Lifeline
A Meeting on the Go

Changing Me
Not the Program

Anorexia, Bulimia
and Recovery

September 2016
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.
It Works When I Work It

Reluctance and wrong focus can be overcome simply by working the Steps.

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Anorexia, Bulimia, and Recovery

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Accept our open invitation to stretch hand and heart around the globe.
When I started OA in August 2015, I thought many things about the program seemed unnecessary or ought to be changed. Some of the Tools seemed pointless—what did they have to do with losing weight? The Twelve Steps seemed good, but surely I didn’t need to work them, because I had dealt with all that stuff before (I thought). I believed in God, my Higher Power. I already knew I had a spiritual problem, but knowing this had not changed anything. So many things about OA just didn’t work with the diet I thought I needed to find. Was this program really what I needed?

I did become abstinent by about the fourth week, but at first my abstinence was more a formula for a new diet than a comfortable plan of eating.

Being an all-or-nothing kind of person, I decided to try everything just to find out for sure if this really worked. So many testimonials said it did and so many people had long-term success stories. I devoured all the OA-approved literature I could get my hands on. As I read I started to see just how much sense it makes, this way of living. As I worked through the Steps with a sponsor, I became aware of some of the reasons I started to overeat as a child and continued to overeat through my sixty-three years until the day I became abstinent. I dealt with the years of resentment I had for some people (most of them are dead and gone). I started to feel an amazing freedom I had never felt with any of the many diets I had tried. There was serenity and freedom I had never felt and a new, amazing relationship with God.

Yes, this was what I needed—all of it! Nine months later I am down over 90 pounds (41 kg) and feeling an amazing joy and peace that I’ve never had before. Keep coming back! It works if you work it!

— Judy W., Ontario, Canada
Should I Quit?

I had many years of Twelve Step recovery from an addiction unrelated to food, and I thought adding OA would be a snap. I joined OA in January 2010, and because of my previous Twelve Step experience, I knew I had to attend meetings and get a sponsor. Within the first three weeks, I found meetings I liked, and I still have the same sponsor today.

My sponsor asked me to write down everything I ate and when I ate it. She also asked me to do a “daily fifteen” list: five things for which I was grateful, five things for which I needed to forgive myself, and five things I’d done well. I emailed the list to her every day along with my food diary. We began to work the Steps, I wrote answers to questions, and we talked every Sunday morning. I lost about 20 pounds (9 kg) in the first six months and became secretary of our small group.

By eight months, I noticed I had stopped losing weight. I became dissatisfied with my program and began looking for differences instead of similarities in the stories I was hearing. I determined OA wasn’t working for me and it was time to give it up. But I had four months left on my commitment as secretary, so I decided I couldn’t quit something I hadn’t really tried.

I told myself I could quit OA if it did not work for me after I had incorporated all the program Tools into my recovery for the balance of my service position. I began making daily phone calls to get to know people so that when I did have a bad day, I was already in the habit of reaching out. I added another meeting, so I was attending three to five Twelve Step meetings weekly. I added more OA literature to my long-established daily reading, writing, prayer, and meditation practices. I worked the Steps with my sponsor. I redefined my ever-evolving plan of eating using a nutritionist and OA literature. I provided service to my two regular groups by rotating my service position at each meeting and, among other things, typing up phone lists and steering committee notes. I practiced anonymity, and I incorporated an action plan into my OA framework. Surprise! I lost another 30 pounds (14 kg) over the next year.

I am not a Cinderella story. I continue to trudge (not jump, hop, or skip, but trudge) this road of happy destiny. My weight loss has stalled again, but I am learning to balance life as it comes along. I haven’t regained the weight I’ve lost, and my emotional maturity and spiritual connection continue to expand. With my chronic health issues, I need to refine food choices even more and remain creative with exercise to keep losing weight. After going through the Twelve Steps with abstinence questions, studying the Traditions, and experiencing a multitude of spiritual quests, my learning continues. My only job is to remain teachable.

“I am not a Cinderella story, but I am learning to balance life.”

If you haven’t guessed, I decided not to quit OA at the end of that original service term. I’m still working for OA, and it is working for me.

— Laurie B., Rohnert Park, California USA
**Trust Works**

Step Two says we “Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.” There is also a line in AA’s *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* that says, “Take it easy. The hoop you have to jump through is a lot wider than you think” (p. 26).

To me, this describes the leap of faith of replacing myself and my self-will with something else greater than myself. Rather than having a defined idea of what my Higher Power is or looks like, the key to the lock is simply this: to accept that I am not my Higher Power—and to be open to the idea that something else is. To put my faith and trust in something else I have no control over is the key. Since Step Two is not prescriptive, I can make this decision any time. I don’t need to know anything more than “I can’t, so perhaps something else can.”

My experience of taking that leap with my food plan meant accepting that I was incapable of consistency when it came to knowing what, when, and how to eat (or not eat). Therefore, I needed something else in place to provide a structure I could follow, a structure over which I would have no control.

Recently I met two women who had something I wanted, which was sustained and clear abstinence with food. I started by using one of their food plans because, if it worked for her, it could possibly work for me! It turned out to be based on a plan from the OA *Dignity of Choice* pamphlet. But it didn’t really matter where the plan came from—not being in control got me clean. In addition, once I experienced that plan and found it to be sustainable, I could see that trust was working for me, so the hoop widened further to cover other areas of my life. Maybe, I thought, I could trust my Higher Power with other stuff too.

My faith continues to deepen with each day of amazing and blessed abstinence. I am celebrating twenty-eight days abstinent, one day at a time.

— Sarah S., United Kingdom

**Scaling Back**

I am in withdrawal after giving up the bathroom scale. After a year and a half of program, of going to meetings and
working the Steps with a sponsor, I have finally succumbed to my sponsor’s suggestion (and experience I’ve heard from other members) to put the scale away.

