

THIS IS A PORTION OF
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 we deal with ~~fool~~ 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:

(This is the end of the reading for this portion of Chapter 5.)

THE TWELVE STEPS

1. We admitted we were powerless over food – that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a fearless and searching 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 the 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 other 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.

Our description of the compulsive eater, the Chapter to the Agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:

- A. That we were compulsive overeaters and could not manage our lives.
- B. That probably no human power could have relieved our compulsive overeating.
- C. That God could and would if He were sought.

The Twelve Traditions

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on 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} ~~out~~ 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 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. OA 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, TV, films and other public media.
12. Anonymity is the Spiritual Foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place Principles before Personalities.



The Tools Of Recovery (abridged)

We use tools—a plan of eating, sponsorship, meetings, the telephone, writing, literature, action plan, anonymity and service—to help us achieve and maintain abstinence and recover from our disease. Many of us have found we cannot abstain from compulsive eating unless we use some or all of OA's nine tools of recovery to help us practice the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.

A Plan of Eating

A plan of eating helps us abstain from compulsive eating. (See the pamphlet *Dignity of Choice*.) This tool helps us deal with the physical aspects of our disease and achieve physical recovery.

Sponsorship

We ask a sponsor to help us through our program of recovery on all three levels: physical, emotional and spiritual. Find a sponsor who has what you want and ask that person how he or she is achieving it.

Meetings

Meetings give us an opportunity to identify our common problem, confirm our common solution through the Twelve Steps and share the gifts we receive through this program. In addition to face-to-face meetings, OA offers telephone and online meetings.

Telephone

Many members call, text or email their sponsors and other OA members daily. Telephone or electronic contact also provides an immediate outlet for those hard-to-handle highs and lows we may experience.

Writing

Putting our thoughts and feelings down on paper helps us to better understand our actions and reactions in a way that is often not revealed to us by simply thinking or talking about them.

Literature

We read OA-approved books, pamphlets and *Lifeline* magazine. Reading literature daily-reinforces how to live the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.

Action Plan

An action plan is the process of identifying and implementing attainable actions that are necessary to support our individual abstinence. Just like our plan of eating, it may vary widely among members and may need to be adjusted to bring structure, balance and manageability into our lives.

Anonymity

Anonymity guarantees we will place principles before personalities and assures us that only we have the right to make our membership known within our community. Anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television and other public media of communication means that we never allow our faces or last names 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.

Service

Any form of service that helps reach a fellow sufferer adds to the quality of our own recovery. Members can give service by getting to meetings, putting away chairs, putting out literature and talking to newcomers. Beyond the group level, a member can serve as intergroup representative, committee chair, region representative or Conference delegate.

As OA's responsibility pledge states: "Always to extend the hand and heart of OA to all who share my compulsion; for this, I am responsible."

See the full *Tools of Recovery* pamphlet for more information.

OA Board-approved.

Overeaters Anonymous®, Inc.

www.oa.org

Mail Address: P.O. Box 44020, Rio Rancho, NM 87174-4020 USA

Tel: 1-505-891-2664 • Fax: 1-505-891-4320

©2011 Overeaters Anonymous®, Inc. All rights reserved.

A Vision for You

Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us. Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick. The answers will come if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven't got. See to it that your relationship with Him is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the great fact for us.

Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny. May God bless you and keep you until then.

The PROMISES are on the reverse.

Overeaters Anonymous – Baltimore Area Intergroup – 443-475-0443

Serving OA groups and members from the metropolitan area and surrounding counties of Baltimore, Maryland USA

The Promises

Upon working through the Steps to and including the 9th and 10th Steps, members can attest to realizing these promises in their lives, and their compulsion to overeat has been greatly reduced and even eliminated. Physical, spiritual, and emotional recovery from the disease of compulsive eating are realized and sustainable.

In their minds, when reading these promises, many OA members substitute the words "alcohol / liquor" and "alcoholic" with the words "food" and "compulsive eater," but in respect for the wishes of Alcoholics Anonymous, we repost these words verbatim from the Big Book.

From the Alcoholics Anonymous "Big Book," pp. 83-84

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

- We know a new freedom and 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.
- We will see how our experiences would benefit others.
- That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.
- We will lose interest in selfish things.
- Self-seeking will slip away.
- Our whole attitude and outlook on life will change.
- Fear of people and economic insecurity will leave us.
- We will intuitively know how to handle situations that used to baffle us.
- We will realize that God is doing for us what we couldn't 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.

From the Alcoholics Anonymous "Big Book," pp. 84-85

And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone – even alcohol. For by this time sanity will have returned. We will seldom be interested in liquor. If tempted, we recoil from it if as from a hot flame. We react sanely and normally, and we will find that this has happened automatically. We will see that our new attitude toward liquor has given us without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it. We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation. We feel as though we have been placed in a position of neutrality – safe and protected. We have not even sworn off. Instead, the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us. We are neither cocky nor afraid. That is our experience. That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition.