

ZOOM FORMAT

**Meeting Format and Leader's Guide**  
For the  
**Overeaters Anonymous HOW Meeting**  
*Honest-Open-Willing*

**Saturday 9:30 - 11:30 EST / 8:30 - 10:30 am CST**

**7:30 - 9:30 MST / 6:30 - 8:30 am PST**

**Our Recovery Circle Meeting**

**Updated July 6, 2026**

Notes, tips, and tricks for leading a zoom meeting:

1. **Print out the leader guide (pages 3-10 of this document) so that you don't have to mess with flipping your screen back and forth.**
2. **Write the people's names on the leader guide of all volunteers for readings, tools, medallions, treasurer, and candle readers (if there is a step-up).**
3. **Someone else will share the readings with the group, so all you need to do is read from the script.**
4. **Sponsor Circle: You will call on people who "raise their hands" and the host of the meeting will put their hands down after the sponsor speaks.**

**You will tell people to "raise their hand" (this is in the script)**

**After someone shares, the host will "lower their hand"**

**If someone doesn't unmute, remind them to do so.**

5. **If someone starts speaking/reading and they forgot to unmute themselves, speak up and let them know that they are muted and we can't hear them.**

1) Good morning! Welcome to Our Recovery Circle Meeting of Overeaters Anonymous. My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am a compulsive overeater and your leader for this meeting.

2) To open the meeting, let us have a moment of quiet meditation followed by the Serenity Prayer. Please unmute your microphone and pray along with me.

*Pause for meditation and allowing people to unmute*

i) "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. Thy will, not mine, be done."

3) I assume that I am not alone this morning, but for the record, are there any other compulsive overeaters at this meeting besides me?

*People will wave and some will unmute and say hello.*

4) Please mute your microphone if you haven't done so yet.

5) Use the meeting Zoom chat to share if you are new, if you are looking for a sponsee or a sponsor, and for announcements. This information will be included in the weekly meeting recap email unless you indicate otherwise.

6) Out of deference for our Group Conscience decision, if you are going to eat during this meeting, please do so with your video off.

7) Overeaters Anonymous is a fellowship of individuals who, through shared experience and mutual support, 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 overeating and to carry this message of recovery to those who still suffer.

8) Would \_\_\_\_\_ please read "What is HOW?"

- 9) Would \_\_\_\_\_ please read "The Only Requirement"?
- 10) Would \_\_\_\_\_ please read "The HOW Concept"?
- 11) Would \_\_\_\_\_ please read "Reflections for the Newcomer"?
- 12) Would \_\_\_\_\_ please read an excerpt from Step 2 in the book The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous?
- 13) A word about our readings: OA is rooted in the wisdom of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), and we share key readings from AA literature in our meeting. Because the AA General Services Office asks that OA not modify AA's literature, we read all such excerpts as they are written in two books titled Alcoholics Anonymous and Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. (You may hear these books referred to as "The Big Book" and "The 12 x 12", respectively.) Please feel free to privately substitute the words "food" and "compulsive overeating" for "alcohol" and "alcoholism".

With that in mind as we listen, would \_\_\_\_\_ please read from Chapter 5 of the book Alcoholics Anonymous "How It Works"?

- 14) Would \_\_\_\_\_ please read the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve Steps of Recovery?
- 15) Would \_\_\_\_\_ please read the Twelve Traditions of the OA program?
- 16) The Tools of Recovery – The Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous are a program of recovery. Webster's Dictionary defines a "tool" as: "any person or thing used to get something done". We have many tools of the program which help us recover on a daily basis. Tools are essential to get the job done and they work for us. In order for a tool to work, it must be used. So, too, with our tools of recovery. I will ask seven OA-HOW sponsors to explain how they use a particular tool. Limit of two minutes each tool pitch.

\_\_\_\_\_ is our timekeeper this morning (OR if no one has volunteered yet: "Would someone please volunteer to be the timekeeper?")

- a) Would \_\_\_\_\_ please read and then pitch for 2 minutes on “Plan of Eating”
- b) Would \_\_\_\_\_ please read and then pitch for 2 minutes on “Sponsorship”?

