

Relapse Prevention/Relapse Recovery Workshop Format

Materials needed for completing this workshop: 1.) Recovery checklist pamphlet #105 available from WSO 2.) AA Big Book 3.) OA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

- A. Open with a prayer.
- B. Review commitments made at the previous meeting.
- C. Read aloud the tools for this workshop:

In these groups, the use of the tools is not suggested; it is **necessary**. We consider this effort a training course to acquire the habit of program. Those members who wish to deepen their understanding of and commitment to the Twelve Steps will surrender to the disciplines and suggestions made here.

For some of us it takes a longer time than for others to accomplish the goals. **Delay does not mean defeat**. Those of us who cultivate willingness and consistently apply ourselves to these suggestions will eventually find serenity.

1. Make a minimum of one telephone call every day. Incoming and sponsor calls do not count. Before you take the first compulsive bite, make a telephone call, thereby giving your abstinence a chance of survival.
 2. Have a sponsor.
 3. Attend additional meetings, as many as you can, other than this group.
 4. Read program literature every day.
 5. Write on the homework and in a daily journal.
 6. Attend every one of these meetings and be on time. If and when there is a legitimate reason for absence or tardiness, you are excused; but call someone in the group to let them know you will be late or unable to attend.
- D. Read aloud the Step for the current session from The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous. For the first session use the attached article on the next page. Then allow 20 minutes for all group members to write on the questions for the current week.
 - E. After the writing time, members share on what they wrote.
 - F. Now is the time for the 7th tradition collection. The expense for this group is producing the handouts. Donations beyond this amount will go to support the work of OA.
 - G. Each member makes a brief commitment. This way we plan to slowly improve the quality of our lives with the **understanding** and **acceptance** of the fact that sometimes we are not able to follow through. But we try. These commitments are seldom major ones. The idea is to combat procrastination and inertia, thus gaining more self-respect and serenity.
 - H. Is there a volunteer to lead next week's session?

I. Close with a prayer.



A rose worth the thorns

When I worked my first step, I was grateful to find "rose-colored abstinence." But as the weeks wore on, I found that the roses bore some thorns.

I kept telling my sponsor that I'd been slipping in my abstinence. Finally in the direct manner which I've come to love and respect, she said, "What is the difference, for you, between abstinence and dieting? Write about it!" I did, and discovered some interesting things.

After I found my abstinence I swore I'd never diet again. But as time went on, abstinence became confusing. *Abstinence*, as I understand it, is to refrain from compulsive overeating. *Dieting*, on the other hand, is to control food intake, with the focus placed on calories and weight loss.

Abstinence is not only physical, but emotional and spiritual. If I'm abstinent, it's not by my control. But when I am dieting, then I'm doing the controlling.

All my life thoughts about fattening foods have controlled my mind and emotions. So the question becomes: If I do eat some of those foods but remain abstinent, why do I feel guilty. Is it because true abstinence means I wouldn't even have a desire for those foods?

If I am abstinent in all phases of my program, I *don't* desire those foods. Wanting to eat them is a sign that I am not working my program - the compulsion is still there. They should be viewed as red flags. If I can rid myself of the guilt associated with eating those foods and focus on *why* I wanted them to begin with, the rest will fall into place. It sounds easy, but it's not.

I don't ever want to diet again; yet I want it all, including physical recovery, and I want it *now*. Sometimes it seems like I'm always working at it, and sometimes I get tired. Then I ask myself, "Isn't it all worth it - the promises, the lifting of

my compulsion?"

Abstinence can be confusing and hard, just like a lot of worthwhile things in life. But the goal is obtainable, and when I reach it, OA won't let me down as the diets did. All I have to do is be honest and willing. Sometimes that can be a tall order, but after all, I'm worth it.

P.P., Edmonds, Washington
Lifeline, February 1992

The following material is presented in a session-by-session format. The material includes homework to prepare for the session and questions for consideration for journaling after the step has been read during the meeting. For homework, you will be asked to read much of the AA Big Book, both the first section about the program and the stories which follow. We suggest you also write about some (or all, if you choose) of the statements from the homework selections each week. Write in terms of what the statements mean to a compulsive eater.

