# How It Works (Chapter 5 of the Big Book of AA, pp. 58-60)

Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates.  They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.

Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it — then you are ready to take certain steps. At some of these we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.

Remember that we deal with food — cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power – that One is God. May you find Him now! Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon.

Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery:

1. We admitted we were powerless over food — that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and, when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to compulsive overeaters and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Many of us exclaimed, “What an order! I can’t go through with it.” Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after making clear three pertinent ideas:

1. That we were compulsive overeaters and could not manage our own lives.
2. That probably no human power could have relieved our compulsion.
3. That God could and would if He were sought.

# Intentionally Left Blank for Duplex FormattingOur Invitation to You

We of Overeaters Anonymous have made a discovery. At the very first meeting we attended, we learned that we were in the clutches of a dangerous illness, and that willpower, emotional health and self-confidence, which some of us had once possessed, were no defense against it.

We have found that the reasons for the illness are unimportant. What deserves the attention of the still-suffering compulsive overeater is this: *there is a proven, workable method by which we can arrest our illness.*

The OA recovery program is patterned after that of Alcoholics Anonymous. We use AA’s Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, changing only the words “alcohol” and “alcoholic” to “food” and “compulsive overeater.”

As our personal stories attest, the Twelve-Step program of recovery works as well for compulsive overeaters as it does for alcoholics.

Can we guarantee you this recovery? The answer is simple. If you will  honestly face the truth about yourself and the illness; if you will  keep coming back to meetings to talk and listen to other recovering  compulsive overeaters; if you will read our literature and that of Alcoholics Anonymous with an open mind; and, most important, if you are  willing to rely on a power greater than yourself for direction in your  life, and to take the Twelve Steps to the best of your ability, we  believe you can indeed join the ranks of those who recover.

To remedy the emotional, physical and spiritual illness of compulsive overeating we offer several suggestions, but keep in mind that the basis of the program is spiritual, as evidenced by the Twelve Steps.

We are not a “diet and calories” club. We do not endorse any particular plan of eating. We practice abstinence by staying away from eating between planned meals and from all individual binge foods. Once we become abstinent, the preoccupation with food diminishes and, in many cases, leaves us entirely. We then find that, to deal with our inner turmoil, we have to have a new way of thinking, of acting on life rather than reacting to it—in essence, a new way of living.

From this vantage point, we begin the Twelve-Step program of recovery, moving beyond the food and the emotional havoc to a fuller living experience. As a result of practicing the Steps, the symptom of compulsive overeating is removed on a daily basis, achieved through the process of surrendering to something greater than ourselves; the more total our surrender, the more fully realized our freedom from food obsession.

Here are the steps as adapted for Overeaters Anoymous:

1. We admitted we were powerless over food — that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and, when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to compulsive overeaters and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

“But I’m too weak. I’ll never make it!” Don’t worry, we have all thought and said the same thing. The amazing secret to the success of this program is just that: weakness. It is weakness, not strength, that binds us to each other and to a Higher Power and somehow gives us the ability to do what we cannot do alone.

If you decide you are one of us, we welcome you with open arms.  Whatever your circumstances, we offer you the gift of acceptance. You are not alone anymore.

Welcome to Overeaters Anonymous.

# The Promises (9th Step) **(Chapter 6 of the Big Book of AA, pp. 83-84)**

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through.

* We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.
* We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.
* We will comprehend the word serenity, and we will know peace.
* No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.
* That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.
* We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.
* Self-seeking will slip away.
* Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.
* Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us.
* We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.
* We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

        Are these extravagant promises?  **We think not.** They are being fulfilled among us — sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.