

**Participants dial 712-775-7031. Enter PIN 519003816. To mute and/or unmute press \*6. Moderator code 2407#. Mute entry/exit tones press \*8. Mute everyone press \*5. Unmute press \*6.**

## SARASOTA HOW FORMAT MEETING OF OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS

Thursday 6:30-8:30 PM Face-to-Face in Sarasota, Florida plus Phone Participants

(Note to Leader: Anniversary night - before the meeting starts, place the roses and candle on the table and light it.  
Step-Up night – before the meeting starts, place the cactus and the 5 candles on the table but do not light them.)

1. Welcome to the Sarasota Thursday evening HOW Format meeting of Overeater's Anonymous. My name is \_\_\_. I am a compulsive overeater and your leader for this meeting.
2. To open the meeting, let us have a moment of silence, followed by the Serenity Prayer. \_ \_ \_  
*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the Courage to change the things I can, and the Wisdom to know the difference. Thy will not mine be done, Amen.*
3. I assume that I am not alone this evening, but for the record, are there any other compulsive eaters at this meeting beside myself?
4. This meeting uses a telephone conference line so that members in other areas may attend our meeting. The following are suggested guidelines to help keep the meeting running smoothly:
  - a. In this room, we pass a microphone to members who are speaking so that members on the conference call can hear us.
  - b. We ask all members on the conference line to keep their phone muted by pressing \*6. If you wish to speak, press \*6 to unmute. When you are done speaking, press \*6 to mute again.
  - c. If you experience audio difficulty or get disconnected, please call the conference line again. If we get disconnected, please stay on the line, we will call back into the conference line.
  - d. If you are late for the meeting or if you get disconnected and call back in, please do not follow the prompt to announce yourself.
  - e. You may download our meeting format from [www.oahowphonemeetings.com](http://www.oahowphonemeetings.com) on the link labeled "Thursdays."
  - f. If you would like to join our group, be a speaker or a leader, or request a phone list, please send an email to [oahowsarasota@gmail.com](mailto:oahowsarasota@gmail.com).

As for attendees in this meeting room:

- a. Please turn off the Bluetooth on your cell phone so it does not interfere with our microphone.
- b. The "We Care" book will be circulated twice, the first time for you to list your name and number and the second time for you to take names and numbers to call during the week.

- c. Because of sensitivity, please refrain from wearing fragrances at this meeting. We ask that, if you do need to eat during the meeting, you please eat quietly in the back of the room. We encourage members to be fully present at this meeting by avoiding cell phone use and/or other distracting activities as this helps add to the quality of our meeting.
5. Preamble: Overeaters Anonymous is a Fellowship of individuals who, through shared experience, strength, and hope, are recovering from compulsive overeating. 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 eating and compulsive food behaviors and to carry the message of recovery through the Twelve Steps of OA to those who still suffer.
6. In deference to AA's General Service Office's wishes that OA not modify AA literature, this meeting reads excerpted passages exactly as written in "Alcoholics Anonymous" (the Big Book), and the AA Twelve and Twelve. Feel free to privately substitute 'food' and 'compulsive eater' for 'alcohol' and 'alcoholic.'

7. What is HOW: I've asked \_\_\_ to read.

HOW is a movement within Overeaters Anonymous whose basic principle is that abstinence is the only means to freedom from compulsive overeating and the beginning of a spiritual life.

Where And Why Did HOW Begin? HOW began in Phoenix in 1981, as a means of reviving a group called "OA Victorious." Its meeting format is taken from Rozanne's book, I Put My Hand In Yours, and centers around the concept of service. Many of the questions used in HOW sponsoring stem from OA Plus and Westminster groups. The outline of service came from the OA Suffolk County, New York, sponsor's guide.

8. The Only Requirement: I've asked \_\_\_ to read.

Overeater's Anonymous respects the autonomy of each OA group. We do suggest, however, that any group which has requirements in addition to the suggested Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions inform its members that these requirements are what that particular group has found effective in working the program and do not represent OA as a whole.

The members of this group have found the HOW concept to be effective in working the OA program. The opinions expressed by those who share, are their own and not necessarily those of OA. We understand the Third Tradition to

mean that individual ways of working one's program should not exclude any compulsive overeater from attendance and participation at OA meetings anywhere, anytime.

