

OA Renewal Survey Responses

Houston Metropolitan Intergroup
OA Renewal Committee

February, 2008

Background

In October 2007, the Houston Metropolitan Intergroup (HMI) of Overeaters Anonymous (OA) formed a Renewal Committee to explore ways in which HMI might improve and increase its services to Houston-area OA groups.

In addition, HMI hoped to learn how it could work with Houston area OA groups to further promote and strengthen OA recovery and encourage OA service in the spirit of the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions.

The OA Renewal Committee began its work by considering the overall strengths, weakness, and opportunities for service and OA recovery within HMI and its constituent OA groups. In determining how HMI could best improve its services and aid in OA recovery, it was apparent that the OA Renewal Committee needed to be guided by the strength, wisdom, and experience of the OA members themselves. With that in mind, the Committee developed an “OA Renewal Survey” to gather feedback from Houston-area OA members.

An online version of the “OA Renewal Survey” was launched on the OA Houston web site on November 17, 2007, and printed copies of the survey were made available to the Houston-area OA membership at the same time. The survey was conducted for 4 weeks between November 17 and December 17, 2007.

Survey Participation

Eighty-four (84) Houston-area OA members completed the survey – an estimated 20 percent of the Houston area OA membership. Seventy-four (74) members responded to the survey online through the “Houston OA” web site, and 11 members completed the printed version of the survey.

Report Contents

The following sections of this report summarize the results of the “OA Renewal Committee” survey. Contents include:

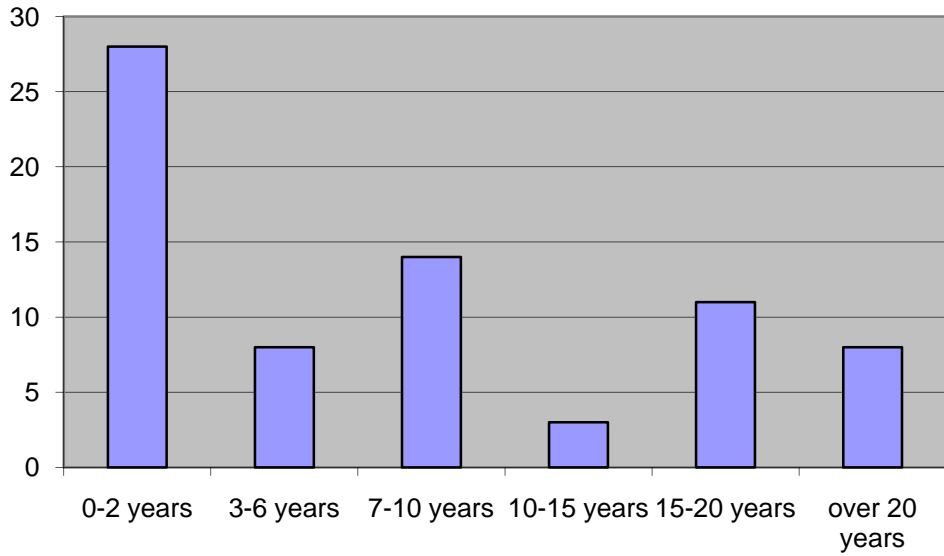
Summary Results -- This section contains a summary of results for each survey question.

Appendix A – This section contains detailed responses to essay-type survey questions.

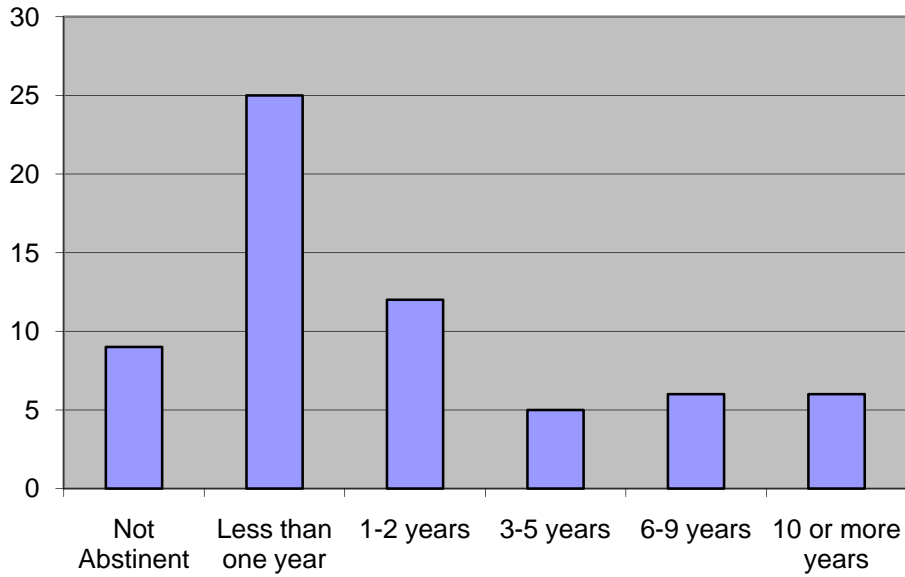
Note to Readers: Some members did not respond to every question in the survey. And, for two- and three-part questions, more than one response was sought. Therefore, readers will notice that the total number of recorded responses, where noted, may be more or less than the total number of members who took the survey.

