Overeaters Anonymous 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.
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Willingness to Work

I was introduced to OA in 1987 following outpatient therapy for binge eating, overeating, and bulimia, so I was already armed with a food plan and an understanding of the First Step when I “jump-started” into the program. The miracle of abstinence led to a new spiritual life, and OA saved me from the insanity of my disease. I was a busy wife and mother with a full-time nursing job, and many miracles came true for me, including a 35-pound (16-kg) weight loss.

As years passed, the marriage got rocky, the kids grew, and I settled into doing only what I thought I needed to stay abstinent by depending almost solely on: HP, a spiritual life that became religious, and the Second, Tenth, and Eleventh Steps. “Half measures” (Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed. p. 59) haunted me as my precious abstinence was eroded, first by a few slips, then sporadic ‘bad’ days, and eventually a return to a life of eating binges. Dishonesty, one of my character defects, kept me in denial for two years before I admitted I was in relapse.

Every day of that thirteen-year relapse, I started my day with meditation, prayer, and a resolution to live abstinently. I had some good days, but the spiraling was harder than ever to stop. Following my program was difficult, and my knuckles were usually white.

One big realization finally took hold: As long as I’m fighting myself over the food, I will lose. I was still powerless over food. I couldn’t control a ‘failure’ any more than a
cough from bronchitis. That meant no more shaming myself. I just had to move on to what I could do—more program.

I’ve been abstinent for over two and a half years. I’ve lost over 50 pounds (23 kg) from my highest weight in relapse, and now I work all the Steps daily. I check in with my sponsor and email my food, action plans, and Step work. Retired and divorced (and a grandmother), I make more time for meetings and service. I’ve learned so much:

• If I’m fighting with myself over what I’m eating, then I need to go back to Step One.
• I have to pray to do my HP’s will and for the willingness to work program, not just for the willingness to be abstinent.
• Abstinence, like weight loss and serenity, is a gift of grace.
• Relapse was never as bad as life before program, because I had hope, the Tools, and experiences of abstinence.
• If I have time to overeat, then I have time for more meetings and program.

The blessings of a sane and useful life happen when I follow the rules instead of trying to do life and program my own way. Following instructions is no longer a bitter pill. I’ve seen the light. It took a big chunk of my life, but relapse has given me deep understanding, and fellowship with sufferers and survivors.

Relapse is not inevitable, and it’s never an excuse for shame. It is what it is, and like a mistake, is there for the learning. Always for me, there is hope in recovery through OA.

— Janet P., Danville, Kentucky USA

The Slippers and the Strugglers

I am a recovering compulsive over-eater, and I’ve been in the rooms for more than forty-two years. Twice I had spurts of freedom from the compulsion to overeat—the longest was two years. I lost 100 pounds (45 kg) initially and have kept off 80 pounds (36 kg) for more than fifteen years, which is a miracle in itself. I’m still 5 pounds (2 kg) from my goal. I’m going on 83 years old but feel like I’m 60.

I’m grateful for all the times I slipped and was able to get up again with the first three Steps: I can’t; God can; I’ll let him. I have never left the rooms, abstinent or eating compulsively. Where would I go? I’ve tried it all. When all else fails, follow directions. I get my directions from the Steps, the Tools, my God, and very often from meetings.

I admire those who have years of abstinence, but I identify most with the slippers and the strugglers, especially long-timers like me. I applaud the person who struggles for years but keeps coming back, and when that person finally stands up and says, “I’m abstinent and sponsoring,” my eyes fill with tears of happiness for them. That’s the kind of person I want for a sponsor.

I’m not the person I was when I first came into the rooms. I was a very unhappy single mother weighing 253 pounds (115 kg). I was a couch potato. After finding OA, I got my driver’s license at the age of 54 with the help of lessons from an OA friend. I flew for the first time to visit an OA friend in Florida. I was able to raise my children alone with the help of OA. I went back to work after twenty years, which was very scary, and after retiring I moved to Florida (to the surprise of my family). The Serenity Prayer was always with me during my chemo and radiation treatments. I’ll never forget two beautiful
members who got down on their knees and prayed for me during a convention. I have so much to be thankful for, including the love of my children and my OA family who loved me when I couldn’t love myself. I keep coming back and that is what keeps me going. OA works if we work it. Eventually it grabs hold. It just takes some of us longer than others.

I can’t; God can; I’ll let him. These have been the best years of my life.
— Dotty, Flagler Beach, Florida USA

First Aid

One Saturday, I had a long to-do list of errands and wondered how to get it all done. My highest priority was to go to my home meeting, but I had an hour until it started. “Hey, I can get the grocery shopping done if I hurry.” This is the thought that crossed the brain of a person who tends to overcommit and underestimate available time and energy.

Since my husband had our car, I multi-tasked (getting exercise was also on the to-do list) by walking to the store with our portable pushcart. Though I shopped quickly, the checkout lines were longer than I anticipated. Walking more quickly than usual and pushing the full cart along, I did not see a raised crack in the sidewalk. When I hit that crack, the cart lurched. I took a tumble, and my arms and knees met concrete. Shocked and angry, I was a scraped, bloody mess. I arrived home a few minutes later, upset that I would likely miss the meeting.

While cleaning and bandaging myself, I had a sudden urge to guzzle a can of a diet soft drink. The drink is part of my food plan, but I realized I wasn’t thirsty—I just wanted to dull the shock and pain. To respect my abstinence, I did not drink the soda, and I resolved to get to my meeting, even late. Somehow, I got the groceries put away and arrived at the meeting in time to hear the opening Serenity Prayer.

At the meeting, I shared the lesson that life on life’s terms is occasionally unpleasant and painful. I had placed myself in a position to be hurt by cramming too much into an hour and becoming careless. Yet I was able to remain abstinent despite the physical and emotional pain of the moment.

