

OA in Action Sponsor Guidelines

What is an OA in Action Sponsor? A sponsor is an abstinent member of OA who lovingly shares the experience, strength and hope from their own program of recovery. Sponsors work the 12 Steps and Traditions to the best of their ability. We help our sponsee on all three levels – spiritual, mental and physical. We listen, support and are understanding. We do not hesitate to reach out to others sponsors if we need help guiding our sponsees. We do not need to have all the answers! A sponsor may be following a different OA program and still sponsor using the OA in Action guidelines.

Why should I sponsor? Serving as a sponsor helps reinforce our own recovery. It will strengthen our relationship skills and keeps us from isolating while teaching us to support another human being through love and service.

When and how do I become a sponsor? Ideally an OA in Action Sponsor has 90 days of OA in Action abstinence and has worked the 12 steps to the best of their ability. Simply sponsor up to the level of your experience, sharing your recovery. Remember when someone seeks your sponsorship, it may be the first time they have reached out for help and shared their inner most secrets about their abnormal behaviors around food. It has taken great courage, is the first step of surrender of their will and admission that their life has become unmanageable. Listening is essential, as sponsees express their thoughts and feelings they discover insights into their actions and feelings that may have escaped them before. Please listen with a gentle, non-judgmental ear.

If a sponsee does not follow through, they are not ready, it is not a reflection on you or your recovery. The sponsee/sponsor relationship is based on trust and compassion. If either the sponsee or sponsor feel it is not a good fit, they can respectfully end the relationship without fear of being judged.

OA in Action Sponsorship

1. Explain what OA in Action abstinence is:

We follow a food plan from OA Dignity of Choice, a health-care professional or nutritionist; commit our food daily to our sponsor and report any food changes to our sponsor by the following day. We weigh and measure our food at home for the first 90 days, then work with our sponsor to determine if we continue weighing and measuring. We do not have to weigh and measure when eating out, but commit our food to our sponsor, refrain from added sugar in food and beverages when listed in the first four ingredient or if listed earlier, 2 grams of sugar or less in the nutrition facts label; read and write daily and share our writing with our sponsor; and build a support system by contacting at least one other program fellow daily to share your thoughts or concerns, so that when a problem arises you have a circle of support to trust with these issues.

2. Set a time for your sponsee to connect everyday either through phone, email or text so that they can commit their food choices for the day to you and read what they wrote.

Explain that it is important to connect at the same time everyday, but if something comes up and another time is needed, please do not hesitate to change time or if you are not able to take a connect at that time then they can connect with another sponsor.

3. Request that they choose a food plan from Dignity of Choice or a medical professional.

You may share your food plan with them to get them started. Help them understand food choices and portions. How you weigh and measure your food. Have them share their food plan with you so that you know

what they are to have every day. You may even want to take them shopping for food. Explain that we refrain from **added** sugar in food and beverages when listed in the first four ingredients or if listed earlier, 2 grams of sugar or less in the nutrition facts label. Be sure that they understand the different names of sugar, what added sugar in the list means and that they know how to read a label. Have them grab something from their cupboard and work with them to help them read labels.

Added sugar is listed in many ways. You may find sugar listed as agave, cane juice and cane syrup, corn sweeteners and high fructose corn syrup (HFCS), fruit juice concentrate and nectars, honey, malt syrup, barley malt, molasses, sugar and brown sugar, sugars ending with "ose" (e.g. fructose, glucose, maltose, sucrose, dextrose).

Ask them if they have a scale and measuring cups, if not they need to buy them as they will be weighing and measure food at home for at least the first 90 days. After 90 days we are not required to weigh and measure at home, but most of us have found it helpful to continue doing so to ensure we are using food as fuel not to medicate our feelings.

