

OA NEW BEGINNINGS MEETING FORMAT SUNDAY 7:00pm *(Revised 9/25)*

Leader: “Welcome to the: Sunday New Beginnings meeting of Overeaters

Anonymous. My name is _____. I am a compulsive eater and your leader for this meeting.”

Leader: “Will those who wish, please join me in the Serenity Prayer: God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.”

Leader: Meeting Statement: “As we extend the heart and hand of the OA Fellowship to those who still suffer, let us be mindful of OA’s Unity with Diversity Policy, which respects our differences, yet unites us in the solution to our common problem. Whatever problem you may have with food, you are welcome at this meeting, regardless of race, creed, nationality, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, or any other trait.”

Newcomer Welcome: (If newcomers are present)

Leader: Newcomer Welcome: “Is there anyone here for the first, second, or third time? Would you please tell us your first name so we can welcome you? If you are returning to OA or are visiting from another area, please tell us your first name so we can also welcome you.

Leader: “Would someone like to briefly describe what OA has done for you?”

Readings:

Leader: “Would someone read “Our Invitation to You” up to the steps (Screen share)

Our Invitation to You:

We of Overeaters Anonymous have made a discovery. At the very first meeting we attended, we learned that we were in the clutches of a dangerous illness, and that willpower, emotional health and self-confidence, which some of us had once possessed, were no defense against it. We have learned that the reasons for the illness are unimportant. What deserves the attention of the still-suffering compulsive overeater is this: there is a proven, workable method by which we can arrest our illness.

The OA recovery program is patterned after that of Alcoholics Anonymous. As our personal stories attest, the Twelve-Step program of recovery works as well for compulsive overeaters as it does for alcoholics. Can we guarantee you this recovery? The answer is up to you.

If you will honestly face the truth about yourself and the illness; if you will keep coming back to meetings, to talk and listen to other recovering compulsive overeaters; if you will read our literature and that of Alcoholics Anonymous with an open mind; and, most important, if you are willing to rely on a power greater than yourself for direction in your life, and to take the Twelve Steps to the best of your ability, we believe you can indeed join the ranks of those who recover. To remedy the emotional, physical

and spiritual illness of compulsive eating we offer several suggestions, but keep in mind that the basis of the program is spiritual, as evidenced by the Twelve Steps.

We are not a “diet” club. We do not endorse any particular plan of eating. In OA, abstinence is the action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight. Once we become abstinent, the preoccupation with food diminishes, and in many cases, leaves us entirely. We then find that, to deal with our inner turmoil, we have to have a new way of thinking, of acting on life rather than reacting to it — in essence, a new way of living.

From this vantage point, we begin the Twelve Step program of recovery, moving beyond the food and the emotional havoc to a fuller living experience. As a result of practicing the Steps, the symptoms of compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors are removed on a daily basis, achieved through the process of surrendering to something greater than ourselves; the more total our surrender, the more fully realized our freedom from food obsession.

Leader: Ask for another volunteer to read to the end.

Here are the Steps as adapted for Overeaters Anonymous:

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.

“But I’m too weak. I’ll never make it!” Don’t worry, we have all thought and said the same thing. The amazing secret to the success of this program is just that: weakness. It is weakness, not strength, that binds us to each other and to a Higher Power and somehow gives us the ability to do what we cannot do alone.

If you decide you are one of us, we welcome you with open arms. Whatever your circumstances, we offer you the gift of acceptance. You are not alone anymore. Welcome to Overeaters Anonymous. Welcome home! (STOP SCREEN SHARE HERE)

Leader: “Abstinence is the act of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight. Recovery means removal of the need to engage in compulsive eating behaviors. Spiritual, emotional, and physical recovery is achieved through working and living the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve Step program.”

Leader: “Would someone read the Traditions of the month?” (Screen share)

Tradition One (Spiritual Principle-Unity)

Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon OA unity.

This is the First Tradition: unity. The reason for this Tradition is clear enough when you consider the consequences of OA fragmentation. If we split up into little argumentative groups, where is the strength we need? Growth depends on strength—both personal growth and group effectiveness. Our recovery is not usually something we can do by ourselves. We need the loving support of our peers. We cannot afford to let disagreements deprive us of our unity.