I was powerless over the pain, but I practiced the principles of recovery by surrendering my will and desire to eat using Steps One, Two, and Three. I administered Eighth and Ninth Step help by giving myself first aid, physically with soap, water, and bandages, and emotionally with a meeting. An on-the-spot Tenth Step helped me understand the price of overcommitment, cramming, and rushing. My Sixth and Seventh Step were learning to give myself more time and surrendering my expectations about completing to-do lists. My Twelfth Step action was to share my experience at a meeting (and gingerly receive hugs). Later,
I practiced my Fifth Step by calling my sponsor and discussing the experience and lessons learned. During our call, we also said the Serenity Prayer, an Eleventh Step act.

My cuts and scrapes healed, I got to work almost all Twelve Steps on this problem, and despite a tumble, my abstinence was maintained for another day.

— Mike B., Baltimore, Maryland USA

**Run to God**

Life’s problems and recovery—I love putting these two concepts together because it means I can let go of problems instead of wrapping my life around them and getting stuck. Recovery is about taking the action needed to experience serenity. Recovery gets me unstuck!

I find such freedom in the program, such peace—and then, yikes! A problem hits me in the face. Life on life’s terms, I’m reminded. What to do? How do I stay out of obsessive analysis of another person’s behavior or obsessive thinking about the issue confronting me? And how do I let go of the fear produced by “what ifs,” if I time-travel in my head to the worst possible outcome?

I have seven years in recovery, and what a miracle it is, how this program works. When a problem surfaces, I can ask myself, “Why don’t I first run to God, instead of running to obsessive thinking?” or “Why do I want to hang onto this issue? Why not turn it over?”

What works for me is to first recognize when I’m starting to obsess. Then I use Step Eleven by:

- Pausing when I can’t seem to focus on the beauty around me because I’m worried about the situation before me
- Pausing to pray, “God, please guide me into right thinking. I cannot do it on my own.”

Then I take an action, even a small one—journal, call my sponsor, make an outreach call, fold the laundry, or anything to move me in a more positive direction and change my focus.

When I use these tools, I become free—free to live how this program intends me to live, letting go and experiencing serenity. Each day I ask myself, “Did I experience serenity?” It’s a question that reminds me it is possible, that I do deserve to be at peace with myself, and that I can trust God in the midst of hard things.

In gratitude, I take action when my old self starts telling me lies about who I am. Left alone, I would be self-propelled to the kitchen or pantry for “just one bite,” and my thoughts would want to default to the old way, the self-obsessive and self-defeating way. But this program offers guidance for a sane and happy life, one day at a time. I am forever grateful for the blueprint for living offered by the Twelve Steps of OA—truly we have a program to live by.

— Nadine V., Billings, Montana USA
Hi. My name is Laurie and I’m an overeater. I’ve found I can handle life on life’s terms much better when I work with the Tools in my program of recovery.

I use the Serenity Prayer too. At the beginning of my recovery, my biggest challenge was my job because I was required to work near fresh-baked treats, sugary sweets, and fast food. I chose to abstain from all of them. I never counted how many times I had to say the Serenity Prayer back then, but I know there were days when I retreated to the restroom several times each hour to recite it. I found the power I needed in the Serenity Prayer.

Now, almost three years into my recovery and one day at a time, work is still my biggest daily challenge. While the food is no longer tempting, the people I work with can be maddening and frustrating. I am grateful it is now an automatic reflex to surrender and to let go and let God. I accept I am powerless over all other people, places, and things. I am only responsible for how I choose to respond. If I can’t find my serenity in surrendering, I say the Serenity Prayer. If my feelings are still overwhelming, I call or text a program friend or write my feelings down on paper. Reading literature always helps me find my center.

No person, place, or thing is worth as much as my recovery, and my recovery is my number-one priority. I make certain
to hit at least one meeting weekly, but two is better when things aren’t going so smoothly. I also go to as many retreats as possible. I love the hunger for recovery that I find at retreats. It’s fun and relaxing to get away. There’s such intense focus, perhaps because we’re not pressed for time or distracted by chores or errands. We make our recovery the one and only priority for that day. Retreats always give me a super shot in the arm.

I hope my story encourages you. Together we get better.
— Laurie M.

Lifeboat

How to live life on life’s terms was the most important lesson I learned during my deployment in 2015. I’m a member of the U.S. Navy, and I spent more than seven months on a ship sailing across the ocean. The ship’s menu did not cater to me. The hours of food service did not cater to me. My work and sleep schedule was out of my control, and exercise became more stressful than rewarding to my exhausted mind and body.

Within the first two months of deployment, I relapsed. I had been in program for over three years and had almost a year of continuous abstinence from bingeing and purging. I felt so ashamed and defeated. I tried so hard to manipulate everything so it would work for me. I complained about my food needs constantly and threw fits when the foods I wanted weren’t available or when I knew I wouldn’t be getting my full eight hours of sleep that day. For months, I tried to force myself to exercise, and when I couldn’t get out of bed early enough to do it, I beat myself up the rest of the day. I felt lower than I had in years. It never occurred to me to go easy on myself given that I was living at sea on a floating hunk of metal and working twelve to fourteen hours a day.

Deployment is hard, but I didn’t want to seem weak. Though I could tell everyone on the ship was suffering, I didn’t think anyone was suffering as badly as me with my disease. I was too embarrassed to admit defeat.

By the grace of my Higher Power, I stayed abstinent during the last four months. I did my absolute best to live life on life’s terms by taking everything one step at a time. I wrote to my sponsor constantly. If something felt too difficult and triggered cravings, then I told myself I could deal with it later. If the food I needed wasn’t available, I became as flexible as I could or I very politely asked the cooks if I could have something different. When I was calm and sincere, it was usually not difficult to move around bumps in the road.

I know that I will experience hardship again, maybe not quite like deploying on a ship, but other things will happen to me to challenge my peace of mind and my abstinence. Next time, I can reflect on
the thoughts and actions that helped me during my deployment so I don’t lose my abstinence again. I am forever grateful for this program. Without the Tools, the Steps, and all of my loving OA friends back at home port, I think I would have done much more damage to myself on that ship.
— Madison, Hawaii USA

Doubling Down

At the ripe age of 69, I got married for the first time and also relocated from a booming metropolitan area to a more rural, suburban community. Since moving, my weight has slowly decreased due to increased activity and vigorous program work in OA.

