

WSBC 2011 Ask-It Basket Questions/Responses

<p>Q. Do OA HOW groups cut themselves off from hearing virtual services trustees speak at their OA HOW meetings?</p>	<p>A. Tradition Three states that the only requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively. When an OA group registers with the WSO, they agree to comply with Tradition Three and the OA, Inc. Bylaws, Subpart B, Article V, which states, “No member is required to practice any actions in order to remain a member or to have a voice (share at a meeting).” Groups may suggest that those who share at a meeting meet additional restrictions, but may not require it. Having said that, any group that limits who may share is cut off from hearing something that may be helpful to their recovery. If I listen with an open heart and mind to everyone who shares, I will always hear something valuable. A newcomer reminds me how serious the disease of compulsive eating is, and how miserable I would be if I returned to compulsive eating. A member in relapse relates a cautionary tale of what happened to lead them back into the disease. What we all have in common is the solution to compulsive eating; a spiritual awakening as the result of working OA’s Twelve Steps. Where we differ is in how we use the tools to assist us in working the Steps. We have different plans of eating, different meeting formats, and different ways of sponsoring. It is shortsighted to assume that just because someone works the details of the program differently than I do, that they are not in recovery and have nothing of value to share.</p>
<p>Q. There is discussion in our intergroup regarding whether or not a person who attends multiple meetings should vote at the group conscience meeting for any group other than his or her home group. Does the BOT have a position on this issue?</p>	<p>A. Tradition Four states, “Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole.” Page 137 in <i>The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions</i> says, “Autonomy means that ... no other group or service body – even inside OA – can dictate group action. There is only one limit to group autonomy in Tradition Four: Groups should not do anything which will injure other groups or OA as a whole. Tradition Four gives OA groups the freedom to do what works best for them. Each group chooses its own meeting place and time, format and practices. Every OA group makes its own decisions – and mistakes – without interference from any governing body other than its own group conscience.” Group autonomy extends to all things that go on within a group that do not impact other groups. The question of who can and cannot vote in the group conscience of each meeting is an issue that impacts that individual meeting and no other. Honoring Tradition Four means that one group can decide for itself that only members that declare that meeting as their home group may vote in the group conscience while another group can decide that anyone attending the meeting may vote. The BOT’s position on this issue is that it is a matter of group autonomy and between the individual member and the group involved.</p>

<p>Q. In my city a state-funded drug and alcohol treatment center offers 12 step groups free rooms for meetings. Is it against the Seventh Tradition to accept free room rental?</p>	<p>A. It is indeed contrary to the basic idea of being fully self supporting. The first thing you should check into is whether they will accept “contributions” as opposed to “rent.” For tax purposes, many facilities cannot “rent” room space, and continue to maintain their current tax status but they can accept “contributions.” If that does not solve the problem, then ask to speak to the facility administrator. There are few, if any, facilities which will not sort out a manner of accepting contributions. Since this is a facility which is acutely aware of 12 step programs, I am certain they will understand the concept of self supporting and will work with your group to come up with a solution.</p>
<p>Q. Regarding the entertainment skits/plays offered at WS Conventions, is this reviewed/ approved by anyone on the board regarding content and suitability?</p>	<p>A. Yes, skits and plays are reviewed and approved by the Convention Subcommittee (four trustees) ideally four months before the Convention. The entertainment chair (a local person) stays in contact with the Convention chair through the rehearsal process. Of course, we do not have any control over the performers at the Convention except to expect they will stick to the script. As for comedians, there is no subcommittee approval of their work, as they all improvise their routines. They all have been OA members and they are all told to keep it clean. There is nothing more a committee can do, barring canceling the show. In the future this kind of entertainment may not be chosen for the general sessions but could be more appropriate for small venues like Café OA.</p>
<p>Q. Is there an abstinence requirement for delegates to WSBC, or is that an intergroup decision?</p>	<p>A. Yes, there is an abstinence requirement for delegates to WSBC, as stated on the Delegate Registration Form, under Delegate(s) Information. This states: “Each delegate must sign in the signature field affirming that he/she is in compliance with OA, Inc. Bylaws, Subpart B, Article X, Section 3c) 1.” Namely: “Qualifications for selection of World Service delegates/alternates shall be set by each intergroup, region (in the case of region delegates) or service board provided that each delegate/alternate shall have at least one year of current abstinence and at least two years of service beyond the group level.”</p>
<p>Q. What is the best way to handle a visitor at a business meeting who refuses to sit in the visitor section?</p>	<p>A. Perhaps you could pass a note to your region chairman; he/she could speak directly to the visitor and request that they move to the visitor section. Another option is to send a note to the chairman of the Board of Trustees to make a general announcement, as to not draw undue embarrassment to the visitor. Thirdly, the Conference Support Committee (CSC) may be able to help. You could notify a page to let the CSC chair know that there is a problem.</p>

