

## **Welcome, Newcomers, to OA.**

This brief document is intended to provide you with some helpful materials to supplement those provided by the World Service Organization (WSO) of OA. Some prayers are included here because OA emphasizes a spiritual (not religious) approach for overcoming all types of eating problems. This is an important way in which OA differs from other weight-control solutions you may have tried or read about. OA proposes a 3-pronged approach – physical, emotional and spiritual. We share our knowledge and experience with each other unselfishly.

Regarding the concept of “spiritual” vs. “religious,” OA basic tenets and literature use the terms “God” and “Higher Power” interchangeably and they are usually capitalized, even though they do not refer to any specific religious deity. When “God” is used, it is always understood as “God as we (you) understand God,” and every member is invited to define a higher power in whatever way they choose - religious, agnostic, atheistic or something entirely personal.

If you do hear religious references at any OA meeting, please know that this is not in keeping with OA policy as a whole. We hope you will find these materials helpful in your own journey in OA.

Sincerely,

The Members of the Milwaukee Area Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous (OAMAI)

### ***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 will power. 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. – Rozanne S., Co-founder of OA*

### ***Diet vs. Abstinence***

- Diets are something you start on Monday and go off by Thursday. Abstinence is an on-going daily reprieve from the disease of compulsive overeating.
- Dieting is going through the day obsessed with eating as little as possible. Abstinence is eating nourishing meals, with life in between.
- Dieting is having a goal weight, a goal day, clenched fists and gritted teeth. Abstinence is accepting powerlessness over food, relaxing and giving up the fight.
- Dieting is starving myself so that I look good at my high school reunion. Abstinence is accepting and liking myself as I am today, realizing that my self-worth does not hinge on the size of my body.
- Dieting is life-threatening. Abstinence is life-giving.
- Dieting is placing all the emphasis on the food, which must be controlled in order to solve the problem, which is believed to be fat. Abstinence is knowing that fat is not the problem, but only a symptom of an illness called compulsive overeating.
- Dieting is being obsessed with calories, carbohydrates, and charts, always jumping on the scale to monitor my weight. Abstinence is letting go and letting God, and following a simple food plan, trusting the results to a Higher Power.
- Dieting is believing that thin is well and that once I lose the weight, all my problems will go away. Abstinence is living in the here and now, realizing that recovery must be on all three levels – spiritual, emotional and physical – if I am to obtain true serenity.

Reprinted from the *LIFELINE*, Nov 1966

### ***To Be Abstinent Is About Willingness, NOT Struggle***

- If you are **willing** to be abstinent, this is a state of great humility. If you are **trying** to be abstinent, this is a state of great confusion.
- A **willingness** to be abstinent implies you do not know how to do it, but are willing to learn. **Trying** to be abstinent implies you should be able to do it, but are struggling with it.
- **Willingness** to be abstinent involves acceptance. **Trying** to be abstinent involves condemnation.
- If you are **willing** to be abstinent, you are open to receive. If you are **trying** to be abstinent, you are closed to guidance.
- If you are **trying** to give up the old ways and have condemned yourself for failure to do so, simply be **willing** to learn how the old ways may be replaced with ways of peace.
- If you are **trying** to be abstinent, you will fear not being able to be abstinent. You will judge yourself a failure. If you are **willing** to be abstinent, no setback becomes a problem, for you know you will be shown.
- If you are **trying**, you are attempting to be abstinent by yourself. If you are **willing** to be abstinent, you are asking for guidance.
- **Trying** to be abstinent places the responsibility on you. Being **willing** to be abstinent places the responsibility on God.
- **Willingness** to be abstinent is, in a sense, a prayer. **Trying** to be abstinent is an act of separation from your Higher Power.
- When you **try**, there is resistance. When you are **willing**, there is acceptance.
- If you are **trying** to be abstinent, everything is an interference. If you are **willing** to be abstinent, everything is of assistance.

The freely made choice to be abstinent is the most important decision you make each day because it speaks for your willingness to be abstinent each day.

Without the giver of the gift (of abstinence), there would be no gift. Which is more important, the giver of the gift or the gift itself? Bear in mind, this particular gift is just for one day, or one meal at a time.

- Shirley, Reprinted from the *COCOON*, June 2001

### ***Morning Prayer of Abstinence***

*Higher Power, today is a new day for me and with Your help it can be a day of abstinence. I ask for Your protection in case sometime during the day my desire to overeat is greater than my desire to abstain. I also ask for Your protection today from anyone or anything that may interfere with my abstinence. I know that I am powerless over food. I believe You will restore me to sanity. Please help me to know Your will for me today and give me the willingness to carry that out. I turn my life over to You.*

- Unknown

## **DEFINITIONS FOR OA NEWCOMERS**

Starred (\*) items refer to practices and organizations within the Milwaukee Area. Others are universal.