For an OA member who is practicing abstinence and losing weight, the scale can become a new addiction. Oh, the joy of losing! I step on the scale and see the number drop another pound or two more! After I run, will it be even lower? One OA member called this “the high of losing and the low of gaining.” The pull of the scale greeted me first thing in the morning and was there all day—sometimes throughout the night—whenever I needed a hit. I needed it to feel better about myself, but if the number went higher, even by just a half pound (.2 kg), I would plunge into self-loathing.

At my home group meeting, I heard another member say, “I weigh on the first of the month, so I’ll have some more information to share with my sponsor.” Then we read a story in which the writer shared her need to always be on the scale. And it hit me: The scale owns me. I need to put it away.

So I weighed myself on the first of the month and then put the scale away. On the second, it was freedom to say, “Oh, I don’t have to weigh this morning!” But all day, my thoughts led back to it. It was strange not to see it there on the bathroom floor. Now, after three days, I am in withdrawal.

The insanity of this compulsion really came to light last night. A family member was out very late and not answering his cell phone. I couldn’t sleep, and you can guess what I wanted to do: step on the scale. I kept thinking, well, if my weight is down from last time, then I’m okay (as if the number on my bathroom scale had anything to do with whether my family member was safe at three o’clock in the morning). But my feelings of worry, fear, and anger were building—feelings of being out of control and not knowing what was happening or what to do. Since I couldn’t eat, I needed the hit of the bathroom scale to feel okay.

Instead, I prayed. I prayed for his well-being and prayed to get a little sleep, because if anything was really wrong, I wouldn’t find out until morning and would need some sleep to deal with it.

This morning, I awoke to find him safely returned. I am running on three hours of sleep and still filled with those feelings of anger, but I’m not getting on the bathroom scale. I need a much bigger higher power than the forty-dollar, hardware store variety to help me through this day.

― Anonymous, Duluth, Minnesota

**Surprise Ending**

I know in my heart that program is all about changing me from the inside out so I can become the higher version
of myself, someone who doesn’t need to turn to abusive food behaviors when life gets tough. But being all too human, I get caught up in my day and my self-will and blindness can creep back in unnoticed.

I have been bumping heads with a fellow OA member, someone I need to work with cooperatively in order to do service at the intergroup level. I was connecting with my HP this morning and ended by praying for the people I care for. To my surprise, I ended with a mini-version of a resentment prayer, asking for this person’s heart to be softened. My Higher Power immediately gave me the message that this change begins with me! A wave of acceptance and peace came over me.

I shared this awareness with several program friends in order to solidify my commitment to change. I know in my heart that I have the ability and the willingness to work together with this individual to help carry the OA message of healing and recovery.

— Anonymous

Crazy Prayer

“Many of us had asked God to help us control our weight and this prayer hadn’t worked” (The Twelve Steps and

Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, p. 15).

Yes, I am one of those askers, and if the definition of crazy is doing the same thing repeatedly and expecting different results, then I’m one of the crazy ones! For the past forty years, I prayed to God, my Higher Power, asking, begging, threatening, and bargaining, for a miracle, and time and time again, nothing happened. No pull-tab appeared under my chin for me to yank off the fat suit. I never saw blobs of fat going down the shower drain. I never woke up magically thin as I realized it was all a bad dream. Sweets never tasted disgusting. Vegetables never tasted like dessert. (Come on—we have all pictured our miracle at one time or another!)

I would look at all the skinny people—they made it look so easy. But I failed to look at the right stuff. I failed to look at me. Here is the right stuff:

• I have a disease, and it has little to do with just pushing away from the table.
• God has been talking to me for years, just not saying what I wanted to hear.
• I have other chronic diseases, and God has not made those disappear either.
• Sometimes life sucks, and it is not fair. It requires some kind of work every day, and there are no magic potions or free passes.

So there it is. God is ready, willing, and able to help. My HP has handed me just Twelve Steps to follow. My HP will be by my side, cheering me on, listening to my fears, holding me when I feel alone, smiling at my progress, wiping my tears when I falter, and even giving me a tribe of OA members to be there in physical form and remind me that I can do this.

— Edited and reprinted from Monarch Monthly newsletter, The Three Rivers Inter-group, November 2014
I would be “good” for a while, and then think I should be able to treat myself, but every treat ended in a binge, with me feeling swollen, nauseated, guilty, and remorseful. Ashamed and exhausted, I would try to figure out why my willpower had failed me again. I definitely wanted to stop this cycle. I wanted to be free.

I eventually discovered, much to my relief, that “willpower” and “willingness” are two different things. Willpower did not and could not give me the willingness to succeed; wanting to do something was not the same as being fully willing to do something. I hadn’t been willing to do anything necessary to get healthy. My bingeing behavior was comfortable. Change was uncomfortable.

My addiction is an addiction of the body and the mind. If I eat a trigger food or a binge food, my body has a physical reaction that causes it to crave more and more. Then I mentally obsess about that food to the point of insanity. No amount of willpower can prevent this reaction. No amount of willpower can stop me from binging. I lost (or never really had) the ability to choose whether I would binge; I was compelled by my addiction to continue the self-destructive behavior.

Once I let go of this concept of willpower and became willing to do anything necessary, my recovery truly began. When I became willing, I was able to admit I did not have all the answers. I became open to letting go of old behaviors, beliefs, and patterns that kept me inside my addiction. I became open to

Willpower vs. Willingness

When I was in the food, deep in my addiction, I believed I was a weak person. If I truly wanted to stop the binges and the pattern of self-hatred and self-destruction, then I should be able to muster the willpower to get myself out of the depths of despair. But it never really worked that way.

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learning new strategies and a new way of living. I began to live life on life’s terms, rather than trying to control everything. I became willing to change.

Today I know I must put my recovery first. I have to avoid people, places, and things that will pull me back into active addiction. I have ended relationships, stopped going to certain places, and stopped eating certain foods. I have let go of the toxic and opened myself up to the healing. These steps are so important to my recovery.

Today I realize that I cannot moderate my binge foods. I will never be a normal eater. I am like an alcoholic, a drug addict. The smallest taste of my drug of choice will send me back into a tailspin of active addiction, mental obsession, physical pain, and utter destruction.

Today all I ask of myself is that I be willing to maintain my abstinence from my addiction.