Section 1. Summary of Survey Results

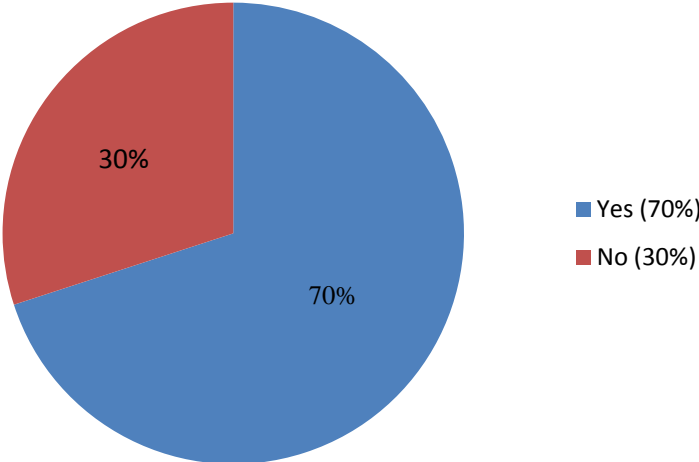
Question 1: How Long have you been in OA?



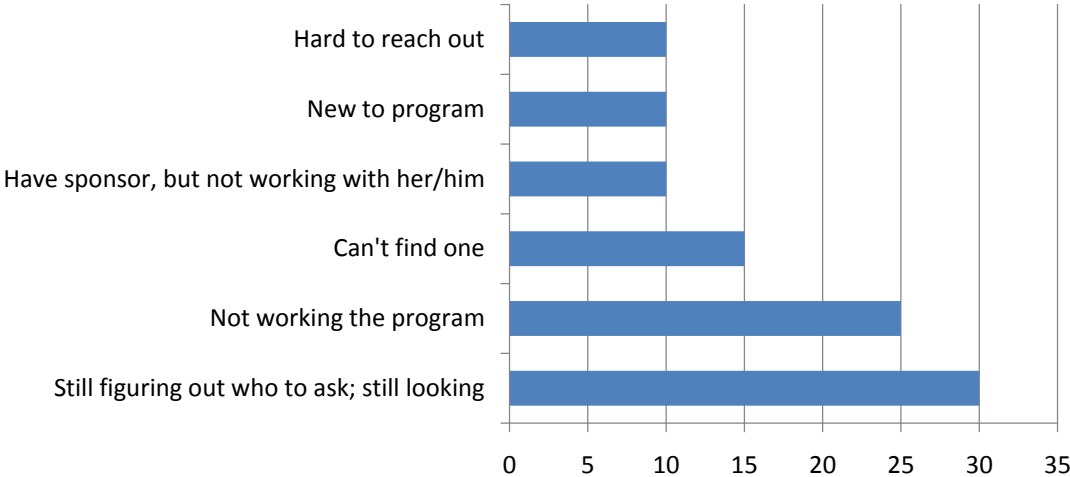
Question 2. What is your length of abstinence?



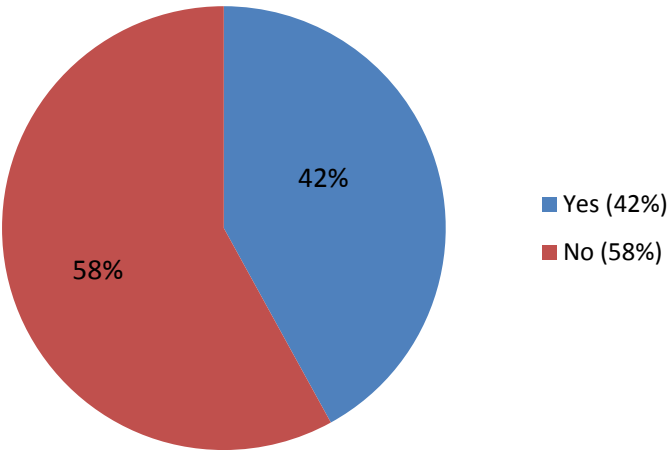
Question 3A. Do you work with a sponsor?