*After the sponsor’s pitch, the Leader continues:*

It’s now time for our Sponsor Circle. If you are an OA or an OA/HOW sponsor and you would like to participate in our sponsor circle, please use the “raise your hand” feature. You can find the ‘raise your hand’ feature in the ‘reactions’ section of your zoom meeting. If you are joining us by phone, you can raise your hand by pressing \*9. In the interest of time, please keep this very short and respectfully, only include the following information:

- i. First name
- ii. Abstinence date
- iii. Amount of weight lost or gained
- iv. Pass
- v. ONLY share sponsor status if you have a permanent sponsee opening, in which case state your open time slot, time zone, & phone number.
- vi. Please note: This is not a time for sharing for sponsors. Any other sponsor details should be kept for tool pitches, meeting pitches, or meeting chat. Please keep it brief, and no applauding between sponsors.
- vii. When your name is called, please unmute your microphone and share, and then re-mute yourself when you are done.
- viii. I will go first.

*After everyone who has “raised their hand” has shared, then say:*

If there are any sponsors on the call who did not get to raise your hand, please unmute your microphone and share now.

*After the sponsor line, read "Clay Feet": **Clay Feet***

We should remember that all OAs have Clay Feet. We should not set any member on a pedestal and mark her or him out as a perfect OA. It is not fair to the person to be singled out in this fashion and if the person is wise, he or she will not wish it. If the person we single out as a perfect OA has a fall, we are in danger of falling, too. Without exception, we are all only one bite away from a binge, no matter how long we have been in OA. Nobody is entirely safe. OA should be our ideal, not any particular member of it.

- c) Would \_\_\_\_\_ please read and then pitch for 2 minutes on "Anonymity".  
Would you like to read Option 1 or Option 2? *(If the reader doesn't know what one they want, just pick for them.)*
- d) Would \_\_\_\_\_ please read and then pitch for 2 minutes on "Telephone Calls"
- e) Would \_\_\_\_\_ please read and then pitch for 2 minutes on "Meetings"
- f) Would \_\_\_\_\_ please read and then pitch for 2 minutes on "Literature and Writing"
- g) Would \_\_\_\_\_ please read and then pitch for 2 minutes on "Service"
- 17) Will all people doing service please unmute your microphones and applaud service!

- 18) Will all people on maintenance please wave your hand at us and let's all applaud maintenance!
- 19) Please re-mute your microphone if you haven't done so already.
- 20) I have two reminders for everyone:
  - a) Out of deference for our Group Conscience decision, if you are going to eat during this meeting, please do so with your video off.
  - b) Please add your information to our virtual "We Care List." This is done by filling out the contact form at [bit.ly/OurRecoveryCircle](https://bit.ly/OurRecoveryCircle). The link will be shared in the Zoom chat and can be found in column A or at the top of the "We Care List" tab of our meeting's service sign-up sheet spreadsheet. The We Care List, refreshed every 6 months, is the contact list for fellows to contact each other after the meeting and throughout the week, and for receiving weekly meeting recap and reminder emails.
  - c) Use the meeting Zoom chat to share if you are new, if you are looking for a sponsee or a sponsor, and for announcements. This information will be included in the weekly meeting recap email unless you indicate otherwise.
- 21) Our Recovery Circle meeting is a friendly place. We want to get to know each other. If you are here with us today for the first time ever, will you please unmute your microphone and introduce yourself by first name only.

*If there is a newcomer: "Thank you for being here! We have a newcomer greeter who will greet you and we would love for you to include your name and phone number in the chat section so that we can reach out and connect with you. Please stick around after the meeting and our newcomer greeter will introduce themselves to you and answer any questions that you might have."*
- 22) Will our newcomer greeter please unmute your microphone and share your name and your phone number so that all newcomers may write your numbers down.
- 23) As you have heard, our seventh tradition tells us that we must be fully self-supporting through our own contributions. OA World Service suggests a donation of \$5 if you are able. However, there is no requirement to give money in

order to attend this meeting. The money collected is used to support our meeting, as well as other OA meetings and levels of the OA organization to help spread the message that there is recovery from compulsive overeating.

24) Will the treasurer please give us a Treasurer’s Report and explain to us how to make our donations? (If the treasurer is unavailable read the following) You can make a 7th tradition contribution as a member of this meeting using the donate button under Our Recovery Circle meeting at [oahowphonemeetings.com](http://oahowphonemeetings.com) that will be distributed to the HOW Virtual Intergroup (HVIC), OA Virtual Region and OA World Service Office. to this meeting.