— Mary D.

True Self

“Searching Out Shame,” (p. 20) the Stepping Out article in the April 2016 issue of Lifeline, spoke deeply to me. The author asserted that the power source for compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors is shame rooted in codependency, and this concept sank into my depths. Its ripples of truth resonated right through me.

Before I came to OA, the lying voice of my disease assailed me daily. It constantly whispered, and often screamed, that I was fat, defective, and unlovable. It mattered not that I was either at a healthy weight or significantly underweight, because I believed this lying voice. My entire identity was wrapped up in the number on the scale, how little I could eat, how long I could go without eating, how much I could exercise, or whether someone commented on my thinness. I was an obedient slave, and those masters dictated my every move.

My deep self-hatred and sense of defectiveness housed and sustained the shame that I felt and drove me to look outward for value and identity. In my twisted thinking, thinness gave me value and identity; approval from others made me somebody.

To complicate matters, my sexuality and gender identity did not conform to social norms, so I felt further devalued and outcast. I felt desperate for social acceptance and craved social power, but in my experience, thinness, long hair, and traditional femininity brought social power. Deep codependency compelled me to turn myself inside out and do whatever had to be done to acquire crumbs of social power—the smiles, nods, eye contact, listening ears, and affirmations. Deep
shame of myself as simply me fueled all of it. Shame rooted in codependency compelled me to grow my hair, wear feminine clothes (even though I felt like a drag queen), starve myself, and over-exercise in order to appear thin and feminine, just so I could feel acceptable to other people. It was a desperate, empty existence.

OA showed me a better way and has gently and slowly helped me to embrace it. OA has truly saved my life. Since 1989, minus an early, eight-year relapse (a break for further research), HP has been continuously sloughing from me the deep shame that fuels my disease. I want my recovery journey to be a powerful event, but the process continues to unfold at its own pace, while I imperfectly apply our inspired program, Tools, and Steps to daily life on life’s terms. Despite the social pressure my codependency perceives, HP has enabled me to maintain, without panic, a 15-pound (7-kg) weight gain and to follow food and exercise plans one day at a time. I read program literature daily, attend several meetings weekly, and regularly share my true, raw heart with my sponsor and within this loving Fellowship. I have discovered, and keep discovering, my true self.

As the tender sprouts of my true self develop, my shame rooted in codependency slowly fades. Miracles keep happening. I keep coming back because I always have room for more miracles.

— Julia S., North Carolina USA

Feeling Raw

When I came into OA, I weighed 43 kilos (95 lbs). I was consuming huge amounts of food, and I was terrified of putting on weight. My life revolved around bingeing and being thin, and I had a system. I binged on any junk food I wanted for one day, then I binged on vegetables and fruit for four or five days to stop myself from gaining weight. Then I’d do it all over again.

I was isolated and lonely. Occasionally, others would break through and tell me how worried they were about how thin I was. I took that as a good sign. It was evidence that I was still in control.

My life was ruled by fear. What if I was in a social situation and had to eat some real food on a day I was only allowed fruit and vegetables? What would I do on holidays when the gym closed and I couldn’t work out? What if one day I lost control and gained weight? While bathing, I would feel my hipbones to check that I was still skinny, comforting myself against my constant fear.

The rest of my life atrophied while my obsession with food and weight ballooned. I had a job and a few friends so I could look normal, but I had abandoned the career I trained for because I couldn’t handle any proper responsibility or achieve any real performance. I was scraping by on the outside and being eaten alive on the inside.

When I went to my first meeting, I really wanted to get better, but I was scared. Would it mean putting on a lot of weight? If I turned my back on the food, would my emotions go out of control—beyond what I or the program could handle? Still, I had to try.

I jumped in with both feet, doing everything suggested to me, and I felt ter-
rible, worse than I felt while bingeing. The longtimers explained this was normal; I was going through a huge change and would feel raw while I acclimated. They said I was grieving my old, destructive relationship with food, and things would get better.

Letting go of the food was the scariest thing I ever did, but it was also the best. I thought I was just deciding to kick my food problem. I didn’t know my decision would also shine a healing light on every broken corner of my life and piece me back together into a person who could be happy with herself. I didn’t know that I would see my life crammed with people I love and who love me. I didn’t know I would be able to eat abstinent meals and think about life and not food. I didn’t know I would become healthy, fit, and slim, and no longer obsessed with my body or my weight. I didn’t know I would be able to live a normal life with all of its freedoms, challenges, and opportunities. But I am forever grateful.

— Hilary S., Auckland, New Zealand

“Letting go of the food was the scariest thing I ever did, but it was also the best. My decision would shine a healing light on every broken corner of my life.”

Good and Bad

When I sat in my first OA meeting in February 1990, I weighed 215 pounds (98 kg). I could not stop eating, and three-quarters of all my mental energy was devoted to food: eating it, not eating it, getting it, hiding what I was eating, obsessing over what I thought you were thinking about my eating and weight. I hated my body, I hated myself, and I felt like a failure. I knew I would never, ever be able to do without the foods that so many of you said you abstained from effortlessly.

Sitting in an OA meeting today, I feel comfortable in my 140-pound (64-kg) body. My clothes fit. Very little of my mental activity concerns food, because I enjoy regular meals that are usually, but not always, planned and measured. Because of the Twelve Steps, I no longer suffer the discomforts—agitation, anger, depression, regret, shame, and fear—that food used to relieve. There’s no longer anything that food can fix.

During my twenty-five years in OA, I have experienced a full life on life’s terms: I broke up with an alcoholic boyfriend when I got clean. I met and married the man of my dreams. He broke my heart, and we divorced. I watched my brother suffer terribly for years and then die from a terminal illness. I left my secure, full-time job to pursue a less secure, freelance profession that was my heart’s desire. I met and married the new man of my dreams, wide awake. Menopause came, my body aged, and I began to experience progressing physical pain and loss of strength and mobility, yet all the while, God has continued to do what I cannot do for myself and has enabled me to use my body with vigor and exhilaration. I’ve had opportunities and successes, bitter disappointments and failures. Since experiencing the psychic change described in the Twelve Steps, when bad fortune has come
my way I have not fought it as being unacceptable or wrong. When good fortune has come, I haven’t allowed the things that OA has given me to lead me out of OA. Good and bad, praise and blame, success and failure, none of it is a reason to eat.