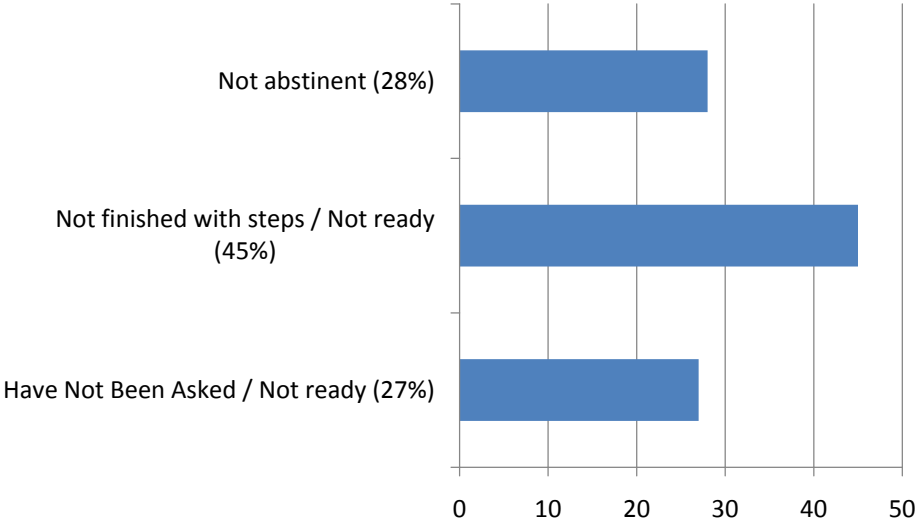
Question 3B. If not working with a sponsor, why not?



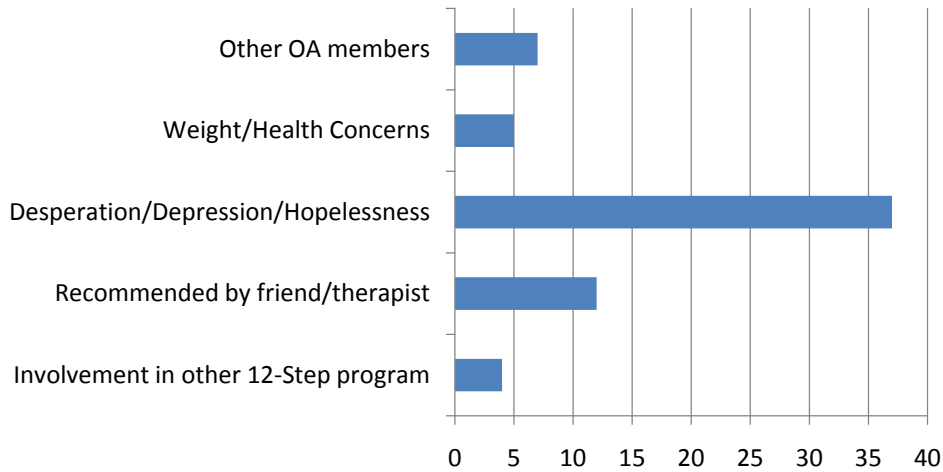
Question 4A. Do you sponsor other members?



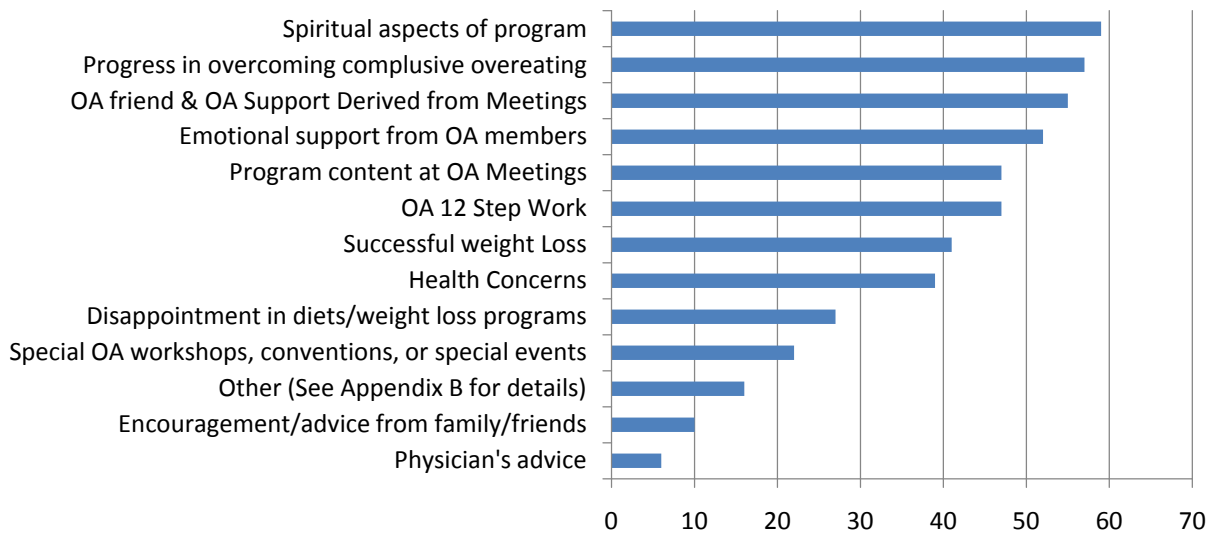
Question 4B. Reason why I don't sponsor other members.