FIRST SESSION—GENERAL VIEW/INTRODUCTION

DATE:

LEADER:

QUESTIONS:

1. *How do I compare the comfort I get from compulsively eating with the comfort when I am abstinent?*
2. *Promises, Promises, promises! Is it worth it to me to try again?
OR What do I do to "abstain" rather than "diet"?*

Commitment:

HOMework IN PREPARATION FOR SECOND SESSION

Read "Bill's Story" (pp. 1-16), "More about Alcoholism" (pp. 30-43) and, if you have time, the forewords and "Doctor's Opinion." Write on some of the following statements:

1. Eating ceased to be a luxury and a way to keep my body fueled; it became something I had to do. (p.5)
2. Surely self-knowledge is the answer to my problems (p. 7)
3. I learn that people who eat compulsively have a will that is amazingly weak when it comes to food even though it remains very strong in other respects (p.7).
4. It is not surprising in our daily eating, year after year, that there have been innumerable attempts to prove we could eat like normal people, be it at a restaurant buffet or on diets (pp. 30-31).
5. Once a compulsive eater, always a compulsive eater (p. 33)
6. There are many forms of compulsive eating. The most noticeable are the overeater, the bulimic, and the anorexic. I have been all at one time or another (p. 33)
7. My behavior can be as absurd and incomprehensible as the person who jay walks, is hit by a car, but, once healed, jay walks again (p. 37)
8. Do I believe I eat compulsively? Consider the following:

- a. ways in which I have tried to control my eating or weight
 - b. who or what I blamed for my eating/ weight problems
 - c. how I felt after a binge
 - d. what foods and eating behaviors troubled me
 - e. the history of my relationship with food
9. How has my insanity about food led into insanity about people, places and things?

SECOND SESSION—STEP ONE

DATE:

LEADER:

QUESTIONS:

1. *How might I act or feel if I became willing to stop blaming myself or others for my compulsive eating and to accept it as a disease?*
2. *What is the "insanity" like? For instance, in what areas of life do I feel the need to control?*
3. *"The disease of compulsive overeating is three-fold: physical, emotional and spiritual." Describe how the disease manifests itself in the physical, emotional and spiritual areas at present.*
4. *"We admitted ... our lives had become unmanageable." Answer these questions in discussion form:*
 - a. *Am I excelling or just getting by?*
 - b. *Was my home pleasant or had I been living in depression and anger?*
 - c. *How had my unhappiness over my overeating affected my friendships and marriage?*
5. *Here is a description of my relapse:*
6. *Have I returned to my former compulsive overeating behavior after years of recovery?*
7. *How have I used excess food to escape life's problems?*

Commitment:

HOMEWORK IN PREPARATION FOR THIRD SESSION
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Read "There is a Solution" (pp. 17-29), "We Agnostics" (pp44-57) and "The Vicious Cycle" (pp. 238-250) [p219-231 4th edition] Write on some or all of the following statements:

1. "Once this malady has a real hold, they (people who have it) are a baffled lot" (p.23)
2. I see that the process of the Twelve Steps works even though doing most of the Steps seems too much to ask of me (p.25)
3. I can choose my own Higher Power (pp28 and 248)
4. "While my religious convictions were good, they were not sufficient for the spiritual experience necessary for recovery." (p27)
5. "Our human resources, as marshaled by the will, were not sufficient; they failed utterly" (p.45)
6. Faced with self-destruction through compulsive eating, "we soon became as open-minded on spiritual matters as we had tried to be on other question" (p.48)
7. For me, what is the difference between a "spiritual" and "religious" program and experience (p.28)?

THIRD SESSION—STEP TWO

DATE:

LEADER:

QUESTIONS:

1. *How do I, right now, envision a power greater than myself? What do I need and what do I want from my HP?*
2. *Am I willing to "open the door" or "act as if"? What does "willingness to act on faith" mean to me?*
3. *"OA does not tell us we have to believe in God - only that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." What is a power greater than myself? (p.13 OA12&12)*
4. *How does religion and a spiritual program differ? (p.13 OA 12&12)*
5. *As I look with complete honesty at my life, how have I acted in an extremely irrational and self destructive manner where eating is concerned?*
6. *In what other areas of my life do I need help from a higher power? What would I like such a power to be and do in my life?*
7. *What actions am I willing to take that others have told me worked for them?*

Commitment:

HOMEWORK IN PREPARATION FOR FOURTH SESSION

Read PP 58-63 in "How it Works" "He Had to be Shown" (pp193-209) [not in 4th edition] and "The Housewife Who Drank at Home" (pp. 335-341) [p295-300 4th Edition] Write on some or all of the following:

1. What does it mean, "a life run on self-will" (p. 60) or "self-will run riot" (p.62)?
2. "We had a new Employer" (p.63)
3. "When I left the hospital I tried this [simple OA program] for a day and it worked..." (p.209)
4. How am I in practice going to "turn over" my food?
5. "And I took everything that (OA) had to give me. Easy does it, first things first, one day at a time. It was at the point I reached surrender" (p.340)

FOURTH SESSION—STEP THREE

DATE:

LEADER:

QUESTIONS:

