

# OA Desert Recovery

December 2021: Abstinence

A revised **Abstinence and Recovery Policy** was adopted at World Service Business Conference 2021. OA's revised policy states:

"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])

## The Adventure of Abstinence

Imagine a panel of three. The first one eats three meals a day with nothing in-between, but she uses a large plate and piles it high. The second one eats three meals a day, but his plate is not well-balanced, and he often has more starch than vegetables. The third one has been in the program for a long while and eats three meals a day but a number of the foods eaten are in the "gray" zone—things that perhaps ought not to be in her food plan. Are any of these people abstinent?

What is your definition of abstinence? Here's how OA currently defines it: "The action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight."

We are recognized by our length of abstinence with coins for 30, 60, and 90 days, 6 months, 9 months, a year, and multiples of years. Does abstinence mean that's how long someone has been in the program? What if someone has been in OA for years but is not at a healthy body weight?

Abstinence comes from abstaining. That means NO. If there are foods that we know are trigger foods—and for each person, there's a different list—then we are to abstain. Or are we? Doesn't this OA definition of abstinence give us wiggle room? If I know that such-and-such is a trigger food, but I am not compulsive about it, if I just eat one, have I blown my abstinence? According to this OA definition, if I am refraining from compulsively eating a food like this, then am I abstinent?

For me, I say no. I steer clear. Even if I could just eat one. I'm not willing to risk it. Because of that, this definition worries me. I would rather it state emphatically that I need to completely avoid anything that even resembles one of my trigger foods. It doesn't say that. I'm going to add it to my definition. I must abstain from those binge foods that I used to consume in earnest even if I can now eat them without being compulsive about them.

Head to the OA Website and take a survey to help them learn about sponsorship: [Take a Short Online Survey to Improve Sponsorship](#). In doing the survey, I learned about a cool resource available for free: [Temporary Sponsors: Newcomers' First Twelve Days](#).

## How to Make the Most of Your Zoom OA Meetings:

- Have a printed or digital copy the Steps and Traditions so that you can volunteer to read:
  - [The Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous](#)
  - [The Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous](#)
- Have the literature handy to follow along or start the reading for the group.
- Bring your calendar to know when you'll be able to volunteer to lead!
- Post your information in the chat and take down information to make outreach calls.
- Practice the Seventh Tradition.



### Deadline for next newsletter:

Topic: Sanity

Deadline: January 1, 2022

Email to:

**[newsletter@southernaz.org](mailto:newsletter@southernaz.org)**

Issue will release via e-blast on January 15, 2022.

So let's go to Webster and see what the definition is of the word abstain: "to hold oneself back voluntarily, especially from something regarded as improper or unhealthy." The foods I once ate were definitely not healthy for me—or anyone else, for that matter. They were fake foods greatly enhanced with salt or sugar. Those had nothing to do with nutrition.

What's the adventure of abstinence? It took many steps to be where I am today, including those first vital 12 steps. I found a whole new world of eating. My meals are nutritious and balanced, and they are delicious! I eat only my favorite foods, and surprisingly, foods that I once avoided are now on my plate—and thoroughly enjoyed.

Because I not only abstain from eating certain foods but also limit my portions of the healthy food that I eat, I've become less of myself. What a wild and wonderful adventure to be able to buy clothes that are the same size as my shoes! And lastly, what a surprise in life to have someone say, "Sit on my lap. You are light." Light? Not heavy? It's hard to believe. This program has provided me an adventure that took me into a life that I couldn't have imagined!

Avoid being one of the three panelists described above. Their abstinence is shaky. If you've been in the program and are not heading toward a healthy body weight, figure out why. Be honest with yourself or visit someone schooled in nutrition and ask.

Begin starting your day with a prayer focusing on your abstinence:

"I ask your protection today from anyone or anything that may interfere with my abstinence. I KNOW that I am powerless over food and my emotions, and my life can become unmanageable again. I do believe that you will relieve my compulsion and restore me to sanity." (Courtesy of the OA West Jersey Intergroup website)

Make your abstinence an adventure and see the possibilities of change. Your life will become better than your wildest dreams! Mine has.

-Joy V'M

**"God, I offer myself to Thee – to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of Life."**

***Third Step Prayer***

## Abstinence Prayer

"God, today is a new day for me and with you, it can be a day of abstinence and emotional stability.

With you, I can handle anything. I ask for your protection in case sometime during the day my desire to eat compulsively or obsess over anything becomes stronger than my desire to abstain. I ask for your protection today from anyone or anything that may interfere with my abstinence. I KNOW that I am powerless over food and my emotions, and my life can become unmanageable again. I do believe that you will relieve my compulsion and restore me to sanity. Please help me to know your will for me today and give me the willingness and ability to carry it out

**-Posted anonymously  
in "Discover OA"  
(Summer 2014) by the  
West Jersey  
Intergroup of  
Overeaters  
Anonymous**

## Abstinence Literature Resource Guide

The following literature is specifically helpful for obtaining and maintaining abstinence.

Pamphlets and books can be purchased on the OA website in the Bookstore. The free downloads are available by clicking the blue links.

