

Been Slipping and Sliding? A Reading and Writing Tool

The following 30 questions are for use in daily writing and/or discussion with a sponsor by members who want to stop “slipping and sliding.” The questions are also recommended for those in relapse who want to recommit to their OA program.

The OA literature referenced for the writing is available from OA’s WSO. It includes *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous (OA 12&12)*, *Overeaters Anonymous*, Second Edition (*OAI*), the Overeaters Anonymous daily meditation book *For Today* and the OA pamphlets, *The Tools of Recovery*, *A Plan of Eating* and *Dignity of Choice*.

Read the suggested material(s), then reflect and write on the accompanying idea or question:

(1) Read the story “Abstinence, not Perfection” in *OAI* and pages 19-22 in Step Three in the *OA 12&12*. What does “abstinence” mean to me physically, emotionally and spiritually?

(2) Read Step Two in the *OA 12&12*, especially pages 9-11. How did I know that my eating was out of control?

(3) Do I have a devastating disease that leads me to return to food for comfort? If so, how much pain does this cause me? How could my disease kill me? Some readings in our OA literature that might help on this question are:

(a) In the *OA 12&12*, pages 10-11, especially the paragraph starting at the bottom of page 10 with “Those of us who were overweight . . .” and ending on page 11 with “Some of us tried it.”

(b) In *OAI*, in the story “Abstinence, Not Perfection,” starting near the bottom of page 44 with “Then one day my wife called me at work . . .” through the next paragraph ending on p. 45 with “. . . a lesson in purity through exercise and starvation.”

(c) In *OAI*, in the story “It Gets Better, I Promise,” especially from “I was certainly unhappy . . .” near the bottom of page 79 through “I knew I was dying” on page 80.

(d) The story, “Sink the Lollipop!” found in *OAI*.

(4) Read “He Never Let a Hot Doughnut Get Cold” in *OAI*, with special attention to the paragraph at the top of page 33. What made the difference that brought the author to renewed abstinence? How would I describe my willingness to accept that this program may be more difficult once my previous abstinence has eluded me?

(5) The paragraph starting on the bottom of page 58 of the story “It’s Elementary” in *OAI* describes one person’s original plan of eating (“My first plan of eating was three binges a day.”). The OA pamphlets *A Plan of Eating* and *Dignity of Choice* are possible resources for considering an appropriate food plan for continuing in Overeaters Anonymous. Both eating behaviors and specific quantities of each food group are worth considering. What was my food plan in earlier efforts to work the program? What is it now? What changes do I need to make?

(6) Read all three appendices A, B and C of *OAI*. Discuss the idea that “my main problem as a compulsive eater is in my mind rather than in my body.”

(7) The May 26th entry in *For Today* refers to “distorted ideas.” Researching the “before” thinking in *OAI* stories might help me identify some of my own distorted ideas. What were my thoughts before I indulged in that first compulsive bite?

(8) Read pages 23-27 of Step Three in the *OA 12&12*; also read the January 12th entry in *For Today* for one illustration of thinking that can lead to compulsive eating. In what ways is my thinking irrational when I believe that I can take just one bite?

(9) The April 18th entry in *For Today* starts with the problem of denial, described in different words. The May 22nd entry gets very pointed on the subject of denial. The January 21st selection gives the OA perspective that works in place of denial. How did denial play a part in my relapse?

(10) Read “Our Invitation to You” in *OAI*. Is this an unconditional or conditional guarantee? How does the Overeaters Anonymous statement that there is a proven, workable method by which we can arrest our illness affect my willingness to depend on the Twelve Steps?

(11) Read two paragraphs in Step 10 of the *OA 12&12*, pages 84-85, starting with “In Step Four, for instance, we . . .” through the paragraph ending “. . . through our practice of Step Ten.” Which of the following signs of relapse have I noticed in myself? As I read stories in *OAI*, let me make notes of which stories apply to the items I have checked in this list.

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|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Argumentative | <input type="checkbox"/> Forgetting gratitude |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cockiness | <input type="checkbox"/> Frustration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Complacency | <input type="checkbox"/> Grief |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Defiance | <input type="checkbox"/> Impatience |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Denial | <input type="checkbox"/> “It can’t happen to me” |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Depression | <input type="checkbox"/> Letting up on discipline |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dishonesty | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-pity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eating my binge foods | <input type="checkbox"/> Use of mood-altering chemicals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exhaustion | <input type="checkbox"/> Wanting too much |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expecting too much of others | |

(12) How much willingness do I have to stop living in my problem(s) and start living in the solution(s)? Am I willing to memorize and to remind myself daily of the OA

Promise? This promise is as follows: *“I Put My Hand in Yours, and together we can do what we could never do alone! No longer is there a sense of hopelessness, no longer must we each depend upon our own unsteady willpower. We are all together now, reaching out our hands for power and strength greater than ours, and as we join hands, we find love and understanding beyond our wildest dreams.”* (Found on page 207 of the OA book ***Beyond Our Wildest Dreams.***)

(13) The words, “But all this self-knowledge could not stop me from eating compulsively” are at the top of page 67 in ***OAI***. Also read pages 23-27 of Step Three in the ***OA 12&12***. I will write about the truth of this statement in my own life: “Self-knowledge and knowing the consequences were not enough to prevent my compulsive eating behavior.”