I knew that adjusting to marriage and a new living environment would be high stress. Luckily, this Fellowship has taught me that food is not a solution to stress—the Twelve Steps of recovery is. For me, this was a do-or-die situation.

My first action was to find a face-to-face meeting, and as soon as I walked in, I knew I was home. I am an African-American woman, and my new community is predominantly white. At the meetings I attend, I am the only “fly in the buttermilk,” but it does not matter. OA meetings are my place of refuge, and these wonderful people have become my new and dearest friends.

The challenges have not been easy, but I live in Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve. When fear of not being the perfect wife, loneliness, or friction from living with another human being arises, I follow the directives in the Big Book and immediately ask God to remove them. If needed, I discuss the issue with my sponsor or another recovered OA member. I meditate daily and ask God what his will is for me and for directions and the power to carry them out.

Having a sponsor and sponsoring is the lifeblood of my recovery. My sponsees keep me in the Steps and help me exemplify that “Nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics” (Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., p. 89); it is also true for compulsive eating and compulsive overeaters.

My recovery is stronger today because I knew I was in a doubly stressful situation and that staying close to my Higher Power and this program was my only solution. I doubled down on my efforts because I know this disease is progressive. But guess what? Recovery is progressive too.

I thank God for OA, my sponsor and
sponsees, and a 100-pound (45-kg) weight loss maintained since 1993. I have a life beyond my wildest dreams. This program is a design for living that gets me through anything. Yes it does.

— Nancy R., Mishawaka, Indiana USA

As Is

I thought I was living the dream—smack-dab in the middle of OA Paradise! I was abstinent, I’d lost weight, I attended meetings, and I was working my program. All was good. I remember hearing about the “honeymoon” abstinence, that one day I would take a step backward before I would be able to move forward again. I felt it simply could not happen to me.

I worked in retail and was always on my feet. Meeting quotas was stressful, and there was pressure to perform. I had difficulty manipulating someone into buying something they did not want. I found myself thinking about food to help me get through the stress, but I didn’t lose my abstinence.

I dreamed of working in an office again, where I was familiar with phones, computers, alphabetizing, and sitting a lot, and my dream came true. My food was good, three meals a day with no sugar or white flour. My meetings had to change to accommodate my new work schedule, and I missed the love and support of members from my old meetings. Once, I felt sorry for myself, but I still didn’t lose my abstinence.

I continued to work my program, but because I went from walking around for six hours a day to sitting for six hours without changing my food, I began to gain weight. Before I knew it, I had gained 15 pounds (7 kg). I was mortified!

My husband said he would take over cooking if I would clean, and I jumped at his offer. But his cooking was not as light, and after a few months the pounds had grown to 35 (16 kg). I still wasn’t eating sugar, but I was eating differently and exercising less.

I realized my new job came with its own set of stressors, and I soon began to think that food would ease the stress. Another 15 pounds (7 kg) returned—I ate no sugar, but portions and meal times had grown. I began to panic. My head began to play the old tapes: “I’m a failure; I’m not good enough!”

I shared all this at my meeting, and I was immediately surrounded with love and support. It brought me to a place where I could accept myself “as is.” I found the courage to change my daily action plan and tweak my food plan. By the grace of God, I now walk for thirty minutes each day and have cut back on portions. The pounds are coming off, but more important, I feel happy again. I now have the hope and faith I need to continue to grow in whatever direction God has planned for me.

— Liz B., Chicago, Illinois USA
New Presence

Just a month before my fifth OA anniversary, my father suffered a massive heart attack and was placed on life support. By the end of the day, there was little hope for Dad’s recovery, but some family members were not ready to accept that truth. If ever there was an excuse for this compulsive eater to dive into the food, this was it! But almost five years of abstinence taught me that I am a recovering compulsive eater and as a result of working the Steps, I had what I needed to keep on recovering no matter what happened in my life.

Almost instinctively, the Tools took over, and I used the new skills I’d developed to care for myself while dealing with difficulties. I chose to eat according to my food plan, regardless of how many sweets and fatty foods well-meaning people brought to the waiting room. I had OA friends and my sponsor to call. I followed an action plan to eat at regular meal times, get away for short periods of quiet, and take short walks around the hospital. Even when I was in the ICU room with Dad, I took time for prayer and journaling.

During one of those early-morning prayer times, I was overwhelmed with some of the deepest emotion I have ever experienced. Not wanting to wake my sister, I rushed out of the room and down the hall to the hospital chapel, where I sat down on the floor and began to sob. Was this grief? Of course it was! One of the most cherished people in my life was dying.
As the sobs began to subside, I realized I was also feeling something more—gratitude, and maybe even joy. Since I wasn’t stuffing my feelings with food, I was able to be present both with my feelings and with my grieving family. I was able to express what I needed and welcome the gifts of love, presence, and help that good friends and family came to offer. I was able to listen to what the doctors were actually saying and guide my family through the difficult decisions. Most of all, because I was abstinent, I could thank my Higher Power for Dad’s life as it was lived, with all the good and not-so-good parts, and celebrate what we’d shared together.

All I wanted when I walked through the doors of OA six years ago was to find my way out of the food and into a healthy body weight. I certainly experienced those miracles, but the real gifts of working the Steps are so much deeper, richer, and fuller than I ever imagined. The transformation that began on my outside has reached all the way into my spirit, and every day I become more and more who I was always meant to be.

I thank my Higher Power for the program of Overeaters Anonymous and the life I am living because of it.

— Lisa P., Townsend, Tennessee USA

Early in my program I received the suggestion to call in my food plan to another OA member. It seemed weird at first, but it was also a great idea since I tended to be secretive about what, how, and when I ate. Many years later, I continue to call in my food. My weight has stabilized within a 5-pound (2-kg) range; I weigh once a month. My top size was 13, but now, depending on clothing style and material, it is usually between sizes 6 and 8.

