

What Is H.O.W.?

H.O.W. 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 H.O.W. begin?

H.O.W. 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 H.O.W. sponsoring stem from O.A. Plus and Westminster groups. The outline of service came from the O.A. Suffolk County, New York sponsor’s guide.

(Updated 2-10-2020)

The Only Requirement

Overeater's Anonymous respects the autonomy of each O.A. 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 O.A. as a whole.

The members of this group have found the H.O.W. concept to be effective in working the O.A. program. The opinions expressed here tonight by those who share, are their own and not necessarily those of O.A. 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 O.A. 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."

(Updated 2-10-2020)

Reading 2

The H.O.W. Concept

The Overeaters Anonymous H.O.W. meetings have 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 O.A./H.O.W. groups are formed in the belief that our disease is absolute, and that only absolute acceptance of the O.A. program will offer any sustained abstinence to those of us whose compulsion has reached a critical level. Therefore, we accept the seven tools of program and the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions as necessary for our recovery.

Our meetings are dedicated to the concept of remaining honest, open-minded and willing to listen. This is the H.O.W. of the program. We pray that the collective group conscience and love that these ideals offer us will promote a strong sense of security that will enable us to experience a new unity and wholeness with all those around us; and that the H.O.W. ideals 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.

The evening 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 understand Him, open our minds and our hearts to the love which is manifest in this room.

Amen.

Reflections for the Newcomer

Welcome to O.A./H.O.W. We are all so glad that you have decided to become a part of our fellowship. You know that the H.O.W. concept is very disciplined. We believe that the discipline of weighing and measuring, of telephoning your sponsor at a particular time, of attending meetings and making phone calls all lead to a life based on the Universal Discipline, which is accord rather than discord with all those things going on around us. 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 as constant for the beginner as for the sponsor. If the newcomer shies away from this life's responsibility, the sponsor may 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 may 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 phone, then there is a breakdown in the level of communication between the sponsor and the newcomer. "Frothy emotional appeal seldom suffices." ("Doctor's Opinion", BB p. XXVI, para. 2)

If a sponsor slips, get a new one. The pitfalls of self-deception cannot be overstressed if you are to recover. Therefore, a sponsor, in all self-honestly, must release all the people they are sponsoring in order to work on their own recovery. Sponsors cannot qualify themselves as Sponsors at meetings or sponsor again until they have at least 30 days of back-to-back abstinence. Sponsors cannot give what they do not experience.

Finally, you must believe that we need each other. All problems that arise can be worked on via the phone 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 restorative.” (“The Family Afterward”, BB p. 133, para. 2)

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.

(Updated 2-10-2020)

Reading 4

Pages 9-11 of Step 2 in the OA 12x12 Book

Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity

Many of us compulsive eaters tend to look at this step and say: “Restore me to sanity? I don’t need that. I’m perfectly sane. I just have an eating problem.” But how sane are we, really?

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 eat, 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 other people’s plates, off the floor, 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 others because we didn’t want to face the truth ourselves. 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 destroying our health. We have isolated ourselves to eat, damaging our relationships and denying ourselves a full social life.

Then, horrified by what we were doing to ourselves with food, we became obsessed with diets. We spent hundreds of dollars on weight-loss schemes, we bought all sorts of appetite-control drugs, we joined diet clubs and spas, 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 “have our cake and eat it too.”

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 gave us 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.

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’d stuff food in our mouths until we were in physical pain, then we’d “get rid of it.” We damaged our digestive systems and our teeth while we starved our bodies of nutrients needed to live.

We found that no matter what we did to ease our turmoil, our compulsive eating eventually returned. Over the long haul, our weight went up and our self-esteem went down. After a while we became battle-weary and discouraged. Still we could never accept our powerlessness.

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 it became harder for us to get enough. Instead of bringing comfort, the eating backfired. The more we ate the more we suffered, yet we continued to eat. 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.

Once we honestly looked at our lives, it became easy for us to admit we had acted insanely where food and weight were concerned.

(Updated 2-10-2020)

Reading 5

Chapter 5 “How It Works”

Note: Per AA's request, we read AA literature exactly as it is written. However, as you listen to this reading, please feel free to substitute the words “food” and “compulsive eating” for the words alcohol” and “alcoholism.”

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.

(Updated 2-10-2020)

Reading 6

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 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 perfections.