And none of this is my doing, by the way. I only followed the footsteps of others who walked this way before me. I am gratified to be making footsteps of my own for others to follow because “Those of us who live this program don’t simply carry the message; we are the message. Each day that we live well, we are well, and we embody the joy of recovery which attracts others who want what we’ve found in OA. We’re always happy to share our secret: the twelve steps of Overeaters Anonymous, which empower each of us to live well and be well, one day at a time” ([The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous](https://www.oa.org), p. 106).

— Margaret Ann B., Cambridge, Massachusetts USA

Dignity Given

I was doing service work at a men’s homeless shelter, and this time they assigned me to the kitchen, where my job was to sort desserts donated by bakeries and then arrange them neatly and attractively on trays to serve at mealtimes.

At first I balked at this—me, a compulsive overeater who used to binge on these foods, handling baked sweets for an hour?! Then I calmed down, prayed to HP for guidance, and reminded myself that this stuff was not mine and I had a choice: I could pick up the food again or just do the service work that I had been assigned.

“Okay,” I thought, “I can do this.” I got a hairnet and gloves and went to work slicing and arranging. As each tray was done, the kitchen supervisor brought in more.

At one point, he carried in a large bag of pastries that were broken, smashed, and globbed together at the bottom. His directions to me were, “Only use those that you would eat yourself.”

I was in shock. When I had been in the depths of my disease, there was nothing I would not eat, even globby, gross, mashed-up stuff at the bottom of the bag!

Then it hit me. The homeless shelter was attempting to treat these men with dignity by serving them attractive meals. What my disease did to me was strip me of all dignity when it came to food and eating behaviors. By working the Steps, I gain my dignity back and can choose to no longer eat the way I used to. OA gives me dignity of choice in how and what I will eat.

— Ann S., Covington, Louisiana USA
About half a year ago I was dying from bulimia. I had almost given up hope; my eating disorder was going to kill me. No matter what I did or what I tried, I couldn’t quit bingeing and purging. I was almost at the end.

I knew about Overeaters Anonymous and decided to try recovery one more time. I would work the OA program for all I was worth and see what happened.

The first thing I did was go to my doctor to get a medical okay. She was familiar with OA and very supportive of my joining. The medical stamp of approval gave me some security, but I was concerned and scared. What would happen to me if I stopped purging? Would I begin to gain huge amounts of weight? Since I also have anorexic tendencies, my doctor has always reminded me I was at a healthy weight and needed to stay there. If I couldn’t binge and purge, would I just stop eating altogether? I sat with my doctor, tears in my eyes, asking these questions and more. She reassured me, “You’ll be okay. Just follow the program and you will be fine.” I wasn’t so sure, but I knew I had nothing else.

Recently I went back to the doctor for a six-month follow-up. I was happy to report I was in Overeaters Anonymous and hadn’t had a single bulimic episode since the day I joined. I felt better physically, emotionally, and spiritually than I had felt.

OA works for all, no matter where you start, fat or thin, no matter how sick. I am living proof this program of recovery works if you work it.
promises to me, just as they will for my overweight counterparts in the rooms.

I worked hard for those promises. I used the OA Tools every day. At meetings, I listened to members’ stories, and I heard the messages of their courageous shares. I heard their fears, insecurities, and pain, as well as their joys, peace, and love. I heard about other people’s mistakes, slips, and imperfect program work. That gave me permission to be “perfectly imperfect,” which liberated me from the death-grip of the all-or-nothing, black-and-white thinking that ruled my old anorexic life.

It would have been easy for me to isolate in this Fellowship. I could have used the excuse “no one can understand me because no one else here is anorexic.” I could have made myself terminally unique. But my Higher Power gave me the willingness to look for similarities and not differences, to look past the obvious behavior of overeating and the resulting weight gain and see the mental obsession and emotional pain we share.

So if someone is struggling in this program and is feeling like no one else understands, I would ask him or her, “Do you look for the similarities or the differences?” We will find whatever we
look for. Today I look for recovery, and I find it all around me.

If an anorexic can work this program, anyone can. If we look for recovery and work for recovery, we will find it, no matter how different we think we are. At least, I did.

Thank you for letting me share.
— Stef, Minneapolis, Minnesota USA

Another Way

When my sponsor suggested I write an article for Lifeline, I was resistant and felt a surge of rage toward the program because, to be honest, my experiences in OA have not been perfect. For years I used OA to reinforce my eating disorder. I am an anorexic, bulimic, compulsive over-exerciser, and a compulsive over-eater, and I’ve been in OA for five years.

When I first entered the rooms, I’d already been in and out of treatment facilities. I was also hopeless and resigned to dying on the bathroom floor after a purge. My bulimia was aggressive, up to twelve episodes and three hundred dollars per day, so my whole life was spent eating and vomiting.

When I started going to OA meetings and working with a sponsor, something shifted. I asked my Higher Power for relief from bulimia, and for a long time I stopped purging. But my disease morphed into anorexia and compulsive over-exercising. I ran 6 miles (10 km) a day, five days a week and was undereating. I called in my food to a sponsor, but since I wasn’t purging, we both thought I was doing great. I didn’t have weight to lose, but I lost a lot of weight and became even crazier in OA.

I became obsessed with my eating, my body, and the number on the scale. I thought weighing and measuring and no flour and no sugar was the only way, and I held myself up as a recovering person, when in fact I was emotionally overwrought and spiritually bankrupt. After two years free of bingeing and purging (but still miserably anorexic), I relapsed into bulimia and couldn’t stop. I stayed in relapse for a long time.

At a certain point, I recognized I was trying to control my eating and my body, so I gave that up, surrendered to a Power outside myself, and enlisted the help of those around me. I decided my abstinence is about conscious surrender, so I make no rules about my food. Instead, I trust my partner, who prepares my meals and tells me what to eat. I don’t restrict, binge, purge, or over-exercise.