In the last ten years, I’ve lost both parents, two brothers, several close cousins, a sponsor from another Twelve Step program, and several friends. I have changed jobs five times. There has been much sadness and strain, but I’ve accepted life on life’s terms. My abstinence has survived through it all.

Life delivers a lot. I have been given so much abundance. I am currently sponsoring someone in the Steps, and—miracle of miracles—we are both working together on Step One. It couldn’t be more relevant. While sharing with her, I am reminded of so many changes and that I haven’t had to face them alone.

I have two sponsors whom I talk with regularly. I also attend meetings regularly, and I keep contact with a host of friends.

Life’s Terms

Taking life on life’s terms is one of the most important ideas that OA has given me—it’s such a meaningful concept. My sponsors remind me it’s my job to fit into my Higher Power’s plan, not the other way around. Looking back, it’s clear to me now that early years of abstinence gave me lots of practice in accepting life as it is, changing what I can, and letting the rest go.
Along with prayer and meditation, my friends form the spine of my recovery.

It concerns me that I haven’t had tears since my brother died six weeks ago, but even that is something I am powerless over. When the time is right, I’m sure it will be taken care of because Step One seems to fit everything.

First, I was powerless over compulsive eating, and my life was unmanageable. Now, I’m powerless over grief, powerless over remaining self-supporting through my own contributions, and powerless over all the other changes life brings.

When I was in early recovery, someone once told me the only constant is change. I can count on that. That’s life on life’s terms. Thank you, OA.

— Helen O.

Acting Out

Nine years ago, I crawled into the rooms of OA, wishing I could die so I could be free of the hell of this disease. I heard “Welcome to Overeaters Anonymous. Welcome home!” and I began my recovery journey back to life. That year, I also began taking over the care of my mother. Working the Twelve Steps in OA not only gave me the grace to deal with her increasing dementia, but also enabled me to forgive both my parents, make amends to them, and share a loving relationship with them in their last years. Within a few years of joining OA, I went from a size 22 to a size 10. I am 5 feet 9 inches (175 cm) tall, and I maintain a weight loss of 70–75 pounds (32–34 kg).

In 2014, my life was turned upside down. Mom passed away in August after years in nursing facilities. Dad died in November under hospice care in his home. In the midst of my grief, I looked at my marriage and knew I could no longer live with my alcoholic husband. I made the painful decision to leave him in June 2015.

I turned to the tools and the Twelve Steps. It is miraculous that I did not relapse. I felt those feelings without avoiding them or delaying them with food.

The process of grieving these back-to-back losses has included the darkest days of my life. When my only daughter left for college in September 2015, I fell deeply into a clinical depression. I sat through moments, hours, and sometimes days of enormous emotional pain. By the grace of God, I never
picked up my drugs (sugar and flour), and I did not binge. At times, I started down the “slippery slope” by adding food to my meals, but I turned to the program Tools and the Twelve Steps to stop my addiction before it could progress. It is miraculous that I did not relapse. I felt those feelings without avoiding or delaying them with food.

I put one foot in front of the other and focused on one day at a time. I brought my body to meetings and absorbed recovery, although I was not often able to share. I added a second sponsor for additional support. I took sponsee phone calls daily, which brought me out of the self-absorption of my own problems. I called long-timers and newcomers. I read OA literature daily. I journaled frequently, including work in a daily gratitude journal, which reminded me to focus on my blessings. Most important, I started each day with prayer and meditation and maintained connection with my Higher Power throughout the day.

I did all these things, whether I felt like it or not, because my program has taught me not to think myself into action, but to act myself into thinking a recovered life.

I thank God I had my prior years of recovery, which gave me structure; I used my action plan to keep working my program. I am grateful beyond anything I can express for my fellows sharing their support, prayers, and love. Thank you, God, for Overeaters Anonymous!

— Pat H., Williamstown, New Jersey USA

Phone Save

When I first walked into the rooms of OA, I never thought I’d still be attending meetings thirty-nine years later. All I was interested in was getting a diet, losing weight, and going on my way—and that is exactly what I did, over and over again. I never could sustain abstinence over periods of time, but I was able to be abstinent in stressful times.

After six years, I stopped coming and going and never left OA again. I worked the Steps more than once with various sponsors, but I was unable to be abstinent for more than a few months at a time, usually just a few days, because I would always think I could have a little non-abstinent food. Each time, I wound up discouraged and disgusted. Sometimes, I felt hopeless.

I was also going to school, working full-time, and caring for an elderly uncle. I thank God for OA because, no matter what, I remembered the Third Tradition.
By returning to meetings and connecting with my Higher Power, I was able to endure my uncle’s death and my dad’s shortly after.

In fall 2008, my husband became critically ill, so I could not attend meetings regularly. In December, I saw a flyer for OA phone meetings, and I was so excited! I thought it would help me stay abstinent if I attended ninety phone meetings in ninety days. I was abstinent for eighty-six days. The next day, March 15, 2009, I was hungry and binged on a sugary substance. All it took was one bite, and I could not stop eating.

The next day I shared what had happened, and I never got so many OA phone calls in my life. What a Fellowship! You give such love, understanding, and support.

Since that day, I have remained abstinent, and I have maintained a 50-pound (23-kg) weight loss from my highest weight. I am eternally grateful.

I remained abstinent through the rest of my husband’s illness and his death in 2012. We were together for fifty-eight years and losing him was the most devastating struggle, stressor, and setback I have ever experienced. The morning after his death, I called the 6:45 a.m. East Coast Sunrise meeting and shared my grief with my OA family.

Then last year, two days after returning from WSBC, I was awakened by a loud noise and found my home on fire. Miraculously, I got out alive. Again I called the Sunrise meeting. Before the day was over, I received calls, texts, and promises to send OA literature.

I continue to attend at least one phone meeting a day and at least one face-to-face meeting every week. I continue to practice the Principles in all my affairs. I sponsor and I have a sponsor. OA has become such a big part of my life that I never ever want to leave. It has given me the gift of being much closer to my Higher Power. It has changed my life.

— Evangelyn R.
Using Help

“You have cancer!” Those were the first words I heard after coming out of surgery. My first thought was “Oh, good. I can eat now, and no one will judge me for it.”

