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., pp. xxv-xxxii ("The Doctor's Opinion"), pp. 1-16 ("Bill's Story"), pp. 17-29 ("There is a Solution"), and pp. 30-43 ("More About Alcoholism")
Pamphlets:
Fifteen Questions
Sponsoring Through the Twelve Steps, pp. 4-5

"Honest appraisal of our experience has convinced us that we can't handle life through self-will alone" (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 6).

SESSION TWO: STEPS TWO AND THREE

Step Two: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

"In Step Two we added to this acceptance of our utter helplessness a newfound faith that there exists a power greater than us which can relieve us of the obsession for food and restore us to sanity in all areas of life" (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 19).

Suggested readings for discussion and sharing:

Books:
The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 9-17
The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 11-20
Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., p. xxvi, p. xxviii, p.12, pp. 30-43 ("More About Alcoholism"), p. 92, p. 550

Pamphlets:

Fifteen Questions
Sponsoring Through the Twelve Steps, pp. 5-7

"This willingness to act on faith, then, was the key to Step Two. It was the beginning of a healing process that would relieve us of the compulsion to overeat and bring stability to our unbalanced lives" (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 17).

Step Three: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.

"If we want to live free of the killing disease of compulsive eating, we accept help without reservation from a power greater than ourselves. We now say yes to this power, deciding from here on to follow spiritual guidance in making every decision" (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 19).

Suggested readings for discussion and sharing:

Books:
The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 19-27
Overeaters Anonymous, 2nd ed., p. 238
The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 21-26
Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., pp. 44-57 ("We Agnostics"), p. 63, p. 86
AA *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pp. 34-41

Pamphlets:
Sponsoring Through the Twelve Steps, pp. 7-8

"Once we compulsive overeaters truly take the Third Step, we cannot fail to recover … We can confidently face any situation life brings, because we no longer have to face it alone. We have what we need any time we are willing to let go of self-will and humbly ask for help" (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 27).

SESSION THREE: STEP FOUR

Step Four: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

"The Fourth Step calls for us to examine our lives up to the present day, writing down all important actions and events of a moral or ethical nature, our feelings about them, and the character traits in us from which these actions stemmed" (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 29).

Suggested readings for discussion and sharing:

Books:
The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 29-44
Overeaters Anonymous, 2nd ed., p. 238

The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 27-30
Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., pp. 64-71
AA *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pp. 34-41

Pamphlets:
Sponsoring Through the Twelve Steps, pp. 9-11
Fourth-Step Inventory Guide

"We have been trying to get a new attitude, a new relationship with our Creator, and to discover the obstacles in our path" (*Alcoholics Anonymous,* 4th ed., p. 72).

SESSION FOUR: STEPS FIVE, SIX AND SEVEN

Step Five: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

"By the time we have completed the fourth step, most of us feel ready to move ahead quickly with Step Five. We want to be free of resentments, guilt, and shame rooted in the past, and we realize that sharing the details of our past with another human being is an important step toward freedom" (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 46).

Suggested readings for discussion and sharing:

Books:
The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 45-52
The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 31-37
Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., pp. 72-75
AA *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pp. 55-62

Pamphlets:
Sponsoring Through the Twelve Steps, pp. 11-13

"Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience. The feeling that the drinking problem has disappeared will often come strongly. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe" (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th ed., p. 75).

Step Six: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

"A willingness to change is the essence of Step Six. Change is always frightening, even when it's a much-needed and long-overdue change for the better" (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 57).

Suggested readings for discussion and sharing:

Books:
The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 53-58
The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 39-44
Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., pp. 75-76
AA *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pp. 63-69

Pamphlets:
Sponsoring Through the Twelve Steps, p. 13-14

"Our commitment to embrace the needed changes in ourselves has given us an extraordinary power to deal with life's challenges. No longer do we go through life clinging desperately to the past, resistant to change. From now on, we will strive to keep ourselves entirely ready for any transformations our Higher Power wants to bring about in us. Having such an attitude, we can't fail. We will become wiser, saner, more effective people as we recover from the disease of compulsive overeating. We'll find we can cope with both good times and bad, learning and growing spiritually from each experience as our Higher Power intended us to do all along" (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous,* p. 58).