The only requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively. Anyone who says he or she is a member of OA is a member. We of Overeaters Anonymous welcome all members with open arms.

#### 9. The HOW Concept: I've asked \_\_\_ to read.

The Overeaters Anonymous HOW meetings have been formed to offer the compulsive overeater, who accepts the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions as a program of recovery, a disciplined and structured approach. HOW groups are formed in the belief that our disease is absolute, and that only absolute acceptance of the OA program will offer any sustained abstinence to those of us whose compulsion has reached a critical level. Therefore, we accept the nine tools of program and the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions as necessary for our recovery. In HOW, our daily action plan is outlined in the structured use of each of the other tools.

Our meetings are dedicated to the concept of remaining honest, open-minded and willing to listen. This is the HOW of the program. We pray that the collective group conscience and love that these ideals offer us will promote a strong sense of security that will enable us to experience a new unity and wholeness with all those around us; and, that the HOW ideals will help us to progress in our program of recovery on a daily basis.

To be certain, much of our strength is found in the structure of meetings and in the daily adherence to the program as it is written in our literature.

This meeting also firmly understands that, after our recovery has begun through abstinence and the taking of the first three steps, our further surrender to the additional steps of recovery offers us a promise of happiness, contentment and achievement in all areas of our lives.

We ensure our continued and sustained abstinence from compulsive overeating by being forever aware that God is doing for us what we have never been able to do for ourselves.

May God, as each of us understands Him, open our minds and our hearts to the love which is manifest in this meeting. Amen.

#### 10. Reflections for the Newcomer: I've asked \_\_\_ to read.

Welcome to OA HOW. We are all so glad that you have decided to join us tonight. You know that the HOW concept is very disciplined. We believe that the discipline of weighing and measuring, of telephoning your sponsor at a particular time, of attending meetings and making phone calls, all lead to a life based on the Universal Discipline, which is accord rather than discord. Therefore, if there is a breakdown in any of these areas, the concept is threatened, as is the individual's abstinence.

We have found that the discipline must remain as constant for the beginner as for the sponsor. If the newcomer shies away from this life's responsibility, the sponsor may give the newcomer's time slot to someone more committed to recovery. This is not a personal affront, but a matter of necessity. So many who think they should recover, in fact, are not ready. If the newcomer should show lack of commitment, the sponsor may then offer the newcomer assistance in finding a new sponsor. The rationale here is, if the newcomer insists on picking up the food before the phone, then there is a breakdown in the level of communication between the sponsor and the newcomer. "Frothy emotional appeal seldom suffices" ("Doctor's Opinion", BB p. XXVIII, para. 2). If a sponsor slips, get a new one. The pitfalls of self-deception cannot

be overstressed if you are to recover; therefore, a sponsor, in all self-honesty, must release all sponsees to continue his own recovery. A sponsor cannot give what they do not experience.

Finally, you must believe that we need each other. All problems that arise can be worked on via the phone, or person-to-person contact. Only positive, upbeat recovery belongs at our meetings.

“A body badly burned by alcohol does not often recover overnight, nor do twisted thinking and depression vanish in a twinkling. We are convinced that a spiritual mode of living is a most powerful health restorative.” (The Family Afterward, BB p. 133, paragraph 2)

Good luck. Everyone in the fellowship is praying that you find the release from the obsession so many of us have. God bless. And no matter what, keep coming back! We will always be here for you!

11. This meeting is a friendly place. We want to get to know each other. If you are here or calling in for the first time, please introduce yourself by first name only and give us your phone number if you wish to receive calls. Participants on the phone will go first. Press \*6 to unmute.

12. “Step Two”: I’ve asked \_\_\_ to read from Overeaters Anonymous Twelve and Twelve.

When we look with complete honesty at our lives, we see that where eating is concerned we have acted in an extremely irrational and self-destructive manner. Under the compulsion to overeat, many of us have done things no sane person would think of doing. We have driven miles in the dead of night to satisfy a craving for food. We have eaten food that was frozen, burnt, stale, or even dangerously spoiled. We have eaten food off of other people’s plates, off the floor, off the ground. We have dug food out of the garbage and eaten it.