### Pamphlets

1. "A Lifetime of Abstinence: One Day at a Time"
2. "A New Plan of Eating"
3. "Is Food a Problem for You?"
4. "Many Symptoms, One Solution"
5. "In OA, Recovery Is Possible: About Compulsive Eating and the OA Program of Recovery"
6. "Think First"
7. "The Tools of Recovery"
8. "Recovery Checklist"
9. "Strong Abstinence Checklist and Writing Exercise Wallet Card"
10. "Welcome Back: Suggestions for Members in Relapse and Those Who Care"

### Books

1. *Overeaters Anonymous*, Third Edition, specifically the Forewords and Appendices:
  - a. "The Role of a Plan of Eating in Recovery from Compulsive Eating"
  - b. "A Disease of the Mind"
  - c. "A Disease of the Body"
  - d. "A Disease of the Spirit"
2. *Abstinence*, Second Edition
3. "The Doctor's Opinion" from *Alcoholics Anonymous*, Fourth Edition
4. *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, Second Edition

### Free Downloads

[What is abstinence in Overeaters Anonymous?](#)

[Strong Abstinence Checklist](#)

[Difference Between Abstinence and A Plan of Eating Workshop](#)

**"My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding."**

***Seventh Step Prayer***

# Get Off the Roller Coaster Ride



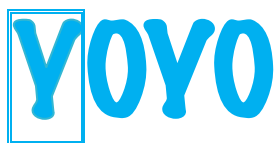
*...and come join us for a 12-Step Within Workshop Series*

Join us for a workshop series that will take us through the 12 Steps of Overeaters Anonymous from January to December.

## **What You Need to Know:**

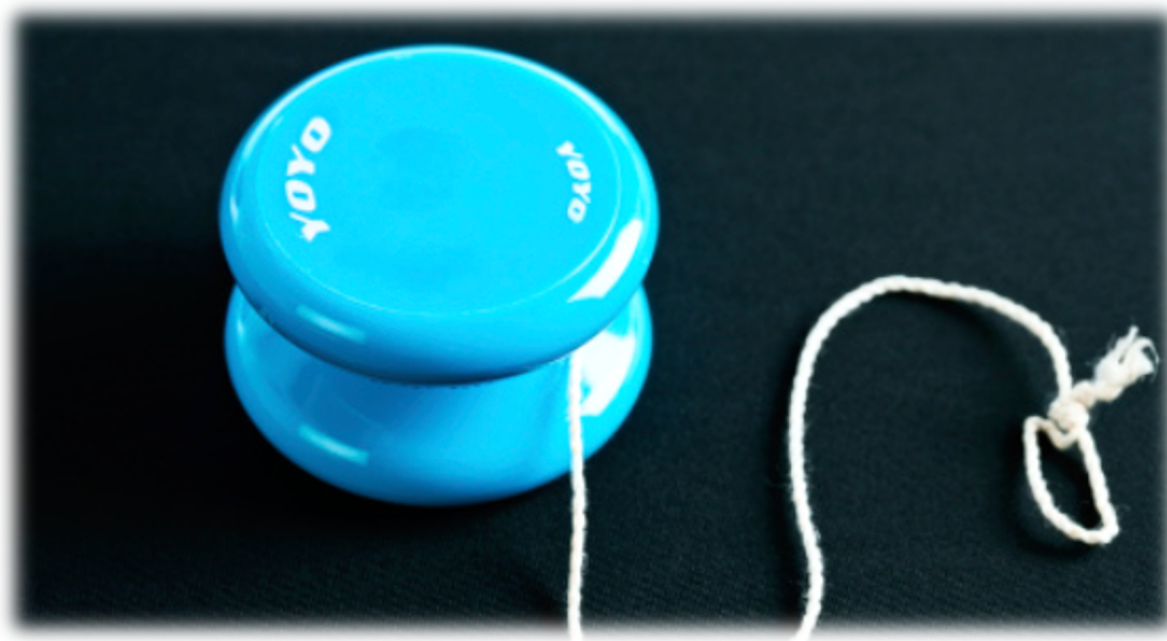
- The workshops will be held on Zoom on the first Wednesday of each month from 6:30 to 8:30 PM beginning on January 5<sup>th</sup>.
- The registration window is November 17<sup>th</sup> to December 15<sup>th</sup>.
- To register, contact Joy V'M at 520.834.7224 or by email at [SoAZ.12thStepWithin@gmail.com](mailto:SoAZ.12thStepWithin@gmail.com) OR Chris N at 520.661.1991 or by email at [rainbow.smiles@cox.net](mailto:rainbow.smiles@cox.net)
- This closed workshop is for those who have already completed the 12 steps with a sponsor. All workshop participants will be expected to attend all twelve sessions.

**SPONSORED BY THE 12th STEP WITHIN COMMITTEE  
of the SoAZ Intergroup of OA**



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12<sup>TH</sup>, 2021, FROM 1 – 2:30 PM (MST)

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## You're On Your Own

Register by clicking here:

[SoAZ.TSW.Event@gmail.com](mailto:SoAZ.TSW.Event@gmail.com)

Questions? Send email to Joy V'M at [SoAZ.12thStepWithin@gmail.com](mailto:SoAZ.12thStepWithin@gmail.com)

S-T-E-P R-E-C-O-V-E-R-Y

**SPONSORED BY THE 12<sup>th</sup> STEP WITHIN COMMITTEE**  
of the SoAZ Intergroup of OA

**In celebration of OA's TSW Day!**