My plan of eating looks different than most, because I’m not in charge. I eat every food in moderation, with guidance and support. I eat three meals and one snack per day. Today I eat to live.

OA has offered me a bridge back to life, but I sometimes feel different when I hear people share about what they can’t eat or how they weigh and measure. So I write this for my anorexic, bulimic, and compulsively overeating siblings so they know there is another way. OA defines
abstinence as “the action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight” (Dignity of Choice, p. 1). It says healthy, not emaciated.

“OA has offered me a bridge back to life. So I write this for my anorexic, bulimic, and compulsively overeating siblings so they know there is another way.”

Today I see that real recovery, true healing, and the support I receive has enabled me not only to feel human again but also to eat like a human being, and for that I am forever grateful.
— Dara L.

Fierce Honesty

I first came to Overeaters Anonymous in August 2011. I had recently returned from an overseas internship and moved to a new city, where I hardly knew a soul. I decided to try OA after a close friend recommended it. She said it helped her face her lifelong struggle with bulimia when nothing else worked.

As a food restrictor and over-exerciser, I didn’t know how I would fit in with a group called Overeaters Anonymous. However, I had just enough humility to accept that if another “skinny” person thought it was valuable, then it might be worth trying (and I was hoping it would prove to be a diet-and-calories club that would help me maintain an unnaturally low body weight).

Two things surprised me at my first OA meeting: first, how deeply I related to the sentiments shared by others, and second, the fierce honesty of the sharing. It seemed that nothing was too shameful to talk about, and for the first time in my life I felt like I truly belonged. It didn’t matter that I was underweight and others were normal or overweight. We all struggled with the same food obsession, and we all recognized a deep discomfort with our feelings. As one member said, “I’m an addict! I’ve never had a feeling I couldn’t eat over!”

I quickly learned in the Fellowship to challenge my assumptions about other members based on their appearances. One man, a recovering binge eater, weighed over 300 pounds (136 kg) but had one of the strongest programs I have seen. He eventually became one of my Tenth Step heroes and was an absolute lifeline when I struggled. I was often struck by how OA gave me the privilege of meeting people I would never have met otherwise and the opportunity to know them in an intimate and very real way.

They say that the Twelve Steps really help us grow up. Since committing myself to recovery, I feel like I’ve gone from living in a hole to walking through a lush forest. When I lived in the hole, every day was the same. My life was small, safe, and very dark. Now I spend my days seeking to connect with myself, my God, and other people. I’m just beginning to discover who I am and what I like, and it is very exciting. My relationships have improved two hundred percent as I slowly learn to challenge faulty thinking.

I’ve put on 10–15 pounds (5–7 kg) since joining the group and am now at
a normal weight for my height. I don’t weigh myself, and I’m working on accepting that my weight is none of my business.

For today, I am abstinent from food restriction and over-exercising, and I’m very grateful for that.

— K., Canada

The Longing

I have been a compulsive eater for as long as I can remember. My earliest memories are of food, and my earliest relationships were with food rather than people. I was always a thin child, but when I reached adolescence, my body began to change, and I felt extremely uncomfortable in my own skin. I hated how I looked and felt, and I struggled with feeling like an outsider among my family members and classmates. My goal was to escape from those scary feelings, and food served as my primary means of doing so.

During those years, my eating behaviors became quite disordered. I began to restrict my food intake until my body was starving too much to manage; then I binged, felt awful about it, and repeated the cycle all over again. I spent nearly fifteen years trapped in that agonizing cycle of bingeing and restricting, trying to figure out on my own how to break out of my self-imposed prison. My addiction had a strong hold on me. Alone, I was no match for it.

My weight plummeted as I continued to restrict food intake, until I weighed so little—85 pounds (39 kg)—that my organs were fighting to keep me alive. But my scale served as my god, and my disease kept yelling that I was not thin enough yet. “Just a few more pounds,” it said. “Just a few more.”

Regular therapy and work with a nutritionist finally broke through my denial but could not change my crazy eating behaviors. From a friend’s urging, I finally began to attend OA meetings, where I was amazed to find other people who faced similar struggles. I listened intently to all they offered and finally felt there was hope for me. I learned I didn’t have to live in that lonely, food-obsessed world anymore, and I slowly began to change. I wanted what I saw in those abstinent OA members: freedom and serenity. It took me a year before I was fully willing to surrender my disease to my Higher Power and begin to work the Steps with a sponsor. Once I did, I began to experience the freedom from food obsession that I had longed for but never believed possible.

Currently, by the grace of God, I celebrate almost nine years of abstinence, and I have maintained a healthy weight for all that time. I have a sponsor and I sponsor others. I continue to work the Steps and practice the Principles of the program to the best of my ability. I am infinitely grateful for this second chance at life that was so freely given to me, and I pray my story of recovery will provide some hope for another struggling compulsive eater.

— Nina S., Memphis, Tennessee USA

“It took me a year before I was fully willing to surrender. Once I did, I began to experience freedom from food obsession.”
My Highest Priority

My anorexia started innocently enough as a diet to attract a boy. Then I hit puberty and developed, and the molestation started at home. My twelve-year-old self reasoned that if I went back to my undeveloped body, the abuse would stop. So my diet became a war against my body. By college, I was bulimic and purged everything I ate. When I became an electrical engineer, I looked like I had it all, but I ended up in a mental health facility for suicide prevention because, as I learned, nothing is more devastating to the soul than living an inauthentic life.

At the facility, I told someone the truth and attended my first OA meeting, where I met others like me and was able to envision a life without my disease.

After my release, I continued to struggle with abstinence, but a pregnancy helped me put together ninety days. Then I lost the baby. Devastated, I relapsed, and by the time I reached out again for help, my disease had progressed to the point that I was eating just to have something to purge.