I’d been abstinent for almost three years at that point, but once a compulsive overeater, always a compulsive overeater. I didn’t like the thought of not being abstinent, though, so my next thought was, “No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others” (Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., p. 84). Even before I learned what was wrong with me, I knew the only way I was going to get through was by helping others. I knew I had to be abstinent throughout my cancer and cancer treatment to show others and myself that with God’s help it was possible. And then I fell back asleep.

During the course of my illness and treatment, I learned to:

- Ask for help.
- Accept the help I asked for.
- Have honest interactions by offering a hug to friends who had difficulty finding the words to tell me they loved me.
- Give people a list of foods I could eat so they could prepare my meals because friends want to help but they don’t know how. A list made everyone happy.
- Be angry with God and turn my life and my will over to him anyway.
- Ride the waves because whatever “it” is won’t happen overnight.
• Write. Write. Write.
• Ask for meetings at my home so I could attend.
• Do service. Service made me feel a part of something greater than what I was going through.
• Keep my commitments. I still planned to go to World Service Business Conference, so I had to keep my commitment to my abstinence and my sub-committee. It gave me something to look forward to.
• Use the Board of Trustees. I admit it, I felt alone. I tried to find other OA members who had abstinently gone through what I was going through. I called my trustee and cried in her ear. She asked the other trustees, and soon I was getting phone calls from around the world. It was up to me to call back.
• Be patient with others and myself. I still have a hard time asking for help. I realize I hate inviting someone else into my insanity. But if I don’t, I may not make it through the next bout of life.

A few months ago, I was one year cancer-free and looking forward to the next World Service Business Conference.

The Conference theme was “Responsibility—To Carry the Message.”

What’s my message? If I can make it through cancer and cancer treatment abstinently, so can you. We can do it together with our Higher Power’s help.

— Lyn C., Western Massachusetts USA

Re-Call

I recently did battle with another disease: shingles. I had so much nerve pain I could not go to meetings, and I felt abandoned. I was forced to make phone calls.

Every OA member I called offered help and prayers. Even when I was hopeless, they gave me hope.

Nerve pain is similar to the disease of compulsive overeating. Like food, I could think of nothing but the pain, which was so intense that I had to ask for help.

My sponsor suggested I might want to actually read my OA literature. I began to study Overeaters Anonymous, Third Edition by reading each paragraph, writing about it, and sharing what I learned.

Every person I called, man, woman, or teen, asked, “What are you reading?” I know we used Gamblers Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous literature to get our program started in 1960, but OA has come of age. Last year I’d purchased a gift for myself: Overeaters Anonymous, Third Edition. (I call it my Big Book.) It describes every path I tried to gain victory over my disease. I could never win. At my home meeting every week, we read “Our
Invitation to You” and hear these words: “It is weakness, not strength, that binds us to each other” (p. 4). I finally understood there is no victory over the disease of compulsive overeating, period. It’s in the book that my “soul purpose” is to abstain and share with others. Share what? That there is a way out.

When I had shingles, my phone became my lifeline. I called many newcomers. When Twelfth Step Within day came, I decided to call each person who was there for me when I first walked into my home meeting. Of our twelve members, one had died in recovery, four had never left OA and are still living in these beautiful Steps, and two had left OA but came back. I am still searching for the other five. That’s forty percent full retention and fifty percent active today with *Overeaters Anonymous, Third Edition* being used as part of their recovery. Wow, we have come of age. Reach out!

— Anonymous

Choosing Well

I read an article in *Lifeline* about a person who had a problem she couldn’t fix, so she wrote an article for our magazine, and it stopped her from eating compulsively. I decided to do the same.

I have been a member of OA for almost seventeen years and abstinent for sixteen of them, using the same manageable food plan. Four months ago, I was diagnosed with stomach cancer and had 90 percent of my stomach removed. I am cancer-free today. But instead of being grateful that they found my cancer early through a miracle from my Higher Power, I am complaining about my new food plan.

Now I have to eat five or six times a day in small quantities. I have to be very careful with my measurements because if I try to eat too much at one time my body rejects the food and puts me in discomfort. I know now what it is like to be anorexic, trying to give my body enough nutrition so I don’t lose more weight. I have lost 15 pounds (7 kg) since my cancer was discovered, so I am now underweight. My doctors and nutritionists have told me that my situation should improve, but I am an addict, and I want results now.

Today I just ask God to get me through today. I am grateful I was able to have the surgery. I have a chance to see my two young grandchildren grow up. I still have my sponsees and am starting to do service for my intergroup. Focusing on others will take me out of my own mind. I can still do service for my fellow OA members, especially those who supported me through my difficult time.

My Higher Power has given me a choice
today. If I stay positive and seek his will for me, I stand a chance to have a life that is joyous and free. If I don’t, I will suffer the same way I suffered seventeen years ago, a slave to the food, angry, and resentful. Guess which one I choose today?
— Edward R., Sharon, Massachusetts USA

**Turning It Over**

I weighed 240 pounds (109 kg) when I first entered OA. Even though I stalked the rooms for two years, calling the hotline, looking for local meetings, I didn’t have the guts to step through the door. But in September 2010, I was approached by a colleague who invited me to give OA a try. I went that night and became a consistent member for several years.

I became abstinent in January 2011 and released weight until I reached 186 pounds (84 kg). My bloodwork became normal, and my diabetes was controlled with one-third less insulin. I felt amazing. I was able to remain abstinent through the death of my father, who died of end-stage kidney disease as a result of his diabetes. I knew his fate would be my future if I did not control my compulsive overeating. I reached eighteen months of abstinence, but then I relapsed and stopped attending meetings.

In August 2014, I was contacted again by that same colleague. She said, “I am worried that you will die if you don’t do this work.” Her words got through to me. I was back up to 221 pounds (100 kg), and my diabetes was more out of control than ever, so I committed to attending a structured meeting format with five other members.