The Twelve Traditions

- 1. Our common welfare should come first; recovery depends upon O.A. unity.**
- 2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority, a loving God as He may express Himself to our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.**
- 3. The only requirement for O.A. membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively.**
- 4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or O.A. as a whole.**
- 5. Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers.**
- 6. An O.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the O.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise; least problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.**
- 7. Every O.A. 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. O.A. 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 O.A. 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.**

(Updated 2-10-2020)

To be read by a H.O.W. sponsor

Plan of Eating

A food plan is a commitment to recovery. The O.A./H.O.W. Program was designed for food addicted people. We believe in a disciplined and structured approach. H.O.W. 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 a not a personal thing in H.O.W. 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 eater from the bondage of food through the use of a food plan, positive thinking and the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous. We eat weighed and measured meals with nothing in between except sugar-free beverages and sugar-free gum -unless those become a problem for us. 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 H.O.W. 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 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 guess work. We do not measure by eye. We use a measuring cup, spoon and a scale. (Demonstrate with 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 multi-vitamin 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 5th or beyond on the ingredients label.
8. Above all, we do not vacillate or water down the disciplined nature of the H.O.W. Program. It is not the extra string bean that counts; it's the decision to take it.

Tools

To be read by a H.O.W. sponsor

Sponsorship

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 sobriety. 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 H.O.W. sponsor is a compulsive eater who has completed at least 80 days of back-to-back abstinence and who has taken the first three steps of the program. Sponsors have also completed at least 80 days of assignments.

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 newcomer 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 H.O.W. 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 H.O.W. 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 12 Steps and 12 Traditions of O.A. in order to free ourselves from the bondage of food addiction.

SPONSOR DO NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO PLAY GOD...WE HELP EACH OTHER.

(Updated 2-10-2020)

Tools

To be read by a H.O.W. Sponsor
(Please read only one side -- your choice)

Anonymity

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 O.A. 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 O.A. members.

Within the fellowship, anonymity means that whatever we share with another O.A. 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 O.A. for the purpose of conducting O.A. business, which is primarily twelve-step work. It is likewise not a break of anonymity to enlist twelve-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.

(Stop here – do not read the next side)

Tools

If you have already read the 1st side, do not read this side.

Anonymity

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...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 O.A. 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 O.A. 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.

WHOM YOU SEE HERE

WHAT YOU HEAR HERE

WHEN YOU LEAVE HERE

LET IT STAY HERE

(Updated 2-10-2020)

Tools

To be read by a H.O.W. sponsor

Telephone

Compulsive eating is a disease of isolation. The telephone is a means of communicating with another compulsive eater 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 O.A./H.O.W. we are asked to make at least 4 telephone calls a day – one to our sponsor and 3 more to other O.A. members. These calls give us an opportunity to “talk program” on a daily basis. The telephone is our “lifeline.”

(Updated 2-10-2020)

Tools

To be read by a H.O.W. sponsor

Meetings

Meetings are gatherings of two or more compulsive eaters who come together to share their experience before and after recovery and to share the strength and hope O.A. 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.

(Updated 2-10-2020)

Tools

To be read by a H.O.W. sponsor
(Please read **both** tools, then pitch for a total of 3 minutes)

Literature

We study the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous* referred to as the Big Book and the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, another A.A. book to reinforce our program. By substituting the words, “food” and “compulsive eating” for the words, “alcohol” and “alcoholism”, we can identify closely. We also read O.A. literature: the O.A. book, *Overeaters Anonymous*, referred to as the Brown Book, the *O.A. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, For Today*, for daily meditation, and *Lifeline*, our journal of recovery. Read on a daily basis, our literature impresses upon us certain basic truths that we have found vital in our growth. Our literature and the A.A. 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 better 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.

(Updated 2-10-2020)

Tools

To be read by a H.O.W. sponsor

Service

Carrying the message to the compulsive eater 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. Putting away chairs, making coffee, talking to newcomers, doing whatever needs to be done in a group or for O.A. 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 O.A. to all who share our compulsion; for this I am responsible.

Those of us working the H.O.W. concept also believe that our greatest service is abstinence.