25) \*\*\*\* *At this point, the Leader reads either the “Promises of the Program” or “Bad News”*

**The Promises of the Program**

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through. 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” and 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 of 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.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not! They are being fulfilled among us – sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them. (Big Book, pages 83-84)

*or*

**Some Bad News**

We’ve got some bad news for you. It was bad news for us, and it will probably be bad news for you. Whether you quit six days, months, or years, if you go out and take a drink or two, you’ll end up in

this hospital tied down, just like you have been in the last six months. You are an alcoholic. (Big Book, page 187)

- 26) It is now time for announcements. If you would like to make an announcement, please use the “raise your hand” feature.

*After everyone who “raised their hand” has gone, then ask if anyone who didn’t raise their hand would like to unmute and jump in to make their announcement.*

- 27) If you would like to purchase literature and books, please go to the Overeaters Anonymous website, OA.org.

- 28) Group Conscience: There is a business meeting-we call Group Conscience-following this meeting on the first Saturday of odd numbered months.

- a) *If this is **not the week** for the business meeting say: This is not a Group Conscience meeting week, but you are always welcome to add agenda items provided you'll be attending the meeting-the link to add/review agenda items can be found in our weekly emails.*
- b) *If this **is the week** for the business meeting, say: Since this is the first Saturday of an odd numbered month, we will have a 30-minute Group Conscience meeting directly following this meeting. The link to add/review the agenda items can be found in our weekly emails [or in chat]-a reminder that you must attend to present your agenda item. After the Serenity Prayer, we encourage both sponsors and non-sponsors to choose to join the Group Conscience breakout room. Newcomer greeter and any newcomers will stay in the main meeting.*

- 29) It is now time for Medallions. At HOW we recognize milestones of recovery for those working the HOW program. All other OA abstinence is given a round of applause. Our medallion person today is \_\_\_\_\_. If you would prefer not to have your milestone mentioned in the email which is sent out after the meeting, please indicate that either in the chat or as you accept your medallion.

- 30) Step-Ups: At this point in our meeting, we ask the group to join us as we celebrate another example of the miracles that abound in OA. The stepping-up

portion of the meeting asks a sponsor to introduce a newcomer who has at least 70 days of continuous back-to-back abstinence, who has completed the first three steps of the program and is now ready to become a sponsor. Are there any step-ups?

(1) *If there is a step-up:* Our readers for our step-up candles today will be:

1.) \_\_\_\_\_ 2.) \_\_\_\_\_ 3.) \_\_\_\_\_ 4.) \_\_\_\_\_ 5.) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) *If there is no step-up, continue reading:*

At HOW meetings, new sponsors are presented with a virtual cactus to signify the tough love of the program, stick with the stickers, remember to drink water, and remember that we don't water down the program.

- 31) **Anniversaries:** Birthdays are celebrated for each year of continuous abstinence. Are there any anniversaries to celebrate this morning?

*If yes, then the leader reads the anniversary reading to the person who is celebrating and then reads:*

“On behalf of Our Recovery Circle Meeting, we all are celebrating your \_\_\_\_\_ years of beautiful back-to-back abstinence. Congratulations!”

- 32) The Leader now qualifies for ten minutes (*only if time allows, since leader's share needs to end by 11:00 am ET*)
- 33) **(At 11:00 am)** I would like to introduce \_\_\_\_\_, our guest speaker, who qualifies for twenty minutes. (*After the speaker has concluded, ask the group to join you in applauding \_\_\_\_\_, our guest speaker*)
- 34) The floor is now open for two-minute pitches (sharing). If you care to pitch, then please use the “raise your hand” feature. In HOW meetings we share our experience, strength and hope at meetings. No one is prohibited from sharing, but we ask that you focus on the solution. All pitches should be of a positive nature in which you share your growth and recovery. All other issues can be worked out over the phone or after the meeting. (*Look at the participants for those who have their hand raised*) \_\_\_\_\_, please go ahead, unmute your microphone, and make your two-minute pitch.

