

Suggested Step-Study Meeting Format

Note: This format may be used as part of a Step study or as part of an OA meeting. OA and AA literature are primary references for working the Steps. However, numerous OA members have requested an OA-approved format for studying the Steps. As a result, the Board-Approved Literature Committee created this document. If you are conducting your Step study as a meeting, the following introduction format may be useful.

We have found that consistent use of this format keeps meetings focused on OA recovery, reinforces our program and encourages unity. It also provides a reassuring feeling of continuity, an important factor in membership retention. Your group may modify the format to suit its needs.

The meeting is to begin at _____

1. “Welcome to the *[day and time]* _____ Step-study meeting of Overeaters Anonymous. My name is _____. I am a compulsive overeater and your leader for this meeting.”
2. “Those who wish please join me in the Serenity Prayer:
God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”
3. *[If this is a regular OA meeting, the leader would say:]*
“Whatever problem you may have with food, you are welcome at this meeting. Are there any compulsive eaters here besides myself? Is anyone here for a first, second or third time? Would you please tell us your first name so we can welcome you? If you are returning to OA or are visiting from another area, please tell us your first name so we can also welcome you.” [Welcome each person by name.] “We encourage you to:
 - get a sponsor to help guide your recovery
 - develop a plan of eating and if you wish, write it down and report daily to your sponsor
 - read OA-approved literature to develop a working knowledge of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.”
4. “The following is the OA Preamble:
Overeaters Anonymous is a Fellowship of individuals who, through shared experience, strength and hope, 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.”

5. [Ask someone to read “Our Invitation to You,” which includes the Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous.]
6. [Ask someone to read “The Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous.”]
7. “Tonight we are discussing Step _____.” [Leader may hand out the references for this Step.]

SESSION ONE: STEP ONE

Step One: We admitted we were powerless over food—that our lives had become unmanageable.

On page 60 of the Big Book* (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th ed.) we find the following the following “pertinent ideas”:

- (a) That we were alcoholics and could not manage our own lives.
- (b) That probably no human power could have relieved our drinking.
- (c) That God could and would if He were sought.

Suggested readings for discussion and sharing:

Books:

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 1-7

The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 1-10

Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., pp. xxv-xxxii (“The Doctor’s Opinion”), pp. 1-16 (“Bill’s Story”), pp. 17-29 (“There is a Solution”), and pp. 30-43 (“More About Alcoholism”)

Pamphlets:

Fifteen Questions

A Guide to the Twelve Steps for You and Your Sponsor, pp. 4-5

“Honest appraisal of our experience has convinced us that we can’t handle life through self-will alone” (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 6).

SESSION TWO: STEPS TWO AND THREE

Step Two: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

“In Step Two we added to this acceptance of our utter helplessness a newfound faith that there exists a power greater than us which can relieve us of the obsession for food and restore us to

*Note: When reading quotes from AA literature, it is helpful to think of “food” instead of “alcohol,” “compulsive eating” instead of “drinking,” and “compulsive eater” instead of “alcoholic.”

sanity in all areas of life” (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 19).

Suggested readings for discussion and sharing:

Books:

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 9-17

The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 11-20

Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., p. xxvi, p. xxviii, p.12, pp. 30-43 (“More About Alcoholism”), p. 92, p. 550

Pamphlets:

Fifteen Questions

A Guide to the Twelve Steps for You and Your Sponsor, pp. 5-6

“This willingness to act on faith, then, was the key to Step Two. It was the beginning of a healing process that would relieve us of the compulsion to overeat and bring stability to our unbalanced lives” (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 17).

Step Three: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

“If we want to live free of the killing disease of compulsive eating, we accept help without reservation from a power greater than ourselves. We now say yes to this power, deciding from here on to follow spiritual guidance in making every decision” (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 19).

Suggested readings for discussion and sharing:

Books:

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 19-27

Overeaters Anonymous, 2nd ed., p. 238

The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 21-26

Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., pp. 44-57 (“We Agnostics”), p. 63, p. 86

AA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pp. 34-41

Pamphlets:

A Guide to the Twelve Steps for You and Your Sponsor, pp. 7-8

“Once we compulsive overeaters truly take the Third Step, we cannot fail to recover ... We can confidently face any situation life brings, because we no longer have to face it alone. We have what we need any time we are willing to let go of self-will and humbly ask for help” (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 27).

SESSION THREE: STEP FOUR

Step Four: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

“The Fourth Step calls for us to examine our lives up to the present day, writing down all important actions and events of a moral or ethical nature, our feelings about them, and the character traits in us from which these actions stemmed” (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 29).

Suggested readings for discussion and sharing:

Books:

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 29-44

Overeaters Anonymous, 2nd ed., p. 238

The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 27-30

Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., pp. 64-71

AA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pp. 34-41

Pamphlets:

A Guide to the Twelve Steps for You and Your Sponsor, pp. 8-9

Fourth-Step Inventory Guide

“We have been trying to get a new attitude, a new relationship with our Creator, and to discover the obstacles in our path” (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th ed., p. 72).

SESSION FOUR: STEPS FIVE, SIX AND SEVEN

Step Five: Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

“By the time we have completed the fourth step, most of us feel ready to move ahead quickly with Step Five. We want to be free of resentments, guilt, and shame rooted in the past, and we realize that sharing the details of our past with another human being is an important step toward freedom” (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 46).