(Updated 2-10-2020)

Tools

Just for Today

- Just for Today** I will try to live through this day only, and not tackle my whole life problem at once. I can do something for one day that would appall me if I felt I had to keep it up for a lifetime.
- Just for Today** I will be happy. This assumes to be true what Abraham Lincoln said, that, "Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be."
- Just for Today** I will adjust myself to what is and not try to adjust everything to my own desires. I will take my "luck" as it comes and fit myself to it.
- Just for Today** I will try to strengthen my mind. I will study. I will learn something useful. I will not be a mental loafer. I will read something that requires effort, thought and concentration.
- Just for Today** I will exercise my soul in three ways. I will do somebody a good turn and not get found out; if anyone knows of it, it will not count. I will do at least two things I don't want to do, just for exercise. I will not show anyone that my feelings are hurt; they may be hurt, but today, I will not show it.
- Just for Today** I will be agreeable. I will look as well as I can, dress becomingly, talk low, act courteously, criticize not one bit, not find fault with anything, and not try to improve or regulate anybody except myself.
- Just for Today** I will have a program. I may not follow it exactly, but I will have it. I will save myself from two pests: hurry and indecision.
- Just for Today** I will have a quiet half-hour all by myself and relax. During this half-hour sometime, I will try to get a better perspective of my life.
- Just for Today** I will be unafraid. Especially, I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful, and to believe that as I give to the world, so the world will give to me.

(Updated 2-10-2020)

OA/HOW MEETING FORMAT

1. Good evening. Welcome to the Monday evening HOW meeting of Overeater's Anonymous. My name is _____, I am a compulsive eater and your leader for this meeting.
(Group responds: "Hi, _____, welcome.")
2. To open the meeting, let us have a moment of quiet meditation, followed by 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. Thy will, not mine, be done."
3. I assume that I am not alone this evening, but for the record, are there any other compulsive eaters at this meeting other than myself?
4. The "We Care" book will be circulated twice. The first time for you to list your name and telephone number and the second time for you to take names and telephone numbers to call during the week.
 - This is a 2-hour meeting ending by 8:30pm.
 - This is a reminder to please turn off the ringer your cell phone.
 - Out of respect for members who have chemical sensitivities, please refrain from wearing or using perfumed items in our meeting.
 - Those who have brought their dinner to eat during the meeting are asked to disconnect their video feed while eating. not to eat in the meeting room. Feel free to eat in the lounge directly outside our meeting room. You're welcome to leave the meeting room doors open so you can listen while you enjoy your meal.
5. Overeaters Anonymous is a fellowship of individuals who, through shared experience and mutual support, are recovering from compulsive eating. 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 eating and to carry this message of recovery to those who still suffer.
6. Would someone please read, "What is HOW"?
7. Would someone please read, "The Only Requirement"?
8. Would someone please read, "The HOW Concept"?
9. Would someone please read, "Reflections for the Newcomer"?
10. Would someone please read an excerpt from pages 9-11 of Step 2 in the OA 12x12 book?
11. Would someone please read from Chapter Five of the book, Alcoholics Anonymous: How It Works?

12. Would someone please read the Twelve Steps of Recovery?

13. Would someone please read the Twelve Traditions of the program?

The Tools of Recovery – We have many tools of the program which will help us to recover on a daily basis. Webster's dictionary defines "tool" as "any person or thing used to get something done." Tools are essential to get the job done and they work for us. In order for a tool to work, it must be used. In OA HOW, we work the Plan of Action by daily application of the following tools. I will ask that HOW sponsors explain how they use a particular tool. Limit of 3 minutes each tool. Would someone be willing to be the timekeeper?

Please Note: At this meeting, we only use OA conference-approved literature.

a) Abstinence/Plan of Eating

b) Sponsorship
Pause

Leader: Will all sponsors (HOW and OA) please raise your hand and when called upon, stand and state:

A. How long in OA and HOW.

B. How long abstinent (OA and HOW).

C. How much weight lost or gained.

This is not a time for sharing for sponsors. Please keep it brief and no applauding between sponsors.

Pause

Leader reads "Clay Feet" as sponsors are returning to their seats.

We should remember that all O.A.'s have CLAY FEET. We should not set any member upon a pedestal and mark her or him out as a perfect O.A. It is not fair to the person to be singled out in this fashion and if the person is wise, she or he will not wish it. If the person we single out as an ideal O.A. 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 O.A. Nobody is entirely safe. O.A. itself should be our ideal, not any particular member of it.

c) Anonymity

d) Telephone Calls

e) Meetings

f) Literature and Writing

g) Service

14. Will all people doing service for OA at any level, please stand and applaud service?
15. Please keep the “We Care” book circulating until everyone has had an opportunity to sign it. The book should continue to circulate for the duration of the meeting so that everyone may take names and telephone numbers for their personal contacts. Is there anyone who has not yet signed the book?
16. The Monday night meeting is a friendly place. We want to get to know each other. If you are here with us today for the first time, will you please unmute stand and introduce yourself by first name only. (Group responds with, “Hi, _____, welcome!”)
17. May we have a treasurer’s report?
18. As you have heard, our seventh tradition states that we must be fully self-supporting through our own contributions. The money collected is used to support this meeting as well as other meetings and levels of the OA organization, to help spread the message that there is recovery from compulsive eating. A suggested donation is three dollars, but please don’t let lack of funds keep you from attending our meeting.

