**FRIDAY NOON/ TUESDAY 7am (ET)**

**OA F2F/ZOOM MEETING**

**SPECIAL FOCUS ON ATHEISTS AND AGNOSTICS (#56851)**

Bethesda Library, 7400 Arlington Rd. Bethesda, MD 20814
Noon to 1 p.m. ET/ 7-8a ET
Usually we meet in the collaboration rooms at the far end.
Format revised April 3, 2020

Welcome to the \_\_\_\_\_ Meeting of Overeaters Anonymous with a special focus on atheists and agnostics. My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I am your Secretary for this meeting and a compulsive overeater.

Are there any other compulsive overeaters here?

Will those who care to please join me in the OA Promise:

**Promise**
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.

We begin with a few reminders about Zoom:
1. Please mute yourself at all times when you are not speaking.
[\*6 mutes/unmutes telephone members]

2. Please enter your contact information in the Chat. In this meeting we take turns reading our script (pass the script around.)

Overeaters Anonymous is a fellowship of individuals who, through shared experience, strength, and hope, are recovering from compulsive overeating and other behavior around food. We welcome everyone who wants to stop eating compulsively. There are no dues or fees for members; we are self-supporting through our own contributions, neither soliciting nor accepting outside donations. OA is not affiliated with any public or private organization, political movement, ideology, or religious doctrine; we take no position on outside issues. Our primary purpose is to abstain from compulsive food behaviors and to carry the message of recovery including the Twelve Steps of OA to those who still suffer.

This meeting was started because many of us with long and short periods of abstinence in OA do not believe in God, at least not a masculine, Christianity-based deity who will intervene in our lives and make us abstinent. There are many atheists and agnostics in Alcoholics Anonymous and all the other 12 Step programs.

There are over 500 AA meetings with a special focus on us. There have been such meetings in OA since the 1970's. Besides this meeting there are at least two other such OA meetings by Zoom and two by phone on Sunday morning and Wednesday evening. We hope to inspire many more. You do not have to believe in God to stop eating compulsively in OA.
However, stopping eating compulsively in OA can be harder for agnostics and atheists. It can be hard to feel the need to translate the word “God” every time we hear it or read it. It can be hard not to get angry every time God is assumed to be masculine or Christian. It can be hard when other people in the room at other meetings look down, shift in their seats or engage in cross-talk when we mention our belief—or lack of it—and try to convert us after the meeting or tell us we will return to overeating if we do not believe in God.

There have been agnostics and atheists in 12 Steps since Jim B. and others got Bill W. to tone down the Christian language and practices which he and Dr. Bob took from the Oxford Group and found useful in their own recovery. That is why the Steps say “God as we understand him,” why the Traditions say “the only requirement for membership is the desire to stop drinking (or in our case eating compulsively) and why the Steps are described as “suggested” only.

This meeting is part of Overeaters Anonymous. Therefore, we make use of the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions of OA and only read conference-approved literature during the meeting. However, since we have a Special Focus on Atheists and Agnostics and much of the literature refers to God and uses masculine language, please feel free to make whatever adjustments in language when reading either out loud or silently which are useful to your recovery. We will be doing the same.

We also welcome those who believe in God.

After 45 minutes, the formal part of our meeting ends, you are welcome to stay. We will read and discuss other materials from the secular 12-step movement for 15 minutes. If you would like to know more about the movement of atheists and agnostics in OA and other 12 Step programs and the literature and other resources from those movements which we have found helpful to our recovery, please consult with members of this meeting at the meeting end, or with your sponsor. Some of us will stay after the hour for this purpose or to answer any other questions you have about OA.

If you are wondering how to work the Steps without God, we recommend the Lifeline article: “When OA is your Higher Power,” by Alan S. the October, 2018, issue. We have copies for sale and give one to each newcomer.