1. *How would it feel to turn over the control of my will and my life to a higher power?*
2. *How will I recognize when my higher power gives me guidance in making a choice?*
3. *In what ways is my ego still blocking my recovery today?*
4. *What area of my life today is causing the most frustration or unhappiness? Ask my Higher Power to show me my part in it so that I can turn it over to H.P.*
5. *Am I willing to give up self will regarding food? Explain*
6. *How do I feel about completely turning my life over to a higher power for guidance?*
7. *If occasionally the food obsession returns, how do I get through those times?*

Commitment:

HOMEWORK IN PREPARATION FOR FIFTH SESSION
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Read from the bottom of p. 63 to p. 71 in "How it Works", [p246-257 4th edition], "The Man who Mastered Fear" (pp. 275-286), "Doctor, Alcoholic, Addict" (pp 439-452) ["Acceptance Was the Answer" p407-420 4th Edition] Write as suggested below.

1. Why is resentment (or hurt, anger or fear) not a safe emotion for a compulsive overeater (p.64)?
2. Begin a 4th step inventory. Do a bit every day (p. 65). Some members have found that a complete fourth step inventory as found in the Big Book is not realistic for the 12-Step-Within. Some suggestions include:
 - ⌚ Complete a resentment list using the Big Book format.
 - Complete a fear list using the Big Book format.
 - Do a sex/relationship inventory.
 - Complete a Do Like/Don't Like list and list briefly what emerges for

categories

such as money, sexuality, your body, family, work, etc.

- Complete all or part of the inventory in the OA book.
- Choose one topic in your life and write about it in depth.
- Complete a relationship inventory on one person. Make a page for each of the

following: I Am Mad About, I Am Sad About, I Feel Bad About, I Am Glad About

3. How can I deal with people whom I resent? Be specific, using examples from the 4th step "grudge list" (pp. 66-67)
4. Is it reasonable, manageable for me, or fair to include Sex in an inventory (p. 70)?
5. What problems have I sidestepped for a long time (p. 284)?
6. What is a solution to the fears I experience (P. 449)?

FIFTH SESSION—STEP FOUR/PART ONE

DATE:

LEADER:

QUESTIONS:

1. *What fears do I feel as I prepare to write a "searching and fearless" moral inventory?*
2. *How can I be more honest in my life?*
3. *Say a prayer for the willingness to get going on your inventory, and follow it with action. "Any action, no matter how small, will help overcome procrastination."*
4. *"Experience has taught us to approach this inventory with the words 'fearless' and 'searching' uppermost in our minds." To what degree have I been fearless and searching? What does fearless and searching mean to me?*
5. *"We must change if we are to recover." Writing a fourth step inventory is the one way to act on earlier decisions. It is important for me to just do it. Remember, it does not have to be perfect! Start on your Fourth Step inventory from the OA 12 Steps of OA, pp 34-42 or AA text, 63-65. Write on questions which really stand out to you.*
6. *What are some of the ways I can do my inventory focusing on my relapse? Which approach will I take?*
7. *Have I addressed dishonesty, selfishness, resentment and fear in my inventory?*

Commitment:

HOMWORK IN PREPARATION FOR SIXTH SESSION

Read "Women Suffer Too" (pp 222-229) [p200-207 4th Edition] and "The Keys of the Kingdom" (pp 304-312) [268-276 4th edition] Write as suggested below:

1. Continue work on your inventory, a bit every day.
2. After admitting powerlessness and recognizing a spiritual solution, will I decide to act differently than I have in the past?
3. When I free myself from angers, including the righteous ones, I am closer to knowing happiness and love. (p. 228)
4. "There was a concrete program, designed to secure the greatest possible inner security for us long-time escapist" (p. 229)
5. "(OA) is not a plan for recovery that can be finished and done with" (p 311)
6. I can experience something like a hangover from food. What happens then (p.306)?

SIXTH SESSION—STEP FOUR/PART TWO

DATE:

LEADER:

QUESTIONS:

1. *Am I a mistake?*
2. *In doing step 4, how do I avoid simply thrashing myself and, instead, take an honest look at my good and bad points?*

Commitment:

HOMework IN PREPARATION FOR SEVENTH SESSION

Read pp. 72-75 in "Into Action", "Promoted to Chronic" (pp464-473) [not in 4th Edition] and "Rum Radio and Rebellion" (pp356-368) [not in 4th Edition] Write as suggested below:

1. Continue your 4th step inventory, a bit every day ([p.65)
2. Why is it useful to discuss my character defects with another person (p72)?
3. What is the difference between feeling humble and feeling humiliated?
4. In what ways do I expect to feel relieved, frightened, or healed?
5. Write about the futility and fatality of resentments (p. 471)
6. What are my present relationships like; are they selfish? (p. 472)

SEVENTH SESSION—STEP FIVE

DATE:

LEADER:

