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Learn more about OA. Visit the OA website. oa.org

To order from the OA online store, go to bookstore.oa.org

One Year Yields 31 Percent Weight Reduction and More

— Carolann B., New York

On August 22, 2015, I celebrated the one-year anniversary of a life-changing event: the beginning of my journey in Overeaters Anonymous. Never could I have imagined that a new road—free of compulsive overeating—would open up for me.

The trip began when Joan, my therapist, told me about OA and suggested I try it. Until then, all the paths I had followed led to dead ends.

My problems around food began as early as 8 years old. To appear as what I thought was thin during my teens, I began restricting along with binging. And so the swings began. I had some periods of weight loss, but these were inevitably followed by even greater gains. As I got older and doubled my weight to 258 pounds (117 kg), the problem was no longer only about the shame and self-hate resulting from not looking good. Continuing along this path could only lead to weight-related health issues, such as diabetes and heart disease.

When Joan asked why I continued to binge and I had no answer, I knew in my heart that I had to follow her suggestion and give OA a try. It still took me two weeks to get to my first meeting. There, I was greeted with warmth and sincerity, and there, I received the gift of hope. Since then my life has changed not only physically...

The Most Successful Therapy Clients

Nancy J. Davis, LICSW, is a clinical social worker in Beverly, Massachusetts. A number of her clients are in twelve-step programs, including OA. We talked with her about how OA has helped her clients.

How did you first learn about OA?

One of my clients had a food addiction, and I was searching for a resource that would provide the kind of support I saw in other twelve-step programs. I found out about OA and got some literature I could give to my client.

Do you refer patients to OA?

I definitely do. I have several clients in OA, and I see how the program is working in their lives. I’m able to share their experience with other clients who are struggling with compulsive eating issues.

One of my clients, who is a long-term OA member, has allowed me to give her phone number to people who want to know more about the program. Nothing is more effective than having a recovering OA member speak to someone who is struggling because fear often stops people who are in pain from being willing to reach out and learn...
One Year Yields 31
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cally but also emotionally and spiritually. I have lost 80 pounds (36 kg) so far, which makes my doctor and me very happy. I have a 24/7 support system with regular OA meetings, phone calls, texts, and emails. I can share about my weight-loss program and everything else, good and bad, going on in my life.

I also see myself in a completely different way. Now I even love myself. At the root of all this change is an evolving, deepening relationship with my Higher Power whom I choose to call God.

I can never thank Joan enough for everything she has done for me throughout the years. My therapy sessions are still an important part of my life. Additionally, this past year my OA journey has given me freedom from the bondage of food and everything related to it. With God’s help, I plan to follow this road for the rest of my life.

Enhance the Waiting Room Experience!

Overeaters Anonymous publishes *Lifeline*, a full-color magazine produced ten times per year.

In *Lifeline*, OA members share their experience, strength, and hope found in OA. Subscribers consider *Lifeline* “a meeting on the go.” Your patients or clients may benefit from reading *Lifeline* while in your waiting room. Receive ten issues a year for $23. To subscribe, go to bookstore.oa.org and search “subscription” or call 1-505-891-2664 to order by phone.

Complement Your Care with Overeaters Anonymous

OA works, in part, because it offers an ongoing support system for members and encourages them to help one another, thereby weakening their isolation and loneliness.

Many members consider OA a complement to the professional services they receive. In fact, OA claims no medical, nutritional, or psychological expertise and suggests that interested members contact qualified professionals for help in these areas.

Awareness and Self-Evaluation Poster for Treatment and Waiting Areas

Download and display our free poster to help patients and clients recognize compulsive overeating and compulsive food behaviors and seek support through OA. The poster directs patients and clients to OA’s *Fifteen Questions*, a self-evaluation tool found at oaquiz.org, and can be customized to include local contact information for groups and meetings.

Professionally printed, four-color posters are also available for purchase. Search “poster” at bookstore.oa.org.

