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Could You Tackle Obesity with Overeaters Anonymous?

This is a program unlike any others. This program works on the problem of overeating through the 12-step program developed by Alcoholics Anonymous. OA works by asking for help from a “Higher Power,” that you identify. It offers support with meetings all around the world as well as meetings online.

OA works on the whole self and requires that you consider all of your behavior. The first few steps you work on “letting go” or “bowing down to your higher power.” You realize that you can’t do it alone and make a commitment to yourself to not just stop compulsive overeating but to stop doing other behaviors that hurt yourself or others. It is during these first few steps that you work on defining your own abstinence. Unlike alcoholics you cannot abstain from food and you work on developing a personalized plan that works for you. Some people need to be structured with a set plan they go by at all times or they won’t be able to maintain their abstinence. Others stick to a specific calorie level and maintain that throughout the day. The one thing that I think is important is the OA doesn’t define it for you, you define it and maintain it yourself with help from your “higher power.” For example, you have eaten within your own plan for a few weeks and you slip up one afternoon and binge on cookies. If you can have the courage to say “I have made a mistake” and go right back to your plan the same day, then you have maintained abstinence as you have defined it.

OA works on the concept of “Just for Today.” Its’ philosophy is “What I might not be able to do for a lifetime or even until next week, I can do Just For Today.” There is a book that has daily inspirations about “Today”. Once you have realized that you can do it “Just For Today,” you gain a momentum each day working on that concept. It also works “just for this meal, afternoon, or evening.” It makes overeating not seem like as big of an undertaking as it is.

Meetings and support from other members is also essential to working the program. At these meetings others share their thoughts and stories and you discover you are not alone. You’re encouraged to study the 12 steps. At each meeting there is a guest speaker who shares how they defined their program and maintained their own abstinence. You are given phone numbers of other members and are encouraged to call three people every day to talk about strengths and weaknesses. After you have begun to feel you would like to try this program you get yourself a sponsor. A sponsor is a person who has been through the program. They have maintained their own abstinence, lost the weight and stopped compulsive overeating for a set amount of time. This is a person who you choose to guide you through your own program. As you progress through your program the steps guide you to self -discovery. You identify your problems in all aspects of your life and become dedicated to stopping this addiction of compulsive overeating. You are encouraged to make a list of people you have wronged and make amends with the person. This whole process is difficult because you begin to face all of your faults and ask your

“Higher Power” to guide you as you rediscover yourself and your life. Food no longer dominates your day. You figure out the things you love and your purpose in this life.

This program doesn't focus on specific things you need to do to lose weight, and is not structured like other diets. You could be on Weight Watchers and be involved in the 12-step program. The main point is that you have to want to stop overeating. OA is a drastic life change and often it only works for people who have hit rock bottom. The idea of bowing down and asking for help from a higher power is often enough to scare anyone away. Your idea of the higher power could be anything, and it will often evolve throughout your program. The important thing is to do the readings on the program, listen to others and ask for help when you need it from your higher power as well as other people.

If you wish to get involved with this program go to www.OvereatersAnonymous.com to get information on meeting times and locations. You can also order books that are extremely helpful and essential to understand and define your own program. If you wish to go to an online meeting there are many offered online through different websites. There are different times that can be convenient for college students, including meetings after 12am. <http://www.oa.org/pdf/OnlineMeetingsList.pdf>