Then I traveled to attend a training course for work, but instead of celebrating its completion with the other trainees, I spent hours alone in the hotel room bingeing and purging. It was as if I was standing back, watching someone else destroy herself. And then something amazing happened: my first spiritual experience. I heard a voice say, “This has to stop!” I got down on my knees and begged God for help. That’s when I finally surrendered. I have not purged since.

I took my first three Steps at an eating disorders treatment facility. When I got home, I joined OA right away. At first, my disease kept me from choosing a sponsor, but when I realized this, I found one anyway and started working the Steps. My recovery became my top priority, so I followed directions, did assignments, and gave service whenever I could. One day, I realized that all the miracles had come true for me. I did not chase them; they seemed to appear on their own.

Today, my recovery is still my highest priority. I maintain my abstinence by practicing the Principles of the program in all my affairs and practicing the Steps throughout the day. This year, I celebrated twenty years of abstinence, one day at a time. I identify as anorexic and bulimic at meetings and sponsor anyone who asks. I am no longer at war with my body. I am grateful for all it has given me, including my three children, and I make living amends to my body by practicing self-care.
The Twelve Steps released me from the prison of my disease and saved my life. I have a Higher Power who walks with me though every breath. I ask for guidance, and I always get an answer. I know he has a plan for me; my life is more than I ever imagined it could be, a life beyond my wildest dreams.

—Alice W., Forest Grove, Oregon USA

Ahead of the Pack

I’m a compulsive eater, compulsive exerciser, and bulimic who literally runs along the fine lines between healthy eating and exercise and compulsive behavior. I have been in recovery for five years, but sometimes my own mind still trips me up.

Today I went on a run in the hot sun, got nauseated on the way back, and vomited in the yard when I got home. Puking is really triggering for me, so as it was happening I had a sudden cacophony of voices in my head. Usually my internal voices all sound like me, but this time I was really able to tell them apart.

Boyfriend: “Atta girl! Running till ya puke is hard-core! Hooah!”

Disease: “OMG, this is the start of relapse. I’m going to start bingeing and puking until I lose everything and become a crazy cat lady, alone and fat. It’s hopeless and inevitable.”

Mom: “Poor sweetie. You’re sick. Let’s get dessert.”

Granny: “Did the neighbors see you? You should bake them a dish to apologize.”

Papa: “If you had been at church, where you belong on a Sunday morning, this never would have happened.”

Bestie (non-OA): “Stick to your plan. If you had run according to your schedule you wouldn’t be running in the hot sun. Winners exercise early!”

Drill Sergeant: “Drink more water, soldier! Only a moron forgets to hydrate!”

Dad: “You know if you’d just move back home you could take it easy.”

Sister: “Um, are you pregnant? It is morning, and, um, your tummy is kind of poochy.”

And finally . . .

God: “Great run, little one. You are right where you are supposed to be, even if you don’t know why this moment sucks. Take it easy today and enjoy the endorphin rush I’m about to send you. I’ve got the rest of the day handled for you.”

—Stephanie S., Hilo, Hawaii USA
Everything you need to lead a journey through the Steps, including leader scripts, Fourth Step inventory worksheets, and hand-selected references from OA-approved literature is included. Use it to lead a group of OA members or one-on-one with your sponsees. Together, you can discover proven ways to incorporate the Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous into a way of living—and a life beyond our wildest dreams.
I never aimed to be a compulsive overeater, but I was very grateful to find out what was wrong with me. I am an addict whose primary addiction is food. By working the Twelve Steps of OA, always coming back, and working with my sponsor, I have found a Power greater than myself that helps me live the best way I can on a daily basis.

I have also found my primary purpose in life. It's not to strive for happiness, but to help other compulsive overeaters, whether they are in the rooms of OA or not. This gives me a serenity that I never experienced in my life of eating.

In the beginning of my recovery, I was only too happy to put the chairs out or put them away. As other opportunities presented themselves, I began to take on positions such as greeter, group treasurer, public information secretary, intergroup rep, intergroup treasurer, and region rep. I considered not doing service as Region Ten chair and really had to pray about it. When my time as region chair came to an end, I could only feel immense gratitude to those who helped sponsor me into the position and made themselves available for support along the way.

I recommend that all members of our Fellowship look at our Responsibility Pledge. Are you giving back some of what you have been given? Giving back could include giving service, making responsible donations in your meetings and via the Contribute page on oa.org, phoning someone you haven’t seen at a meeting lately—and the list goes on.

OA's Region Ten encompasses the Far East, Southeast Asia, Western Pacific Basin, Australia, and New Zealand. It is small in numbers and geographically widespread, but our membership is slowly growing. China, Korea, and Indonesia are working on their translations of OA literature, and we are looking forward to seeing the signs of our growth at the 2016 Region Ten Assembly and Convention, which will be held October 5–9 in Adelaide, Australia.

We have found that videoconference meetings are a wonderful way of carrying the message to people in remote areas of our region. Can you connect to a Region Ten videoconference meeting and share your experience, strength, and hope? That would be a wonderful way to give service. We have members attending from Japan, the U.S., Australia, and New Zealand.

—Letitia M.

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

Honest Effort

In one of my meetings this week, we were asked to respond to a question from the Twelve Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous regarding Step Nine. I chose “What is the purpose of Step Nine?” (p. 65). I completed my first Step Nine amends the first year I joined OA, but I never fully answered all the questions in the workbook. So this time I began to look carefully at what the completion of Step Nine has meant and still means to me as I practice the Principles of the Twelve Steps in all my affairs.

Step Nine meant I could take action to finally make amends, apologize, and change my behavior toward those whom I had harmed or wronged in the past.

In Steps Four and Five, I looked very carefully at the wrongs I did to others and admitted those wrongs to myself, God, and my sponsor.

In the religious tradition of my youth, I learned that God only forgives wrongs, or sins, committed against him and that sins committed against my fellows could only be forgiven by the people whom I had wronged. However, The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous tells me that these people “don’t owe us forgiveness, and we don’t need it to complete step nine and recover from compulsive eating” (p. 77). It only matters that I make an honest effort to apologize for my wrongs and then amend, or change, my behavior toward others. Only then can my conscience be cleared of old guilt.

When I walked into the rooms, weighing 313 pounds (142 kg), I had no idea why I ate like I did. Then I learned in the rooms that I ate to hide from fears, guilt, and resentments. By truly apologizing and making amends to those I had harmed, I found I no longer needed to hide from shame and guilt by using food.

I believe now that if I make honest and thorough amends, God will forgive me for my wrongs. I will be washed clean and be ready to face life without old guilt haunting me and without the need for me to eat compulsively.

Did it work for me? Well, here I am, nearly five and a half years later, maintaining a weight loss of 145–150 pounds (66–68 kg) for more than three years. My life has completely changed, not only with respect to food, but in all areas. The promises in the Big Book have come true for me (Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., pp. 83–85). But I know they will continue to do so only if I continue working the Steps on a daily basis, one day at a time.

—Sander B., Marietta, Georgia, USA
OA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

**Living Traditions**

**A live and Well**

Our group has no government, no permanent officeholders, no small committee that runs everything, and no authorities. Instead, we encourage rotation of service for all offices.

Our longest-term members are not even informal leaders. Instead, they are only members among members. (Sometimes longtimers’ perspectives make them more sensitive to Tradition breaks than newer members, but we are all encouraged to speak up when necessary for the good of the group, since many of us know groups that have closed because a Tradition or two was ignored.)

Our biggest donors do not have any special influence. Instead, everyone is equal, no matter how rich or poor. Mostly we don’t even know how much people donate, and if we happen to find out, we ignore it.

Our members who have influential careers leave their outside status behind when they come into the rooms. People do not announce their jobs to us. Again, even if we find out, such outside issues do not make any difference to us.

Our members who have lost the most weight or who have maintained abstinence the longest don’t tell other people how to work their programs. Instead, they only say what worked for them.

Our members who sponsor have no greater status than anyone else. There is no status in our group. Instead, we encourage everyone to sponsor when they are ready.

Our group’s money does not give us any power. We don’t keep it. Instead, we give it away. Whatever money we have saved after covering expenses like rent and literature, we donate to OA’s service bodies: our intergroup, our region, and the World Service Office. If we donate more or less than other groups, it doesn’t make our group any more or less important.

So there you have it—Tradition Nine is indeed alive and well in our OA group.

— Edited and reprinted from OA Today newsletter, St. Louis Bi-State Area Intergroup, September 2015
Taking the Spiritual Path

Perfect Understanding
To see where I am and how I got here, I must look into the past, where the God of my understanding put people, places, and situations in my path. Perhaps he was using the Tool of anonymity when he made me trip over coincidences to get me into recovery.

I had a chance to try another way of living because of his love and mercy for me. I could have brushed off that gal, an OA member, who broke her anonymity to tell me about this Twelve Step program, but I didn’t. I could have walked out of that first meeting never to return, but I didn’t. I could have kept up my compulsive eating and my lies to others and myself about my abstinence, but I didn’t. Something or someone was leading me and guiding me, and I didn’t even know it.

Today I don’t believe in coincidences. I know that the hand of God plays a part in all I am. As long as I remain willing to believe that a Power greater than myself empowers me to keep on keeping on, then I progress toward “a life of sane and happy usefulness” (Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., p. 130).

I used to take pleasure in telling everyone I was a perfectionist, but today, as long as my life is involved with other people, places, and situations, the idea of being perfect will drive me back to the food. The God of my understanding wants me to involve myself with others, so I must accept them as I accept myself. Perhaps in the eyes of God I am perfect. At some point, I began using food because I thought situations prevented me from being perfect or because I didn’t get my way—so, I thought, my life was defective and imperfect!

For today, it is what it is. Life is good. People are a necessity in my life, and I am willing to accept all as it is supposed to be at this moment. How sad it would be to always be waiting for the perfect moment to get abstinent, the perfect friend, the perfect family, the perfect job, the perfect mate and, for me, the perfect meal.

I have come to believe everyone has flaws, but thanks to this program, I can release my defective ways to the God of my understanding and mend my ways back into recovery.

— Anonymous
I am 16 and believe myself to be an overeater. I want help and recovery, however, I don’t think there are meetings in my city. I also feel uncomfortable with meetings on the phone—email is easier for me. So could I have meetings by email? Or, like, talk to someone through email?

What a blessing to have found OA at your early age. I hope that you got a chance to look at the OA website. There is a wealth of information to help you determine if you are a compulsive overeater and how OA can offer a solution.

Some OA members participate in email “loops,” which are different from meetings, but may be helpful to you. You can find contact information about them by searching “loops” on oa.org.

Also, there are more than a dozen face-to-face meetings that focus on young people. You can use Find a Meeting on OA’s website to get contact information for these meetings and then ask if you can attend by voice or by video. This might allow you to connect with other young people in OA. In one of my face-to-face meetings, a member joins us by video every week. We get to see her and she gets to see us, and it feels like she is still a part of our local OA community.

You may also find it helpful to call in to a regular OA meeting in order to learn about the solution offered in OA.

Another suggestion would be to check out the online meetings, where you can talk to people online, and if you have questions, they will help you.

—Members of the Board of Trustees provide answers to these questions

Send Us Your Stories! The next deadlines for Lifeline are . . .

September 15—How OA Changed My Life Describe your life before and after OA. Include your physical state before and after OA. How is life better in recovery?

October 15—Unity Day Feb. 25 is Unity Day, a day to reaffirm the strength inherent in OA’s unity. What does belonging to a worldwide Fellowship mean to you and your recovery? Share about the First Tradition and your recovery.

Face-to-Face with Our Worldwide Fellowship Share your story about gathering with OA members at the 2016 World Service Convention. If you traveled or lived away from home, did you rely on face-to-face meetings or other service? Did you give service as a speaker or in another way?

Send your stories to info@oa.org with the subject “Lifeline.”
Card-Carrying Member

The number of members in Overeaters Anonymous is small compared with the number of members in Alcoholics Anonymous, but OA is as valuable a program for compulsive overeaters as AA is for alcoholics.