<p>Q. Small intergroup with difficulty filling position, much less rotation of service. Recently group conscious okayed treasurer to stay in position with loss of abstinence. With understanding abstinence must be regained in time period, were we right in that decision?</p>	<p>A. My experience is that it is very hard to know what the “right” decision is in these situations. I will assume that your bylaws state that officers must be abstinent to hold a position. I believe that having abstinence requirements is the best policy, because many people are irresponsible and unreliable when they are overeating and under the influence of binge foods. However I also know several people who do excellent service for OA and are not abstinent. The local intergroup in my area functioned for several years without abstinence requirements. About two years ago they passed a bylaw change to make abstinence requirements for important intergroup officers and those who handle money. I believe that this has increased the commitment of the “trusted servants” serving our area. This is always the ideal situation. I know that it would be VERY important not to allow someone to continue to promise abstinence within a time period and not be able to get or stay abstinent. Therefore if your treasurer is unable to be abstinent it would be better to have her step down and concentrate on her recovery. Sometimes we tend to want to keep the “waters smooth” so much that we allow things to continue past what is best for everyone. You never know if this might just be the “bottom” needed for this person to get abstinent. There are several things that your intergroup can do to be proactive in general and help service be more “attractive” for OAers in your area. I have seen some wonderfully creative and welcoming things done at intergroups to help.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make intergroup a fun place to come and a “recovery zone”.• Ask if there are newcomers at the intergroup and let them know that the service structure may seem unfamiliar.• Tell the newcomers there are “No Dumb Questions” and take the time to explain things so they understand.• Get reports from individual meetings first – good stuff and possible problems. Ask other intergroup representatives for possible solutions.• Have people introduce themselves, tell what meeting they represent or what office they hold and ask them to share their favorite Step or Tradition or color or animal (remind them to be brief).• Thank people for their service and emphasize projects well done. Maybe you do not have twenty committees but maybe the two you do have are doing a GREAT job. We all need praise. These positive actions at intergroup will do MORE in the long run to help create a stronger intergroup than putting rules in place and enforcing the rules. We can do together what we cannot do alone and that includes supporting groups by providing good services via the local intergroup.
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<p>Q. What is OA's standing on meeting formats (HOW) that have changed Chapter 3 and Chapter 5 from alcohol/alcoholism to overeater/compulsive overeating?</p>	<p>A. There is an article in <i>A Step Ahead</i> (Third Quarter 2010) which speaks to this question (http://www.oa.org/pdfs/asa_q3_10.pdf). I refer you to the entire article, and I will quote a portion of the article, as it gives the AA General Service Office opinion (dated January 22, 2010) which addresses this question and states in part: "Although the First and Second editions of <i>Alcoholics Anonymous</i> are in the public domain of the United States, it has always been Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. ("AAWS") board's position to request the cooperation of other fellowships based on AA's Steps, Traditions, etc. in protecting the integrity of the AA message as conveyed in <i>Alcoholics Anonymous</i>. AAWS has historically permitted the adaptation of the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions by other fellowships. However, when it comes to other AA materials, the board does not feel that it is appropriate for other fellowships to substitute any other words where the words such as 'alcoholics,' 'alcoholism' appear in the original text." It is the intention of the Board of Trustees of OA to honor the request from AA as a matter of respecting OA's historical relationship with AA. OA has a Suggested Meeting Format which many groups use. It can be found at http://www.oa.org/pdfs/suggested_meeting_format.pdf. The requirements for an OA HOW group are the same as for an OA group. For more information on OA HOW format groups, please refer to the FAQ section http://www.oa.org/faq.php.</p>
<p>Q. Our meeting rents its meeting room from the local government and rent has doubled in two years. It is struggling to find cheaper rooms. The local government said that non-profit organizations can apply for grants from the local government. The meeting declined due to concern about Tradition Seven. Was this correct or could OA apply for a grant to help pay rent and/or get reduced rent?</p>	<p>A. As you know, each group is autonomous. Your meeting might investigate the local government's offer and discover that the grants are available to any nonprofit organization in the area. Some members believe that OA would not be getting special treatment, and could consider availing itself of the available grants. However, if there are restrictions, this would not be in the spirit of the Traditions and would be considered an outside donation. Nevertheless, the general consensus is that if the group avails itself of the local government's offer, the group would not be self-supporting. This is not an easy question to answer. Your members may wish to discuss this again and see if they can reach substantial unanimity.</p>

