



Frequently Asked Questions

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Over the years, Overeaters Anonymous (OA) members have come to learn many of the questions newcomers have about our program of recovery from compulsive eating. We had the same questions before we joined. Members of the MetroWest Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous have compiled this list of questions and answers which we hope will help you understand OA.. These represent the views of our intergroup and do not represent the opinion of Overeaters Anonymous as a whole. If your question is not answered here, please get in touch with us. Our address, phone number and e-mail are shown above.

- Q1. Will OA help me lose weight?
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Q1. Will OA help me lose weight?

A1. If you need to lose weight, OA can help. While OA is not a weight loss group, when OA members

adopt a healthy way of eating (we have a tool called our “plan of eating”) most of us lose weight. Not everyone who comes to OA needs to lose the excess weight. Many members have found that avoiding the foods that trigger our cravings (binge foods) helps with our behavior around food. This has also helped us to refrain from out-of-control eating. All these actions bring about weight loss in members who need it.

Q2. How can I lose weight?

A2. If you need to lose weight, OA can help. Although OA is not a weight loss group, when OA members adopt a healthy way of eating, most members lose their excess weight. OA members often find that when they avoid foods that trigger their cravings (“binge foods”) and follow a healthy, moderate food plan, weight loss occurs naturally.

Q3. Is OA a diet?

A3. Overeaters Anonymous is not a diet. It is a fellowship of individuals who through shared experience, strength and hope are recovering from compulsive overeating. OA does not recommend or endorse a specific plan of eating, although the OA pamphlet “Dignity of Choice” offers some suggestions on food plans. An OA member or your OA sponsor can help you get started until you see a health care professional. OA members are encouraged to work with a nutritionist or other professional for specific advice regarding their own food plan.

Q4. What and how much am I allowed to eat?

A4. OA does not set rules or make recommendations about the type or quantity of food that OA members eat. Instead, it is suggested that members consult a healthcare professional (either a doctor or nutritionist) for advice in establishing a plan of eating that best suits their individual needs. When designing a plan of eating, many members exclude foods that seem to trigger cravings that lead to compulsive eating. A sponsor can be helpful in crafting a specific plan of eating based on a member’s particular needs and the recommendations of the member’s healthcare professional.

Q5. I’m not an overeater, but food is a problem. Can OA help me?

A5. Yes. OA can help people with many forms of problem eating, including compulsive overeating, binging, purging, restrictive eating, overexercising, and others. Anyone with a desire to stop eating compulsively and to change their relationship with food is welcome at OA meetings.

Q6. Can OA help anorexics and bulimics?

A6. Yes. OA can help people with many forms of problem eating, including anorexia and bulimia. Anyone with a desire to stop eating compulsively is welcome at OA meetings.

Q7. I’ve had gastric bypass surgery. Can OA help me?

A7. Yes. Overeaters Anonymous is not a diet. At its core, OA is about dealing with the issues which drove us to engage in unhealthy behavior with food. Gastric bypass surgery helps deal with the excess weight but not with the reasons for the behaviors that caused the excess weight.

Q8. I'm a teen. Can OA help me?

A8. OA works for anyone of any age. We have a pamphlet written especially for teens that is available from www.oa.org. Teens are welcome at all meetings and some areas have Young Peoples' meetings just for them. There are members who have worked OA's program of recovery from the time they were pre-teens and are still strongly committed OA members in their 40's.

Q9. My wife (husband, friend, son, daughter, lover, priest, boss etc.) really needs help. What can I do to help?

A9. OA has many pamphlets available that inform people about OA and how OA might help them. The OA Web site (www.oa.org) is an excellent source of information about OA. If you are an OA member the best thing you can do for another overeater is to continue your own recovery. Friends and loved ones may see the positive changes in you as a result of your recovery in OA and be attracted to your new ways for themselves. It's not uncommon to be asked how you "changed" or "lost weight," or why you seem "happier", "calmer," or "not so angry." These questions present an opportunity to tell people about your experience with OA and how it has helped you.

Q10. How much does OA cost?

A10. OA does not charge any fees to its members. We do pass a donation basket at meetings into which most people make a contribution (\$2.00 if they are able, but a donation of any size is welcome). Groups use the money to pay the rent for their meeting space, to buy OA literature and to help inform the public that OA is available to help other compulsive eaters.

Q11. I heard I have to get a sponsor and do what (s)he says. I don't want a sponsor. Can I still join?

A11. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively. Sponsors are OA members who help guide other members through their recovery. A sponsor helps other members by sharing their experience, strength, and hope on a one-to-one basis. So, while a sponsor is recommended you can certainly be a member without a sponsor. Members are also free to change sponsors at will.

Q12. How do I join?

A12. There are no dues or fees for membership. You need only a desire to stop eating compulsively. There are lists of meetings on the OA websites. Just find a meeting and show up. Meetings are organized by OA members. You do not have to call ahead to attend a meeting but it may be a good idea to call the listed contact and confirm the time and place of the meeting.

Q13. How do I find a meeting near me?

A13. You may find meetings anywhere in the world at the Overeaters Anonymous World Service website(www.aa.org). You may find a meeting near you by calling Overeaters Anonymous. Numbers for local offices are listed in the telephone book. MetroWest Intergroup can be reached at 508-875-0001.

Q14. How can I get more information about a meeting before attending?

A14. Each meeting location has a contact telephone number. You may call that number and speak anonymously with a member of OA. He or she can provide more information about the meeting format and location. You also can write to the Metro West Intergroup with your questions about OA. We'll happily answer your questions.

Q15. Are there telephone or on-line meetings?

A15. Yes, there are both telephone and on-line meetings available if face-to-face meetings are not available in your area or the scheduled meeting times conflict with your schedule. You can download a list of on-line meetings and telephone meetings from the Overeaters Anonymous World Service website(www.aa.org). You also can request this information by calling a local Overeaters Anonymous office (see question #13 for locating a meeting).

Q16. Who can attend OA meetings?

A16. The only requirement for membership is a desire to refrain from compulsive eating. There are some special focus meetings (men's groups and women's groups for instance) but nobody is ever barred from attending such a meeting. Most OA meetings are open meetings and all members are welcome. Visitors are also welcome and we ask that the respect our tradition of anonymity.

Q17. I went to a meeting 6 years ago and it wasn't for me. Why should I come back?

A17. Every OA meeting is unique. We suggest newcomers try out 6 different meetings, if they can, before making up their mind about OA. If you're concerned about returning to a meeting you tried in the past, you'll find that often the membership of a meeting changes over time. The format and tone of a meeting can change along with its membership.

Q18. What kinds of OA meetings are available?

A18. A variety of OA meetings are available to help individuals with food or eating problems. Meetings vary by format: speaker meetings usually involve a talk by an OA member about his or her experience with OA; in literature meetings members read and discuss an OA book or pamphlet; step meetings involve a discussion of one or more of the 12 steps of Overeaters Anonymous. Some OA meetings have a special focus, such as women, men, gay/lesbian, anorexic, bulimic, and others. Finally, OA meetings vary in the means by which members connect. In traditional meetings, OA members meet in person at a specified location and regular time each week. In phone and online meetings, members connect through the telephone

or internet at a designated time.

Q19. Why do people continue to attend OA meetings after they lose weight?

A19. People continue to attend meetings after they reached their goal weight for support in maintaining their weight loss. While the symptoms of compulsive eating may have abated, the disease itself is never cured. Continued attendance at meetings allows the OA member who has lost weight to continue to grow in the spiritual and emotional aspects of his or her life. Many OA members find that the continued fellowship and opportunity for service help them to maintain a healthy weight as a way of life. Also, members who have recovery act as powerful examples for newcomers and members still struggling with compulsive eating.

Q20. Is OA a religion?

A20. No. OA has a spiritual basis, but is not a religion. Most OA members come to rely on a power greater than themselves for help with recovering from problem eating—but in OA, we are free to define this power in any way that works for us. Many call this power God, but some members do not. Membership in OA does not depend upon a belief in God or any Higher Power. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively. All are welcome regardless of personal beliefs.

Q21. Do I have to believe in God to be a member?

A21. No. A belief in God is not required to be a member of Overeaters Anonymous. There is only one requirement for membership: A desire to stop eating compulsively. In OA “God” or “Higher Power” are very personal concepts. We are a spiritual program, not a religious organization. What you believe in is not important—a desire to stop eating compulsively is what’s important. That desire is common to all of us who seek help in OA.

Q21. Is OA affiliated with AA or any other 12-step fellowship or medical group interested in obesity?

A22. OA is not affiliated with any medical group, AA or any other anonymous fellowship. We do base our program of recovery on the book Alcoholics Anonymous, often referred to as the “Big Book.”

Q22. Can I speak to a member today?

A21. Probably. Call us at 508.875.0001 and press 1 for a list of local member's telephone numbers who are happy to take your call. They will try to call you back today. We'd also be happy to take get an e-mail from you. Send your questions to info@metrowestoa.org. You may also call OA World Service Office in Rio Rancho, New Mexico at 1-505-891-2664.