I attended it sporadically for about a year, gaining and losing the same 20 pounds (9 kg). I reached ninety days of abstinence a few times, but kept relapsing and starting over. I was unwilling to do the work and wanted to focus on problems to justify being in the food.

In September 2015, I relapsed into bulimia for the first time in ten years. I was deep in despair, and my weight was climbing. I felt guilt and shame, and I was ready to give up. I was terrified too. How had I gotten back here?

A few months later, I met with my colleague again. I cried about my misery in the food and admitted to the bulimia. I felt I had hit rock bottom. As I was leaving, I realized it was December 12, and I knew there was an OA meeting happening for Twelfth Step Within Day.
Somehow I drove myself to that meeting. I recognize now it was my Higher Power at work. I was home!

I have recommitted to the group and attend five meetings a week. I am now doing Step work with a sponsor. I weighed 213 pounds (97 kg) when I recommitted and now am down to 194 pounds (88 kg). I find peace every day by turning it over to my Higher Power. I have to recognize and accept myself for who I am, even if I never lose another pound. I am tremendously grateful for the gifts I receive every day in this program. And this is just the beginning of the journey.

— Amy H., Medford, OR

An “I Can” Plan

Early in my recovery, I often heard longtimers say, “If you fail to plan, then you plan to fail.” My first sponsor drove home this idea by always encouraging me to call ahead and plan ahead for meals and events and to make backup plans, including knowing who to call for support. This instilled in me a desire to keep my food clean no matter what. Whenever I heard successful members share, they always related their recovery with putting their binge foods down first, and then making sure their clean food was right. I wanted what they had, and I still do.

Recently, I was confronted with a health issue that required major surgery and four to six weeks of recovery. When the surgery date was set, I had two weeks to finish work projects and prepare at home for my recovery. For those two weeks, I prayed for acceptance and courage; I went to my meetings; I talked and cried with friends; I “cocooned” with my husband; I asked God to help me let go of pet projects at work; I lined up nurse friends to help me change bandages and dressings; and most important, I prepared my food. I measured out abstinent food to take to the hospital in case their menu didn’t fit my food plan. I made a large dish and measured single portions to heat up. I labeled containers and baggies to remember the measured amounts they held. Then I spoke with my sponsor and other recovering OA members to ask them to be available and to pray for my medical team and me on the day of the surgery.

With everything that was going on for me emotionally and physically, I did not want to be faced with food issues. One thing I know for sure was that my disease of compulsive overeating likes to attack when I am vulnerable. When I am tired, overwhelmed, sad, or anxious, my disease tells me I don’t need to measure, or that a little extra food would make me feel better. My disease is a liar, and I knew if I failed to plan for those times of vulnerability, I would succumb to the lies. I would plan to fail.

Today, four weeks after my surgery, I sit in a pool of gratitude for all that planning. My food is clean, and I am grateful I did all that preparation and was given the willingness to stick to my plan. The peace of mind those measured meals brought me is priceless! During a time of pain, uncertainty, fear, and waiting, I did not have to make any food decisions or even think about what was next. It was all planned out and ready to go. There was no question for my disease to present. I was protected by the Principles of the program and the clear-headedness of living in the solution. Without OA, I have no idea what might have happened, and I have no desire to find out.

— Jessica M., Shillington, Pennsylvania USA
I’m sure I heard the OA Responsibility Pledge at my first meeting fifteen years ago. When I really listened to it a few meetings later, I thought, “Responsible? Who, me? No way! My life is a mess—I’m the one who needs help. How could you possibly tell me that I’m responsible for others?”

When I was a teenage compulsive eater, responsibility meant making sure the children I babysat were in bed as soon as possible so I could eat whatever I found in the kitchen. When I was an adult compulsive eater, responsibility meant showing up for work even though I was hung over from too much food the night before. And as a compulsively eating wife, it meant buying the groceries so I could make sure I got my sugar fix (and the real food too). I did what I absolutely had to do to get through the day. That was enough responsibility.

I made commitments and did not keep them, or I kept commitments but complained the whole time. I procrastinated at work, then pulled all-nighters to get the work done. It’s clear I didn’t know how to handle responsibility before OA.

Fast-forward fifteen years. Now the words of our Responsibility Pledge have taken on a new meaning. Through the Steps and the Fellowship, yes, I really am responsible. How?

I am responsible for:

- my own recovery
- my abstinence
- my self-care
- working the Steps and staying in fit spiritual condition
- reaching out to the Higher Power of my understanding, listening, and seeing what he has planned for me
- sharing my experience, strength, and hope
- picking up the phone or the literature instead of the food
- being honest at all times, especially with my sponsor
- practicing the Principles of the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts in all my affairs

I want to live the rest of my days abstinently. The only guarantee I have for lifelong abstinence is to keep coming back, to carry the message, and to extend my hand and heart to all who share my compulsion so that OA is still here tomorrow. For that I am gladly responsible.

— Denise O.

Editor’s Note: OA’s 2016 Strategic Plan includes a focus on the Responsibility Pledge. Region chairs and members of the Board of Trustees are contributing one article per issue on this theme.
Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

Admission and Prayer

Step Eight asks me to own up to who I am in relation to other people and myself.

Working with a sponsor helped. I returned to OA after a relapse, during which I quickly gained 40 pounds (18 kg). After a suicidal crisis, I realized I would slowly eat myself to death if I continued. I received the gift of desperation and was willing to go to any length to recover from this disease. I asked someone who had what I wanted to sponsor me.

After Step Seven, my sponsor suggested I review my Fourth Step to look for anyone I had harmed. I wrote down their names and the reasons why I needed to make amends to them. The first half of Step Eight was an opportunity to name those I had harmed and why. It didn’t matter if someone had harmed me; I only needed to identify the people I had harmed. I recently considered several people I used to sponsor. It wasn’t easy to admit I had been controlling and arrogant towards them. When I did admit I had harmed these people, relief filled my heart.

I needed to put my own name on the list—“we have also damaged ourselves with our self-destructive thinking, eating, and living habits” (The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, p. 69). I damaged my body by compulsively overeating, starving, overexercising, and denying my excess weight. I lived in isolation, fear, self-pity, and resentment. I wrote my name on the list, although I had no idea how I would make amends to myself. That was part of Step Nine, and I wasn’t there yet.

