

About OA

The first Overeaters Anonymous (OA) meeting was held in 1960 in Los Angeles, California. Since that time it has grown to about 7,000 meetings in more than 80 countries—about 54,000 members.

OA is not just about weight loss, weight gain or maintenance, obesity or diets. The OA program offers physical, emotional and spiritual recovery for those who suffer from compulsive eating. Members find recovery on all three levels by following a Twelve-Step program patterned after Alcoholics Anonymous. Members who recover through the Twelve Steps find that yoyo dieting is a thing of the past. They no longer wish to return to eating compulsively.

OA is not affiliated with any public or private organization, political movement, ideology or religious doctrine and takes no position on issues outside of its own program. No membership dues or fees are required for participation in OA. The organization is self-supporting through members' voluntary donations and the sale of OA literature.

In OA, you'll find members who are morbidly obese, extremely or moderately overweight, average weight or underweight; still maintaining periodic control over their eating behavior; or totally unable to control their compulsive eating. The only requirement for membership in OA is a desire to stop eating compulsively.

Similar to other Twelve Step programs, a key tenet of OA is anonymity, which offers members freedom of expression, equality and safeguards within the OA community. Anonymity at the level of press, radio, television and other media of communication provides assurance that OA membership will not be disclosed. This protects both the individual and OA membership as a whole.

For more information about Overeaters Anonymous visit www.oa.org.

Questions & Answers

WHAT DOES OA OFFER?

We offer unconditional acceptance and support through readily available OA meetings.

We in OA believe we have a threefold illness—physical, emotional and spiritual. Tens of thousands have found that OA's Twelve-Step program effects recovery on all three levels.

The Twelve Steps embody a set of principles which, when followed, promote inner change. Sponsors help us understand and apply these principles. As old attitudes are discarded, we often find there is no longer a need for excess food.

Those of us who choose to recover one day at a time practice the Twelve Steps. In so doing, we achieve a new way of life and lasting freedom from our food obsession.

HOW DOES AN INDIVIDUAL JOIN OA?

No one “joins” OA in the usual sense of the word. There are no dues to pay or membership applications to be completed. Once we have heard about OA and believe we have an eating problem, we simply attend local OA meetings of our choice. Anyone who says he/she is a member of OA is a member.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR OA MEMBERSHIP?

Our Third Tradition states, “The only requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively.” Nothing else is asked or demanded of anyone.

HOW MUCH DOES OA MEMBERSHIP COST?

There are no financial requirements to be a member of OA. This recovery program is available to all who want to stop eating compulsively, no matter how much or how little money they may possess. We are self supporting through members' voluntary contributions and literature sales.

IS OA A RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION?

No. OA is not a religious organization since it requires no religious belief as a condition of membership. OA has among its membership people of many religious faiths as well as atheists and agnostics. OA is, however, a spiritual program based on each members' personal interpretation of a higher power.

HOW DO OA MEMBERS LOSE WEIGHT AND MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT?

The concept of abstinence is the basis of OA's program of recovery. By admitting inability to control compulsive eating in the past and abandoning the idea that all one needs is “a little willpower,” it becomes possible to abstain from overeating—one day at a time.

While a diet can help us lose weight, it often intensifies the compulsion to overeat. OA provides guidance in creating a plan of eating that may include identifying trigger foods and behaviors; working with a sponsor and a health care professional; and some food plans suggested by OA members, and approved by a licensed dietitian, that they have found success with. We don't furnish diets, counseling services, hospitalization or treatment; nor does OA participate in or conduct research and training in the field of eating disorders. For weight loss and maintenance, any medically approved food plan is acceptable.

OA members interested in learning about nutrition or who seek professional advice are encouraged to consult qualified professionals. We may freely use such help, with the assurance that OA supports each of us in our efforts to recover.