**Abstinence:** “Abstinence in Overeaters Anonymous is the action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working toward or maintaining a healthy body weight. Spiritual, emotional and physical recovery is the result of living the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve-Step Program.”

**Anonymity:** Because of Anonymity, it is safe to share at meetings. This means we honor each other’s privacy by never discussing who we have seen or what has been discussed at a meeting with anyone outside of that meeting.

**Big Book:** The Big Book refers to *Alcoholics Anonymous* which also is used in Overeaters Anonymous. It is our basic piece of literature and is used to help us recover from compulsive eating and to stay in recovery.

\***“Cocoon”:** The bi-monthly newsletter of the Milwaukee Area Intergroup is *Out of the Cocoon*, more often referred to simply as “*The Cocoon*.” Anyone who is participating in the OA Program can write his or her experiences, strengths and hopes and submit it to the newsletter. The deadline for each issue is set by the editor.

\***Convention:** The Milwaukee Area Intergroup traditionally holds an annual weekend convention. It provides an opportunity to celebrate recovery with other OAers through keynote speakers, workshops, panel discussions, and fellowship.

**Cross Talk:** “Feedback, cross talk and advice-giving are discouraged during all Overeaters Anonymous meetings and events. Cross talk during an OA meeting is giving advice to others who have already shared, speaking directly to another person rather than to the group and questioning or interrupting the person speaking/sharing at the time.” (From the OA website at “Suggested Meeting Formats”.)

**Group Conscience:** Group conscience is based on Tradition 2. When a group wishes to determine how best to conduct meetings, spend funds, organize special events, and deal with issues that affect the group or OA as a whole, business meetings are conducted by group conscience. Group conscience is the special way (unique to 12-Step fellowships) in which the individuals in the meetings come to agree on a decision that is best for the whole group.

\***Holiday Marathon:** In the Milwaukee area, special meetings, called Marathons, are held on some major holidays to help deal with the challenges holidays may hold. The Marathon may run from a few hours to all day.

\***HOW meeting:** This is a type of OA meeting designed for those who would like to have a more structured program to follow regarding such things as Food Plan, use of the Tools, etc.

**“Lifeline”:** The international magazine of Overeaters Anonymous is *Lifeline*. Paper and e-subscriptions are available. Go to OA.org to subscribe.

\***Milwaukee Area Intergroup (MAI):** Milwaukee Area Intergroup, also known simply as Intergroup or MAI, is the service body that provides support for groups in the Milwaukee area and most of eastern

Wisconsin.

**\*MAI Emailblast:** Regular information for the Milwaukee Area Intergroup is provided to OA members via email. Check the *Cocoon* newsletter for details on subscribing.

**Newcomer:** A person new to OA and/or the 12-Step Program is considered a newcomer. There is no time limit on when someone may be considered a newcomer.

**OAers:** Those attending and participating in Overeaters Anonymous often are called OAers.

**Outreach Calls:** These are calls to other OAers between meetings just to check in, to get support, or to discuss aspects of the program. It is suggested that more intense issues be discussed with one's sponsor.

**Overeaters Anonymous:** Overeaters Anonymous is a Fellowship of individuals who, through shared experience, strength, and hope, are recovering from compulsive overeating.

**Region 5:** OA has ten regions worldwide. We are in Region 5 which covers Wisconsin and other areas in the Midwest.

**\*Retreat:** The Milwaukee Area Intergroup traditionally holds one weekend-long retreat each year. It is a spiritually-based opportunity to strengthen your recovery and build fellowship.

**Sponsee/Sponsee:** A sponsee or sponsee is a person who is being sponsored/helped through the program. Each person is encouraged to be a sponsee and to find a sponsor who has what he or she wants.

**Twelve and Twelve:** OA uses two "Twelve and Twelve" books—*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous* and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous*.

**Twelve Steps:** The OA program of recovery for individuals is based on the 12 Steps which are defined and explained in the Big Book and the "Twelve and Twelve" books.

**Twelve Traditions:** The 12 Traditions are a means by which groups remain unified in a common cause and community. They ensure smooth functioning, survival, and growth of the meetings.

**\*We Care Book:** A voluntary sign-in book at the meetings with the attendees name, phone number, and/or email is passed around at most meetings. Each member is encouraged to sign in and to use the book to obtain phone numbers of people he or she would like to contact between meetings.

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