*Continue to call on the people who have “raised their hand”. If there is time, ask if anyone who hasn’t raised their hand and cares to pitch to unmute their microphone and make their pitch.*

*End the pitches at 11:28am ET.*

- 35) **(At 11:28)** I want to thank you for allowing me to be your leader for this meeting. I also thank all of those who participated, especially our speaker, \_\_\_\_\_, who offered so much of her/himself.
- 36) May we have the reading of the “OA Promise.”
- 37) After the meeting, will our newcomer greeter and the newcomers who are here today please stick around for a bit so that we can say hello and answer any questions that the newcomer might have?
- a) *If this is not a business meeting week:* move on to read Closing Statement
  - b) *If this is a business meeting week, say:* After saying the Serenity Prayer, we encourage both sponsors and non-sponsors to choose to join the Group Conscience breakout room. The Newcomer Greeter and newcomers will stay in the main meeting.
- 38) Closing Statement: To those of you who are still new to the program, we remind you that all that was said here this morning should safely remain here, as we respect and cherish our tradition of anonymity. We also assure you that following the program will get you to a healthy body weight. Abstinence will remove the craving. Our way of life will remove the compulsion in time and give you contentment and fullness in all areas. After a moment of meditation, will you please unmute your microphones and join me in saying The Serenity Prayer?



## ***Reading 1***

### **What is HOW?**

HOW is a movement within Overeaters Anonymous whose basic principle is that abstinence is the only means to freedom from compulsive eating and the beginning of a spiritual life.

### **Where and Why did HOW Begin?**

HOW began in Phoenix in 1981 as a means of reviving a group called "OA Victorious." Its meeting format is taken from Rozanne's book, I Put My Hand in Yours, and centers around the concept of service. Many of the questions used in HOW sponsoring stem from OA Plus and Westminster groups. The outline of service came from the OA Suffolk County, New York, Sponsors Guide.

## *Reading 2*

### **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 Twelve Steps and Twelve 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 today, by those who share, are their own and not necessarily those of OA.

The Board of Trustees states: "We understand the third tradition to mean that individual ways of working one's program should not exclude any compulsive eater from attendance and participation at OA meetings anywhere, anytime."

"The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop eating compulsively. Anyone who says he or she is a member, is a member. We of Overeaters Anonymous welcome all members with open arms."

### *Reading 3*

#### **The HOW Concept**

The Overeaters Anonymous HOW Concept meeting has been formed to offer the compulsive eater, who accepts the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions as a program of recovery, a disciplined and structured approach. The OA/HOW group is formed in the belief that our disease is absolute and therefore only absolute acceptance of the OA 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. In OA HOW, our daily action plan is outlined in the structured use of each of the other tools.

Our meetings are dedicated to the concept of remaining honest, open-minded, and willing to listen. This is the HOW 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 all those around us. And, that the HOW 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.

Our Recovery Circle Meeting 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 eating by being forever aware that God is doing for us what we have never been able to do for ourselves.

May God, as each of us understands Him, open our minds and our hearts to the love, which is manifest in this room.

Amen.

## *Reading 4*

### **Reflections for the Newcomer**

Welcome to OA-HOW! We are all so glad that you have decided to become part of our fellowship. You know that the HOW Concept is very disciplined. We believe that the discipline of weighing and measuring, of phoning your sponsor at a mutually agreed upon time, of attending meetings, and making telephone calls all lead to a life based on the universal discipline, which is accord rather than discord. Therefore, if there is a breakdown in any of these areas, the Concept is threatened, as is the individual's abstinence.

We have found that the discipline must remain constant for the beginner as for the sponsor. If the newcomer shies away from this life's responsibility, the sponsor will give the newcomer's time slot to someone more committed to recovery. This is not a personal affront but a matter of necessity. So many who think they should recover in fact are not ready. If the newcomer should show lack of commitment, the sponsor will then offer the newcomer assistance in finding a new sponsor. The rationale here is, if the newcomer insists on picking up the food before the telephone, then there is a breakdown in the level of communication between the sponsor and the newcomer. "Frothy emotional appeal seldom suffices" (Big Book, Doctor's Opinion, page xxvi).

If a sponsor slips, get a new one. The pitfalls of self-deception cannot be over-stressed if you are to recover. Therefore, sponsors in all self-honesty must release all the people they are sponsoring in order to continue his/her own recovery. A sponsor cannot give what they do not experience.

(Over)

Finally, you must believe that we need each other. All problems that arise can be worked on via the telephone or person-to-person contact. Only positive, upbeat recovery belongs at our meetings.

“A body badly burned by alcohol does not often recover overnight, nor do twisted thinking and depression vanish in a twinkling. We are convinced that a spiritual mode of living is a most powerful health restorative.” (Big Book, The Family Afterward, page 133).

