

The Message Is Hope

A Guide for OA Intergroups & Meetings

Suggested Action Plans and Resources
*to help our fellows find relief from
struggling WITHIN the OA program*

Prepared by
Overeaters Anonymous Region 2
Twelfth Step Within Committee



Introduction

Winter 2021:

During Stressful Times, even the best of us can struggle...

No one would disagree that the past year has been challenging for everyone. Our fellows in OA are no different. For some of us, any kind of change can be difficult, as we work hard to change our attitudes and lifestyle habits.

The truth is that just because we struggle like everyone else, we 12-steppers are extremely fortunate to have tools others may not have. We *know* how important it is to stay in contact with our community daily. We *know* how important it is to carry the message to all who need it. And we *know* that we help ourselves when we help others.

This guide suggests ways that we, as individuals, meetings, or service groups can carry the message to our fellows *within* our community that may either be beginning to falter, or are possibly on their way back from a relapse.

As the Twelfth Step Within Committee of OA Region 2, we offer some ideas and resources for members who would like to do service for fellows who need our support. We are not alone. We can help each other. And, in doing so, we help ourselves.

Create a Twelfth Step Within (TSW) Service Position

Overeaters Anonymous is a fellowship of people who may not have met otherwise. The methods of recovery from Compulsive Eating are just as varied as the members who constitute OA. With all the different forms of disordered eating and uncontrollable food behaviors that are prevalent among us, “the desire to stop eating compulsively” covers a beautiful diversity of individuals who are all welcome in OA. This truth is dramatically portrayed on the cover of *Overeaters Anonymous*, where twelve strips are interwoven into a tapestry. These strips create a fabric that is stronger than its parts alone, and forms the basis for the unity found in Tradition One.

The first and second meetings are the hardest meetings to attend for the Newcomer. In a disease that is often powered by shame, it is just as hard returning to a meeting after a slip or a period away from OA. For those who take this courageous step, and keep coming back even when no progress seems to be made, and the hope of recovery seems elusive, the fear of rejection becomes soul-crushing. The fellowship is there to embrace the still struggling member with compassion and acceptance, for “together we can.” In sharing our experiences in this way, the unity within our diversity forms the strength that supports personal recovery.

A few groups and meetings have a Twelfth Step Within (TSW) service position. These people have always done outreach calls to members they have missed seeing over a few meetings. Have a Group Conscience Meeting. Would your Intergroup or local meetings find value in adding this position to your service roster?

At the INTERGROUP Level

Create the service position of Twelfth Step Within Committee Chair. Responsibilities may include: Sharing any new conference-approved literature, putting on workshops addressing the issues of relapse and member retention, and reaching out to meetings to offer any literature or support in this area. There are numerous other suggestions in the featured literature listed on the following pages.

At the MEETING Level

Elect a regular meeting attendee to the Twelfth Step Within position. Go through the “We Care” weekly sign-in book, and look for people they may not have seen for a while, take the contact information, and do an outreach call. If anyone new to the meeting identifies as returning from relapse, the TSW person can welcome them back and offer any support such as literature, getting a sponsor, or simply talking. There are numerous other suggestions in the featured literature listed on the following pages.

People may be struggling alone, whether or not they are slipping away, or grappling to come back. They are at a vulnerable place, and that added contact, referral, or outreach call may help more than you know.

Using Literature to Work with those who are Struggling

1. Good for sponsor and new sponsee, or a Twelfth Step Within (TSW) sponsor and relapse returnee:

Curating a list of individuals who have waded through the waters of relapse, or struggled with the OA program, and are willing to share their Experience, Strength and Hope regarding their journey of recovery, may be an invaluable resource for a meeting or Intergroup. We are calling this focus of sponsorship, a "Twelfth Step Within Sponsor." These heroic individuals have discovered a path to healing from a situation that seemed daunting, and are willing to share their hope that recovery is possible to those who are still struggling.

These fellows can guide individuals to become sponsors, provide tools to struggling OA members on how to ask for help, and offer assistance to sponsors who are working with someone through difficulties in their program. Supporting those who support others is crucial, and so, these mentors can be indispensable to Intergroups and meetings.

Temporary Sponsors: Newcomers' First Twelve Days

Recently approved by the World Service Business Conference (WSBC), this PDF was written to help newcomers, returning OA members, sponsees and sponsors alike.