We have frequently lied about what we have eaten – lied to others because we didn’t want to face the truth ourselves. We have stolen food from our friends, family, and employers, as well as from the grocery store. We have also stolen money to buy food. We have eaten beyond the point of being full, beyond the point of being sick of eating. We have continued to overeat, knowing all the while we were disfiguring and maiming our bodies. We have isolated ourselves to eat, damaging our relationships and denying ourselves a full social life. Because of our compulsive eating, we have turned ourselves into objects of ridicule and we have destroyed our health.

Then, horrified by what we were doing to ourselves with food, we became obsessed with diets. We spent lots of money on weight-loss schemes, we bought all sorts of appetite suppressants, we joined diet clubs and fitness centers, we had ourselves hypnotized and analyzed, we had major surgery on our digestive systems, we had our ears stapled or our jaws wired shut. All of this we did willingly, hoping we could still eat all we wanted and be free of the compulsion.

13. “How It Works”: I’ve asked \_\_\_ to read from Chapter Five of Alcoholics Anonymous.

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 alcohol — 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:

#### 14. OA Twelve Steps: I've asked \_\_\_ to read.

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.

#### 15. OA Twelve Traditions: I've asked \_\_\_ to read.

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon OA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers.
6. An OA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the OA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every OA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

8. Overeaters Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. OA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Overeaters Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the OA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television and other public media of communication.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all these Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

16. The Tools of Recovery – The Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous are a program of recovery. Webster’s dictionary defines “tool” as: “Any person or thing used to get something done.” We have many tools of the program, which will help us recover on a daily basis. Tools are essential to get the job done and they work for us. In order for a tool to work, it must be used. So, too, with our tools of recovery. I will ask that HOW sponsors working the 2-hour format explain how they use the particular tool they are reading. Limit of (3) minutes each tool. Would someone be willing to be the timekeeper? The timekeeper will provide a 1-minute and a “please stop”!

17. Plan of Eating: I’ve asked HOW sponsor \_\_\_ to read and share.

A food plan is a commitment to recovery. The OA HOW format was designed for food addicted people. We believe in a disciplined and structured approach. HOW abstainers do not modify their food plan to suit themselves and commit themselves to black and white abstinence. Deviations invite the return of many other problems.

A food plan is not a personal thing in HOW. This means that we depend upon each other for the strength and growth that we need to remain abstinent. We join together in an effort to free the compulsive overeater from the bondage of food through the use of a food plan, positive thinking, and the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous. We eat weighed and measured meals with nothing in between, except sugar-free beverages and sugar-free gum. Food is written down, called in to our sponsor and committed, so that we can get on with our recovery and out of the food. We also believe that negative thinking is a large part of our disease, so we abstain from negative thinking.

Those of us who work the HOW format concepts use the following guidelines for food plans.

1. We do not write our own food plan. We use a food plan given to us by a doctor, nutritionist, or dietitian. We discuss it with our sponsor. We do not pick one that allows any of our binge foods. If some food on our plan becomes a problem, we avoid it.

2. We do not skip meals, switch meals or combine meals. We do not deviate or manipulate our food plan in any way. If we need to change our committed food during the day, we call a sponsor.

3. We weigh and measure all our portions so that there is no guess work. We do not measure by eye. We use a measuring cup, spoon, and a scale. We use a phone to call our sponsor and commit our food plan. I will now take 2 minutes to describe use of abstinence kit.
4. We weigh ourselves once a month until we reach goal weight and once a week on maintenance.
5. Unless advised otherwise by your doctor, we take a multi-vitamin and drink 64 ounces of water a day.
6. We do not drink alcohol.
7. We do not use foods containing sugar, except if sugar is listed 5<sup>th</sup> or beyond on the ingredients label.
8. Above all, we do not vacillate or water down the disciplined nature of the HOW format. It is not the extra string bean that counts; it is the decision to take it.

### 18. Sponsorship: I've asked HOW sponsor \_\_\_ to read and share.

Sponsors are OA members who are committed to abstinence and to living the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions to the best of their ability.

We ask a sponsor to guide us through our program of recovery on all three levels: physical, emotional and spiritual. In working with other members of OA and sharing their experience, strength and hope, sponsors continually renew and reaffirm their own sobriety. Sponsors share their program up to the level of their own experience. Ours is a program of attraction; find a sponsor who has what you want and ask how it was achieved. A member may work with more than one sponsor and may change sponsors at will.