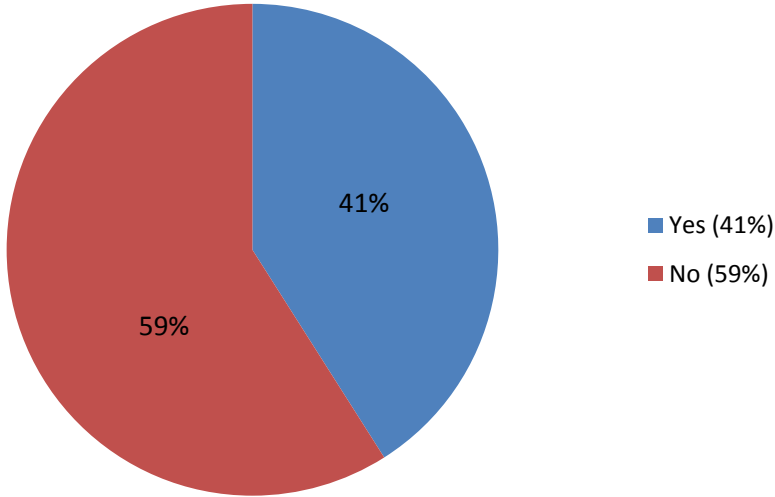
Question 5. What brought you to OA? (by number of responses)



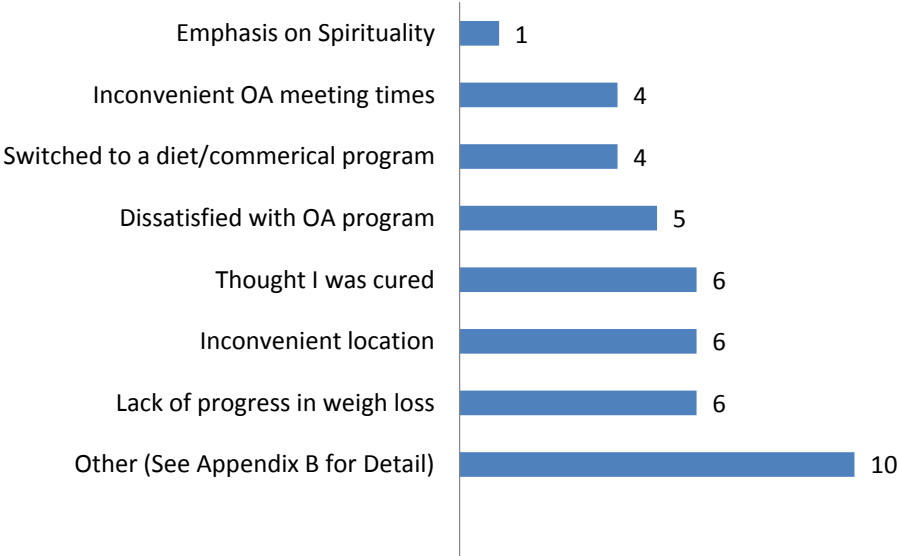
Question 6. What keeps you coming back? (by number of responses)



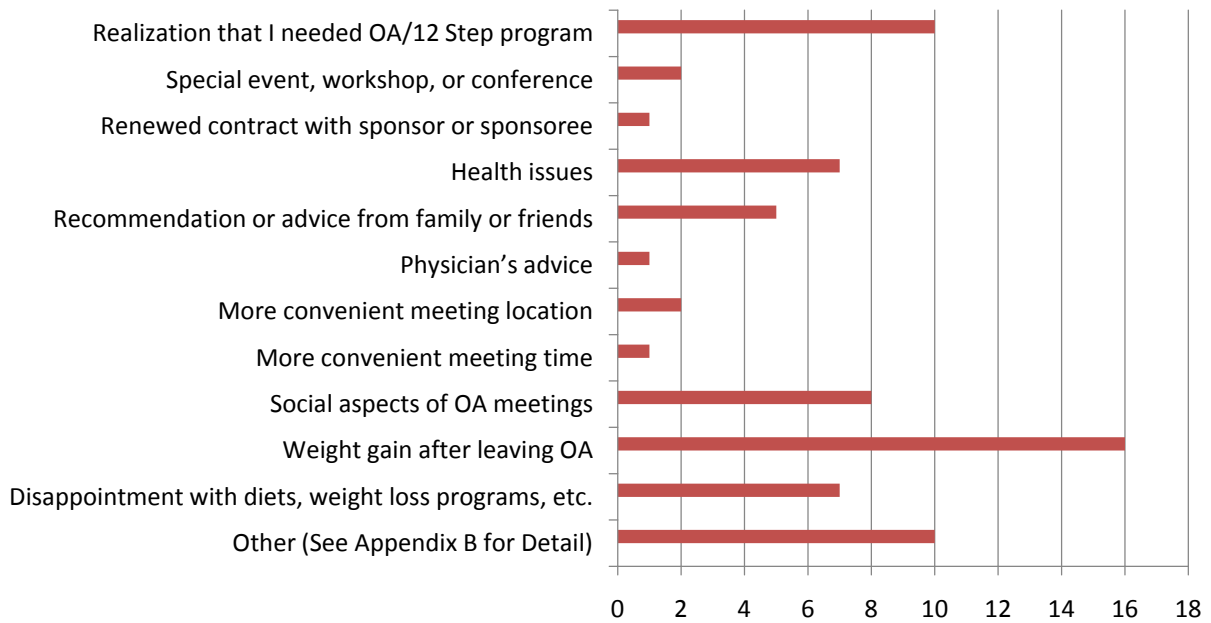
Question 7. Have you ever left OA?



