

OA Recovery Online

Introduction

Let me start by putting to rest any concerns you may have about online recovery meetings and resources stealing people from your meetings. The truth is that online recovery resources and meetings can only supplement face to face meetings. Remember seeing heads nod the first time you shared in an OA meeting? Remember those wonderful hugs you received after the meeting? Remember people looking at you lovingly and not judgmentally? All those things were very important at my first meetings and continue to be very important. But all those things can't really happen via online meetings or other online experiences.

Can someone recover using just online recovery resources? Sure, but it wouldn't be my first choice. Remember AA discovered early on that recovery could be spread with just a Big Book. For those people in isolated locations online recovery resources could be a real life saver. Even given the limitations, online recovery resources still have a lot to offer to support, strengthen and supplement our recovery.

Resources Available on the Web

World Service Website – oa.org

One of the most valuable websites is the World Service Office website found at oa.org. You can find the following there:

- Meetings
 - Find meetings by Country, State/Province, City and Day of the Week
 - Register new meetings, update registrations & close meetings
 - Find an online meeting or telephone meeting
- Lifeline Magazine
 - Subscribe to Lifeline magazine or E-Lifeline, the online edition.
 - E-Lifeline subscribers can access the last year of E-Lifeline magazine.
 - View a sample E-Lifeline magazine.
 - Monthly topic list for the upcoming year.
 - Guidelines for writing an article for Lifeline
 - Change your address for your Lifeline subscription
- Literature Catalog
 - See descriptions and pictures of the available literature and support material
 - Place an order on line. I've had orders arrive in 5-6 days.
- Member/Group Support
 - Service by Mail/Email List
 - Helps you contact others looking to sponsor or be sponsored or to be a penpal
 - Joining the list costs \$7 annually
- World Service Office Info
- Dealing with Professionals and the Media

RegionV Website – region5oa.org

I may be a little biased but I think the Region 5 website is also a valuable tool. Some of the resources available are:

- Meeting info provided by Intergroups in Region 5
- Upcoming Events in Region 5
- List of Newsletters Available Online in Region 5 (includes Cincinnati, Cleveland, Rockford, Fort Wayne, Evansville, Milwaukee, Dayton, Ann Arbor, Louisville, Turning Point in Chicago)
- How to join the Region 5 Email Directory
- How Region 5 Intergroups (and unaffiliated groups) can get their own website free
- Other links of Interest (region5oa.org/links.html)
 - An abstinence calculator tells you how many weeks, days, hours, minutes and seconds of abstinence you have
 - An online version of the AA Big Book 1st Ed.
 - An audio tape Store for WSO conventions and conferences
 - Links to download several great OA leads (free)
 - Links to other Region websites
 - Information on using the Google.com search engine to find other OA resources

Online Meetings/Chat Rooms

Where or how do I find them?

- World Service Maintains an Online Meeting List
- oa.org/pdf/OnlineMeetingsList.pdf
- Many entries are obsolete but still plenty of meetings

What are some online meeting “rooms”?

- **The Recovery Group**
 - Every day -- 12am, 3am, 6am, 9am, 12pm, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm ET
 - www.TheRecoveryGroup.org
- **12 step 4 coes**
 - Every day -- 7am, 10:30am, 2:30pm, 6pm, 8:15pm, 10:30pm, 12:30am ET
 - oa12step4coes.org
- **Meetings for Recovery**
 - Every day at 11am & 9pm
 - Info: health.groups.yahoo.com/group/MeetingFORRecovery
 - Meeting: www.starchat.net/chat/?chan=meetingsforrecovery

Pros and Cons of Online Meetings

- Meet with OAers from all over the world
- An added degree of anonymity
- Meetings available anywhere you can get on the Internet
- Meetings available at a wide variety of times
- No real hugs after the meeting
- Slower paced than face to face meetings. Not as many people can share (slow typists)

Other Notes about Online Meetings

- Chat room abbreviations
 - Lol – laughs out loud
 - F2f – face to face
 - ((your name)) – online hug
 - * - raising your hand to “speak”
- Some meetings are more OA structured and some less. The Recovery Group meetings felt very similar to my local OA meetings.
- Don’t interrupt the person sharing
- Raise your hand to share and wait for the leader to acknowledge you
- If you come late or leave early do it “quietly”

