

The OA HOW Tools of Recovery (Revised 7.15.21)

OA-HOW offers a special approach to those of us whose compulsive eating has reached a critical level. In OA HOW, the Tools of Recovery describe specific methods that provide a vital structure for working and living the Twelve Steps. OA HOW members rigorously use these tools as core practices that support daily abstinence and build ongoing recovery.

Overeaters Anonymous defines abstinence as “the act of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviours while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight.”

Recovery is defined as “the removal of the need to engage in compulsive eating behaviours.

Spiritual, emotional, and physical recovery is achieved through working and living the

Overeaters Anonymous Twelve Step program.”

Plan of Eating

According to our group consensus, abstinence is achieved by adhering to a daily food plan that includes specific foods and portions, weighed and measured meals, and refraining from eating sugar and all other foods and amounts that trigger addictive eating behaviours for us individually. OA HOW members are strongly encouraged to meet with a nutritionist to create a food plan exactly right for them, and then to continue with this guidance as needed. However, if that isn't possible, members are encouraged to select one of the food plans from the OA pamphlet, “Where Do I Start?” and then to work with a sponsor on identifying the foods that activate cravings and compulsive food behaviours in order to exclude them from our plan.

Once a personal Plan of Eating is established, rigorous honesty makes it clear that we don't eat foods or amounts that are not included in our plan. The rewards of honesty are clear: When we honestly abstain from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviours, we achieve and maintain a healthy body weight. Committing ourselves to a clearly defined plan of eating helps us deal with the gray areas of living. But we must keep in mind that no eating plan will be permanently effective for us unless we daily practice the twelve steps of recovery on all levels—physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual.

Literature

In OA HOW, we read OA Approved literature including the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) “Big Book” and “Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.” We read AA materials exactly as written and mentally substitute the words “compulsive eater” for “alcoholic” and

“food” for “alcohol.” In doing so, we can absolutely identify with the alcoholic experience, especially those of us whose disease has progressed. All of our literature provides insight into our problem of eating compulsively, the strength to deal with it, and the very real hope that there is a solution for us. The OA daily readers are especially useful to help us remain abstinent while we deal with life’s ongoing challenges.

Writing

Writing helps us learn more about ourselves and our disease. In OA HOW, we use special writing assignments for the first 30 days of abstinely working the OAHOW program. These first assignments take us through the first three Steps and are taken from the AA Big Book and AA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. These first OA HOW writing assignments lay the foundation for long term abstinence. Sponsors use a variety of OA and OA HOW study tools to work the remaining steps. As an ongoing recovery practice, writing also helps us learn to identify and abstain from negative thinking, a behaviour that can appear at any time in our disease. When we put our difficulties down on paper, it becomes easier to see situations more clearly and better discern any necessary action.

Action Plan

An action plan helps us identify and implement attainable actions, both daily and long-term, that are necessary to support our individual abstinence and emotional, spiritual, and physical recovery. The plan is an individual one that incorporates the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions, and Tools to bring structure, balance, and manageability into our lives. New OA HOW members are encouraged to start this invaluable practice with a daily food commitment as well as daily time for meditation and prayer. With those essential practices in place, members make plans for whatever feels important. Action plans can range from changing small but bothersome personal habits to investigating a new interest or taking on a lifetime goal or bigger life change.

While the plan is personal, tailored to our own recovery process, most of us find it important to work with a sponsor, fellow OA member, or appropriate professional to help us create it. This tool, like our plan of eating, may vary widely among members and may need to be adjusted as we progress in our recovery.

Anonymity

What you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here. When we meet another member in the outside world, we do not mention they are members of OA HOW. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Telephone

Using the telephone helps us with the daily challenges of living in recovery. We get to know each other and this creates a strong fellowship, making it easier to give and ask for help when we really need it.

Ideally, we reach out to four people daily, including our sponsors, by telephone, text, video calls, or email.

To do so, we use the contact information gathered at each meeting.

Meetings

In meetings, we find out that we are not alone. We learn more about the

Steps, Tools, and OA HOW practices. OA-HOW meetings provide safe places to learn from

abstinent members with active recovery and to gain support when we are struggling. In OA

HOW we suggest that members select a weekly home meeting to support through attendance

and service positions as well as actively attending other meetings on a regular basis. Ideally

we attend a minimum of 3 meetings a week. Lists of meeting places are available at

www.seattleoa.org and www.oa.org.

Service

Through service in OA-HOW we can give back what we have been given. Service at meetings includes sponsoring, welcoming newcomers, and preparing the meeting space as well as taking on service positions such as treasurer, secretary, literature person, intergroup representative, and so on. We can also serve in other levels of the OA fellowship. Abstinence is a service to ourselves and to the group.

Sponsorship

Sponsoring others is an essential 12 Step practice and a special kind of service. Sponsors are people in recovery who regularly work with individual members on a one-to-one basis as they learn the challenges and joys of an abstinent life. Sponsors also offer their experience, strength and hope in practical ways as they apply the Steps to recovery on every level – physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual.

In OA HOW, the initial qualification to sponsor is completing 30 days of questions with a sponsor and attaining 30 days of back-to-back abstinence as defined in the above tool, “Plan

of Eating.” An OA HOW sponsor helps a beginner through their first 30 days of abstinence and with the writing assignments that take them through the first three steps. Having completed these steps with 30 days of continuous abstinence, new members “Step Up” and become qualified to sponsor newcomers as they continue to work with their sponsor on the remaining Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous.

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