A HOW sponsor is a compulsive overeater who has completed at least 80 days of back-to-back abstinence and who has taken the first three steps of the program. Sponsors have also completed at least 80 days of assignments.

REFLECTIONS TO THE SPONSOR : No list of reflections and meditations are end-alls and be-alls for the newcomer. A sponsor must be attentive not only to what the new person is saying, but also to what the newcomer is not saying. There are many newcomers who are reticent to purchase books, and who are hesitant to throw themselves headlong into the program. Therefore, we have a list of pre-commitment assignments.

Above all, DO NOT VACILLATE OR WATER DOWN THE DISCIPLINED NATURE OF THE HOW FORMAT. It is not the extra string bean that is the problem. It is the DECISION to have it that results in some trouble.

The HOW Concept is an alternative for people who have tried everything else—therefore, the program is an immutable triumvirate of tools, steps, and traditions. Using the tools of weighing and measuring our food, sponsors, meetings, phone calls, reading and writing, service, and anonymity, we follow the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions of OA in order to free ourselves from the bondage of food addiction.

**SPONSORS DO NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO PLAY GOD .... WE HELP EACH OTHER.**

### 19. Will all sponsors OA & HOW stand and state:

- How long in OA and HOW.
- Current Back to Back abstinent date (OA and HOW).
- How much weight lost or gained.
- “Pass” if you do not have an opening for a sponsee.
- “Yes” if you have an opening along with your phone number.

- Sponsors on the phone will go first.

20. We should remember that all OAs have Clay Feet. We should not set any member upon a pedestal and mark her or him out as a perfect OA. It is not fair to the person to be singled out in this fashion and if the person is wise she or he will not wish it. If the person we single out as an ideal OA has a fall, we are in danger of falling too. Without exception, we are all only one bite away from a binge, no matter how long we have been in OA. Nobody is entirely safe. OA itself should be our ideal, not any particular member of it.

21. Anonymity: I've asked HOW sponsor \_\_\_\_ to read and share.

Anonymity is a tool as well as a tradition because it guarantees that we will place principles before personalities. It offers each of us freedom of expression and protection against gossip. Anonymity assures us that only we as individual OA members have the right to make our membership known within our community.

Anonymity at the level of press, radio, films and television means that we never allow our last names or faces to be used once we identify ourselves as OA members.

Within the fellowship, anonymity means that whatever we share with another OA member will be held in respect and confidence. What we hear at meetings should remain there. It should be understood, however, that anonymity must not be used to limit our effectiveness within the fellowship. It is not a break of anonymity to give our names and addresses to the secretary of our group or to other service offices of OA for the purpose of conducting OA business, which is primarily twelfth-step work. It is likewise not a break of anonymity to enlist twelfth-step help for group members in trouble, provided we are careful to omit specific personal information. If their disease has reactivated and we persist in protecting their anonymity, we may, in effect, help kill them and their anonymity.

Anonymity is the part of the program that allows each of us to stand in front of our fellows and share for the first time, honestly, who we are, where we have been, and where we hope to go, without fear that our story will be told outside these rooms.

For many of us, the OA rooms are the first place where we have no fear of being judged or criticized. We are accepted as we are at that moment. This is the first time for most of us that we experience sharing where we are not told what we did wrong.

We come into OA at rock bottom, mangled emotionally, physically and spiritually. We are supported back to health with honesty, open-mindedness and willingness. We are encouraged to speak of our pain and we are lovingly told "your secrets are safe." Come share our recovery, recovery on a three-fold level: physical, emotional and spiritual.

Lastly, a word to newcomers – please join us. However, if you decide that our program is not for you, please remember that our anonymity allows us to grow and recover from a very serious disease. WHOM YOU SEE HERE, WHAT YOU HEAR HERE, WHEN YOU LEAVE HERE, LET IT STAY HERE.

22. Telephone: I've asked HOW sponsor \_\_\_\_ to read and share.

Compulsive overeating is a disease of isolation. The telephone is a means of communicating with another compulsive overeater between meetings. It provides an immediate outlet for those hard-to-handle highs and lows we all experience. The telephone is also a daily link to our sponsors and, as part of the surrender process, is a tool by which we learn to ask for help, reach out and extend that same help to others.

In HOW we are asked to make at least four telephone calls a day; one to our sponsor and three more to other OA or OA/HOW members as suggested by your sponsor. These calls give us an opportunity to “talk program” on a daily basis. The telephone is our “lifeline.”