But does this mean we must always be in sheeplike agreement? That is not possible, even if it were desirable. What it does mean is that discussion and differences of opinion must be resolved, in the end, by consideration of the welfare of the group as a whole. Not all groups follow the same eating plan or use the same meeting format. Some of our members must follow special diets for medical reasons.

These differences are not important. Our common ground and our one source of unity is that we are all working the Twelve Steps of recovery.

Tradition Two (Spiritual Principle-Trust)

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.

The newcomer may ask, “Who is the head of OA?” and be puzzled by the answer in Tradition Two: a loving God. No organization in the world, except other Twelve-Step groups, is run in quite this way. It may seem thoroughly impractical—but it works! We ask God’s guidance and then vote on concerns, and the group decision is our authority.

Not all our group decisions will be wise and practical. We do make mistakes. Then we must look for better answers to the problem. In time, we are likely to see we have learned and grown from our mistakes.

No one person has all the answers in OA. It is only natural for the founders of a group to feel they must always guide and direct the group. But this is not so. The counsel of elder members can continue to be invaluable, but it is not good for the group or the individual for one person to hold authority long.

A vital part of personal growth is learning humility by yielding our self-will. As a group, we may think it is easier to follow a strong leader than to join in making our own decisions at a steering committee meeting. But group conscience must be our guide in making all decisions for the group. There is more strength in working out solutions together.

Tradition Three (Spiritual Principle-Identity)

The only requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively.

Most organizations have rules for membership. We have only one: a desire to stop eating compulsively. A person cannot be barred from OA because they differ from others in race, political views, religion, economic status, interpretation of the program, or food plan. Weight is not a criterion for membership. A person is a member if they have a desire to overcome their compulsion. There is a place in OA for each of us. Here we are free to be ourselves and be accepted.

Some groups have been troubled by members who were emotionally disturbed and tended to disrupt the harmony of the meetings. Yet they were not ousted from the group and were not denied the chance of recovery. They had the one requirement for membership: a desire to stop eating compulsively.

Troublesome personal problems can be dealt with on a one-on-one basis through sponsorship. In time, these groups were seen to survive, stronger than ever.

Note, too, that desire is required—not success. Many people keep coming back even though they feel they have failed. The door never closes. As long as they keep coming back, they have a chance.

Tradition Four (Spiritual Principle-Autonomy)

Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole.

Tradition Four defines our freedom. Our groups are free to find what works best for them. They can make their own mistakes and learn from them. There are only two limits to this freedom: we may not do anything that will injure OA as a whole, and we must remain free from outside influence. Our decisions must be by group conscience.

Let us see how this works. Suppose a group decides to have no format and to eliminate the Twelve Steps. Of course, it is free to do so, but it is no longer an OA group and should not identify itself as such. It is simply a diet club. If members make a habit of going out after meetings and overeating together, they should not speak of themselves as OA members, lest they harm the reputation of OA as a whole.

On the other hand, if a group votes to regulate smoking areas or to institute abstinence requirements for officers, it is exercising group autonomy. If a meeting is held in a church or school, it must, of course, conform to rules about smoking, noise, tidiness, etc. But its membership is not to be confined to members of the church or residents of the area. It must be open to all who wish to abstain from

compulsive overeating. Nor is its freedom of expression to be limited by nonmembers. Group conscience is always our guide.

Tradition Five (Spiritual Principle-Purpose)

Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers.

The practicing compulsive overeater is more likely to listen to a recovered overeater than to doctors, family or friends. If their advice were sufficient, very few would be compulsive eaters. But we can and do listen to one another. We share our feelings and experiences with others. When we are traveling the road to recovery, we are uniquely equipped to help others, because they will let us. This is our prime purpose.

An OA group is not a social club, though we make wonderful friends. If a group has stopped getting newcomers, it is time to examine its actions. Are efforts being made to let OA be known by public notice and personal witness? Is the newcomer neglected, while friends are absorbed in conversation? Or is the newcomer warmly welcomed and made to feel at home?

Our group purpose is to carry the OA message. Specific causes, religions, and unrelated philosophies, no matter how worthwhile, are not promoted at OA meetings.

Tradition Six (Spiritual Principle-Solidarity)

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.

It may sometimes occur to some among us that we could carry the message most effectively through health camps, packaged meals, or restaurants. Why not? It seems very promising at first glance. But the experience of AA has shown us the pitfalls. If the OA name is used for one outside enterprise, no matter how well-meaning, it may then be applied to many others. Inevitably, some would not be to our credit.

