

## **Growing OA Unity Worldwide**

In OA, Unity is considered so important we speak of it in our OA preamble, which states: "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."

We also have a Unity with Diversity policy to remind us all how much we need to be open and accepting of one another. In our suggested meeting formats we read: "Let us be mindful of OA's Unity with Diversity Policy: 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 trait."

But Unity can be challenged by other less obvious differences as well. Consider how you may be affecting the Unity of OA as a whole by your own actions as I continue.

*Tradition One says, "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon OA unity."*

This tradition speaks of unity. But unity does not mean uniformity.

We can grow OA Unity worldwide if we focus on our common solution, not our differences.

From our book, *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition*, we learn "When we first came to OA we focused on our own recovery [and we] took for granted the OA groups... and the OA fellowship. As we left behind our dependence on food, we began to rely on OA. ...We reacted with fear any time we thought this Fellowship might be threatened. ...We did not need to be afraid for the health of OA. Overeaters Anonymous has Twelve Traditions which are designed to keep our meetings and service committees on track."

Our OA membership is diverse, and we see many different spiritual beliefs and styles of recovery. No two members are identical, so why would we expect their program be exactly the same? We need the combined strength of us all working together for our common solution, supporting each other and OA as a whole.

From our pamphlet, *A Common Solution: Diversity and Recovery*, we learn "When we focus on our differences, the disease grows bigger. When we focus on what unites us, we find strength and recovery beyond our wildest dreams".

We also learn "We share a common problem of compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors, and together we seek a common solution—recovery".

How do we help Overeaters Anonymous grow and be strong as a whole?

We are all part of OA, joined by the desire to stop eating compulsively and to carry the message of recovery to the still-suffering compulsive eater.

Meeting formats and how members work their programs may vary or change over time. The Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, Nine Tools of Recovery, and Twelve Concepts of OA Service remain the same for everyone and are the foundation of Overeaters Anonymous.

Another quote from the *OA Twelve and Twelve* book, "Unity of OA is a matter of life or death to us".

OA as a whole has agreed on a number of things that do affect us all. We embody unity when we adhere to the definition of an OA group. This four-part definition is found in our OA Bylaws, which says:

"1) As a group, we meet to practice the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, guided by the Twelve Concepts of OA Service.

2) All who have the desire to stop eating compulsively are welcome in the group.

3) No member is required to practice any actions in order to remain a member or to have a voice (share at a meeting).

4) As a group we have no affiliation other than Overeaters Anonymous."

*Tradition Three says, "The only requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively."*

Through Tradition Three, we embrace diversity in how OA members work their respective programs of recovery. This includes diversity with:

-How and when we work the Steps

- how members sponsor other members, whether in a structured or flexible way

- individual plans of eating

- the many manifestations of our disease, including anorexia, bulimia, compulsive overeating, and under-eating

Diversity of meeting formats and meeting topics, including meetings to support LGBT members, women, men, members who have lost 100 pounds or more, members who are maintaining a healthy body weight, young person's up to age 30, longtime

OA members, and members with other backgrounds, plus both face to face and virtual meetings.

OA also embraces the personal diversity of our membership, including diversity of race, creed, nationality, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, and any other trait. Individual differences among our members and different approaches to recovery within our Fellowship need not divide us. OA's framework is broad enough for us all.

Diversity enriches us and helps OA reach more suffering compulsive eaters. In OA *all* are welcome. Let's promote acceptance and inclusivity.

*Tradition Four says, "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole"*

From Tradition Four, we recognize that each meeting is a self-governing community of recovering members who are allowed to decide through group conscience what works best for their group. The only limit to group autonomy is that it does not injure other OA groups or OA as a whole.

There are not different kinds of OA. There are, however, different OA members, different meeting formats, different special-focus or special-topic meetings. But no matter what the differences, we are all OA.

From the OA *Twelve and Twelve*, "The first tradition of unity reminds us of an important truth. We are not alone. The disease of compulsive eating which once isolated us has now led us to OA".

Let's work together, each guided by our individual Higher Power, to foster a spirit of Unity in OA. Together we all make OA stronger.

#### *Journaling questions*

- 1) How can I be more open minded and non-judgmental about all OA members, whatever their individual traits?*
- 2) How can I become more open minded and non-judgmental about the way others work their program?*
- 3) How am I practicing love and tolerance of others?*
- 4) How might I contribute to the unity and diversity of OA as a whole?*
- 5) Do I believe the OA program is broad enough to accommodate me and my path to recovery?*

[Repeat the questions]