Step Seven: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

"In OA we have discovered that humility is simply an awareness of who we really are today and a willingness to become all that we can be. Genuine humility brings an end to the feelings of inadequacy, the self-absorption, and the status-seeking" (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 60).

Suggested readings for discussion and sharing:

Books:
The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 59-66
The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 45-53
Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., p. 76
AA *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pp. 70-76

Pamphlets:
Sponsoring Through the Twelve Steps, p. 15

"The Seventh Step is where we make the change in our attitude which permits us, with humility as our guide, to move out from ourselves toward others and toward God" (AA *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, p. 76).

SESSION FIVE: STEPS EIGHT AND NINE

Step Eight: Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

"In Step Eight, we look at our relationships for the purpose of discovering those patterns which have done harm to us and to others" (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 67).

Suggested readings for discussion and sharing:

Books:
The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 67-73
The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 55-61
Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., pp. 76-83
AA *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pp. 77-82

Pamphlets:
Sponsoring Through the Twelve Steps, pp. 16-17

"The experience of OAers who have worked the Steps before us shows that recovery depends on completing Steps Eight and Nine" (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 73).

Step Nine: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

"When we finish our amends most of us feel closer to our Higher Power than ever before. As we have dealt lovingly with every person in our lives, our spiritual awakening has become a reality" (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of OA,* p. 80-81).

Suggested readings for discussion and sharing:

Books:
The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 75-81
The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 63-72
Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., pp. 76-84
AA *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pp. 83-87

Pamphlets:
Sponsoring Through the Twelve Steps, pp. 17-19

"This Step has freed us from the shackles of our past mistakes in a miraculous way" (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 75).

SESSION SIX: STEPS TEN, ELEVEN AND TWELVE

Step Ten: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

"The purpose of Step Ten is to identify and remove from our path today's stumbling blocks, those manifestations of pride, fear, anger, self-pity, greed, and other emotions which are bringing pain into our lives and keeping us from growing today" (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 84).

Suggested readings for discussion and sharing:

Books:
The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 83-90
The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 73-84
Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., pp. 84-86
AA *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pp. 88-95

Pamphlets:
Sponsoring Through the Twelve Steps, pp. 20-22

The OA "Twelve and Twelve" describes different types of inventories: spot-check, daily and extensive (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous,* pp. 85-89).

"As we repeatedly act on Step Ten, we begin to see the remarkable way the Steps will, from now on, continue to remove unnecessary turmoil and pain from our lives" (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 89-90).

Step Eleven: 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.

"In order to recover from compulsive eating, we need a living, developing, ongoing relationship with this Higher Power, and we find having complete freedom to seek that relationship is a vital aspect of our program" (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 92).

Suggested readings for discussion and sharing:

Books:
The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 91-98
The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous, p. 85-93
Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., pp. 86-88
AA *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions,* pp. 96-105

Pamphlets:
Sponsoring Through the Twelve Steps, pp. 22-23

"Perhaps one of the greatest rewards of meditation and prayer is the sense of *belonging* that comes to us. We no longer live in a completely hostile world. We are no longer lost and frightened and purposeless … we are no longer deeply disturbed by all the seeming evidence to the contrary that surrounds us in purely human affairs. We know that God lovingly watches over us. We know that when we turn to Him, all will be well with us, here and hereafter" (AA *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, p. 105).

Step Twelve: 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.

"Perhaps it is fortunate for us, and for the millions of compulsive overeaters who still suffer, that most of us who've worked this program will be unable to keep the recovery we have unless we share our experience, strength, and hope with others" (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, pp. 100-101).

Suggested readings for discussion and sharing:

Books:
The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 99-106
The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 95-106
Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., pp. 89-103
AA *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, pp. 106-125

Pamphlets:
Sponsoring Through the Twelve Steps, pp. 24-25

"We who began working the Steps in order to recover from compulsive eating now find that through them we have embarked on a lifelong journey of spiritual growth. From the isolation of food obsession we have emerged into a new world" (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p 106)

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