The second half of Step Eight involved becoming willing to make amends to those I had harmed. “It might help us to remember that our purpose in doing step eight is not to judge others, but to learn attitudes of mercy and forgiveness” (The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, p. 69). My sponsor suggested I pray for anyone I was unwilling to forgive. I prayed for each person to have health, prosperity, and joy, although I still felt angry. After praying for one particular person every day for a month, I felt a wave of forgiveness flow over me. The God of my understanding helped me see this person as a lovable child of God, who, just like me, was doing one’s best with what had been given.

I prayed for each person on my Step Eight list and asked God to forgive me too. Then I was ready for Step Nine.

— Edited and reprinted from The Transformation newsletter, Central Ohio Intergroup, August 2011
Overeaters Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

**Living Traditions**

**Tradition 8**

**Labor of Love**

I remember when I was new to OA. I sat with my first sponsor, going over my journaling on Step One. It took quite a bit of time, and I couldn’t believe how patiently my sponsor sat there, listening. She wasn’t giving advice. Periodically she shared her experience, strength, and hope, but mostly, she just offered the gift of understanding. I was amazed that I wasn’t paying her! She accepted me even though we had only known each other for a short while. She even said I was helping her.

The gift of sponsorship is so powerful because it is given freely—no strings attached. Now I get to pass it on and do the same for others. I always enjoy seeing my sponsees’ faces when I tell them they are actually helping me more than I am helping them.

*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous* tells me “In OA, we learn to give our loving support to others freely, without trying to advise people or change them; nor do we look to others to work our program for us” (p. 175).

Service is its own reward. Even if we are experts (counselors, ministers, dietitians, authors) outside the rooms of OA, we only share our experience, strength, and hope. Even someone who has long-term abstinence is not an OA expert; experience has shown that everyone suffers in the long run when recovery “gurus” exist.

OA may (and does) employ special workers. These employees help manage the business aspect of OA when the job is too big for volunteers. These employees may or may not be members. Effective workers are appreciated because they help OA grow stronger, but their duties are entirely business-related.

No member is ever paid for Twelve Step service. Just as the OA *Twelve and Twelve* says, “When we keep OA’s eighth tradition, we discover a beautiful spirit of caring service . . . we can each turn to the one next to us and say truthfully from the heart, ‘I put my hand in yours because I care’” (p. 176).

— Edited and reprinted from OA Today newsletter, St. Louis Bi-State Area Inter-group, August 2014
Seven and a half years ago, I was lying in bed with my abdomen pressing down on my diaphragm and a CPAP mask over my face, and I prayed, “God, see me through to morning, and I promise I’ll go on another diet.” Yet when morning came, I couldn’t diet past breakfast. I had hit bottom.

I tell this story often when I am asked to speak at a retreat or when I qualify at meetings. Only recently did it occur to me that God had indeed answered my prayer. He did see me through to morning. But as soon as I reached that morning, I took control back and tried again to diet on my own, forgetting I had tried diets hundreds of times over the past fifty years or more to no avail.

So what went wrong? Why didn’t God help me? I realized I had never asked him to help me abstain from my destructive eating behaviors. I hadn’t even prayed for the willingness to abstain. All I’d wanted was to live to morning and then “I could take it from there.” No wonder I failed. I had never understood that I was truly powerless over food and only he could restore me to sanity. I never could have done this on my own.

I also understand now that I felt guilt and it was devastating. I had received God’s gift of life and then not gone on another diet. I had made a promise to God but not delivered on my promise. I had “sinned” in God’s eyes and deserved terrible punishment. The overwhelming guilt and hopelessness simply pushed me to eat even more.

I’d hit bottom with no hope in sight. So I went to my doctor and begged her to staple my stomach. She said she would not approve the surgery unless I saw a therapist who specialized in eating disorders. The therapist said she would only take me on if I attended at least three OA meetings. I went to my first OA meeting on May 26, 2006, weighing about 313 pounds (142 kg). Someone there read “Our Invitation to You.” I heard “there is a proven, workable method by which we can arrest our illness,” and I began to have hope.

By the grace of God, I was “struck abstinent” at that first meeting. I got a sponsor at the next meeting. I never had to have the surgery and lost 150 pounds (68 kg) within two years. I have maintained my healthy body weight ever since.

Now my prayer is different. “God, please grant me another day of abstinence and serenity. Grant me the serenity to accept things I cannot change and instead turn them all over to you and your care. Grant me courage to change the things I can and wisdom to know the difference.”

I’ve heard “Ask and you shall receive.” I asked and I have received. Thank you, God.

—Sander B., Marietta, Georgia USA
Can a group be formed that is only for compulsive overeaters of a certain religion?

The OA Preamble does a fairly good job of summarizing several of the Twelve Traditions. I hope that you hear it read aloud at most meetings. Here it is:

“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.”

According to Tradition Ten, “OA has no opinion on outside issues.” If an OA group was formed for compulsive eaters of one religion only, then the group would indicate theirs was the “right” religion. It would also deny membership to large segments of the local or world population. This would affect OA as a whole because people might assume that other OA groups had this restriction as well. Such a group would not be able to welcome everyone who wanted to stop eating compulsively.

A group affiliated with a specific religion would not be an OA meeting because it would not meet the criteria of an OA meeting due to having special requirements for membership.

— Members of the Board of Trustees provide answers to these questions
When I was about three months abstinent, there came a day of unusual struggle with some life and relationship challenges. I could feel my inner addict beginning to plan an epic binge. My mind kept a growing list of all the foods I was going to buy. I asked my inner addict how she would feel about gaining weight, but in that moment, weight gain didn’t matter as much as my desire for the instant gratification of food. I asked how it would feel if my family and friends, who had been so supportive of my recovery, found out I had blown my hard-won abstinence. But the food lust was still stronger than any embarrassment I could imagine.