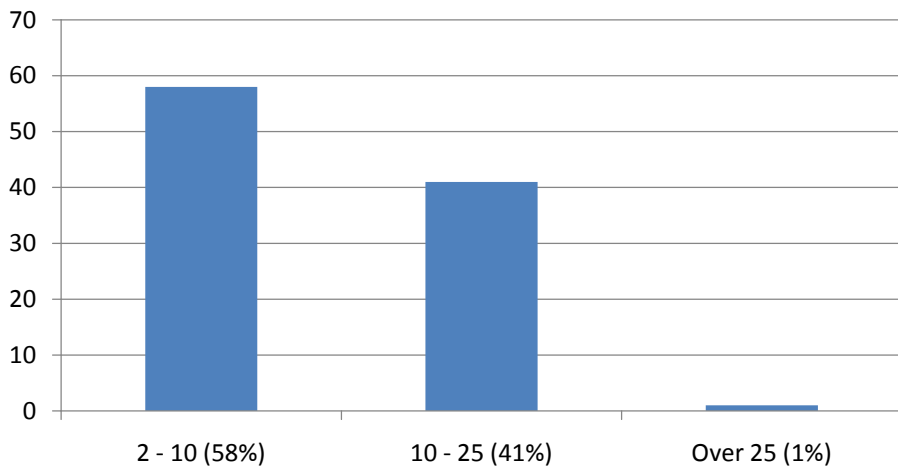
Question 8. Why did you leave? (by number of responses)



Question 9A. What brought you back? (by number of responses)



Question 10. How many people regularly attend your meeting(s)?



Question 11. List the 3 meetings you attend most often and your perceptions of their greatest strengths.

Representative Sample of Responses

GREATEST STRENGTHS
Lots of long-term recovery
Friendly, supportive members
Food plan – Weighed & measured food
Core group of committed people
Welcoming environment
Newcomer outreach
Emphasis on 12 Steps and 12 Traditions
Like format of meeting
Inspiring leader/speaker
Like size of group

For a detailed list of the greatest strengths cited for EACH of the OA meetings, refer to Appendix A.

Question 12. List the 3 meetings you attend most often and your perceptions of their greatest weaknesses.

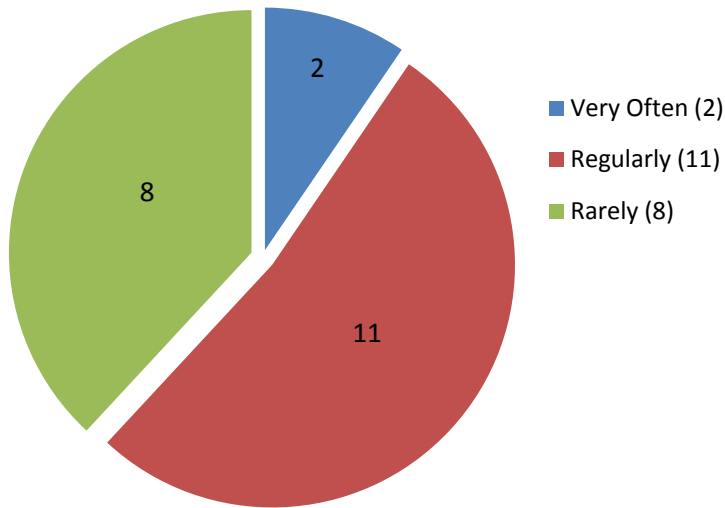
Representative Sample of Responses

GREATEST WEAKNESSES
Lack of sponsors
Cross-talk
Sharing unrelated to OA 12-step recovery; sharing off-topic
Not enough members in recovery
Poor attendance
Arriving late to meetings
Meeting time and/or location
No time limit on sharing
Meeting too short or too long

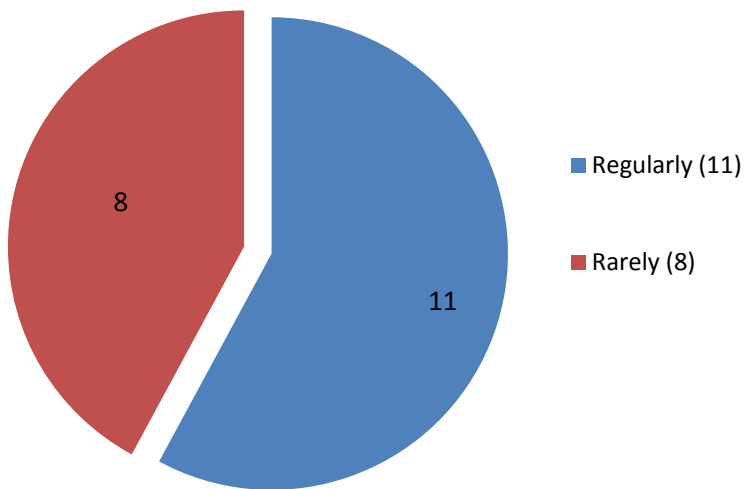
For a detailed list of the greatest weaknesses cited for EACH of the OA meetings, refer to Appendix A.

