



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.
- Permission to use the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous for adaptation granted by AA World Services, Inc.

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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 nonprofessional, 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.

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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.

Into Action

“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 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 been 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 had 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 are we afraid. That is our experience. That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition.

It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels. We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on maintenance of our spiritual condition. Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God’s will into all of our activities. ‘How can I best serve Thee – Thy will (not mine) be done.’ These are thoughts which must go with us constantly. We can exercise our will power along this line all we wish. It is the proper use of the will.”

It Might Have Been Worse

“There are many short phrases and expressions in A.A. that make sound sense. “First Things First.” Solve our immediate problems before we try to solve all the others and get muddled in our thinking and doing. “Easy Does It.” Relax a little. Try for inner contentment. No one individual can carry all the burdens of the world. Everyone has problems. Getting drunk won’t solve them. “Twenty-four hours a day.” Today is the day. Doing our best, living each day to the fullest is the art of living. Yesterday is gone, and we don’t know whether we will be here tomorrow. If we do a good job of living today, and if tomorrow comes for us, then the chances are we will do a good job when it arrives – so why worry about it?

The A.A. way of life is the way we always should have tried to live. “Grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” These thoughts become part of our daily lives. They are not ideas of resignation but of the recognition of certain basic facts of living.

Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th Edition p. 357-358

Acceptance Was The Answer

"And acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing or situation – some fact of my life – unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing, or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment. Nothing, absolutely nothing, happens in God's world by mistake. Until I could accept my alcoholism, I could not stay sober; unless I accept life completely on life's terms, I cannot be happy. I need to concentrate not so much on what needs to be changed in the world as on what needs to be changed in me and in my attitudes.

Shakespeare said, 'All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players.' He forgot to mention that I was the chief critic. I was always able to see the flaw in every person, every situation. And I was always glad to point it out, because I knew you wanted perfection, just as I did. A.A. and acceptance have taught me that there is a bit of good in the worst of us and a bit of bad in the best of us; that we are all children of God and we each have a right to be here. When I complain about me or about you, I am complaining about God's handiwork, I am saying that I know better than God."

Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th Edition p.417

Freedom From Bondage

“If you have resentment you want to be free of, if you will pray for the person or thing that you resent, you will be free. If you will ask in prayer for everything you want for yourself to be given to them, you will be free. Ask for their health, their prosperity, their happiness, and you will be free. Even when you don’t really want it for them and your prayers are only words and you don’t mean it, go ahead and do it anyway. Do it every day for two weeks, and you will find you have come to mean it and to want it for them, and you will realize that where you used to feel bitterness and resentment and hatred, you now feel compassionate understanding and love.’

It worked for me then, and it has worked for me many times since, and it will work for me every time I am willing to work it. Sometimes I have to ask first for the willingness, but it too always comes. And because it works for me, it will work for all of us. As another great man says, ‘The only real freedom a human being can ever know is doing what you ought to do because you want to do it.’

This great experience that released me from the bondage of hatred and replaced it with love is really just another affirmation of the truth I know: I get everything I need in Alcoholics Anonymous – and everything I need I get. And when I get what I need, I invariably find that it was just what I wanted all the time.”

To Handle Sobriety

"God willing, we members of A.A. may never again have to deal with drinking, but we have to deal with sobriety every day. How do we do it? By learning – through practicing the Twelve Steps and through sharing at meetings – how to cope with the problems that we looked to booze to solve, back in our drinking days.

For example, we are told in A.A. that we cannot afford resentments and self-pity, so we learn to avoid these festering mental attitudes. Similarly, we rid ourselves of guilt and remorse as we 'clean out the garbage' from our minds through the Fourth and Fifth Steps of our recovery program. We learn how to level out the emotional swings that got us into trouble both when we were up and when we were down.

We are taught to differentiate between our wants (which are never satisfied) and our needs (which are always provided for). We cast off the burdens of the past and the anxieties of the future, as we begin to live in the present, one day at a time. We are granted 'the serenity to accept the things we cannot change' – and thus lose our quickness to anger and our sensitivity to criticism.

Above all, we reject fantasizing and accept reality. The more I drank, the more I fantasized everything. I imagined getting even for hurts and rejections. In my mind's eye I played and replayed scenes in which I was plucked magically from the bar where I stood nursing a drink and was instantly exalted to some position of power and prestige. I lived in a dream world. A.A. led me gently from this fantasizing to embrace reality with open arms. And I found it beautiful! For, at last, I was at peace with myself. And with others. And with God."

Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th Edition p. 558-559

Serenity Prayer

God, grant me the serenity to
Accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can;
And the Wisdom to know the
difference.

– for origin of the Serenity Prayer see AAHistory.com

Third Step Prayer

“God, I offer myself to Thee - to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!”

Seventh Step Prayer

“My creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding, Amen.”

Night Prayer

God forgive me where I have been
resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid today.
Help me to not keep anything to myself but to
discuss it all openly with another person -
show me where I owe an apology and help me
make it. Help me to be kind and loving to all
people. Use me in the mainstream of life God.
Remove worry, remorse or morbid (sick)
reflections that I may be of usefulness to
others. Amen.