This literature is excellent as both an introduction and a reaffirmation into the OA Program. It works best with a sponsor and sponsee, or any other mentor/mentee pairing.

Download FREE from OA bookstore:

<https://oa.org/group-resources-list/temporary-sponsors-newcomers-first-twelve-days/>

ALL of the questions in the Temporary Sponsors PDF are taken from the Pamphlet: *Where Do I Start? Everything a Newcomer Needs to Know*; so having both pieces of literature is necessary.

Where Do I Start? Everything a Newcomer Needs to Know

A 32-page pamphlet including the Fifteen Questions, Tools (abridged), Plans of Eating, OA Promise, AA Third and Seventh Step Prayers, "Welcome Home," and much more. Help newcomers and those struggling or returning to get started in OA with this comprehensive pamphlet.

Purchase printed pamphlet on OA bookstore:

https://bookstore.oa.org/pc_product_detail.asp?key=044B7B5DE2EC44E6BCA2BE41594DBA5B

Purchase Kindle edition on Amazon:

https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B08DG8YK8J/ref=dbs_a_def_rwt_hsch_vapi_tkin_p1_i5

Purchase Nook edition on Barnes & Noble:

<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/where-do-i-start-overeaters-anonymous/1137431515?ean=2940162699293>

Purchase Apple Book on Apple:

<https://books.apple.com/us/book/where-do-i-start/id1524533694>

2. Good for individual or group work

Been Slipping and Sliding? *

A Reading and Writing Tool, this resource lists 30 questions for daily writing and/or discussion with a sponsor. It has been recommended for those in relapse or anyone who wants to recommit to their OA program.

This is a very inclusive list of 30 questions, the reading is taken from a variety of literature resources. It is generally meant for members who are familiar with program and the literature. It can be used for a single individual, or it could be used with a sponsor, in a meeting or workshop.

Download PDF:

<https://oa.org/app/uploads/2019/12/Been-Slipping-and-Sliding.pdf>

* The readings in this literature come from: OA 12 and 12, second edition; Overeaters Anonymous, third edition; For Today; and pamphlets: The Tools of Recovery; A Plan of Eating; and Dignity of Choice

Twelve Stepping a Problem

This is a writing exercise using the Twelve Steps of OA as an approach to dealing with life's challenges without turning to food.

This can be an exercise for one individual, facing a question or issue that needs attention. It can also be useful as a group writing exercise, or as the focus of a workshop.

Download PDF:

https://oa.org/app/uploads/2019/12/twelve_stepping_a_problem.pdf

3. Good for group activities

Twelfth Step Within Handbook

A must for every group and service body. Focuses on ways to help OA members who still suffer. Includes meeting, retreat and workshop formats; skit and promotional flyer; reading and writing tool; "Recovery Insurance Policy" for support and accountability.

This piece of literature is a gold mine of ideas in relation to Twelfth Step Within service! It offers simple suggestions for individuals, groups, and service bodies. There are recommendations for sponsors working with struggling sponsees. Topics are suggested for workshops, marathons, and retreats, on the subjects of relapse and sponsoring. The idea of a TSW Topic Meeting, including formats and subtopics for speakers and literature studies is introduced. Inventories are outlined, engaging the need for outreach at the personal, meeting, and Intergroup level, as well as supporting the health of each level.

This Handbook is an indispensable resource built to help Intergroups and meetings "extend the heart and hand of OA to all who share my compulsion." In doing so, we nurture those who are struggling, and we may find that we ourselves are among this list at some point in our journey.

"Don't stop 5 minutes before the miracle happens." Those who give Twelfth Step Within service to the best of their ability, increase the quality of recovery within the whole OA fellowship, including assisting in their own spiritual journey.

Purchase Handbook on OA bookstore:

https://bookstore.oa.org/pc_product_detail.asp?key=6CAD649A50734CF8BCC06531F7969710

Any questions?

We, the Twelfth Step Within Committee of Region 2, hope we have provided some useful ideas and resources for your local OA groups.

If you would like to do something on the TSW subject for your Intergroup but need help getting started, we would be happy to speak with you. Please contact us with your questions.

Website:

<https://www.oar2.org>

<https://www.oar2.org/12th-step-within.html#/>

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