I have been in Overeaters Anonymous since January 1987. I entered the program weighing 193 pounds (88 kg) and have maintained a weight loss of slightly more than 55 pounds (25 kg) for twenty-eight years. Here are some efforts I’ve made to make others aware of our OA program of recovery.

I have purchased inexpensive sets of OA’s New Prospect Cards. Each card says we’re interested in helping if someone is having a problem controlling eating. The face of the card says “The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively,” and the card also provides the OA website address and World Service Office telephone number. The back has a space where additional information can be written in. I have left these cards in doctors’ offices, my workplace lunchroom, and on public library shelves.

One December, I read a newspaper article about the AA program, so I contacted the reporter who wrote the article and asked if he agreed that overeating during a holiday season is just as prevalent a problem as excessive drinking. I said that an article by him would help make readers aware of the OA program of recovery. The reporter agreed to attend an open meeting and write an article.

Whenever I give open talks in another Twelve Step program, I make certain to mention that I followed a suggestion from the Big Book to keep sweets on hand and eat them to sustain energy and focus during recovery (Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th. ed. pp. 133–134), but for me it resulted in a significant weight increase. I inform every audience that I removed the unwanted, excess weight, and easily kept it off, by following the program of Overeaters Anonymous.

I know that every member of Overeaters Anonymous carries the message inside the meeting rooms of OA. I encourage each member of OA to also carry the message of OA recovery outside the meeting rooms, and thereby increase the number of people benefitting daily from this outstanding program.

—David E., Las Vegas, Nevada USA
More to Me

I’ll start with an example of how distorted my thinking was when I first came to OA, even with Step One: “Of course my life had become unmanageable—but how could I be powerless over food? I’m an anorexic. Food is the only thing in my life I’ve had power over.”

That didn’t sound quite right, so then I got to thinking that maybe they wrote Step One backwards:

“I’ve felt pretty powerless over my life and for me food is always unmanageable.”

Aha! Now I’ve got it down:

“Food has a lot of power over me, which is making my life unmanageable—and I’m powerless to change either.”

Luckily I found my HP because after all that thinking I definitely needed to be restored to sanity. And to sanity I am being restored.

I’m a newcomer in OA. I’ve only been in program ten months, but I’m counting on many more. In these ten months with my Monday night family, I have found so many blessings I can’t keep track of them all on my daily gratitude list. I have a wonderful sponsor whom I’m trusting with my deepest, darkest secrets as we work Step Four, and yes, she is still talking to me. Wow! I now have a group of caring people I trust who accept me just for being myself. (I even ended up with a new cat.)

Since I’m an anorexic, I don’t use the word “abstinence,” because for me, it just reinforces my disease. For four and a half years, I prided myself on being able to live on less than one thousand calories a day. While I still struggle with my eating, that person is no longer me. I’m not so thrilled about gaining 50 pounds (23 kg), but oh well. There is much more to me than just my body.

I plan to spend many more happy years with my Monday night family (and the cutest, double-pawed kitty that OA has ever seen). I’m always coming back and giving lots of my love. This program works if I work it, and yes, I’m definitely worth it.

— Kim W., Middletown, Connecticut USA

For Discussion . . . AND JOURNALING

In moments of feeling “terminally unique,” the author of I Belong (p. 13) would ask, “Do you look for similarities or differences? If we look for recovery and work for recovery, we will find it, no matter how different we think we are.” What similarities do you share with your OA fellows? Where do you see recovery? Write down your observations.
**Crush Disaster**

I am grateful to the authors of “Searching Out Shame,” (p. 20) and particularly “Facing Temptation,” (p. 14) in the April 2016 issue of *Lifeline* for their messages on the power of addiction.

Twenty-two years ago, I was on a two-month research cruise, 300 km (186 miles) offshore with no fellow OA members around and with limited email contact. I had a terrible crush on a married man. I was saved only by his not responding to me and then the cruise ending. The nightmare of my powerlessness to break my obsession or stop myself from acting on it lives with me to this day, despite a dedicated Step Five on my return. I do not have to engage with this particular man again (unless HP puts him into my path so I can do Step Nine), but I do have to engage with other men, as I engage with food, every day.

The intervening years of working all Twelve Steps don’t move me any further than one compulsive act away from disaster. I do not underestimate the strength required to break a romantic crush. It requires me to break my people-pleasing habits, as well as societal norms of politeness; to say no; be curt; ignore; not return pleasantries; let somebody down; be deliberately cruel; and to keep up these behaviors instead of running back for forgiveness. My Step Ten and regular contact with OA members, with whom I can share the first inkling of obsession as soon as I need to, are my best defense.

—Anonymous

**Got It Covered**

I have been studying the Concepts with a sponsor. While we were reading Concept Eight about delegation, the May/June 2016 *Lifeline* issue arrived. How wonderful to see the Fifteen Questions on the back cover! Even in our fast-paced society, the cover of a *Lifeline* left in a waiting room will be read—and maybe lead someone to action from the awareness received by answering this series of revealing questions. Kudos to staff and volunteers.

—N.J., Illinois, USA
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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.
Have you been worried about the way you eat? Do you resolve to go on a diet tomorrow, only to fail again and again? Is your weight affecting the way you live your life? If you are struggling, you are not alone anymore.

We are men and women—obese, anorexic, bulimic, or of a normal weight—from around the world who are recovering from compulsive eating. Our food behaviors include: obsession with body weight, size, and shape; eating binges; grazing; preoccupation with weight-reduction diets; starving; inducing vomiting after eating; constant preoccupation with food; inability to stop eating after taking the first bite; and overexercising. Our symptoms may vary, but we share a common bond: We are powerless over food and our lives are unmanageable.

Typically, we have tried numerous solutions to our problems with food, including years of diets or exercise. In our Fellowship, we have finally found a solution. Many of us have maintained a normal weight and found freedom from compulsive eating for many years. Physical, emotional, and spiritual recovery is offered through attending meetings, practicing a Twelve Step program, and helping others.

If you feel you are one of us, we welcome you with open arms.

For More Information:

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