

OA GUIDELINES



Guidelines for Membership Retention

Our responsibility pledge states: “*Always to extend the hand and heart of OA to all who share my compulsion: for this I am responsible.*”

Where are the people who were at your first meeting? How many of them are still coming to OA?

There are many things that each of us and our groups can do to keep people coming back. In an effort *to extend the hand and heart to those who share our compulsion*, the following are some suggested Membership Retention Dos and Don'ts.

DO . . .

- study *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*—the Steps and Traditions will strengthen our recovery and keep us living;
- focus on the miracle of physical, emotional and spiritual recovery;
- remember that anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our program;
- understand that there are no special requirements for members to share—the only requirement for members is a desire to stop eating compulsively;
- make it a point to warmly welcome back members who are attending meetings again; in fact, reach out to *everyone* at meetings with love;
- participate in group inventories—use the “Group Inventory Checklist” of the *Twelfth-Step-Within Handbook*;
- send strong speakers to meetings in areas where the attendance is declining or there is a lack of abstinence;
- make tapes of successful speakers from OA events and distribute them at meetings;
- make meetings and special events fun;
- keep a good supply of OA-approved literature, and keep a *Lifeline* lending library for members to share;
- focus on “OA Spoken Here!”
- encourage and support Step-Study Meetings;
- welcome newcomers to your meetings—have volunteers telephone newcomers to answer any questions they may have;
- hold newcomers meetings at least once per week;
- start and support a Relapse & Recovery Meeting, based on the format in the *Twelfth-Step-Within Handbook*;
- have a regular Steering Committee Meeting;
- have the intergroup sponsor a Service and Traditions Workshop;

DO . . .

- encourage your intergroup to regularly distribute a newsletter to keep all groups informed about what's going on in the area;
- start and end your regular group meetings on time, and meet on holidays too!
- have volunteers telephone members who haven't been at the meeting for a while—build a network of support;
- create a phone chain for the entire group, especially during the holidays: put all the members' names in a hat and have each person draw one name to call;
- provide service opportunities at the group level which have no abstinence requirement, so everyone can benefit from doing service!
- rotate service positions, no matter what;
- list all meetings in both large and small local newspapers;
- encourage members to post information cards about meetings in their grocery stores, libraries, etc.;
- share that sponsoring and doing service are a rewarding and exciting way to benefit *your* recovery—get a sponsor, be a sponsor, stand up and be counted;
- hold sponsorship workshops so members aren't afraid to sponsor;
- stick to the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, eight tools and approved literature when sponsoring;
- share about your progress in working and living the Steps; when sharing your experience, share your strength and hope;
- be an example of recovery—this is a program of attraction, not promotion;
- encourage people in their recovery, and support and encourage those who don't “get it” right away;
- give out chips for success as often as possible.

Most of all, *do it with love!*

DO KEEP COMING BACK, NO MATTER WHAT!

DON'T . . .

- forget that our common solution is the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of OA;
- forget to emphasize abstinence from the beginning, making sure that members know that it is NOT OK to binge;
- be afraid to speak your truth at any level;
- judge another's recovery or relapse;
- be afraid of new ideas or changes;
- “preach” or try to sell the program;
- hesitate to ask people to do service;
- overload yourself with service work—avoid burnout;
- give advice, but share your experience;

DON'T . . .

- cross talk during meetings;
- form cliques and ignore others around you;
- put personalities before principles;
- allow one person to continually lead or run the meeting;
- allow anyone to monopolize or dump at a meeting;
- be too serious, rigid or authoritative;
- ignore a member's weight gain/loss;
- discuss outside issues: stick to our primary purpose;
- participate in gossip;
- break another person's anonymity;
- forget that whatever is said in your meetings stays in your meetings;
- let meetings become social gatherings that lack program focus;
- use outside literature, because it implies endorsement of outside enterprises;
- be afraid to help a group member in trouble; remember—relapse is not contagious, recovery is!
- participate in power struggles or personality clashes;
- expect perfection from yourself or anyone else.

MOST OF ALL, DON'T LEAVE BEFORE THE MIRACLE HAPPENS!

These Do's and Don'ts are not intended to be all-inclusive. We can take many other positive actions in order to encourage members to keep coming back. Share what works, and what doesn't, with your fellow OA members around the world through your intergroup newsletter, *Lifeline*, letters to your region or WSO, and at Convention!

OA is a Fellowship in which thousands of compulsive overeaters find and share recovery. It is a program of attraction and a positive way of living. *Together*, we can recover. And, together it does work, when we *all* **“Keep Coming Back!”**

OA Board-approved 1995, 2001

Overeaters Anonymous®
6075 Zenith Court NE
Rio Rancho, New Mexico 87144-6424 USA
Mail Address: PO Box 44020, Rio Rancho, New Mexico 87174-4020 USA
Tel: 1-505-891-2664 FAX: 1-505-891-4320
E-mail: info@oa.org • Web site: www.oa.org

© 1995, 2001 Overeaters Anonymous, Inc. All rights reserved.