****AT THIS POINT, THE LEADER READS ONE OF THE SELECTIONS (The Promises or We’ve Got Some Bad News for You). THE LEADER MAY CHOOSE EITHER READING (Readings follow page 4 of this Meeting Format)**
19. Are there any announcements?
20. Literature and books will be available after the meeting. Please see the book person (Name them here). For newcomers, this could be an opportunity to contact a sponsor.
21. It is now time for medallions. At HOW meetings we recognize milestones of recovery for those working the HOW program. All other OA abstinence is given a round of applause.
22. **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 recognizes a newcomer who has at least 80 days of 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? At HOW meetings, new sponsors are presented with a cactus plant to signify the tough love of the program: stick with the stickers, reminder to drink water and a reminder that we don’t water down the program.
23. **Anniversaries.** “Birthdays are celebrated for each year of continuous abstinence.” (OA Group Handbook, pg. 10) Are there any anniversaries? (At anniversaries, a candle will be lit at the beginning of the meeting. Invite the person who is celebrating an anniversary to come to the front of the room. The reading and instructions for anniversaries are located in the back of this book.)
24. The leader now qualifies for 10 minutes.
25. I would like to introduce, _____, our guest speaker, who qualifies for 20 minutes.

26. The contribution pouch will be on the table after the meeting for those members who arrived after the pouch was passed.
27. The floor is now open for three (3) minutes pitches (sharing). In HOW meetings, we share our experience, strength and hope. 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 telephone or after the meeting. Would someone care to pitch (share)?
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/him) self.
29. May we have the reading of "Just for Today"?
30. I'd like to ask for your help in returning this room to its original set-up. (Explain the original set-up). Would two people please volunteer to help put away materials?
31. Closing Statement: To those who are still new to the program, we remind you that all that was said here tonight should safely remain here, as we respect and cherish our tradition of anonymity. We also assure you that following the program will help you achieve and maintain a healthy weight. Abstinence will remove the cravings. 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 join me in saying the Serenity Prayer? (...Let's pray for those still suffering..." God grant me the serenity... Thy will not mine, be done. Keep coming back. It works when you work it and give a lot of love!)

(Revised 2-10-2020)

(Read ONE of the following)

A. **The Promises:** 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 always materialize if we work for them.” (*Big Book, pp. 83-84*)

B. “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 that first compulsive bite of food, you’ll end up....just like you have been in the past....You are a compulsive eater.” (*Big Book, pp. 187*)

(Updated 2-10-2020)

To be read by a H.O.W. sponsor

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 compulsive eaters achieve sobriety? Can we bring the same spirit of love and tolerance into our sometimes-deranged family lives that we bring to our OA 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 OA 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 OA 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 into good use by those who keep on trying to practice OA’s twelve Steps. And if these are facts of life for the many compulsive eaters who have recovered in OA, they can become the facts of life for many more.

(Updated: 2-10-2020)

Anniversary Reading

H.O.W. Stepping Up Ceremony

(Read first – Before Candle Readers)

(To be read by the leader, leader does not have a candle)

Before you, you see five candles: Truth, Reality, Surrender, Acceptance and Knowledge.

O.A. offers each of us a wonderful opportunity to develop and hasten an attitude change known as ego reduction. The use of the disciplines of weighing and measuring, phone calls, reporting to sponsors and attending meetings, all combine to reinforce our growth in O.A. 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 be not recovering compulsive eaters.

(To be read by the leader after the reading of Candle #5)

Even the newest of newcomers finds undreamed rewards as he tries to help his brother alcoholic, 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 sufferer to pay him, or even 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 has yet received anything or not. 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 Twelfth 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 alcoholic outcast received back into his community in full citizenship, and above all to watch these people awaken 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 alcoholic.

(Please address new sponsor directly using his/her name)

Candle One

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.

(Please address new sponsor directly using his/her name)

Candle Two

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.

(Please address new sponsor directly using his/her name)

Candle Three

This is the candle of **Surrender**. In O.A., surrender is the first and most important act necessary to launching 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.

(Please address new sponsor directly using his/her name)

Candle Four

This is the candle of **Acceptance**. Without acceptance, you could not have come 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 up 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.

(Please address new sponsor directly using his/her name)

Candle Five

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 in knowing ourselves.