### 23. Meetings: I've asked HOW sponsor \_\_\_\_ to read and share.

Meetings are gatherings of two or more compulsive eaters who come together to share their experience before and after recovery and to share the strength and hope OA has given them. Meetings are an opportunity for us to identify and confirm our common problem by relating to one another and by sharing the gifts we receive through this program. Though there are many kinds of meetings, fellowship is the basis of them all. As HOW members we attend at least one HOW meeting a week.

### 24. Literature & Writing: I've asked HOW sponsor \_\_\_\_ to read and share.

**Literature:** We study the text book, Alcoholics Anonymous, referred to as the Big Book, and the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, another AA book to reinforce our program. By substituting the words, “food” and “compulsive eating” for the words, “alcohol” and “alcoholism,” we can identify closely. We also read OA literature: the OA book, Overeaters Anonymous, referred to as the Brown Book; the OA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions; For Today and Voices of Recovery for daily meditation; and Lifeline, our journal of recovery. Read on a daily basis, our literature impresses on us certain basic truths that we have found vital to our growth. Our literature and the AA books are an ever available tool that gives insight into our problem, as well as the strength to deal with it and the very real hope that there is a solution for us.

**Writing:** In addition to writing our inventories and the list of people we have harmed, most of us have found that writing has been an indispensable tool for working the steps. Further, putting our thoughts and feelings down on paper or describing a troubling incident, helps us to better understand our actions and reactions in a way that is often not revealed to us by simply thinking or talking about them. In the past, compulsive eating was our most common reaction to life. When we put our difficulties down on paper, it becomes easier to see situations more clearly and perhaps better discern any necessary action.

### 25. Service: I've asked HOW sponsor \_\_\_\_ to read and share.

Carrying the message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers is the basic purpose of our Fellowship and therefore the most fundamental form of service. Any service, no matter how small, that will help reach a fellow sufferer adds to the quality of our own recovery. Putting away chairs, talking to newcomers, doing whatever needs to be done in a group or for OA as a whole are ways in which we give back what we have so generously been given. Do what you can when you can. “A life of sane and happy usefulness” is what we are promised as the result of working the Twelve Steps. Service fulfills that promise.

Always to extend the hand and heart of OA to all who share my compulsion; for this I am responsible. Those of us working the HOW concept also believe that our greatest service is abstinence.

26. Our Seventh Tradition tells us we must be fully self-supporting through our own contributions.

The money collected is used to cover rent, medallions and Step-up & Anniversary celebrations, as well as to support all levels of the OA organization to help spread the message that there is recovery from compulsive overeating. We encourage all meeting members to contribute to our 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition. People attending via phone should call our treasurer \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

27. (Note to Leader: you choose to read from the Big Book "Promises" pages 83-84 or "Bad News" page 187.)

Promises: 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 on life will change. Fear of people and 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.

or

Bad News: "We've got some bad news for you. It was bad news for us, and it will probably be bad news for you. Whether you quit six days, months, or years, if you go out and take a drink or two you'll end up in the hospital tied down, just like you have been in these past six months. You are an alcoholic."

28. Are there any announcements?

- a. This group has a business meeting the first Thursday of every month at 5:45 pm.
- b. Literature is available online at OA.org and AA.org.

29. (Note to Leader: you read and hand out medallions.)

It is now time to celebrate abstinence. We recognize milestones of recovery for those working the two-hour HOW format. Is there anyone celebrating multiple years of abstinence? One year? Nine months? Six months? Three months or 90 days? Two months or 60 days? One month or 30 days? Now comes the most important part, the 24-hour chip. We refer to it as the chip of desire. It does not mean that you are making a commitment to be abstinent for the next 24 hours. It means you have a desire to stop eating compulsively. Would anyone like a chip of desire?

**30. Step-Ups.** We celebrate another example of the miracles that abound in OA. The stepping-up portion of the meeting asks the leader to introduce a newcomer who has at least 80 days of back-to-back abstinence, who has completed the first 3 steps of the program and is now ready to become a sponsor. There is no ceremony tonight. (or) \_\_\_ is stepping up tonight!

(Note to Leader: if nobody is scheduled do not read the ceremony section.)

