Telephone Connection Starters

Introduction

> *"Member-to-member contact helps us share on a one-to-one basis, work the Steps, and avoid the experience of isolation that is so common among us. Many members call, text, or email their sponsors and other OA members daily. As part of the surrender process, this Tool helps us learn to reach out, ask for help, and extend help to others. Telephone and electronic contact also provides an immediate outlet for those hard-to-handle highs and lows we all experience. Members are reminded to respect anonymity when leaving voicemail or sending any type of electronic message."*
>
> *The Tools of Recovery: Helping us live and work the Twelve Steps (Pamphlet by Overeaters Anonymous www.oa.org)*

Ours is a disease of isolation and the telephone is one of our most important tools in breaking down isolation and feeling connected to our fellowship. But for some of us, it may feel awkward. Some feel like we might be bothering the person, or that we might end up being on the phone longer than intended. We don't know how to get the conversation started, and that hesitancy keeps us from reaching out. These conversation starters are offered to make it easier to use the Telephone Tool.

First, start with our mindset because changing our self-talk changes everything:

- I'm making a connection to get out of myself. It's a boomerang program; when we throw it out, it will come back to us. We can't keep it unless we give it away.
- Fellows with abstinence and recovery know that 'together we can do what we could never do alone'. Reaching out to a fellow is a form of service that benefits both. As with many forms of program service, the person doing the service often benefits more than the recipient of the service. We make calls because it strengthens our recovery and the fellowship we rely on.
- Don't worry about bothering someone. If it is not a good time, they will not answer. We leave the outcome to Higher Power. If the fellow doesn't answer, leave a message letting them know that program works (see examples below).
- Reaching out will benefit you even if the person doesn't respond. Everyone appreciates knowing others care and are concerned.
- We are Higher Power (HP) with skin on to each other. Many of us have had the experienced that when we call, we often hear a reminder from someone else about a message that feels like it is from HP. If we are struggling to connect with our HP, connecting with another person can bridge the gap.

- Make it a habit to use the phone. Doing it regularly makes it easier. Some fellows with long term abstinence have found that a great day might include a call or text to a newcomer, outreach to someone who has been absent or struggling, and contact with someone with solid recovery.

Setting up for a satisfying call

- Be ready to share something program related that you have been reading, working on, thinking about, or heard in a meeting.
- When contacting someone, start by asking if they have a few minutes for a program call. Honor that time.
- Don't take it personally if fellows don't respond. We have already received the benefit by making the outreach.
- Reflect on how I respond to getting a phone call. What can I do to make it easier for a fellow to call me?
- Remember that we don't have to fix anything the fellow tells us is going on in their life. We've got all the resources we need with the 12 Steps and a HP.

Reaching out to Newcomers:

We know newcomers come to meetings at different stages; some have "the gift of desperation", some expect a diet club, some are turned off by spiritual talk, some are wary, etc. How do we welcome them while not overwhelming them?

- If you connect with a newcomer at a meeting, try to agree on a time when you will call them to answer questions. Don't expect them to call you. Share your name and number so they will recognize it when you call. Or text first to see if it is a good time for a call.
- Sometimes the newcomer is anxious to talk. It is OK for us to let them know how much time we have for the conversation on that day.

Conversation starters with newcomers

- After their first meeting
    - It was good to see you at the meeting. What ideas stayed with you after the meeting and what questions do you have that I might be able to answer?
    - When I went to my first meeting, I was feeling… (desperate, discouraged, skeptical, afraid, etc.). What was it like for you coming to a meeting?
    - How did you hear about OA? What are you looking for?
    - Any questions? Things you are curious about or confused about?

- If they have been to a few meetings but are still new
    - What is going well and what are you finding challenging?
    - Would you like me to share what helped me to find abstinence?
    - Have you noticed any changes in yourself as you start to work the program?
    - How can I help you be abstinent today?

Reaching out to someone we haven't seen for a while

Members who have been absent may have a mix of emotions including shame, embarrassment and fear. They may not want to be contacted. We want to convey that the doors of OA are open to all with a desire to stop compulsively eating, and that recovery is possible and is worth the effort.

Conversation starters with someone we haven't seen for a while

- Hi, it's ____ from OA. I had you on my mind and heart and wanted to follow the prompt and reach out. Is this a good time? If yes, then use one of the following;
- How is it going with the food today?
- I haven't yet read today's reading in For Today or Voices of Recovery. Would it work for me to read that now, then we could share a comment or two about what the reading means to us?
- I plan on attending that meeting on _____. It would be great to see you there.
- What can I do to support your recovery today?
- Is there anything you miss about coming to meetings? Is there anything we can do to welcome you back?

Reaching out to someone you know is struggling/in relapse

Conversation starters with someone in relapse

- I'm so sorry that you are in the pain of the disease. How can I support your recovery today?
- What is going well in your life today?

General Conversation Starters

- I'm looking to strengthen my recovery today. Any nuggets you learned recently from the literature or a meeting that has enhanced your recovery?

- Can we read together from For Today or Voices of Recovery and share our thoughts about it?
- Share recovery challenges: “I need to talk about food; you go first” “Here is what I’m not overeating over today”.
- Thank them for service they are doing.
- Thank them for something about recovery that they shared at a meeting: “I appreciated the reminder of the principles, thank you”
- You have been on my mind and heart and I wanted to follow the prompting and reach out. Is now a good time?
- How is your program going?
- What have you done for your program today?
- What program literature are you reading these days?
- What are you working on in your program?
- Share about your own experiences, what you are doing to strengthen your program.

Sample Voicemail Messages:

- I’m making outreach calls. Sorry we didn’t connect today. Wishing all is well with you, your family and your program.
- I’m making outreach calls because it helps me stay abstinent. Hope you are doing well today and I’m glad to be doing program with you.

Resources:

- Call 5 and Keep Them Alive program from OA.ORG