Question 13. How often do newcomers attend your meetings? How Often Do They Return? Why or Why Not?

How Often Newcomers Attend Meetings (by number of responses)



How Often They Return to Meetings (by number of responses)



For a list of responses concerning perceived reasons why newcomers do or do not return, see Appendix A.

Question 14. In the meetings you attend, what would be helpful to strengthen your recovery?

Representative Sample of Responses

More stories of recovery
Continue to hear experience, strength, and hope
Abstinence
Focus on OA talk and not outside or personal issues that don't deal with recovery
More calls and encouragement from other members
More and varied attendance
Weighed and measured food plan
Better preparation for meeting
Less negativity – more focus on solution, not problem
More sponsors

For a detailed list of responses to this question, refer to Appendix A.

Question. 15. How can HMI help make your home meeting stronger?

Representative Sample of Responses

Encourage all meetings to give chips and acknowledge periods of abstinence
Encourage attendees/members of larger OA groups to attend and offer support, encouragement, and tips to smaller groups
Do not know, and/or do not think HMI can help
Provide additional/new workshops (such as a workshop on "Service)
Hold social events
Calls from longtime members after meetings.
More newcomers/more topics.
More outreach through medical facilities.
Easier access to literature.
Encourage service work as a part of OA service.

For a detailed list of responses to this question, refer to Appendix A.

Question 16. How Can HMI help make your home meeting more meaningful?

Representative Sample of Responses

Perhaps requiring that members have some abstinence to share.
Do not know, and/or do not think HMI can help
More emphasis on abstinence
Provide list of topics or quarterly themes
Provide a Speakers List
Provide HMI speakers who can share with other OA groups as needed
Provide information about what other OA groups around the country are doing
Stop announcing and “HMI” meeting – many OA members and newcomers do not know what “HMI” means
Worksheets for home; more reading selections discussed.
Organized outreach to hospitals and medical practioners; public service announcements

For a detailed list of responses to this questions, refer to Appendix A

Question 17. How can HMI help your home meeting be more productive?