Suggested readings for discussion and sharing:

Books:

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 45-52

The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 31-37

Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., pp. 72-75

AA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pp. 55-62

Pamphlets:

A Guide to the Twelve Steps for You and Your Sponsor, pp. 9-11

“Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the

nearness of our Creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience. The feeling that the drinking problem has disappeared will often come strongly. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe” (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th ed., p. 75)

Step Six: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

“A willingness to change is the essence of Step Six. Change is always frightening, even when it’s a much-needed and long-overdue change for the better” (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 57).

Suggested readings for discussion and sharing:

Books:

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 53-58

The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 39-44

Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., pp. 75-76

AA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pp. 63-69

Pamphlets:

A Guide to the Twelve Steps for You and Your Sponsor, p. 11

“ Our commitment to embrace the needed changes in ourselves has given us an extraordinary power to deal with life’s challenges. No longer do we go through life clinging desperately to the past, resistant to change. From now on, we will strive to keep ourselves entirely ready for any transformations our Higher Power wants to bring about in us. Having such an attitude, we can’t fail. We will become wiser, saner, more effective people as we recover from the disease of compulsive overeating. We’ll find we can cope with both good times and bad, learning and growing spiritually from each experience as our Higher Power intended us to do all along” (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 58).

Step Seven: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

“In OA we have discovered that humility is simply an awareness of who we really are today and a willingness to become all that we can be. Genuine humility brings an end to the feelings of inadequacy, the self-absorption, and the status-seeking” (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 60).

Suggested readings for discussion and sharing:

Books:

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 59-66

The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 45-53

Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., p. 76

AA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pp. 70-76

Pamphlets:

A Guide to the Twelve Steps for You and Your Sponsor, p. 11

“The Seventh Step is where we make the change in our attitude which permits us, with humility as our guide, to move out from ourselves toward others and toward God” (*AA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, p. 76).

SESSION FIVE: STEPS EIGHT AND NINE

Step Eight: Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

“In Step Eight, we look at our relationships for the purpose of discovering those patterns which have done harm to us and to others” (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 67).

Suggested readings for discussion and sharing:

Books:

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 67-73

The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 55-61

Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., pp. 76-83

AA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pp. 77-82

Pamphlets:

A Guide to the Twelve Steps for You and Your Sponsor, pp. 12-13

“The experience of OAers who have worked the Steps before us shows that recovery depends on completing Steps Eight and Nine” (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 73).

Step Nine: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

“When we finish our amends most of us feel closer to our Higher Power than ever before. As we have dealt lovingly with every person in our lives, our spiritual awakening has become a reality” (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of OA*, p. 80-81).

Suggested readings for discussion and sharing:

Books:

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 75-81

The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 63-72

Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., pp. 76-84

AA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pp. 83-87

Pamphlets:

A Guide to the Twelve Steps for You and Your Sponsor, pp. 13-14

“This Step has freed us from the shackles of our past mistakes in a miraculous way” (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 75).

SESSION SIX: STEPS TEN, ELEVEN AND TWELVE

Step Ten: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

“The purpose of Step Ten is to identify and remove from our path today’s stumbling blocks, those manifestations of pride, fear, anger, self-pity, greed, and other emotions which are bringing pain into our lives and keeping us from growing today” (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 84).

Suggested readings for discussion and sharing:

Books:

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 83-90

The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 73-84

Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., pp. 84-86

AA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pp. 88-95

Pamphlets:

A Guide to the Twelve Steps for You and Your Sponsor, p. 14

The OA “Twelve and Twelve” describes different types of inventories: spot-check, daily and extensive (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, pp. 85-89).

“As we repeatedly act on Step Ten, we begin to see the remarkable way the Steps will, from now on, continue to remove unnecessary turmoil and pain from our lives” (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 89-90).

Step Eleven: 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.

“In order to recover from compulsive eating, we need a living, developing, ongoing relationship with this Higher Power, and we find having complete freedom to seek that relationship is a vital aspect of our program” (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 92).

Suggested readings for discussion and sharing:

Books:

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 91-98

The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous, p. 85-93

Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., pp. 86-88

AA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pp. 96-105

Pamphlets:

A Guide to the Twelve Steps for You and Your Sponsor, pp. 14-15

“Perhaps one of the greatest rewards of meditation and prayer is the sense of *belonging* that comes to us. We no longer live in a completely hostile world. We are no longer lost and

frightened and purposeless ... we are no longer deeply disturbed by all the seeming evidence to the contrary that surrounds us in purely human affairs. We know that God lovingly watches over us. We know that when we turn to Him, all will be well with us, here and hereafter” (AA *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, p. 105).

Step Twelve: 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.

“Perhaps it is fortunate for us, and for the millions of compulsive overeaters who still suffer, that most of us who’ve worked this program will be unable to keep the recovery we have unless we share our experience, strength, and hope with others” (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, pp. 100-101).

Suggested readings for discussion and sharing:

Books:

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 99-106

The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous, pp. 95-106

Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., pp. 89-103

AA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pp. 106-125

Pamphlets:

A Guide to the Twelve Steps for You and Your Sponsor, pp. 15-17

“We who began working the Steps in order to recover from compulsive eating now find that through them we have embarked on a lifelong journey of spiritual growth. From the isolation of food obsession we have emerged into a new world” (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, p 106).

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The Twelve Traditions

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.

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

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Our invitation to you

We of 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. We practice abstinence by staying away from eating between planned meals and from all individual binge foods. 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, of 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.

Here are the Steps as adapted for 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.

“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!

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