

Difference Between Abstinence and a Plan of Eating Workshop



AIMS

To increase the Fellowship's focus on actions required for abstinence, because our **primary purpose** is to abstain from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors and to carry the message of recovery through the Twelve Steps of OA to those who still suffer.



▼ OBJECTIVES ▼

OA MEMBERS...

- **Understand the difference between abstinence and a plan of eating.**
- **Have a clear vision of their abstinence.**
- **Write the actions they need to take to make abstinence the priority in their life.**
- **Understand what a plan of eating is and is not.**
- **Know about relevant OA resources.**



Why is the difference between abstinence and a plan of eating important?

- **Abstinence is the same for all OA members.**
- **Abstinence: The action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight.**
- **While abstinence does not differ from one OA member to another, details of the plan of eating for each member may vary.**

Background



1961: Abstinence first mentioned as a Tool.

1973: WSBC delegates approved *The Tools of Recovery* pamphlet, which listed abstinence as a Tool.

1995: Importance of abstinence recognized:

- A plan of eating replaced abstinence as a Tool
- Abstinence defined as OA's primary purpose

2015: "Our primary purpose is to abstain from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors and to carry the message of recovery through the Twelve Steps of OA to those who still suffer."

2021: "WSBC 2021 accepts the following:

Abstinence is the action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight.

Spiritual, emotional, and physical recovery is the result of living and working the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve Step program on a daily basis."

(Business Conference Policy Manual, 1988b [amended 2019, 2021])

Brainstorming activity



Formulate your own abstinence vision / affirmation

E.g.,

I am freely choosing foods and food behaviors that are non-compulsive, eating with gratitude, dignity, and grace, which results in my maintaining a healthy body weight, using God's wisdom and guidance and the Twelve Steps of OA as a path for my life.





Is my abstinence strong enough?

- Am I working the Steps?
- Do I pray and meditate?
- Did I plan my food today?
- Am I maintaining or working toward a healthy body weight?
- Did I rely on my Higher Power to get or stay abstinent?
- Do I ask for help?
- Do make OA phone calls?





IS MY ABSTINENCE STRONG ENOUGH?

- Do I have an attitude of gratitude?
- Do I help others?
- Do I have an action plan to stay abstinent?
- Do I have a sponsor? Do I sponsor?
- Is what I am currently doing working for me to remain abstinent?
- What activities will I NOT participate in to maintain my abstinence?





“Abstinence first without exception”

- 
- What are my daily prayer and meditation actions?
 - What actions do I take to live Step Ten?
 - What actions underlie my plan of eating?
- 
- What are my trigger foods that, if I eat a little of, I will crave more?
 - Do I maintain a specific written list of eating behaviors that I *will* participate in?
 - Do I maintain a specific written list of eating behaviors that I will *not* participate in?
- 

A PLAN OF EATING - What it is, what it is not



An effective plan of eating helps the member stop eating compulsively and move toward or maintain a healthy body weight. For a member to “stay stopped” requires more than just a plan of eating. Working the Twelve Steps and using the Tools of Recovery brings a return to sanity around food and a fuller recovery experience spiritually and emotionally.

- 1) Write briefly about what a plan of eating is or does for you.**
- 2) Write briefly about what a plan of eating is *not* or does *not* do for you.**

Take-home actions

- **Everyone is asked to share one thing they could do before they take that first compulsive bite.**
- **Write the suggestions on the whiteboard or paper.**
- **Copy actions that work for you.**



Resources



PAMPHLETS:

- *A Lifetime of Abstinence: One Day at a Time*
- *A New Plan of Eating*
- *Is Food a Problem for You?*
- *Many Symptoms, One Solution*
- *In OA, Recovery is Possible: About Compulsive Eating and the OA Program of Recovery*
- *Recovery Checklist*
- *The Tools of Recovery*
- *Think First*
- *Welcome Back: Suggestions for Members in Relapse and for Those Who Care*

BOOKS:

- *Overeaters Anonymous, Third Edition*—specifically the Forewords and Appendices, “The Role of a Plan of Eating in Recovery from Compulsive Eating,” “A Disease of the Mind,” “A Disease of the Body,” and “A Disease of the Spirit”
- *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition*
- *Abstinence, Second Edition*
- *Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition*, specifically “The Doctor’s Opinion”

FREE DOWNLOADS at oa.org:

- *Abstinence PowerPoint Presentation*
- *Strong Abstinence Checklist*
- *Abstinence Literature Resource Guide*