

INTRODUCING  
OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS

**WHEN SHOULD I  
REFER SOMEONE  
TO OVEREATERS  
ANONYMOUS?**

*To Members  
of the  
Helping Professions*

No dues. No fees. No weigh-ins.





# When should I refer someone to Overeaters Anonymous?

## **Do any of your clients:**

- *continue to eat compulsively in spite of medical advice to control their weight?*
- *find that they cannot stop bingeing, purging, or restricting?*
- *find their efforts repeatedly ending in demoralizing failure, despite firm resolutions?*
- *have weight concerns, body image issues, food attitudes, or behaviors that cause health problems?*

## **Overeaters Anonymous can help.**

Overeaters Anonymous believes these men and women may be compulsive eaters. Like alcoholics and drug addicts, they suffer from what we in OA regard as a physical, emotional, and spiritual disease. In our experience, compulsive overeating cannot be cured, but it can be arrested. OA is a worldwide Fellowship, open to all who have the desire to stop eating compulsively. Compulsive eating behaviors may include overeating, under-eating, bingeing, purging, or any combination of these actions.

OA's approach can enhance—not replace—existing treatment programs for those already under medical supervision.

## **WHAT IS OA?**

Overeaters Anonymous is a Fellowship of individuals who have a common problem: compulsive eating. We join together to share experience, strength, and hope with one another to help solve this problem and help other compulsive overeaters do the same. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively. There are no dues or fees for OA membership. We are self-supporting through our own contributions. Our primary purpose is to abstain from compulsive

sive eating and compulsive food behaviors one day at a time. We do this through regular contact with other OA members, by attending OA meetings, and by working the Twelve Steps and studying the Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous.

## **HOW DO MEMBERS ACHIEVE AND MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT?**

Overeaters Anonymous is a program patterned after the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. Many people have reached a healthy body weight and maintained it by following our program of recovery. Overeaters Anonymous is not a diet club. We know that only by following a program of emotional and spiritual healing can we learn a new way of living without being obsessed with food. For the first time in our lives, we progress toward a healthy body weight.

Because of our long experience of compulsive eating and recovery from compulsive eating, we are able to offer understanding and support for the compulsive eater and general guidance in developing a personal plan of eating. OA claims no nutritional expertise. We strongly recommend that members seek the advice of medical and nutritional professionals for guidance with and approval of a plan of eating.

You may also know others who are maintaining a healthy body weight but who may still have issues around overeating, bingeing, grazing, bulimia, anorexia, or other compulsive food behaviors. Overeaters Anonymous offers hope and recovery to these individuals as well.

## **IS OA A RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION?**

Overeaters Anonymous has no religious requirement, affiliation, or orientation. Overeaters Anonymous is a spiritual program, not a religious one. The Twelve Step program of recovery is considered “spiritual” because it deals with inner change. Members are free to hold whatever religious beliefs they choose, or none at all. OA has members of many different religious beliefs, as well as atheists and agnostics. Everyone is welcome.

Many of us discover we are eating compulsively because of an emotional or spiritual hunger. As we search for spiritual fulfillment, some of us become more involved in the religion of our choice.

## **WHY IS OA “ANONYMOUS”?**

Anonymity allows OA to govern itself through principles rather than personalities. Position and status have no relevance in OA; we are all compulsive overeaters. Anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television, and other public and social media of communication provides assurance that OA membership will be kept private.

Anonymity also allows each member the freedom and safety to develop personal honesty, accountability, and responsibility about his or her actions and choices.

Concerned professionals, as well as family and friends of compulsive eaters, are invited to attend open OA meetings. For times and locations, visit the OA website, [oa.org](http://oa.org), or contact the World Service Office at 1-505-891-2664. Many directories also include local listings for Overeaters Anonymous.

The following series of questions can help those affected by compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors determine if they are compulsive eaters. Many members of Overeaters Anonymous have found they have answered yes to many of these questions. Asking these questions of the person about whom you are concerned may help you decide if referral to Overeaters Anonymous is appropriate.

### **Fifteen Questions**

1. Do I eat when I'm not hungry, or not eat when my body needs nourishment?
2. Do I go on eating binges for no apparent reason, sometimes eating until I'm stuffed or even feel sick?
3. Do I have feelings of guilt, shame, or embarrassment about my weight or the way I eat?
4. Do I eat sensibly in front of others and then make up for it when I am alone?

5. Is my eating affecting my health or the way I live my life?
6. When my emotions are intense—whether positive or negative—do I find myself reaching for food?
7. Do my eating behaviors make me or others unhappy?
8. Have I ever used laxatives, vomiting, diuretics, excessive exercise, diet pills, shots, or other medical interventions (including surgery) to try to control my weight?
9. Do I fast or severely restrict my food intake to control my weight?
10. Do I fantasize about how much better life would be if I were a different size or weight?
11. Do I need to chew or have something in my mouth all the time: food, gum, mints, candies, or beverages?
12. Have I ever eaten food that is burned, frozen, or spoiled; from containers in the grocery store; or out of the garbage?
13. Are there certain foods I can't stop eating after having the first bite?
14. Have I lost weight with a diet or “period of control” only to be followed by bouts of uncontrolled eating and/or weight gain?
15. Do I spend too much time thinking about food, arguing with myself about whether or what to eat, planning the next diet or exercise cure, or counting calories?

## 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.

## **How to find OA**

Visit the OA website at [www.oa.org](http://www.oa.org),  
or contact the World Service Office at 1-505-891-2664.  
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for Overeaters Anonymous.

### **Overeaters Anonymous®**

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