As Bill W. the Founder of AA put it: “It must never be forgotten that the purpose of Alcoholics Anonymous is to sober up alcoholics (or, in our case, help other compulsive overeaters abstain from compulsive food behaviors.) There is no religious or spiritual requirement for membership. No demands are made of anyone. An experience is offered which members may accept or reject. That is up to them.” Bill W.

Is there anyone here new to OA or new to this meeting? [If yes… Could you give us your first name? Is there anyone here for the second or third time?]

In our quest to find OA literature that is not restimulating to us, we have decided to read a Step or Tradition each week from 12 and 12 in this supportive environment. We can discuss our reactions to the language when we do our sharing. You may make adjustments as necessary to your recovery as you read, but please try and save long reactions until we share.

Today's reading is:
Would someone please begin reading?

At the conclusion of the reading, after about 20 minutes, would someone please make a note of where we stopped on the We Care list.

At this meeting we identify sponsors. If you do not have a sponsor, we urge you to get one. Often a busy sponsor will take on a new person for a few phone calls to get started. Having a sponsor has been vital to many of us getting abstinent. If you are a sponsor please identify yourself and say whether you’re available or would be willing to take phone calls. If you are not a sponsor, you do not have to identify yourself.

It is time for the Seventh Tradition. Every OA group ought to be self-supporting, declining outside contributions. OA World Service suggests that we contribute $5, if we can. With these funds, we buy literature and pay other expenses as needed. We also contribute any surplus after our expenses and a prudent reserve to the more broadly-based service bodies of OA. Please send your contribution via Pay Pal or Zenmo to: (treasurer info here). If you are a newcomer, please feel free to contribute or not.

You could use your money to buy literature.

We will now open the meeting for sharing our experience, strength, and hope with each other. We avoid crosstalk. Please do not interrupt when someone is speaking unless there is an emergency. Please don't speak directly to another person, comment on specific shares or give advice. In this meeting, we do not mention specific foods. If there are newcomers present, we suggest that we tell a little of our history in OA as part of our shares. Typically, our stories include: what it was like, what happened and what is it like now. Please be considerate of others and limit our sharing to 3 minutes (or less if it is a large meeting.) Do we have a timekeeper who will signal when three minutes have passed? When the timer sounds, please wrap up very quickly. If you need to share something else to stay abstinent, you can speak again after everyone who wants to has already shared, or you can talk to someone after the meeting.
We discuss business after the hour. If there is a need for group conscience, we will pause after 40 minutes on the following week. The floor is now open for three minute shares.
(Sharing)

If everyone has shared who wants to and there is a long silence, the group has decided to let anyone who wishes to propose five minutes of silent time for writing, reading or meditating.

(After 45 minutes) We are out of time. (or “Has everyone shared who wants to?”) Would those of you who have not shared care to identify yourselves? Anonymity is the basis of our program, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities: remember, who you saw here, what you heard here, unless you brought it here, let it stay here.

We close the formal part of his meeting by holding hands and saying the OA

**Responsibility Pledge**
Always to extend the hand and heart of OA to all who share my compulsion; for this I am responsible.

Now is the time many of us stay for fifteen minutes of secular reading and sharing. Many of us will also stay after the hour to answer questions and socialize. Each week a member is assigned to bring AA secular reading which others in 12 Step programs have found helpful to their recovery. A list of such readings is available (also below.)

After the secular reading ,we will take turns sharing. We follow the same rules in this sharing about cross talk. Today's reading is:
(Secular volunteer begins reading)

Our time is up. Many of us will stay on line to socialize and discuss any business.

Let us close by holding hands and repeating the OA Promise, “ I put my hand in yours.”
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.

**Secular 12-Step Readings Members of the Group have found useful**
Beyond Belief: Agnostic Musings for 12 Step Life. Joe C. Rebellion Dogs Publishing, Toronto, Canada. 2014.
The Little Book: A Collection of Alternative 12 Steps. Yellow Square Books (Menifee, CA, U.S.A.)