Pamphlets for Professionals

Read more about OA membership and compulsive food behaviors at oa.org under For the Professional or order these pamphlets at bookstore.oa.org:

**Introducing OA to Health Care Professionals**—Explains how OA complements professional care. Includes a questionnaire for clients and patients about eating behaviors. (#753/$.15 each)

**Is Food a Problem for You?**—Includes fifteen questions to determine if someone is a compulsive eater, a description of the OA program, member testimonials, and the Twelve Steps. (#750/$.20 each)

**2010 Membership Survey Report**—Summarizes the types of problems OA members have with food; whether they have lost weight, gained weight, or neither; and how OA has helped them recover emotionally, physically, and spiritually. (#102/$.30 each)

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Giving Guidance and Support to Make Choices
—Jim Gates, New York, New York

I have been impressed by the amazing results I’ve seen OA members achieve. I have great respect for twelve-step programs and what they have contributed to the lives of so many people and to our society.

As I work with clients in my health and wellness practice, I have studied many philosophies and techniques of healing body and soul. I hold the idea that most of our health issues arise from negative emotions, which in turn are caused by problems resulting from not being aligned with our spiritual side.

One power of OA is that it works so clearly at the spiritual level to enable healing. OA also works well with our need for human connections. At a deeper level, I think people want two things: happiness and the freedom to make their own choices in life. The foundation of both is our sense of self-worth and our place in the world, which must be connected to our spiritual side in order to be true and lasting.

When we have difficulties moving forward in life, it is good to consider whether we are going against our own feelings. Does what we want to do (or not do) go against our sense of self-worth or support it? Does it go toward or away from our happiness and freedom?

I think one’s spiritual side is based on love and respect, both for the self and others. As we align with the spiritual, our sense of well-being and happiness should increase. Greater happiness is the best indication that we are truly aligning with our spiritual side.

When we face challenges in our lives, even challenges in OA, we can consider that we each want happiness and freedom. With reflection, study, and introspection, we can become better able to know our feelings and understand what leads to better or worse feelings. This process of knowing our real feelings, honoring them, and letting them guide us to greater happiness is the spiritual process of letting God’s love in and feeling our self-worth.

Happiness is interesting because it is a choice. We can choose to be happy or we can choose to withhold happiness and blame it on other people or conditions. We may say we would be happy if we had more money or were healthier or thinner. Chances are if we did get those things, we would find some other reason not to be happy. We don’t realize happiness is a choice until we come into a relationship with our spiritual side. Then we can see that our connection with God is all we need to be happy because it is also a connection with our self, our worthiness, and our source of happiness and freedom.

God is always present, always loving us, always guiding us; yet we don’t allow ourselves to let that love in. That is a choice, just as happiness is a choice. Over time we can let go of our habits and begin to make different choices. To do that, we need guidance and support. The twelve-step programs can be a wonderful source of that guidance and support.

The Most Successful Therapy Clients

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more. It’s always my wish to have clients take the opportunity to talk with someone in OA to find out how the program works.

How have you seen OA benefit your clients?

People in twelve-step programs are always working on themselves, and I find they are the most successful clients in a therapeutic setting. I stress to my clients that they won’t get everything they need through therapy alone, especially if they are struggling with addictive or compulsive behavior. For compulsive overeating and other compulsive food behaviors, having a sponsor, a plan of eating, meetings, and a supportive community clearly provides essential support to my clients in OA.

What do you think would be the best way for OA and our members to reach other health care professionals?

I’m part of a group practice, and we meet monthly with other therapists who are in private practice.

Those meetings would be opportunities to introduce OA to other therapists. Group practices can have literature available and contact information for meetings in their area.

Editor’s Note:
OA has many meetings that are open to anyone who wants to learn more about OA—including students and professionals in health care and counseling. For meeting information in your area, go to Find a Meeting on oa.org.

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Compulsive eating, under-eating, food addiction, anorexia, bulimia, binge eating, or overexercising—no matter what the problem with food, we can provide ongoing support to your patients or clients.

“I am a nutritionist who has been treating an OA participant for the past year. I believe her success in weight loss, as well as improvement in her overall health, is due in great part to Overeaters Anonymous.”

—G.B., Nutritionist

“My psychologist suggested I attend an OA meeting. She believes in the connection between physical and mental health. Thank God I listened to her. I have changed drastically in a short time.”

—G.K., Illinois

“As a group psychotherapist, I am particularly sensitive to the dynamics that allow a group to work well and those that tend to disrupt or destroy a group’s work. The wisdom of the Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous [adapted with permission from the Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous], which govern OA meetings and the Fellowship as a whole, has impressed me. These Traditions safeguard the well-being of each individual member as well as the Fellowship.”

—J.D.R., MD, FASAM, FAGPA