Email/Email Lists

Person to person email

- “I work the midnight shift and cannot connect a lot of times with people during waking hours. I always email my food and blood sugars in, since I am a diabetic. My sponsees know that I check e-mail every day also. It is not a substitute for talking in person or on the phone, but it supplements for me, since I have so much trouble connecting. It also helps me if I get in trouble in the middle of the night. I can reach out even when someone else is sleeping.”
- “I began emailing my sponsor daily about six years ago. I send her my food plan and any changes in my plan from the day before. I write about my day and my emotions. This serves as a way to do work on tenth step most days, too. Email is great because I can write it anytime and she can read it anytime. I don't have to worry about being interrupted because with an email I can stop and get back to it later. I can write late at night or early in the morning and it won't bother her. She responds at a time that's good for her. When I moved, I was able to keep my sponsor and email her everyday with no problem. I think it's important to have regular face-to-face contact for all OA's, but this email relationship has been great for me.”
- “I have been using the internet as a support for my recovery since I moved away from Madison, WI three months ago. I will be living in Brazil for two years. All of the transitions of moving, along with the new foods and removal of my twelve step support system has made me much more dependant on using the internet. I have sought out on-line meetings and used the OA website to find meetings in cities around South America. Mostly, I just e-mail my fellow OA's in Madison though. I usually just begin my message by saying, "hi, my name is Mary and I'm a compulsive overeater," followed by a pitch explaining what's up for me. Then people can feel free to respond or just read and delete my message (kind of like at a meeting). Either way, I feel heard. I've even developed closer contacts with people in OA that I didn't talk to that much before.”
- “I use the internet regularly for support for my recovery. Every night I share my 10th step via e-mail with one of my sponsors. Every morning I get a response back. It is so helpful to get things out, even though it takes me a little while to write out everything. When I don't have access to e-mail, I feel like something is missing!

Last year I had the opportunity to be in Germany for a month. There is a 7 hour time difference between here and Germany. I was in a situation that I had limited control of what was served for the meals and I had to share honestly (via a translator) with the kitchen staff about my food needs. Shortly before my trip, I had the new experience of braces on my teeth, so I was still

adjusting to eating. I actually tried to find an English-speaking OA meeting in the area, but could not. Because of the time difference and my schedule, it was very difficult making calls to my recovery supports back home. I absolutely relied on e-mail connections to process what was going on, to support what I needed to do for my recovery, to continue working the 12 steps. That helped me stay abstinent and have an even more wonderful experience.”

- “POSITIVES about using the internet:
 - It allows me to use the tool of Writing.
 - I have time to think about what I'm going to "say."
 - I have sent brief messages to other members as a way of encouragement.

NEGATIVES about using the internet:

- I can feel a lack of immediacy (I don't log on every day and return messages).
- concern about privacy?”
- “The way that I use the internet for my recovery is when I sponsor people over the net. I use it to send in reports and receive reports from WSO and Trustees, Chairs, delegates and such. I receive minutes, newsletters also. It doesn't sound very exciting, but I love what I am doing and I feel it is a great tool.”

Region 5 Email Directory

- Lists other online OAers in Region 5 including their name, city, state and email address
- Is only available to those who request to be added to the Directory. No cost to join.
- Periodically there are mailings about events, resources, and information in Region 5
- Helps you stay in touch with other OAers across Region 5
- “...got your last email [to the Region 5 email directory]. The online newsletters mentioned are about the most valuable thing I receive from the web around my recovery. I receive so much help and strength from reading these valuable tools. My biggest problem is that when our local Intergroup turned us onto the Region 5 web site and I saw all of the newsletters available and the links to others around the country, I think I went through a ream of paper printing them out!!! I also love to read articles in these newsletters submitted by brothers and sisters in this program that I have had the joy to meet and hear speak at the Region V conventions I have attended. It is great to have a face to put with the words written and it helps me remember those who suffer as I do with compulsive eating.”

Email Lists and Loops

- Since I work in computing I get too much email already so I haven't participated in many email lists or loops.
- Some email loops are available at: oa12step4coes.org
- If you have experience with OA email lists and loops please share at the end of this session.