

Food Plan Survey

In planning for our Plan of Eating Workshop, the 12th Step Within Committee of the Edison Sunday Eve. Meeting of Overeaters Anonymous thought it would be good to take a look at what people who were successful at being abstinent were doing and those who are currently not, to see if there were any commonalities.

The first thing we had to do was to determine a definition for “successful” in OA. We wanted it to be as inclusive as possible and yet still meaningful. We wanted to be able to distinguish between being abstinent and being on a diet. We want to know what others are eating.

Our food plan survey questions were based upon our OA literature which defines abstinence and recovery and describes a food plan as a tool, although as varied as our members, most OA’ers agree it is necessary to have one.

In OA, abstinence is the action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors. Spiritual, emotional and physical recovery is the result of living the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve-Step program.

The OA tools of recovery help us work the Steps and refrain from compulsive eating. A food plan is one of the 9 tools of recovery.

Most OA members agree that some plan--no matter how flexible or structured — is necessary.

Excerpts from suggested meeting format document and the tool A Plan of Eating

Next we developed a survey and our committee members and several volunteers interviewed OA members via e-mail, through the Central Jersey website (www.oa-centraljersey.org) the telephone, at meetings, and at OA events over a 3 month time period.

Food Plan Survey 202 responses

1. How would you identify yourself? Can pick more than one

- a. Anorexic 1½%
- b. Bulimic 4%
- c. Compulsive overeater 76%
- d. Food addict 44%
- e. Powerless over food 30%
- f. Compulsive exerciser 3%
- g. Other : compulsive junk food eater, sugar addict, sugar/salt addict, relapse survivor, critical level

2. Length of time in program? One week to 38 years Average time in program: 14 years

3. Are you currently abstinent? No: 11.5% Yes: 85%

If so, how long. Less than one year 89 people More than one year 80 people (1 –30 years)
Average length of abstinence 9 years (results from 202 responses to the survey)

4. If not, what is your past history with abstinence? Off and on, past history of abstinence for 60%

5. Steps completed? None (3%), All (31%)

6. What Step are you currently working? Steps 1-3 (60%), Step 4 (12%), Steps 10-12 (10%)

7. Have you experienced a weight change and/or freedom from the obsession?

Yes (53%), No (4.5%), Weight gain (3.5%), Decreased (2.5%), Sometimes (10%), Still Obsessed (1%)

8. Have you identified certain binge or trigger foods that you abstain from?

Yes: 33% No: 3.5% (non-abstinent members)

Other: too new to program to identify

9. Are there any specific eating behaviors you are refraining from? No (17%)

Eating in front of the TV (15%) or while driving (17%), standing up (18%), eating alone (5%),
hoarding food (7%), devouring food quickly (25%)

All of these (9%)

Other: buffets, in between meals (4.5%), reading (4%), off another's plate (1.5%), smelling food (1.5%),
stealing (3.5%), in bed, while on the computer

10. What foods, if any, do you abstain from? Can pick any that applied **202 responses**

- a. Sugar (72%)
- b. Other sweeteners, i.e. honey, stevia, truvia (22.5%)
- c. Artificial sweeteners (18%)
- d. White flour (49%)
- e. Wheat (30%)
- f. Other flours (16%)
 - Do you use whole grain pastas/wraps? (17%)
 - Do you provide your own starch at social functions, restaurants? (15%)
- g. Nuts (17%)
- h. Peanut butter and other nut butters (28%)
- i. Dairy/eggs (5%)
- j. Alcohol (43%) Committed (1.5%)
- k. Ice Cream (65%)
- l. Cheese (15%)
- m. Meat (6.5%)
- n. Puffed products, i.e. rice cakes and cereals, popcorn (34%)
- o. Fried foods, do you eat french fries or french fried onion rings? (63%)
- p. Salty snacks (60%)
- q. Crunchy snacks, i.e. pretzels of any type (43%)
- r. Diet Soda (29%)
- s. Coffee (16%) Decaf only (4%)
- t. Flavored coffees (32%)
- u. High fat foods, i.e. Mayonnaise, butter, cream, half & half, cream cheese (25%)
- v. Pizza (44%)
- w. Do you limit any foods, i.e. potatoes, certain fruits? Potatoes 1x week (1%), white potatoes (4%), mango, cereals, bananas (2.5%), grapes (2.5%), oranges, pumpkin, all fruits (7%)
- x. Diet foods, look alike (47%)
- y. Juice (70%)
- z. Specific condiments: BB Sauce, ketchup, mayonnaise, cold cuts, salad dressings, cake, cookies, highly processed junk food, cream sauces, all starches, potato,

