

DIVERSITY WORKSHOP

Enhancing Representation and Inclusion in OA

By: OA World Service Unity with Diversity Committee

Workshop Agenda

- Introduction
- Presentation
- “Assignment” with breakout rooms
- Report back

GOALS OF THIS WORKSHOP

- Define diversity
- Identify & accept that there is an issue that needs to be addressed
- Learn practical tools to increase diversity in the rooms, in meetings at any level, and outside the rooms
- Come away with at least one action that can be done
- Practice Exercise

DEFINING DIVERSITY

Diversity is the range of human differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, economic status, physical or mental ability or attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin, cultural and political beliefs.

“OA’s Unity with Diversity” Policy states as follows:

- THE FELLOWSHIP of Overeaters Anonymous encourages and promotes acceptance and inclusivity. All are welcome to join OA and are not excluded because of race, creed, nationality, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, or any other attribute. We welcome all who share our compulsion. Everyone with the desire to stop eating compulsively is welcome in Overeaters Anonymous.”
- *For the complete Unity With Diversity Policy statement see:*
<https://oa.org/group-resources-list/unity-with-diversity-policy-statements/>

Some Underrepresented Communities in OA (*not limited to*)

- Racial, Ethnicity and National Origin
- Non-English Speakers
- Religious /Secular
- LGBTQ
- Bulimia/Anorexia
- Physical and Mental Health
- Young Adults
- Gender

Why enhancing diversity is important

- ❑ People's needs of being and feeling included are met
- ❑ So that more demographics' needs and viewpoints are included in discussions and actions regarding recovery in this program
- ❑ Because members see lack of diversity as an issue, we seek to promote measures to ensure representation and inclusion in OA

Guidance for Inclusivity at all meeting levels (Group, IG, Region, WSBC)

- Greet everyone, making all feel welcome, and encourage them to keep coming back
- Learn and pronounce names as preferred and to use preferred pronouns
- This is an **inclusive** spiritual, emotional, and physical program of recovery: State that spirituality is defined by the **individual's own perspective and beliefs**
- OA's Unity With Diversity Policy statement is a part of the meeting's format"
- Make sure meetings spaces are accessible to all
- Create a culture of inclusion in the fellowship
 - Breakout Room Discussion to add to this list of ideas

“We are greeted, made to feel welcome and encouraged to keep coming back”

- Remember the main purpose of the meetings is to *carry the message*:
- When it comes to newcomers and returning members: should they want to share - even if it's nearly the end of the meeting - let them share. The newcomer is the most important person in the room.
- Have a plan in place to connect newcomers to an established member in the room at their first meeting.
- Follow up call during and after the meeting with newcomers and returning members; don't be exclusive, be inclusive.
- If a newcomer suddenly stops coming, reach out to check on the person.
- If a newcomer or member explicitly states that they do not want to be contacted any longer for OA fellowship, respect that choice - that individual's journey is theirs, and no one else's.

“OA’s Unity With Diversity Policy statement is a part of the meeting format”

- Found at www.OA.org ,
- Where it is recommended to add the following:
- **“OA’s Unity with Diversity” Policy** states as follows: *THE FELLOWSHIP of Overeaters Anonymous encourages and promotes acceptance and inclusivity. All are welcome to join OA and are not excluded because of race, creed, nationality, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, or any other attribute. We welcome all who share our compulsion. Everyone with the desire to stop eating compulsively is welcome in Overeaters Anonymous.*”
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Safe and Secure Meeting

- If someone shares that they feel unsafe, unwanted, or unwelcome in an OA meeting - even if it's not your meeting - take the person's concern seriously. Consider raising it at a group conscience, reporting the meeting/incident to the Intergroup. (If an incident happened at intergroup level, then report it to the Region or the World Service Board of Trustees)
- “Outside Issue”: All OA members, in all meetings, should feel safe while sharing their experience, strength, and hope and are not told that their share is an outside issue. We all come from different backgrounds and experiences, therefore everyone needs to be able to share at meetings about factors in their lives that could cause them to act out with food.