Good luck. Everyone in the fellowship is praying that you find the release from the obsession so many of us have.

God bless and, no matter what, keep coming back! We'll always be here for you.

## *Reading 5*

### **An Excerpt from Step 2**

#### **in The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous**

When we look with complete honesty at our lives, we see that, where eating is concerned, we have acted in an extremely irrational and self-destructive manner. Under the compulsion to overeat, many of us have done things no sane person would think of doing. We have driven miles in the dead of night to satisfy a craving for food. We have eaten food that was frozen, burnt, stale, or even dangerously spoiled. We have eaten food off of other people's plates, off the floor, and off the ground. We have dug food out of the garbage and eaten it.

We have frequently lied about what we have eaten - lied to ourselves and to others because we didn't want to face the truth about what we do when it comes to food. We have stolen food from our friends, family and employers, as well as from the grocery store. We have also stolen money to buy food. We have eaten beyond the point of being full, beyond the point of being sick of eating. We have continued to overeat, knowing all the while we were disfiguring and maiming our bodies. We have isolated ourselves to eat, damaging our relationships and denying ourselves full social lives. Because of our compulsive eating, we have turned ourselves into objects of ridicule and we have destroyed our health.

Then, horrified by what we were doing to ourselves with food, we became obsessed with diets. We spent lots of money on weight-loss schemes; we bought all sorts of appetite suppressant drugs; we joined diet clubs and fitness centers; we had ourselves hypnotized and analyzed; we had major surgery on our digestive systems; we had our ears stapled or our jaws wired shut. All of this we did willingly, hoping we could someday eat all we wanted and be free of the compulsion.

Some of us went from doctor to doctor looking for a cure. The doctors gave us diets, but we had no better success with those than with the other diets we'd been on. The doctors prescribed shots and pills. Those worked for a while, but we inevitably lost control and overate again, putting back on the weight we had worked so hard to lose and frequently gaining more.

Many of us tried fasting, with and without a doctor's supervision. Usually we lost weight, but as soon as we started eating again, the compulsive eating behavior returned, along with the weight. Some of us learned to purge ourselves with vomiting,

laxatives, or excessive exercise. We damaged our digestive systems and our teeth while we starved our bodies of the nutrients needed to live. Some of us were so terrified of gaining weight, we went to great lengths to restrict what we ate. We refused to eat certain foods, we developed complex rituals around food, and we tried to avoid eating whenever possible. Other people told us we were too thin, but we thought they were overreacting. Our weight went down, sometimes to dangerous levels, but we still felt fat.

Most of us got plenty of advice from others about how to get to our "ideal" size, but nothing permanently solved our problem. We found that no matter what we did to ease our turmoil, our compulsive eating behavior eventually returned. Over time, we became weary and discouraged from battling with weight, and our self-esteem went down. Still, we could never accept our powerlessness. The prospect of being obsessed with food and weight, sick, and out of control for the rest of our lives led some of us to conclude that life was simply not worth living. Many of us thought about suicide. Some of us tried it.

Most of us, however, never reached suicidal desperation. Instead, we took comfort in a feeling that everything was all right as long as we got enough to eat. The only trouble was that, as our compulsive eating progressed, we ate more and more, yet we were never satisfied. Instead of bringing comfort, the overeating backfired. The more we ate, the more we suffered, yet we continued to overeat. Our true insanity could be seen in the fact that we kept right on trying to find comfort in excess food, long after it began to cause us misery.

## *Reading 6*

### **Chapter 5 – “How It Works”**

(A. A. Big Book, How it Works, Pages 58-59)

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.

Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery.

## *Reading 7*

### **The Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous**

(A.A. Big Book, How it Works, Pages 59-60; the Twelve Steps have been adapted for OA with permission of AA World Services, Inc.)

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.

Many of us exclaimed, “What an order! I can’t go through with it.” Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

## *Reading 8*

### **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 communications.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

**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 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.

### **Tool #1: A Plan of Eating**

A food plan is a commitment to recovery. The OA-HOW Program was designed for food-addicted people. We believe in a disciplined and structured approach. HOW abstainers do not modify their food plan to suit themselves and commit themselves to black-and-white abstinence. Deviations invite the return of many other problems.

