

**Workshop:- How to Abstain from Compulsive Eating One day at a Time -**  
**(including - Abstinence / Working the Program / Carrying the Message with specific attention to Newcomers)**  
**OA Region 9 Assembly - Thur 24<sup>th</sup> Nov 2011 17.00 – 18.25**

Materials used:-

- Suggested meeting format (1 for every participant).
- Abstinence Workshop - Writing tool sheet (1 for every participant). (Sheet A attached)
- Abstinence – Lifeline Oct 2000 extract (example given to each group). (Sheet B attached)
- Questions to Ask Newcomers (from A Guide for Sponsors) (1 each for every participant).
- Newcomer Meetings Guidelines (1 for every group)
- Abstinence 'Table Top Questions' (1 for every group – say 5 groups).
- Newcomer Packet as display item & Newcomer meetings Guidelines

Pamphlets displayed:-

- Plan of Eating
- Commitment to Abstinence
- Before you take that first Compulsive Bite
- Think First (pocket card)
- Just for Today (pocket card)
- A guide for Sponsors

Workshop itself:-

- Chair introduced the workshop and explanation as follows :-  
'Welcome to our workshop on abstinence and How to Abstain from Compulsive Eating – it will include the new tool - Action plan and also the Newcomer Meetings packet (not the same as a Newcomer Packet). You will be able to take away the workshop and perform it back home in your own service bodies and then get others in the fellowship to do the same.'

Pass out 'writing tool sheet as attached' and ask participants to write their name and the date on their own sheet.

- Reading from - To the Newcomer \*\*\*\*\* to \*\*\*\*\* as marked in the pamphlet.
- Reading of definition of Abstinence

'Abstinence in Overeaters Anonymous is the action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviours while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight. Spiritual, emotional and physical recovery is the result of living the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve-Step program.'

- Four minutes 'Eleventh Step Sandwich' –

Serenity Prayer

Meditate on - What does my recovery look like?

Step 3 Prayer

Eleventh Step Prayer

Write for 1 minute in top left hand box of 'Abstinence

Workshop - Writing tool sheet'.

- Chair explanation that:-

- whilst the workshop progresses – that the participants are to write in the appropriate sections in the writing tool sheet. i.e. as thoughts spring to mind – draft in and write ideas as they spring to mind what you think are – The benefits of abstinence, definitions of abstinence, and actions taken by the speakers to become and maintain abstinence. It does not have to be neat – these are your rough notes. If you attend the Action Plan workshop at the Convention – you will have a Personal Action Plan to take away.

- Region Secretary told personal story and pass pictures (10 – 12 mins)
- Region Treasurer – -----“-----

*These were told with specific reference to - Things did / still do to 'put down the food' and specifically referring to when first became abstinent and how that was achieved and what continue to do to maintain abstinence.*

- Reading of Action Plan definition from tools pamphlet

'An action plan is the process of identifying and implementing attainable actions, both daily and long – term, that are necessary to support our individual abstinence and emotional, spiritual and physical recovery. While the plan is ours, tailored to our own recovery process, most of us find it important to work with a sponsor, fellow OA member and / or appropriate professional to help create it. This tool, like our plan of eating, may vary widely among members and may need to be adjusted as we progress in our recovery.'

For example, a newcomer's action plan might focus on planning, shopping for and preparing food. Some members may need a regular fitness routine to improve strength and health, while others may need to set exercise limits in order to attain more balance. Some of us may need an action plan that includes time for meditation and relaxation or provides strategies for balancing work, personal interactions with family and friends, and our program. Others may need help to organise their homes; deal with their finance; and address medical, dental or mental health issues.

Along with working the Steps on a daily basis, an action plan may incorporate use of the other OA tools to bring structure, balance and manageability into our lives. As we use this tool, we find that we develop a feeling of serenity and continue to grow emotionally and spiritually while we make measurable progress one day at a time.'

- Split into groups for questions
- Sharing from groups (4 mins each group - answers to be on the R9 web site)
- Close with 3 mins meditation on – **Abstinence Actions**  
Write for 1 minute in abstinence writing tool.  
Eleventh Step Prayer

## Questions for the Groups

### Group 1

- 1) How do you make your meeting a 'school for abstinence'?
- 2) How do your groups encourage subscriptions to Lifeline?
- 3) Does your groups give out a Newcomer Packet to newcomers?
- 4) Does your groups use the Newcomer Meetings Guidelines?

### Group 2

- 5) Name some of the things you did / do to become / remain abstinent?
- 6) How do your groups encourage subscriptions to Lifeline?
- 7) Does your groups give out a Newcomer Packet to newcomers?
- 8) Does your groups use the Newcomer Meetings Guidelines?

### Group 3

- 9) If you are having a Newcomers meeting – which topics would you think are good ones to include?
- 10) How do you deal with the translation and distribution of Lifeline in your language?
- 11) Does your groups give out a Newcomer Packet to newcomers?
- 12) Does your groups use the Newcomer Meetings Guidelines?

### Group 4

- 13) What's the difference between a Plan of Eating and Abstinence?
- 14) How do you deal with the translation and distribution of Lifeline in your language?
- 15) Does your groups give out a Newcomer Packet to newcomers?
- 16) Does your groups use the Newcomer Meetings Guidelines?

### Group 5

- 17) Does your group members all use the OA Meetings Format (as on OA.org) and if so when was the last time they reviewed the latest format and translated it?
- 18) How do you deal with the translation and distribution of Lifeline in your language?
- 19) Does your groups give out a Newcomer Packet to newcomers?
- 20) Does your groups use the Newcomer Meetings Guidelines?