We do not have to weigh and measure when eating out but commit our food to our sponsor. When your sponsee is going to eat out in restaurants or at someone else's house give them suggestions on what they might order. For example; I will have one broiled chicken sandwich, one salad, no croutons or cheese, two tablespoons of dressing for a fat, one apple or one salad as an entree with salmon, two tablespoons of dressing and a roll or they might order salmon, a baked potato, broccoli and a salad, with no croutons or cheese, two tablespoons of dressing for their fat.

Another idea is to have backup food along in case you are not able to get what you need. For example, string cheese, foil packed tuna, applesauce, nuts for fat, tomato juice, crackers, and dried fruit. Encourage them to plan ahead and if needed call for help!!!

Remind them that they need to eat all of their food, if they get sick they may need to have a "medical" day where they may not be able to eat all their food. Some may need to follow the BRAT (bananas, rice, applesauce, and toast) diet until they are able to eat their normal food plan.

Remind them that they will be contacting you and committing their food every day and reporting their food changes to you by the following day. Encourage them to contact you if something comes up that they have questions about, for example the dog ate their food and they do not know how much the dog ate and what they should do. It is also helpful to ask you and their fellows for suggestions on how to cook in bulk so that their food is ready when they need it, ideas for abstinent brown bag lunches and other abstinent foods recipes.

4. Ensure that they have a list of fellow recovering members to connect. Remind them that they need to contact one other fellow a day, they are not bothering that person, it is a way to build a circle of support and to share ideas on abstinent food and how to deal with difficult situations. It is service to the other person.

5. Read and write daily and share their writing with you. Suggest that they purchase the *Overeaters Anonymous* (Brown Book) and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*. Provide guidance on the questions that they will be using. The questions are available at the meeting or available available online at OainAction.wordpress.com Start with questions from the *Overeaters Anonymous* (Brown Book), then proceed to the questions on the 12 Steps using the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous* with the recovery stories from the *Overeaters Anonymous* (Brown Book) interspersed. It is suggested that we move through the steps in 3 to 6 months.

Listen and praise them for their work...do not criticize their grammar or the length of their writing. They are sharing their innermost secrets with you, it may not be easy for them to be honest about their disease and how it is affecting them. We are not counselors, but trusted servants listening with love and service to our fellow, if they seek your guidance offer it, you may find that a slogan, reading or your experience may be helpful to share with them. There is no benefit to delaying the 4th step, guide them through gently, but with the understanding that relief comes by working the Steps! Stopping our abnormal behaviors around food is not enough, we have to keep working the Steps to be free of thoughts that eat away at our souls.

6. Specific guidance for working the 4th and 5th steps:

4th Step guidance-help your sponsee choose the method to be used for the 4th step, either the OA inventory questions from the OA 12/12 or the chart format. Either one is fine, but the benefit of the questions is that one's memory is jogged by the questions where the chart format does not necessarily trigger thoughts that might be useful in an inventory. There are OA 12/12 Inventory questions in the OA in Action handout box at the meeting. You may also email the documents to them. An OA Inventory guide book is also available for sale at the meeting. Request that your sponsee save their 4th Step inventory as it may be useful for doing Steps Eight and Nine.

There are also local workshops and some online 4th step workshops such as the Rick and Bob 4th Step website: <HTTP://www.aabythebook.org/audio.html>

5th Step guidance-Your sponsee may choose a clergy person or another trusted person with 5th Step experience, do not be offended if they choose someone else. When listening to a 4th Step Inventory you are being trusted to be a good listener. It is essential that you remain open minded and non-judgmental. You may listen and make helpful comments as well as share insights and similar experiences. Remember that it is not easy for the person giving the 5th Step.

Prepare two envelopes. After you listen to the 5th step provide the envelopes with questions for envelop #1 and the answers for #2. These envelopes are in the OA in Action handout box section for sponsors or online at OainAction.wordpress.com

7. It is a good idea to start a daily 10th step inventory using the format from the OA *Sponsoring Through the Twelve Steps* (available in the handout box):

Have resentment, dishonesty, selfishness or fear cropped up?
Did I engage in worry, remorse, guilt or negativity?
Have I asked God if corrective measures need to be taken?
Do I need to discuss something with another person right away?
Have I harmed anyone?
Do I owe an apology?
Do I need to review one or more of the Steps?
Is there someone I need to help?
Do my actions toward others demonstrated love and tolerance?