11. Where did you get your food plan? Could pick all that applied

- a. I don't have a food plan (9%)
- b. My sponsor (25%)
- c. Another OA member (7.5%)
- d. Dignity of Choice (19%)
- e. Grey Sheet (6.5%)
- f. ACORN
- g. My physician (7.5%)
- h. My nutritionist/dietician (17.5%)
- i. Commercial weight loss program (2.5%)
- j. I made it up myself (25%)
- k. A rehab (1.5%)
- l. I found on line (1.5%)
- m. Other (6%)

12. Do you weigh and measure your food? Check any that apply

- a. All the time (12.5%)
- b. Only at home (27.5%)
- c. Only certain foods (7.5%)
- d. Sometimes (22%)
- e. Rarely (9%)
- f. Never (8%)
- g. Other: most of the time (1%), I remove excessive food from my plate in restaurants before eating (2%)

13. Do you weigh yourself? If so, how often?

Daily (5%), 1 x week (2.5%), 1-2 x week (1.5%), 3 x week (1.5%), twice a month (7.5%), 1 x month (35%), every 3 months (1.5%), at the gym (1.5%), sporadically/rarely (4%), NO (8%)

Do you report your weight to your sponsor? Yes (22.5%) No (7.5%)

If there is a weight gain a few months in a row, I start to weight more often and report to sponsor.

14. How often do you eat?

- a. 3 meals a day with nothing in between (10%)
- b. 4 meals a day with nothing in between (2.5%)
- c. 5 meals a day with nothing in between (6.5%)
- d. 6 meals a day with nothing in between (5%)
- e. 3 meals a day with a metabolic adjustment in the afternoon or evening (30%)
- f. 3 meals a day with a snack in between if needed (20%)
- g. Whenever I am hungry (4%)
- h. Other: 4 meals with fruit in between, no plan

15. Do you record and/or commit your food? Could pick all that apply

- a. I don't plan out my food (12.5%)
- b. I plan out everything I will eat for the day (19%)
- c. I plan and commit my food plan to someone each day (46%)
- d. I commit my food plan to someone only when I feel I need that extra bit of accountability (6.5%)
- e. I record everything I eat (14%)
- f. Other: my sponsor has a copy of my master food plan, I commit 5x per week

16. If you commit your food, are you 100% honest? Yes (37.5%), no (17.5%), most of the time (10.5%)

Do you call in or report changes you've made? Yes (27.5%), sometimes (18%), no (17.5%)

17. Who and what determines if you've had an abstinent food day?

- a. Me (53%)
- b. My sponsor (1.5%)
- c. Other: Me and my sponsor (21%), God (3.5%), the monkey on my back (1)

22. What advice in regards to food plans do you have for newcomers?

Get a sponsor and ask for help (17%), just get a food plan, any food plan (43%),
Commit your food (14%)
Keep Coming Back to meetings (8%)
Use the telephone (2.5%)
Be truthful (6.5%)
Reliance on your Higher Power (2.5%)
Weigh and Measure (4%)
K.I.S.S. Keep it Simple (3%)
Balance
Get enough sleep
Use the tools
Experiment (2.5%)
Write (2.5%)
Eliminate trigger foods (11%)

Be flexible (and creative) with your food plan, it's OK to change along the way, make sure it's livable and realistic, has enough food, use your sponsor for help, try one from the Dignity of Choice pamphlet, don't be too influenced by what others are or are not eating, listen to your sponsor (4%), allow time to detoxify from sugar, read the literature in the beginner kit, see a professional, pay attention to your response to foods to recognize the triggers, enjoy your food, research your food as your outlook changes, don't make drastic changes (give time for changes to be tried out), let the program grow on your over time

It's just food in order to live, not living to eat

Don't feel you don't belong because you are not abstinent or don't have a sponsor yet

Recovery is not a tightrope, it is a path, if you fall down, get up, dust yourself off and keep walking!

Do your best ONE DAY AT A TIME

Miracles do happen