One small change could make the difference in the success of a new meeting

- If a newly-started meeting for a historically-underrepresented community or specific focus group is not attracting attendees, reconsider the day/time, location and Public Information efforts of the meeting before deciding to close the meeting.
- Start new meetings at locations that are accessible via public transit (for example, along bus routes) - this removes some of the barriers to attendance that lack of transportation and distance may cause.
- Once an in-person meeting is fully established, consider offering child care as a means to attract younger people and keep them coming back.
- Consideration is made for diverse languages and neurocognitive & physical abilities, *i.e* more time for languages other than the host meeting's language.
- With group conscience approval at the meeting level, funds could be used to pay for additional services as needed; i.e. interpreters, sign language, child care, etc.
- Welcoming space: “You expect me to come” example: Physically accessible

We are included in fellowship

- Communication Beyond the Meeting: Have a “Parking Lot”/ “After Party” / “Fellowship” after the meeting closes. For meetings, this is a time for building relationships.
 - If the meeting space is not available to be that fellowship space, work with the meeting venue to make the change for the near-future, or find a nearby space that could substitute.
- Tackle the question: How do we encourage newcomers from historically-underrepresented communities to join OA and also to keep coming back?
 - One solution is to host frequent workshops or open houses where members of the community of focus can learn about OA
 - Maintain a list of available sponsors (general, 90 days, just to get newcomer started)
- Keep the discussion going regarding the importance of diversity and how it can be increased.
- Host a “Tough Questions Workshop” at any level (meeting, intergroup, region, WSBC, convention) -
- Consider that what seems like an outside issue to you is an inside issue to someone else
<https://oa.org/news/what-is-an-outside-issue-are-we-being-open-minded-in-our-meetings/>

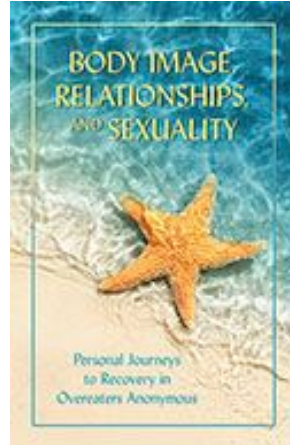
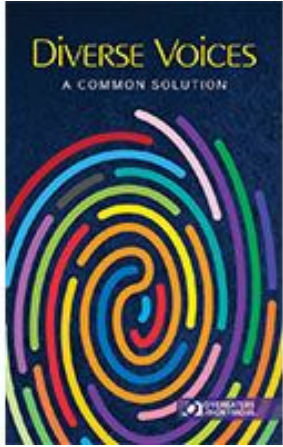
Actions outside of the rooms

- Survey and talk to the community to identify the needs and identify possible solutions.
- Connect with your local intergroup/Service Boards for support in increasing diversity
 - PIPO (objective: outreach to increase diversity)
 - UWD Committee (facilitate awareness and action)
- Promote inclusion in your meetings' and intergroups' outreach.
- Enlist the help of a partner from that community where possible (guidance and perspective); but members of any background can be supportive allies
- Outreach - Promote OA in diverse communities
 - “Offer in person/hybrid “OA Open Houses” (advertise publicly, Intro to OA)
 - Outreach to institutions that serve diverse populations; i.e. to churches, clubs, civic organizations, bariatric centers, hospitals, mental health centers, colleges, universities, libraries, gyms and other locations. (flyers, calling, open house)
 - Run Social Media, bus, radio, TV, and/or newspaper Ads in the community.
 - Encourage providing OA literature and notices in locations and mediums frequented by people from historically-underrepresented groups. (libraries, schools, malls, community centres, other public places)

Service & Support is widely available

- Encourage a new generation in leadership: Look for ways to get Young People involved through various media where young people engage (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, Snapchat, Text Messages, QR codes on flyers and ads.)
- Breakout room

Literature suggested to support our actions:



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