It is also a good idea to have your sponsee offer three gratitudes for their day after the daily inventory.

8. It may be helpful to seek guidance and support from other sponsors. Remember by taking your sponsee's hand and walking this path with them, you are but an instrument being guided by your higher

power. So keep it simple, one day at a time in love and service.

9. If your sponsee has a slip - eats off their food plan, overeats, purges or restricts then it is a good idea to ask what was going on in their life prior to the slip. Were they angry, resentful or fearful? Hungry, angry, lonely or tired? Did they try to stuff their feelings with food? Have them write on what was going on and suggest they make a list of 5 things they can do differently. It may be time to pull out a 4th Step exercise sheet on resentment or fear...no one is perfect. Encourage them to move on, their abstinent life is more important than leaving the program in shame when a slip occurs. After they complete this review and make a list of 5 things to do differently have them continue their homework where they left off. Please use the OA handout - "Been Slippin and Slidin? A Reading and Writing Tool with 30 questions to be answered.

10. If you the sponsor has a slip. You must tell your sponsee that you had a slip, if you feel you are able to continue sponsoring you may if your sponsee agrees. If you do not feel you can continue at this time please help the sponsee until they can find another sponsor.

11. Using literature to work OA in Action

OA in Action members find that reading literature daily reinforces our ability to live a life free of abnormal behaviors around food. We read daily, write on what we read and share this writing with our sponsor on the phone, by text or email. We might also share our writing with our sponsor, sponsees, and OA fellows as a way of service.

OA in Action members start their recovery with the OA in Action questions from the *Overeaters Anonymous* (Brown Book) and *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*. We study these books to find a plan for recovery and hope, strength and experience by reading the recovery stories. OA in Action questions may be found in the information box at the meeting or online at OainAction.wordpress.com

The OA in Action questions start with the forward and appendices in the *Overeaters Anonymous* (Brown book). Then we begin using *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous* (OA 12 and 12) to work through the Steps. The questions take the sponsee through the Steps by working a step with the OA 12 and 12, then reading a recovery story in the OA brown book. The intent is to have the sponsee work through the 12 Steps within 6 months.

After the sponsee has studied the steps, traditions and all recovery stories in the *Overeaters Anonymous* (Brown book) and *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous* it may be helpful for them to read the AA Big Book pages 1 – 175. The chapters How it Works, There is a Solution, The Doctor's Opinion, Bill's Story and Doctor Bob's Nightmare. Bill and Dr. Bob were the founders of AA offer insight into the disease of addiction. OA is based on the 12 Steps of AA.

The sponsee can read at their own pace, some may read a line, a paragraph, a page or a chapter. We read until we have something to write on, for example, how the reading, touches us or relates to our recovery. After the initial work with the *Overeaters Anonymous* (Brown book) and *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous* the sponsor can guide the sponsee to other OA approved literature listed below or found online at OA.org.

Alcoholics Anonymous (the basic text for addictive recovery, known as the Big Book)

Lifeline- OA's international magazine, serves as an indispensable "meeting-on-the-go."

Available by mail or online at OA.org

OA daily reading books **For Today** and **Voices of Recovery** and companion workbooks

Beyond Our Wildest Dreams (A History of Overeaters Anonymous as Seen by a Co-founder)

Abstinence (Members of Overeaters Anonymous Share Their Experience, Strength and Hope)

OA Pamphlets – There are many to use to focus our study, such as

A Commitment to Abstinence

Welcome Back

Before you take that first compulsive bite, remember

OA Members Come in All Sizes

Maintaining a Healthy Weight

Dignity of Choice

Tools

A Guide for Sponsors

Sponsoring Through the Twelve Steps