Then, too, we might lose sight of our primary purpose, carrying the message, in building up our profits and power. Personal power drives and desire for prestige would appear, and our ego demands would cause dissension.

We find it necessary to keep the profit motive firmly separated from our Twelfth Step work at all times. Freely it is given to us, and freely we give it away.

Tradition Seven (Spiritual Principle-Responsibility)

Every OA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

Our OA program is our lifeline, our escape from our compulsion. It is very precious to us. Money is needed to keep it alive. Each group has expenses—the meeting room, the books and literature, the coffee and tea.

When groups become numerous and strong enough, there is the need to support an intergroup office, as well as the World Service Office. How are we to finance our needs? They must be met by our own contributions. We may not accept donations from nonmembers.

An OA member may contribute to the World Service Office up to US\$7,500 per year for the general fund and up to \$7,500 per year for any special fund. OA, Inc. will accept a bequest in any amount from the will of a deceased member.

The reasons for this are clear. If we accept “free” gifts from outsiders, or too much from one member, we become less than free ourselves. If someone is paying our way, they will naturally come to expect a voice in our decisions. The heavy contributor in a group might develop a desire to dominate the group. This we cannot allow, for our ultimate authority is “a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.”

Our groups are urged not to hoard large sums of money, but to keep only a small reserve above running expenses. We are not profit-making, and money is not our goal. As long as we pay our way from our own pockets, we will have public respect, and our own. We will be free.

Tradition Eight (Spiritual Principle-Fellowship)

Overeaters Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

Our World Service Office and intergroup offices require workers to take care of the business of OA. Phones must be answered, bills paid and accounts kept, supplies ordered, business correspondence attended to and records maintained. When the work becomes too heavy for volunteers to handle, we need to hire special workers who may or may not be OA members.

But sponsoring, leading, speaking, explaining OA to newcomers— “carrying the message”—is our Twelfth Step work and it must always be free from the money motive. Compulsive eaters will listen to those of us who give freely from our own experience. Special workers are paid for office services, which makes Twelfth Step work by volunteers possible.

Tradition Nine (Spiritual Principle-Structure)

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

At first glance, Overeaters Anonymous may seem to be organized. There are many tasks and functions in our groups and their activities. These services are delegated to special committees and service boards. Intergroup offices are formed when enough groups in an area realize the need and provide the support to maintain them.

Our World Service Business Conference is composed of delegates chosen by local intergroups. The members of the World Service Board of Trustees are elected by and are directly responsible to the Conference, which represents the collective conscience of OA as a whole.

Yet Overeaters Anonymous as a whole is not organized. We have no president or vice president, no one with governing power in OA. No groups or members can be expelled from OA. If Traditions are broken,

we can call it to the attention of the persons or groups involved, but do not demand compliance. We can suggest, but not order.

It is not necessary that we give orders, even if it were possible. The group that does not follow the Traditions is soon struggling with serious problems. Through trial and error, groups and service boards come to accept direction from those they serve.

Tradition Ten (Spiritual Principle-Neutrality)

Overeaters Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the OA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

Since our members come from many areas and many backgrounds, we naturally have many shades of opinion represented. This could cause dissent and controversy. But we find we can maintain unity without sacrificing personal freedom of thought. We are free to believe in and work for any cause we choose—outside OA.

Within OA, we are concerned only with the message of recovery. Other issues, however worthy, have no place in an OA meeting. Nor will OA as a whole endorse any party, religion, therapy, nutritional reform, or other cause. Our sole business is to carry the Twelve Step message to the compulsive eater who still suffers. We cannot afford to let anything interfere with this objective.

Tradition Eleven (Spiritual Principle-Anonymity)

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.

In OA, we have found hope at last, a way out of our dilemma. It is only natural that we are filled with enthusiasm and feel we cannot wait to tell everyone who is eating compulsively the good news! But if we are too excited and eager to use restraint in our approach, we may very likely find the one we wanted to help turned away instead. How are we to handle this problem?

If prospective members give you an opening, you may, of course, be able to tell them about OA and invite them to visit a meeting. Sometimes it is better to wait until they see a change in you and ask, “What are you doing for yourself?” When they see you have found something they want, attraction draws them to OA.

On a broader scale, how are we to help OA become more widely known? It is well within the realm of our Traditions to use TV or radio spots, newspaper articles, “attraction cards” on bulletin boards, and anonymous panel presentations before professional groups to publicize OA.