A food plan is not a personal thing in HOW. This means that we depend upon each other for the strength and growth that we need to remain abstinent. We join together in an effort to free the compulsive overeater from the bondage of food through the use of a food plan, positive thinking and the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. We eat weighed and measured meals. Food is written down, called in to our sponsor and committed so that we can get on with our recovery and out of the food. We also believe that negative thinking is a large part of our disease, so we abstain from negative thinking.

Those of us who work the HOW Program use the following guidelines for food plans:

1. We do not write our own food plan. We use a food plan given to us by a nutritionist, dietitian or doctor. We discuss it with our sponsor. We do not pick one that allows any of our binge foods. If some food on our plan becomes a problem, we avoid it.
2. We do not skip meals, switch meals, or combine meals. We do not deviate from or manipulate our food plan in any way. If we need to change our committed food during the day, we call a sponsor.
3. We weigh and measure all our portions so that there is no guesswork. We do not measure by eye. We use measuring cups, spoons, and a scale. (Demonstrate use of the abstinence kit.)
4. We weigh ourselves once a month until we reach goal weight, and once a week on maintenance.
5. Unless advised otherwise by our doctor, we take a multivitamin and drink 64 ounces of water a day.
6. We do not drink alcohol.

7. We do not use foods containing sugar, except if sugar is listed fifth or beyond on the ingredients label.
8. Above all, we do not vacillate or water down the disciplined nature of the HOW program. It is not the extra string bean that is the problem, it is the decision to take it.

**Tool #2: Sponsorship (Read both sides)**

Sponsors are OA members who are committed to abstinence and to living the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions to the best of their ability. We ask a sponsor to guide us through our program of recovery on all three levels: physical, emotional, and spiritual. In working with other members of OA and sharing their experience, strength, and hope, sponsors continually renew and reaffirm their own recovery. Sponsors share their program up to the level of their own experience. Ours is a program of attraction; find a sponsor who has what you want and ask how it was achieved. A member may work with more than one sponsor and may change sponsors at will.

A HOW Sponsor is a compulsive overeater who has at least 70 days of back-to-back abstinence and who has taken the first three steps of the program. Sponsors have also completed at least 70 days of assignments.

**(See other side for Reflections to the Sponsor – Suggestions for Discussion)**

**Reflections to the Sponsor – Suggestions for Discussion:**

No list of reflections and meditations are end-alls and be-alls for the newcomer. A sponsor must be attentive not only to what the new person is saying, but also to what the new person is not saying. There are many newcomers who are reticent to purchase books, and who are hesitant to throw themselves headlong into the program. Therefore, we have a list of “pre-commitment assignments.”

Above all, **DO NOT VACILLATE OR WATER DOWN THE DISCIPLINED NATURE OF THE HOW PROGRAM!** It is not the extra string bean that is the problem. It is the **DECISION** to have it that results in some trouble.

The HOW concept is an alternative for people who have tried everything else – therefore, the program is an immutable triumvirate of tools, steps, and traditions. Using the tools of weighing and measuring our food, sponsors, meetings, phone calls, reading and writing, service, and anonymity, we follow the twelve steps and the twelve traditions of OA in order to free ourselves from the bondage of food addiction.

**SPONSORS DO NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO PLAY GOD, WE HELP EACH OTHER.**

**Tool #3: Anonymity (Choose Option 1 or Option 2)**

**(Option 1)**

Anonymity is a tool, as well as a tradition, because it guarantees that we will place principles before personalities. It offers each of us freedom of expression and protection against gossip. Anonymity assures us that only we as individual OA members have the right to make our membership known within our community.

Anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, and television means that we never allow our last names or faces to be used once we identify ourselves as OA members.

Within the Fellowship, anonymity means that whatever we share with another OA member will be held in respect and confidence. What we hear at meetings should remain there. It should be understood, however, that anonymity must not be used to limit our effectiveness within the Fellowship. It is not a break of anonymity to give our names and addresses to the secretary of our group or to other service offices of OA for the purpose of conducting OA business, which is primarily twelfth-step work. It is likewise not a break of anonymity to enlist twelfth-step help for group members in trouble, provided we are careful to omit specific personal information. If their disease has reactivated and we persist in protecting their anonymity, we may, in effect, help kill them and their anonymity.

*(See other side for alternate reading.)*

**Anonymity (Option 2)**

Anonymity is the part of the program that allows each of us to stand in front of our fellows and share for the first time, honestly, who we are, where we have been, and where we hope to go, without fear that our story will be told outside these rooms.