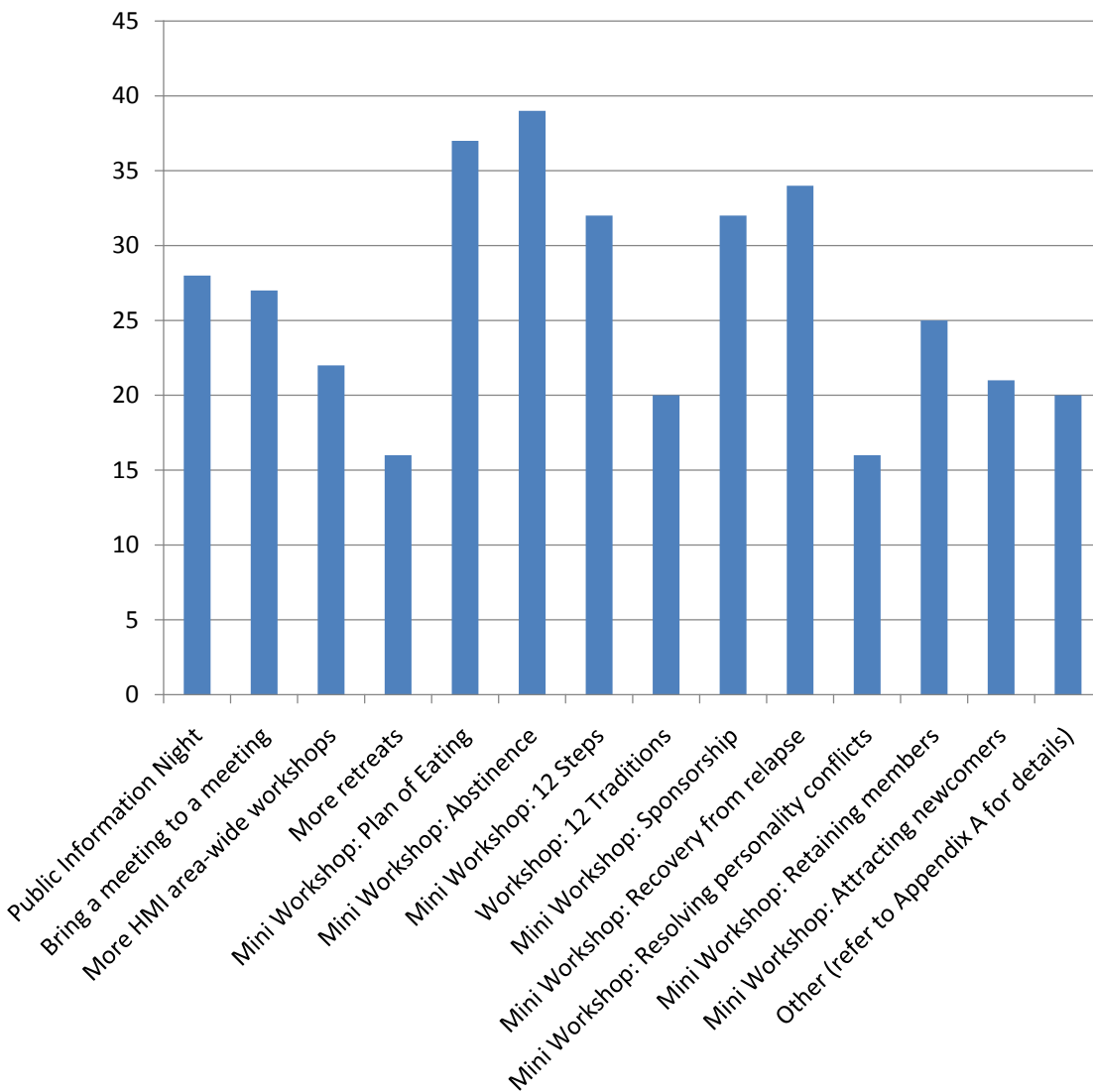
Representative Sample of Responses

Maybe more information on board/card games or just socializing nights
More information on online chat rooms
More information in Spanish
Access to suggested Food Plans
Phone calls offering support to newcomers or dropouts
Detailed directions or map to OA meetings (including Oasis Club directions and map showing landmarks)
Child-friendly meetings

Sponsor another Recovery from Relapse series
Workshop on traditions and service concepts
Help create meetings in underserved area of town (i.e., Midtown, Near East Side, and others)

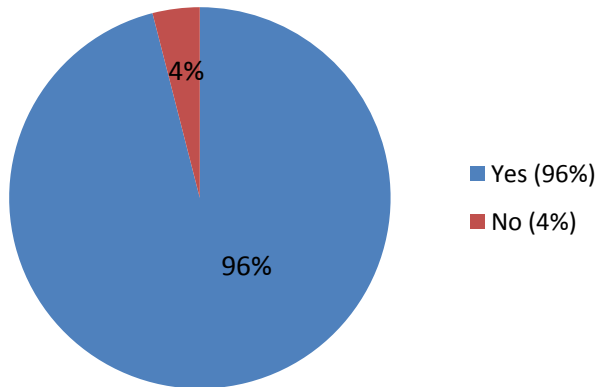
For a detailed list of responses to this questions, refer to Appendix A

Question 18. Check any on the following items that would be help to your recovery?



For a detailed list of other suggestions offered for this questions, refer to Appendix A.

Question 19. Would you attend and support the above activities?



Question 20. Please share suggestions regarding how HMI could help strengthen your group.

Representative Sample of Responses

Sponsor a game night
Have HMI representative attend OA meeting and share experience, strength, and hope
Help keep us all focused on working the steps
Do not know
Send OA meeting secretaries suggestions; tell us how Intergroup stay as large as it does –other than location.
Encourage men to attend men’s meetings
More sponsors
Create an announcement recommending that each meeting elect a representative to HMI. To many people don’t know what is available and recommended.
More service opportunities on a smaller scale
Child care

For a detailed list of responses to this question, refer to Appendix A.

Question 21. Other suggestions and comments.

Representative Sample of Responses

I am an Hispanic and my community is in great need of help, so more information in Spanish in the website would be great.
I believe that a lot of people, with the advent of technology, are going to online and phone meetings so the face-to-face meetings may dwindle, but lots of people are still going to meetings out there. We just don't see them.
I would like to see an ad campaign initially targeted to those areas where meetings are not the strongest. We need to get the word out, but we need to people to receive the newbies coming in.
More emphasis on recovery, abstinence, and especially working the steps.
Thank you for your service. The call from a member that prompted me to answer this survey also prompted by first involvement in the program since 2005.
I was a regular in OA for 20 years and didn't get the kind of recovery I needed for long-term abstinence. I went to OA HOW and found a better way of recovering from my eating disorder.
Remove meetings from the OA HMI meeting list that no longer exist.
I would like to see meetings end with the Serenity Prayer or Third Step Prayer rather than the Lord's Prayer. I think that is more inclusive.
My experience with HMI was not great. It was a fast meeting encumbered by a lot of rules. Keeping up with parliamentary procedure and other rules and traditions was nearly impossible, and I didn't feel like my input was welcome.
Update the phone list by recreating it from scratch. Names and numbers are dated.

For a detailed list of responses to this question, refer to Appendix A.

Appendix A

Detailed Responses to Survey Questions

Appendix A

The following pages contain detailed “text” responses to those survey questions that required them. Questions 1, 2, 3, 7, 10, 19, and 20 are not listed in Appendix A since those questions provided a checklist without a text entry requirement.

Question 4. Do you sponsor other members? If not, why not?