(14) Read the entry for January 13th in ***For Today***. How do I understand the term “relapse”? How do I understand the term “slip”? How do I think they are different from each other?

(15) Read the story “Alive and Well and Living in the Real World,” ***OAI***, pp. 64-71. Note this passage: “No amount of willpower was sufficient to stop me from eating when the craving arose.”(p. 67). What does my last eating binge tell me about my powerlessness against that first compulsive bite?

(16) In addition to reading Step One in the ***OA 12&12***, also read the entries for March 17th, March 24th and April 5th in ***For Today***. How willing am I to admit that I am powerless over food and that my life is unmanageable?

(17) Read the OA pamphlet ***The Tools of Recovery***. How do I use each of the OA tools of recovery? How frequently do I use them?

(18) Read the February 21st and July 6th selections in ***For Today***. What will I do to stop thinking and speaking negatively about myself? How will I replace such self-defeating thinking?

(19) Read the May 16th entry in ***For Today***. Read the story “Journey through Deception” in ***OAI***. How will I give up reasons and excuses for eating compulsively and for not embracing the solution offered in Overeaters Anonymous?

(20) In ***OAI*** read the story, “Abstinence, Not Perfection,” starting on page 47 with “Things are now immensely better with my family” . . . through “Things steadily changed,” on page 48. In what ways am I willing to believe that I must change or I will not recover?

(21) Read the story, “The Atheist Who Made a Zif,” in ***OAI***, then read Step Two in ***For Today***. Willingness to pray is open-mindedness to the experiment of praying, rather than a conviction that prayer will “work.” How do I gain the needed willingness to pray for the willingness to work the OA program? When I have trouble being willing to pray, how can I not worry about whether I “really mean it” and have patience with myself and my practice of the program?

(22) Read Step Two in the ***OA 12&12***, paying special attention to the paragraph that starts near the bottom of page 14 and continues to the top of page 15, ending with “which could restore us to sanity.” Am I willing to believe in a Higher Power that would give me the comfort and security I am seeking when I turn to food? How do I cultivate an effective

relationship with such a Higher Power?

(23) Read pages 60-61 of the story “It’s Elementary” in *OAI*. How can I recognize when my intuition and my Higher Power are giving me messages? In what ways can I “listen” to those messages by writing about them and applying them in my new way of life?

(24) Read Step Three in the *OA 12&12*. What are my Higher Power’s intentions for me regarding food and the other aspects of my life? How can I bring my will into line with my Higher Power’s will?

(25) Read “Saying Yes to Life,” which starts on page 101 of *OAI*, and January 31st in *For Today*. How will I commit myself to the life that my Higher Power is giving me and to practice the tools and work the Steps of Overeaters Anonymous?

(26) Read the July 22nd entry in *For Today* and read the first three paragraphs of Step Ten in the *OA 12&12*. How do I feel about the idea that freedom from food obsession is contingent upon the daily practice (repetition, repetition, repetition without exception) of surrender to “whatever it takes”?

(27) Do I agree that spiritual dependence is the only means of escaping from the destruction of compulsive eating? What is called for in this question is moving into Step Three. Read the story “Alive and Well and Living in the Real World” in *OAI*, and then read the first two paragraphs of Step Three in the *OA 12&12*. Am I ready to agree? Let me write down where I am, honestly, with Steps One, Two and Three.

(28) Consider the June 23rd entry in *For Today*. Additionally, read in the story, “She Found Herself,” in *OAI* the paragraph on page 40 that starts, “My sponsor reminded me that a decision is not a decision unless . . .” through “. . . and filled a large spiral notebook.” What about my willingness to commit to using the tools and working the Steps on a daily basis? What specific actions(s) will I take between now and this time tomorrow?

(29) Read “The Miracle of the Twentieth Century,” in *OAI*, starting on page 50. Even early founders experienced relapse (see the first and second stories in *OAI*). What actions can I take to ensure that relapse is not inevitable?

(30) Read the December 25th entry in *For Today*. They say that the longest journey begins with but a single step. The April 7th entry in *For Today* suggests such a first step. Going to a meeting with even a single day of abstinence to share is a service. With what services have I been served? What service has been a part of my program up until now? To what length am I now willing to go for my recovery by giving back to OA? Am I ready to apply the OA Responsibility Pledge: “Always to extend the hand and heart of OA to all who share my compulsion; for this I am responsible.”