#### Step up ceremony

\_\_\_ before you, you see 5 candles: Truth, Reality, Surrender, Acceptance & Knowledge.

OA offers each of us a wonderful opportunity to develop and hasten an attitude change known as ego reduction. The use of the disciplines of weighing and measuring, phone calls, reporting to sponsors and attending meetings, all combine to reinforce our growth in OA. Action is the magic word. Until we so humble ourselves through these acts, there is no evidence of our ego reduction or our surrender to anyone or anything outside of ourselves.

Each candle signifies a step toward arresting the progression of our disease. The first two represent Truth and Reality. Without these two qualities, we would not be recovering compulsive overeaters.

(Note to Leader: Candle holder/readers are selected by newcomer prior to meeting. Candle #1 reader lights their own candle and reads Candle #1. This continues until all 5 candles are completed. Leader continues ceremony.)

CANDLE (1) The candle of TRUTH is the keynote of all who strive to stop the advancement of compulsive overeating. It is the unrelenting force that permits no double standard. Its attainment brings the satisfaction of inward peace. We must fearlessly face the truth to avoid the ever present pitfall of self-deception.

CANDLE (2) This is the candle of REALITY and it is a new light. It opens the door to a new life. It holds a promise of new understanding. It offers a chance for personal renewal. It makes a statement that goes beyond fantasy, and it holds the dream of a better tomorrow. Without the light of reality, we are destined to remain in that sick, shadowy world of past mistakes and unrealistic dreams of false tomorrows.

CANDLE (3) This is the candle of SURRENDER. In OA surrender is the first and most important act necessary to launching you into the other steps. Without the surrender of your food, your ego, and your will, all else is hopeless. When you surrender, you suspend such negative emotions as disbelief and grandiosity and you open yourself up to the process of learning who you are and where you fit into the scheme of things.

CANDLE (4) This is the candle of ACCEPTANCE. Without acceptance you could not have come this far. Acceptance is seeing things as they really are. Acceptance is understanding that we have spent our lives denouncing everything and now we must open up our hearts, as well as our minds, and accept. We must accept the will of God. Accept that only He can restore us to sanity.

CANDLE (5) This is the candle of KNOWLEDGE and it opens the door wide. We know that God is on our side. We can see and hear his pronouncements in our lives. We recognize what it is that we may do and what only He can do. We acknowledge that the greatest gift He has given us is knowing ourselves.

**(Note to Leader: you will read the following from AA Twelve and Twelve; Step 12; pages 109 and 110.)**

Even the newest of newcomers finds undreamed rewards as he tries to help his brother alcoholic, the one who is even blinder than he. This is indeed the kind of giving that actually demands nothing. He does not expect his brother sufferer to pay him, or even to love him. And then he discovers that by the divine paradox of this kind of giving he has found his own reward, whether his brother has yet received anything or not. His own character may still be gravely defective, but he somehow knows that God has enabled him to make a mighty beginning, and he senses that he stands at the edge of new mysteries, joys, and experiences of which he had never even dreamed.

Practically every A.A. member declares that no satisfaction has been deeper and no joy greater than in a Twelfth Step job well done. To watch the eyes of men and women open with wonder as they move from darkness into light, to see their lives quickly fill with new purpose and meaning, to see whole families reassembled, to see the alcoholic outcast received back into his community in full citizenship, and above all to watch these people awaken to the presence of a loving God in their lives—these things are the substance of what we receive as we carry A.A.'s message to the next alcoholic.

**(Note to Leader: pick up the cactus.)**

On behalf of the Sarasota Thursday evening HOW Format meeting, I would like to present this cactus to you. The cactus signifies the tough love of the program and a reminder that we don't water down the program. Congratulations!

**31. Anniversaries.** Birthdays are celebrated for each year of continuous abstinence. At this meeting, members celebrating an anniversary receive one rose for each year of abstinence. There is no ceremony tonight. (or) \_\_\_ is celebrating tonight!

(Note to Leader: if nobody is scheduled do not read the ceremony section.)

#### Anniversary ceremony

(Note to Leader: you will read the following from AA Twelve and Twelve; Step 12; pages 111 and 112.)