We must be careful of our methods. It is OA we wish to publicize, not individual members. When we have an opportunity to give interviews or personal stories, we do not use our names or show our faces. We focus the spotlight on OA, never on our own persons.

Within the Fellowship, many of us feel free to reveal our full names. None of us can afford to glorify oneself or others. No one can afford to be a star. Personal pride makes the star fall and results in harm to the member and to OA as a whole. Whatever we may be in our lives elsewhere, in OA each of us is just one of the members.

Tradition Twelve (Spiritual Principle-Spirituality)

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all these Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Anonymity means a great deal more to us than just not using our last names. It means being able to talk freely about feelings and experiences, without fear of gossip, so we need not repress feelings with food.

In meetings, we share in a general way. More intimate problems are best discussed with a sponsor or another OA member. This is a life-or-death program; there is no room for pettiness. We cannot afford to let our antagonism to some member's personality distract us from practicing the Twelve Steps of our program. We must strive to put program first, admitting when we are wrong and trying always to find peaceful ways of working together.

Anonymity also means each of our members is just that—a member of the group. We place spiritual principles before personalities. We cannot build our program about any one person. No one is safe on a pedestal. No one is infallible. We are only compulsive overeaters, working toward our recovery.

Anonymity has one more significance. It means we serve OA in whatever way we can, without expecting glory, prestige, or power. It allows us to practice the spiritual principle of humility.

(STOP SCREEN SHARE HERE)

Leader: “We also have Tools of Recovery. The OA Tools of Recovery help us work the Steps and refrain from compulsive overeating. The nine Tools are: a plan of eating, sponsorship, meetings, telephone, writing, literature, an action plan, anonymity, and service.”

If a newcomer is present, say: “Would someone like to pick a tool and share on how that tool helps you remain abstinent?”

Leader: “This meeting is a literature meeting. We will be reading & discussing_____”.
We left off on p._____.

Leader: GUIDELINES FOR SHARING: “We share experience, strength and hope in the program. Cross talk, that is giving advice or directly commenting on someone else's share, is discouraged here. Who would like to begin reading?”

Closing:

Leader: “Can someone read the promises?” **(screen share)**

The Promises made after Step 9

Big Book pp.83-84

- We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.
- We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.

- We will comprehend the word serenity.
- We will know peace.
- No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.
- That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.
- We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.
- Self-seeking will slip away.
- Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.
- Fear of people and economic insecurity will leave us.
- We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.
- We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Leader: “The opinions expressed here today are those of individual OA members and do not represent OA as a whole. Please remember our commitment to honor each other’s anonymity. Whom you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here. Let us all reach out by phone or email to newcomers, returning members, and each other. Together we get better.

Leaders: Will all abstinent sponsors please raise your hand?”

Leader: “According to our Seventh Tradition, we are self-supporting through our own contributions. The suggested contribution is \$5. We encourage OA members to give as much as they are able, to help our group be self-supporting &, as the 12th step suggests, to carry the message to other compulsive overeaters.

The 7th Tradition is much more than putting a few dollars in the basket. We are self-supporting by giving service. Service to my meeting is sharing, reading, leading, keyholding, setting up the materials to begin, cleaning up afterwards & welcoming newcomers. Taking responsibility for the health & function of the meeting strengthens the meeting, my recovery and carries the message to others. It encourages & stimulates emotional & spiritual growth!

Every meeting has a written format. IF YOU CAN READ, YOU CAN LEAD!!!

“No matter how far down the scale we have gone, our experience can help others.” SHARE-what brought you here, what success have you had? What do you still struggle with? Is some problem threatening your abstinence? Did the reading move, scare, excite or delight you? SHARE!!! Recovery is a 2-way street. We GIVE to receive!

(Share this in the chat)

Please send the contributions to:

BRIG

P.O. Box 14815

Baton Rouge, LA 70896

or Venmo @Brig-oa

Leader: "Are there any OA related announcements?"

Leader: "All who care to, join me in the OA Promise, I Put my Hand in Yours"

(Screen share [HERE](#))

OA Promise

I put my hand in yours, and together we can do what we could never do alone. No longer is there a sense of hopelessness, no longer must we each depend upon our own unsteady willpower. We are all together now, reaching out our hands for power and strength greater than ours, and as we join hands, we find love and understanding beyond our wildest dreams.