<p>Q. What do you recommend if someone exhibits disruptive behavior during a meeting, and doing a group conscience about it has not helped?</p>	<p>A. There are many helpful downloads available on the OA Web site. In this case, reading the <i>Guidelines for Addressing Disruptive Behavior at Overeaters Anonymous Meetings</i> (http://www.oa.org/pdfs/disruptive_behavior.pdf) may help to give you some options on some actions you can take. There is another great download, the Strong Meeting Checklist (http://www.oa.org/pdf/StrongMtgChecklist.pdf). This may also be helpful for future problems. You can also ask for help from your local intergroup or region. Your region trustee can do a workshop on strong meetings and other topics that would strengthen your group.</p>
<p>Q. What are the WSO's thoughts on the wording: "We are recovering compulsive overeaters vs. recovered?"</p>	<p>A. The World Service Office is a clearing house. The World Service Office staff follows the directions of WSBC delegates and the Board of Trustees. The fourteen paid staff members conduct OA's day-to-day operations. Much of the OA literature uses the words recovery or recover. As long as we are sticking to our primary purpose of abstinence we as members of OA will recover. The basic text book <i>Alcoholics Anonymous</i> on its title page gave the first promise of hope. In the foreword to the First Edition, the AA book goes on to teach that more than a hundred men and women have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. And that is precisely the main purpose of the book to show other alcoholics how they recovered. This page goes on to say: "And besides we are sure that our way of life has its advantages for all." Over 51 years ago the Overeaters Anonymous program was patterned after Alcoholic Anonymous. OA adapted this way of life. As a recovered compulsive overeater I can share this promise of recovery is true for me. I live a recovered life. My mind and my body are not hopeless; I have found hope. A day at a time I do have the reprieve.</p>
<p>Q. Our intergroup struggles to find money to send delegates to WSBC. If we spend time and effort doing fundraising activities (not by using OA program activities) is this contrary to the Traditions (particularly Tradition Five)? That is, should we only do OA program activities?</p>	<p>A. According to Tradition Seven we have to decline outside contributions. That is why we usually have our fundraising at OA program activities. I believe that we can have a fundraising event for OA members that is not part of an OA activity. This would include such activities as a garage sale and any other activity OA members contribute items and the income is then contributed to OA. I believe that if an OA member is doing an activity even not for OA members and then contributes the income as a personal contribution, it's still in accordance with Tradition Seven. I don't see any problem with Tradition Five.</p>