For many of us, the OA rooms are the first place where we have no fear of being judged or criticized. We are accepted as we are at that moment. This is the first time for most of us that we experience sharing where we are not told what we did wrong.

We come into OA at rock bottom; mangled emotionally, physically, and spiritually. We are supported back to health with honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness. We are encouraged to speak of our pain and we are lovingly told, "Your secrets are safe." Come share our recovery. Recovery on a three-fold level: physical, emotional, and spiritual.

Lastly, a word to newcomers, "Please join us." However, if you decide that our program is not for you, please remember that our anonymity allows us to grow and recover from a very serious disease.

Who you see here,  
What you hear here,  
When you leave here,  
Let it stay here.

### **Tool #4: Telephone**

Compulsive overeating is a disease of isolation. The telephone is a means of communicating with other compulsive overeaters between meetings. It provides an immediate outlet for those hard-to-handle highs and lows we all experience. The telephone is also a daily link to our sponsors and, as part of the surrender process, is a tool by which we learn to ask for help, reach out, and extend that same help to others.

In OA/HOW we are asked to make four calls a day: one to our sponsor, and at least three to other OA members. These calls give us an opportunity to “talk program” on a daily basis. The telephone is our “lifeline”.

### **Tool #5: Meetings**

Meetings are gatherings of two or more compulsive overeaters who come together to share their experience before and during recovery and to share the strength and hope OA has given them. Though there are many kinds of meetings, fellowship is the basis of all of them. Meetings are an opportunity for us to identify and confirm our common problem by relating to one another and by sharing the gifts we receive through this program.

### **Tool #6: Literature**

We study the book Alcoholics Anonymous, referred to as the “Big Book,” and the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, another AA book, to reinforce our program. By substituting the words “food” and “compulsive overeating” for “alcohol” and “alcoholism”, we can identify closely.

We also read OA literature: The Brown Book, The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, and For Today for daily meditation.

Read on a daily basis, the literature impresses on us certain basic truths that we have found vital to our growth. Our literature and the AA books are an ever-available tool that gives insight into our problem, as well as the strength to deal with it, and the very real hope that there is a solution for us.

### **Writing**

In addition to writing our inventories and the list of people we have harmed, most of us have found that writing has been an indispensable tool for working the steps. Further, putting our thoughts and feelings down on paper, or describing a troubling incident, helps us to understand our actions and reactions in a way that is often not revealed to us by simply thinking or talking about them. In the past, compulsive eating was our most common reaction to life. When we put our difficulties down on paper, it becomes easier to see situations more clearly and perhaps better discern any necessary action.

### **Tool #7: Service**

Carrying the message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers is the basic purpose of our Fellowship and therefore the most fundamental form of service. Any service, no matter how small, that will help reach a fellow sufferer adds to the quality of our own recovery. Signing up for service positions, doing a reading, talking to newcomers, doing whatever needs to be done in a group or for OA as a whole are ways in which we give back what we have so generously been given. Do what you can when you can. “A life of sane and happy usefulness” is what we are promised as the result of working the Twelve Steps. Service fulfills that promise.

Always to extend the hand and heart of OA to all who share my compulsion – for this, I am responsible.

Those of us working the HOW Concept also believe that our greatest service is abstinence.

## The HOW Stepping Up Ceremony

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*Leader: PART ONE (read part 2 after the candles)*

**“\_\_\_\_\_, Before you, you see five candles: TRUTH, REALITY, SURRENDER, ACCEPTANCE, and KNOWLEDGE.**



**“OA offers each of us a wonderful opportunity to develop and hasten an attitude of change known as ego reduction. The use of the disciplines of weighing and measuring, telephone calls, reporting to sponsors, and attending meetings, all combine to reinforce our growth. In OA, action is the magic word. Until we so humble ourselves through these acts, there is no evidence of our ego reduction or our surrender to anyone or anything outside of ourselves.**

**“Each candle signifies a step toward arresting the progression of our disease. The first two represent Truth and Reality. Without these two qualities, we would not be recovering compulsive eaters.”**

## The HOW Stepping Up Ceremony

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### CANDLE 1

\_\_\_\_\_, The candle of Truth is the keynote of all who strive to stop the advancement of compulsive eating.

