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February 25, 2023

## Embracing Our Differences

Beloved Members, Groups, and Service Bodies of Overeaters Anonymous,

Humility, of course, is one of the fundamental principles not only of individual recovery but of the practices of OA as a whole. Such humility is apparent in the readiness with which OA members, groups, and service bodies have embraced the first paragraph of OA's *Unity with Diversity Policy*: "THE FELLOWSHIP of Overeater's Anonymous ***promotes acceptance and inclusivity*** [italics added for emphasis]. All are welcome to join OA and are not excluded because of race, creed, nationality, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, or any other attribute." The openness of OA, reflected in the acceptance of this policy, is something that brings solace to our members and demonstrates that our only concern is to carry the message and help heal the suffering compulsive eater.

We want to be sure we are exercising the same degree of humility and openness when it comes to the process by which we recover. It should be clear that OA promotes acceptance and inclusivity in approaches to the Twelve Steps just as much as it does on matters of race or religion. OA's policy on *Unity with Diversity* goes on to say, "THE FELLOWSHIP recognizes the existence of individual approaches and different structured concepts to working our Twelve Step program of recovery; that the Fellowship is united by our disease and our common purpose, and that individual differences in approach(es) to recovery need not divide us. THE FELLOWSHIP respects the rights of members, groups, and service bodies to follow a particular concept of recovery within Overeaters Anonymous and encourages each member, group, and service body to respect those rights as they extend the hand of fellowship to those who still suffer."

When we insist that there is only one way to recover, that there is only one piece of literature members should read, that the way we found to work the Steps is the way for everyone, we cease being accepting and inclusive. We surrender some of the humility and openness that marks our program of recovery, and we directly contradict our policy of *Unity with Diversity*.

OA is forever cognizant of the debt we owe Alcoholics Anonymous and celebrates the Big Book with admiration. It is just as important, however, to recognize the many members who use other OA-approved literature to guide their recovery and the many who have found a way to work the Steps and recover without using any literature.

Yes, groups are autonomous, but when they insist on one way to recover, when they suggest that OA material isn't good enough, they affect other groups and OA as a whole. As an inclusive Fellowship, we embrace all our differences.

Please join us in this recommitment to inclusivity—it is a great act of love, one our Fellowship needs and deserves.

Respectfully,

OA Board of Trustees

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