<p>Q: Can we, OA meetings, still use “Our Invitation to You” in our format since some of it comes from the Big Book? We aren’t sure because of one of the motions at Conference 2011.</p>	<p>A: “Our Invitation to You” as read at OA meetings is excerpted from a section by that title in the very beginning of our own book <i>Overeaters Anonymous</i>. If you check the Suggested Meeting Format on oa.org you will see it mentioned there by name. The confusion comes in part from the need to use AA literature in the early days of OA before we had published our own books. At that time we read the excerpt from the AA Big Book called “How It Works” on pp. 58-59 at meetings. “Our Invitation to You” was a replacement written by OA members for OA members. It is included in our OA book which was approved by the collective group conscience of Overeaters Anonymous as expressed at Conference. More confusion comes from a motion at the 2011 World Service Business Conference referring to AA literature that failed and thus made no change in literature policy regarding AA literature. The confusion came up because the issue was raised at all. The failed motion wanted to remove all AA literature except the Big Book and the AA 12&12 from the OA-approved literature list. The failure of the motion means meetings can continue to use and display the AA literature on this OA-approved list. The list is found on oa.org under Guidelines in the documents section.</p>
<p>Q. Can you explain which literature goes to different bodies for approval and why (which goes to WSBC, Board of Trustees, any other)?</p>	<p>A. Literature that is to be used by the Fellowship as a whole is developed and/or reviewed by the delegates of the Conference-Approved Literature Committee and the Board of Trustees; and then voted on by the delegates of the annual World Service Business Conference (WSBC). This is Conference-approved literature. Literature that is used for public information, professional outreach and group business/management purposes (Seventh Tradition Guidelines and Suggested Group Formats, for example) is reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees. This is Board-approved literature. Content on the OA Web site, oa.org, and within <i>Lifeline</i> is reviewed for adherence to the Twelve Traditions of OA by the WSO managers and the trustees serving on the Board of Trustees’ Internal Information Committee. Our ultimate authority is a Higher Power as expressed in our group conscience. When the Fellowship adopts literature for use within the Fellowship as a whole, we follow the principle of “unity” implicit in both Tradition One and Concept One: That the collective conscience of OA has reviewed the literature and is in substantial agreement (agreeing by at least two-thirds) that it should be adopted. It would be impractical to have the WSBC review all our literature, as this would require the time and expense of many more days of business meetings. Instead, Concept Nine speaks of trusted servants with carefully defined service authority. For reviewing remaining publications, that is what is given to the Board of Trustees and its Board-Approved Literature and Internal Information Committees.</p>

<p>Q. Is there an official name for the statement/prayer that starts “I put my hand in yours” and ends with “we find love and understanding beyond our wildest dreams?”</p>	<p>A. Members have referred to this prayer as “Rozanne’s Prayer” and “I Put My Hand in Yours” prayer. The actual title is “The OA Promise I Put My Hand in Yours.” In accordance with Continuing Effects Motion 1993a: We, the 1993 Business Conference of Overeaters Anonymous, suggest that OA meetings and events be closed with the following: the Serenity Prayer, the Seventh Step Prayer, the Third Step Prayer or the OA Promise I Put My Hand in Yours.</p>
<p>Q. Is it a good idea to increase length of a service position (i.e. decrease rotation in order to keep positions at any board level)?</p>	<p>A. While rotation of service is important for all service bodies, the time associated with that rotation is up to each service body and is usually based on the level of recovery and service in that body. For example a small intergroup with only a few abstinent members might have longer service terms but as that intergroup strengthens and grows and more people qualify and are available for service positions, those length of terms may shorten.</p>
<p>Q. Does O-ANON still exist? Could we revive it?</p>	<p>A. O-ANON was never affiliated with OA and is an outside issue. It was a support organization for people impacted by compulsive eaters. Much like the organization Alanon cooperates with Alcoholics Anonymous, O-ANON cooperated with Overeaters Anonymous. We have no further knowledge about this organization.</p>