It is the unrelenting force that permits no double standard. Its attainment brings the satisfaction of inward peace. We must fearlessly face the truth to avoid the ever-present pitfall of self-deception.

## The HOW Stepping Up Ceremony

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### CANDLE 2

\_\_\_\_\_, This is the candle of Reality and it is a new light. It opens the door to a new life. It holds a promise of new understanding. It offers a chance for personal renewal. It makes a statement that goes beyond fantasy and it holds the dream of a better tomorrow. Without the light of reality, we are destined to remain in that sick, shadowy world of past mistakes and unrealistic dreams of false tomorrows.

## The HOW Stepping Up Ceremony

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CANDLE 3

\_\_\_\_\_, This is the candle of Surrender. In OA surrender is the first and most important act necessary to launch you into the other steps. Without the surrender of your food, your ego, and your will, all else is hopeless. When you surrender, you suspend such negative emotions as disbelief and grandiosity and you open yourself up to the process of learning who you are and where you fit into the scheme of things.

## The HOW Stepping Up Ceremony

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### CANDLE 4

\_\_\_\_\_, This is the candle of Acceptance; without acceptance you could not have progressed this far. Acceptance is seeing things as they really are. Acceptance is understanding that we have spent our lives denouncing everything and now we must open our hearts, as well as our minds and accept. We must accept the will of God and accept that only He can restore us to sanity.

## The HOW Stepping Up Ceremony

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### CANDLE 5

\_\_\_\_\_, This is the candle of Knowledge and it opens the door wide. We now know that God is on our side. We can see and hear his pronouncements in our lives. We recognize what it is that we may do and what only He can do. We acknowledge that the greatest gift He has given us is knowing ourselves.

***Leader: PART TWO (To be read by leader after the 5 candles)***

Even the newest of newcomers finds undreamed rewards as he/she tries to help his brother/sister addict, the one who is even blinder than he. This is indeed the kind of giving that actually demands nothing. He does not expect his brother/sister sufferer to pay him, or even to love him. And then he discovers that by the divine paradox of this kind of giving he has found his own reward, whether his brother/sister has yet received anything. His own character may still be gravely defective, but he somehow knows that God has enabled him to make a mighty beginning, and he senses that he stands at the edge of new mysteries, joys, and experiences of which he had never even dreamed.

Practically every A.A. member declares that no satisfaction has been deeper and no joy greater than in a Twelve Step job well done. To watch the eyes of men and women open with wonder as they move from darkness into light; to see their lives quickly fill with new purpose and meaning; to see whole families reassembled; to see the compulsive eater outcast received back into his community in full citizenship; and above all to watch these people awoken to the presence of a loving God in their lives – these things are the substance of what we receive as we carry A.A.'s message to the next compulsive eater.

*(Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, A.A., pages 109-110)*

On behalf of Our Recovery Circle OA/HOW Meeting, I would like to present you with this virtual cactus to remind you of the tough love of the Program:

- Remember the tough love of the Program!
- Stick with the stickers!
- Drink your water!
- Don't water down the program!



## *Anniversary Reading*

Now comes the biggest question yet. What about the practice of these principles in ALL our affairs? Can we love the whole pattern of living as eagerly as we do the small segment of it we discover when we try to help other alcoholics achieve sobriety? Can we bring the same spirit of love and tolerance into our sometimes-deranged family lives that we bring to our A.A. group? Can we have the same kind of confidence and faith in these people who have been infected and sometimes crippled by our own illness that we have in our sponsors? Can we actually carry the A.A. spirit into our daily work? Can we meet our newly recognized responsibilities to the world at large? And can we bring new purpose and devotion to the religion of our choice? Can we find a new joy of living in trying to do something about all these things?

Furthermore, how shall we come to terms with seeming failure or success? Can we now accept and adjust to either without despair or pride? Can we accept poverty, sickness, loneliness, and bereavement with courage and serenity? Can we steadfastly content ourselves with the humbler, yet sometimes more durable, satisfactions when the brighter, more glittering achievements are denied us?

The A.A. answer to these questions about living is "Yes, all of these things are possible." We know this because we see monotony, pain, and even calamity turned to good use by those who keep on trying to practice A.A.'s Twelve Steps. And if these are facts of life for the many alcoholics who have recovered in A.A., they can become the facts of life for many more.

(Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, AA, pages 111-112)