



HEART OF CANADA INTERGROUP NEWSLETTER

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My definition – Abstinence v. Food Plan

Sometimes I feel so confused about the words that are thrown around OA. I know this program is supposed to be simple but I find it rarely is. I am on a mission to get clarity with some of the terms I hear at meetings, and what they mean. Of course these are my definition, so I encourage you to find your own clarity.

What is the difference between abstinence and a food plan?

We practice abstinence from compulsive overeating. When I go to a meeting and hear the preamble, I hear that we are a fellowship of individuals who are recovering from compulsive overeating.

My food plan, then, is a tool I use to get, and maintain abstinence.

There are times in my program when life happens, and I am not able to eat my planned meal. For example, I realize as I am reaching for my lunch bag that I left it on my counter at home. Well, my food plan changes because I need to buy lunch. I always try to get something close to what I planned but it does not always work out. In this case I did not follow my food plan but I did not overeat so my abstinence is good.

My office likes to celebrate and have food days every so often. I will bring something that I can eat; I plan what my meal will look like. I have a personal rule in situations like this where I will have a small plate and one serving only and will not eat my trigger foods. One such food day, I ate my planned meal then about an hour after I finished eating, I grabbed a couple carrots. Carrots are not a trigger for me but I do not eat between meals. I was simply not being mindful and in went the food. I broke my abstinence.

I have heard it argued that because the food was not a trigger and because it was only 1 or 2 not a binge, then this we not a slip/break in abstinence.

I understand compulsion to mean an inability to resist. In eating those carrots, I exhibited just that. I was not hungry. No one was forcing me to eat them.

I am different from “normal” eaters. I cannot eat unmindfully. Those two carrots will turn into four then permission to do it everyday and one day the moment will come when carrots are not available and I am looking for a substitute. Part of my illness will give me permission to substitute carrots with chocolate.

I accept Step One that I am powerless over food. This means I accept this definition of abstinence even though it is not an easy pill to swallow. The easier softer way I used to follow had me eating from morning till bedtime, hating myself, and miserable to be around. Being abstinent I eat my meals, am learning to like myself, and have serenity. Not the easiest choice to make, but I think I will follow the 12 Steps and the path to long term abstinence.

Christina H.

SLIP vs. RELAPSE

From the OA Ask it Basket
http://www.oa.org/pdf/Ask-It_Archive.pdf

• *What is the difference between a slip and a relapse?*

Since OA's policy allows each member to define his or her own abstinence, it would seem consistent to do the same with slip and relapse. The following contains an example:

“OA Bylaws, Subpart B, Section 4, [Trustee] Qualifications: Continual recovery including abstinence and maintenance of a healthy body weight throughout the entire term(s) of office. Each person shall be the judge of his or her own recovery including abstinence and maintenance of a healthy body weight.”

Both “slip” and “relapse” describe a “deviation” from a recovery path, to use a board member's word. Another board member referred to slips as behaviors that could lead to relapse. A surprising number of OA members share that they regained all of their lost weight while abstinent.