

Monday Night HOW Readings

I. By-Laws

1. The meeting follows the H.O.W. format (Old Westminster Format of Steps, Tradition and Tools).
2. The meeting will have a speaker on most nights and, when unavailable, a topic for discussion. Speakers must be sponsors and have a current clean abstinence of at least 90 days.
3. This is a positive, upbeat meeting where we all come to learn how to recover. We suggest that pitches also be positive and upbeat and project recovery.
4. Sponsors at this meeting must have 90 days abstinence plus completion of 90 days of writings under a qualified sponsor's supervision.
5. These are to be considered closed meetings, open only to those looking for recovery from compulsive overeating. One meeting per month (the last Monday of the month) will be considered an open meeting, allowing any person interested in hearing and attending an OA meeting to come with a family member or friend.
6. Neither this group, nor any OA group, can endorse food plans. We are not a diet club. If you see something you like or want to achieve for yourself, ask a sponsor how they got it. We can only advise what works for each one of us on an individual basis.

II. Our Invitation to You

We at 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 found 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. We use AA's Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, changing only the words "alcohol" and "alcoholic" to "food" and "compulsive overeater". 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 simple. 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 overeating 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 and calories" club. We do not endorse any particular plan of eating. 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, or 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 symptom of compulsive overeating is 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.

"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 ANY MORE. Welcome to Overeaters Anonymous. WELCOME HOME!

III. HOW Concept

The Overeaters Anonymous H.O.W. Concept has been formed to offer the compulsive overeater (who accepts the twelve steps and twelve traditions as a program of recovery) a disciplined and structured approach. The OA/HOW groups have been formed in the belief that our disease is absolute and therefore only absolute acceptance of the H.O.W. program will offer any sustained abstinence to those of us whose compulsion has reached a critical level. Therefore, the OA/HOW plan of eating, steps, traditions and tools of recovery are not suggested. Rather we accept them as requirements for our recovery.

Meetings are dedicated to the concept of remaining honest, open-minded and willing to listen ... this is the H.O.W. of the program. We pray that the collective group conscience and love that these ideals offer us will promote a strong sense of security that will enable us to experience a new unity and wholeness with those around us. And, that the H.O.W. ideal will help us to progress in our program of recovery on a daily basis.

To be certain, much of our strength is found in the structure of meetings and in the daily adherence to the program as it is written in our literature. Each group also firmly understands that after our recovery has begun through abstinence and the taking of

the first three steps, our further surrender to the additional steps of recovery offers us a promise of happiness, contentment and achievement in all areas of our lives.

We ensure our continued and sustained abstinence from compulsive overeating by being forever aware that God is doing for us what we have never been able to do for ourselves.

IV. The Only Requirement

Overeaters Anonymous respects the autonomy of each OA group. We do suggest, however, that any group that has requirements in addition to the suggested 12 Steps and 12 Traditions inform its members that these requirements are what that particular group has found effective in working the program and do not represent OA as a whole. The members of this group have found the HOW concept to be effective in working the OA program. The opinions expressed here this evening by those who share are their own and not necessarily those of OA as a whole. The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop eating compulsively. Anyone who says he/she is a member is a member. We of Overeaters Anonymous welcome all members with open arms.

V. Page 549/550 from the Big Book

The A.A. members who sponsored me told me in the beginning that I would not only find a way to live without having a drink, but that I would find a way to live without wanting to drink, if I would do these simple things. They said if you want to know how this program works, take the first word of your question— the “H” is for honesty, the “O” is for open-mindedness, and the “W” is for willingness; these our Big Book calls the essentials of recovery. They suggested that I study the A.A. book and try to take the Twelve Steps according to the explanation in the book, for it was their opinion that the application of these principles in our daily lives will get us sober and keep us sober. I believe this, and I believe too that it is equally impossible to practice these principles to the best of our ability, a day at a time, and still drink, for I don’t think the two things are compatible.

VI. Big Book Chapter 5: HOW IT WORKS

Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.

Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it—then you are ready to take certain steps.

At some of these we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.

Remember that we deal with alcohol—cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power—that One is God. May you find Him now!

Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon.

VII. The Twelve Steps of 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.

VIII. The Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous

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 non-professional, 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.