Then I remembered I had signed up for my first speaking opportunity at one of the meetings I attend. This meeting requires speakers to have three months of current, back-to-back abstinence. “How would you feel,” I asked my food-obsessed addict, “about going into that meeting and crossing your name off the speaker slot?” The realization that I would be letting down others made me pause. I thought about how much the talks others gave had helped me finally feel I wasn’t alone and gave me hope for the first time in my life. I felt deep gratitude for members who shared their stories and trust, and the idea of not giving something back to them stopped me in my tracks. I am grateful to say that my service commitment got me past this period of temptation.

Service is one of the biggest keys to my recovery. When I prepare to share with others, I am solidly focused on the Steps and other aspects of my program, so service helps me just as much as others. I feel a smile in my heart when I share my experience, strength, and hope and then find it has been helpful to another food addict. Service is a privilege and a pleasure for me, and the rewards have been beyond my wildest dreams.

— Anonymous

For Discussion... AND JOURNALING

Choosing Well (p. 17) is about resolving an unfixable problem by writing about it and making the choice to turn it over to a higher power. What is your unfixable problem? Write it out. What service can you give to start living in the solution?
I was disgusted with myself for the umpteenth time in my life. Over the last three years, I had gained back 36 of the 82 pounds (16 of 37 kg) I’d worked so hard to lose nine and a half years ago. It was after the death of my former husband and the subsequent joy of finding and marrying the man of my dreams that I started to relax my firm resolve. After all, I wanted to please this new man in my life. I wanted to shower him with my culinary delights and home-baked goodies. At first I ate just a little, then an occasional extra dessert. But after eating my way through cruises to Alaska, the Mediterranean, Russia, Europe, and Great Britain, I knew I’d lost the battle of trying to eat like a normal person. I felt entitled to eat all those culinary masterpieces from around the world—I paid for them!

To support my new husband, I attended his meetings in another Twelve Step program. Slowly, I began to see how this program could relate to my food compulsions. I contemplated going to an OA meeting, but . . . arrrgh! A meeting? I’d rather sew. Actually work the Steps? Service? No way. Abstinence? Was I really that desperate?

Despite my negativity, the God of my understanding worked on me patiently, inserting little pearls of wisdom into my head during my husband’s meetings. I watched with delight as people accepted coins to celebrate their days, months, or years of sobriety. I knew something was missing in my life. I wanted a coin too!

I went to my first OA meeting and participated in the readings. I felt love and acceptance from a few people. They invited me to come back. They sold me some literature. I went home feeling odd—a transformation was starting to take place. I was curious.

I started purchasing and downloading all the OA literature I could find. I listened to podcasts. I went to meetings, a marathon, and an intergroup meeting. Miracles began to change my life.

When I was growing up, my parents were devout about their religion, spending a lot of time studying religious books, going to meetings, and volunteering their time, and they forced me to be involved as well. When I realized where my negativity and resistance were coming from, I prayed and cried and gave it to God and then boom, boom, boom—three miracles came in a row: After attending two meetings a week for a few weeks, I found a sponsor; I bought a workbook and began working the Steps; and I took an “OA spa day” and drove through the countryside to three different meetings on a sunny day. Each meeting had a different approach to the OA program, so I went home and researched the differences.

(Continued on next page)
Letters must have a complete name and address. Please specify if your name, city, state, province, and/or country should remain anonymous if published.

**Shared Search**

In the April 2016 issue of *Lifeline*, the topic in Stepping Out was Step Four, “Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.” Leslie O. wrote a piece entitled “Searching Out Shame.” I could relate.

Her blender metaphor is very helpful, and one sentence especially touched a chord in me: “For many OA members, the power source of our compulsions is not just fear and resentment, but shame, which is rooted in the codependency that developed in our dysfunctional childhoods.”

Leslie O.’s article was so well done; I want to thank her for taking the time to share her insight with other OA members through *Lifeline* magazine. Thank you.

— V.L. Jackson, Traverse City, Michigan USA

(Continued from previous page)

Then miracle number four happened. The cravings and compulsions I felt for excess food just left me.

I’m slowly, steadily losing weight. Could it really be this easy? How many podcasts had I heard say that this is a simple program? Wow. I took my 30-day coin. I took my 60-day coin. In a little over two weeks, I will take my 90-day coin. I’m happy, joyous, and free.

It can happen for you. It’s happening for me.

— Loriann P., Colton, Oregon USA

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**September 15**

**How OA Changed My Life**

Describe your life before and after being in OA. Include your physical state before and after OA. How is life better in recovery?

Send stories to info@oa.org with the subject line “Lifeline.”

For more instructions, see oa.org
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The Twelve Steps

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.

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.

Permission to use the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous for adaptation granted by AA World Services, Inc.
Is Food a Problem for You?

This series of questions may help you determine if you are a compulsive eater:

1. Do I eat when I’m not hungry, or not eat when my body needs nourishment?
2. Do I go on eating binges for no apparent reason, sometimes eating until I’m stuffed or even feel sick?
3. Do I have feelings of guilt, shame, or embarrassment about my weight or the way I eat?
4. Do I eat sensibly in front of others and then make up for it when I am alone?
5. Is my eating affecting my health or the way I live my life?
6. When my emotions are intense—whether positive or negative—do I find myself reaching for food?
7. Do my eating behaviors make me or others unhappy?
8. Have I ever used laxatives, vomiting, diuretics, excessive exercise, diet pills, shots, or other medical interventions (including surgery) to try to control my weight?
9. Do I fast or severely restrict my food intake to control my weight?
10. Do I fantasize about how much better life would be if I were a different size or weight?
11. Do I need to chew or have something in my mouth all the time: food, gum, mints, candies, or beverages?
12. Have I ever eaten food that is burned, frozen, or spoiled; from containers in the grocery store; or out of the garbage?
13. Are there certain foods I can’t stop eating after having the first bite?
14. Have I lost weight with a diet or “period of control” only to be followed by bouts of uncontrolled eating and/or weight gain?
15. Do I spend too much time thinking about food, arguing with myself about whether or what to eat, planning the next diet or exercise cure, or counting calories?

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