### Group 6

- 21) What pieces of literature does your group recommend to newcomers?
- 22) How do you deal with the translation and distribution of Lifeline in your language?
- 23) Does your groups give out a Newcomer Packet to newcomers?
- 24) Does your groups use the Newcomer Meetings Guidelines?

**Name**

**Date**

In OA, the Statement on Abstinence and Recovery is 'Abstinence is the action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviours while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight. Spiritual, emotional and physical recovery is the result of living the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve Step Program.'

**What does your recovery look like?**

**Benefits of abstinence?**

**Personal Definition of Abstinence**

**Actions required.**

When I look at the attached extract from *Lifeline* magazine Oct 2000 – can I ask myself.

- a) What does abstinence mean to me? b) What are my plans for actions to achieve /maintain abstinence today? & c) What do I see are the benefits of abstinence in me or others?

# Abstinence Actions

These actions helped us to become abstinent and stay abstinent. Maybe they will work for you, too.

- Ask another member to sponsor you, and call your sponsor every day.
- Develop a plan of eating with the help of a nutritionist or your sponsor; commit to following it. Identify and avoid your binge foods.
- Write down what and when you are going to eat each day, and eat only those foods at those times.
- Go to as many OA meetings each week as you can.
- Buy AA's "Big Book" (*Alcoholics Anonymous*), OA's *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and OA's *For Today* (daily meditations book); and read them.
- Subscribe to *Lifeline* magazine, either in print or on-line.
- Take the first three Steps each morning, and ask your Higher Power for abstinence.
- Choose a home meeting, and join it.
- Take a service position.
- Attend a Step meeting each week.
- Seek your Higher Power's will for you each day, and try to follow it.
- Call newcomers to welcome them. Call members you haven't seen at recent meetings, and let them know they are missed.
- Read OA's *For Today* meditation book each day, and discuss the day's topic with other OAers.
- Call your sponsor or another member before you take that first compulsive bite.
- At meetings, express your gratitude to your HP for abstinence.
- Write down your feelings. Try to identify your resentments.
- Volunteer to read or share about a tool or a part of the format at meetings.
- Become a sponsor, and remember that we only sponsor up to the level of our experience. "We give it away to keep it."
- Tell other still-suffering overeaters about OA and how it works. Invite them to a meeting or give them a meeting list.
- When you feel resentment toward another member, talk to the person about it, and ask your Higher Power for help in letting it go.
- Read the "Just For Today" mini-pamphlet each day.
- Before you eat over feelings, share them at meetings or with other OAers.
- Call members other than your sponsor.
- Ask your HP for help when needed.
- Accept your humanness, and let go of striving for perfection.
- Attend shareathons and OA celebrations.
- Let the secretary of your group know when you will observe your OA recovery or abstinence birthday.
- Write an article for *Lifeline*—OA's meeting in print. Give copies of *Lifeline* to others. Leave them in waiting rooms and on buses.
- Share with other OAers by e-mail, remembering anonymity.
- Welcome a member you haven't met before (remember how you felt at your first meeting). Participate in newcomers meetings.
- Volunteer to lead your meeting for a month. Volunteer to be the speaker.
- Help set out or put away the literature at meetings.
- Put your chair back where you found it, and clear away trash left after the meeting.
- Meet members before the meeting or ask other OAers out for coffee, sharing and fellowship after the meeting.
- Call members from the "We Care" sign-in sheet during the week.
- Use the tool of writing each morning by listing five things for which you are grateful. Each evening, write down three things you did well that day and three things you could have done better.
- Visit your intergroup meeting to experience OA above the group level.
- Keep coming back.

**SPONSORSHIP:  
TOGETHER  
WE RECOVER**

**Abstinence Is ...**  
• Abstinence is the ability to control anger and settle differences without resorting to food for comfort.

- Abstinence is the willingness to pass up immediate pleasure in favor of the long-term goal.
- Abstinence is the ability to stick to a commitment despite heavy opposition or discouraging setbacks.
- Abstinence is the capacity to face unpleasantness, discomfort or frustration without complaint or collapse.
- Abstinence is the ability to make a commitment and stand by it. Lack of abstinence is exploring endless possibilities and giving up too soon.
- Abstinence is keeping your word and coming through in a crisis.
- Abstinence is the art of living in peace with that which we cannot change, the courage to change what we can and the wisdom to know the difference.

— Edited and reprinted from *Spirit of Hope newsletter, Land Between the Lakes Intergroup, January 2000*

## Benefits of Abstinence

- Waking in the morning free from the aftereffects of a binge.
- Functioning with new clarity and focus.
- Feeling free of obsessive pre-occupation with food and diets.
- Turning weaknesses into strengths.
- Planning and eating three moderate meals a day.
- Being open to a power greater than myself.
- Letting go of circumstances over which I have no control.
- Having motivation and energy to persevere in spite of difficulties.
- Not manipulating my caloric intake to produce a high.
- Finding challenging activities to add zest to my life.
- Sharing the gift of abstinence with others.
- Growing spiritually.
- Regaining the capacity to experience joy and satisfaction.
- Doing something for someone else.
- Being free from the addictive behavior of food abuse.
- Feeling peaceful and serene.
- Being spontaneous and enjoying unexpected pleasures.
- Delighting in movement and exercise.
- Eating what I need for good health.
- Celebrating my journey with abstinence.

— C.W. New Holstein, Wisconsin USA