\_\_\_ Now comes the biggest question yet. What about the practice of these principles in all our affairs? Can we love the whole pattern of living as eagerly as we do the small segment of it we discover when we try to help other alcoholics achieve sobriety? Can we bring the same spirit of love and tolerance into our sometimes deranged family lives that we bring to our A.A. group? Can we have the same kind of confidence and faith in these people who have been infected and sometimes crippled by our own illness that we have in our sponsors? Can we actually carry the A.A. spirit into our daily work? Can we meet our newly recognized responsibilities to the world at large? And can we bring new purpose and devotion to the religion of our choice? Can we find a new joy of living in trying to do something about all these things?

Furthermore, how shall we come to terms with seeming failure or success? Can we now accept and adjust to either without despair or pride? Can we accept poverty, sickness, loneliness, and bereavement with courage and serenity? Can we steadfastly content ourselves with the humbler, yet sometimes more durable, satisfactions when the brighter, more glittering achievements are denied us?

The A.A. answer to these questions about living is "Yes, all of these things are possible." We know this because we see monotony, pain, and even calamity turned to good use by those who keep on trying to practice A.A.'s Twelve Steps. And if these are facts of life for the many alcoholics who have recovered in A.A., they can become the facts of life for many more.

(Note to Leader: pick up the roses)

On behalf of the Sarasota Thursday evening HOW Format meeting, I would like to present \_\_\_# roses to you. Congratulations!

**32. Leader qualifies for 10 minutes or reduces qualification time, if needed, in order to be done by 7:55 PM to give the guest speaker a full 20 minutes.**

33. I would like to introduce \_\_\_ our guest speaker who will qualify for 20 minutes. The timer will give you a ten-, five-, one-minute and please stop warning.
34. Thank you \_\_\_ for speaking. Would you like to share your number? The floor is now open for (2)-minute pitches until 8:25 PM. In HOW meetings, we share our experience, strength and hope. No one is prohibited from sharing, but we ask that you focus on the solution. Sharing should be of a positive nature in which you share your growth and recovery. Other issues can be worked out over the phone or after the meeting. Would someone care to share?
35. Thank you for allowing me to be your leader. My phone number is \_\_\_\_. Thank you everyone who participated, especially our guest speaker \_\_\_\_ who offered so much of herself/himself.
36. Just for Today: I've asked \_\_\_ to read.

Just for Today I will try to live through this day only, and not tackle my whole life problem at once. I can do something for one day that would appall me if I felt I had to keep it up for a lifetime.

Just for Today I will be happy. This assumes to be true what Abraham Lincoln said, that, "Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be."

Just for Today I will adjust myself to what is and not try to adjust everything to my own desires. I will take my "luck" as it comes and fit myself to it.

Just for Today I will try to strengthen my mind. I will study. I will learn something useful. I will not be a mental loafer. I will read something that requires effort, thought, and concentration.

Just for Today I will exercise my soul in three ways. I will do somebody a good turn and not get found out; if anyone knows of it, it will not count. I will do at least two things I don't want to do, just for exercise. I will not show anyone that my feelings are hurt; they may be hurt, but today, I will not show it.

Just for Today I will be agreeable. I will look as well as I can, dress becomingly, talk low, act courteously, criticize not one bit, not find fault with anything, and not try to improve or regulate anybody except myself.

Just for Today I will have a program. I may not follow it exactly, but I will have it. I will save myself from two pests: hurry and indecision.

Just for Today I will have a quiet half-hour all by myself and relax. During this half-hour, sometime, I will try to get a better perspective of my life.

Just for Today I will be unafraid. Especially, I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful, and to believe that as I give to the world, so the world will give to me.

37. The OA-HOW concept is what this particular group has found to be effective in working the OA program. The opinions expressed here tonight by those who shared are their own and not necessarily those of OA. To those who are still new to the program, we remind you that

**Participants dial 712-775-7031. Enter PIN 519003816. To mute and/or unmute press \*6. Moderator code 2407#. Mute entry/exit tones press \*8. Mute everyone press \*5. Unmute press \*6.**

all that was said here tonight should safely remain here, as we respect and cherish our tradition of anonymity. We also assure you that following the program will help you reach and maintain a healthy weight. Abstinence will remove the craving. Our way of life will remove the compulsion in time, and give you contentment and fullness in all areas.

To close the meeting, let us have a moment of silence, followed by the Serenity Prayer. \_ \_ \_  
*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the Courage to change the things I can, and the Wisdom to know the difference. Thy will not mine be done, Amen.*