Response Text
Have not been asked yet.
I stopped sponsoring when I stopped being abstinent. Felt I had nothing to give.
Because, I've been told that I don't qualify.
Have not been able to get any abstinence of any length myself.
No one has asked.
Not ready to do so.
No one has asked me to sponsor them.
Lack of recovery.
New to the program.
Not consistently abstinent.
Very small group; no one has asked.
Not abstinent.
I am available but no one has asked.
I have not completed the steps in OA myself.
No, one has asked me yet.
Too new to the organization.
Not currently abstinent; on the road back from long period away from the program.
I'm not ready yet to do this.
Willing to, haven't been asked. I wonder though if I really have the time to devote to sponsoring.
Having trouble maintaining my abstinence.
Not finished with the steps yet.
Not abstinent long enough.
New to program.
Don't feel prepared enough to do so.
Only on step one.
I am not far enough into recovery to work with a sponsor.
Too new.
Haven't finished my step work.

Question 5. What brought you to OA?

Response Text
A relative brought me to a newcomers meeting.
Diets don't work. I have experience in another 12 step program.
My therapist.
Eating disorder.
Desperation.
Desperation over weight and over-eating.
Being sick and tired of being sick a tired of my dysfunctional relationship with food.
Knowledge that the 12 steps is the only thing that has ever changed me in any significant way in my life.
Food addiction.
Weight.
Another member.
I was desperate, and abusing my body.
I couldn't stop eating.
Desire to stop my compulsive eating and to have a support group.
Inability to control my gluttony.
Health concerns.
Tired of overeating and being fat.
Support from others going thru what I am.
Janet Greely's book "It is not what you eat, it is what is eating you."
Losing weight.
Significant weight gain and uncontrolled overeating/bingeing.
I went to my first meeting as a support for a loved one who was desperate at the time. Though I had thought about attending prior to that, but not seriously. I stayed; she didn't.
AA
My therapist recommended it.
Being overweight.
In 1977, I noticed the weight loss of a cousin and she told me about OA. I felt at home at my first meeting.
Desperate.
I saw a meeting notice on my church bulletin. I was so crazy with food and frustrated with my inability to control my food. Because of this I needed to try this avenue and I am glad that I did.
Hit bottom with compulsive eating; called for help about family problem and was told I needed to get help for me.
Out of control with eating. My sister found you and led me to you.
The need for spiritual awakening around my relationship with food.
Recommendation of a friend.
The first time, 25 years ago, a friend suggested it. I had a hard time with some of the terms (God, compulsive overeating, disease) and I was going through a divorce after 24 years of marriage, so I stopped coming. I remembered the serenity and wisdom I had witnessed. I came back because diets did not keep the weight off and I needed something more than the weekly meeting that a few friends and I started. I came back for sanity.
My total inability to manage my weight problem.
Marital problems, overweight, therapist.
A friend who lives in Dallas suggested it.

Desperation - desire to get better.
My weight; I realized that I could not go a day without breaking a diet, and seemed to have "addict-type" behavior around certain foods.
Uncontrolled eating.
Obsession.
Need to stop eating compulsively.
I was dying.
Doctor's suggestion.
I found information about OA on the net and sought local meetings.
When I found out there were others like me that did the same things with food, I came. It took me a few years though to really get the idea that I had to abandon my way of doing things to actually have long term abstinence.
Desperation and the feeling that this GOD centered program was the only help for me.
Eating and bingeing out of control. Wanted to get thin and live happily ever after.
Depression, hopelessness, and fat.
Wanting to loose weight. I was miserable at 5'2" and over 300 lbs. Checked website & found HOW meeting.
Desperation to not repeat the pattern of being crazy around food and body image, out of control and impulsive with quick fixes. I am a member of another 12 step program and the steps really work, so I finally got honest with myself about this obsession and compulsion.
Constant bingeing on uncooked cookie dough. Heard about it from the boyfriend of a friend in the program.
Rock bottom.
I wanted the obsession with food lifted.
I worked with kids with alcohol and drug problems and realized I was addicted but to food so found OA in NYC where I was living.
Feeling out of control and worthless, in despair, trying to stop using food to numb myself and thinking of starting to drink alcohol again.
God. Saw ER episode where one of the character was acting out as an alcoholic and I saw my self in a similar light in terms of eating. out of control, hidden behaviors.
Knowledge of another 12 step program and hearing OA was for my food addiction which was frighteningly similar.
A friend who was a member told me about it.
A friend was going in another city.
Therapist.
Inability to lose weight – obesity.
The scale numbers (powerlessness).
Desperation.
Compulsive overeating and just relying on food for everything.
In need of help with food problems.
I wanted to stop bingeing and I was overweight and miserable.
I have known it was available for years, and one day I decided to look it up on the internet. A meeting was nearby, so I found my way there.
Awareness over my compulsive eating habits, being in another 12-step program, and, initially, the fact it was easy to fit the meeting I attend into my schedule. Have found the program works when I am willing to work the program.
I know I have no control over food.
Desperation.
My best friend, who saw my unhappiness gaining and losing weight all the time with conventional diets.

Question 6. What keeps you coming back? (Listing of Other Reasons)

Other (please specify)
The desire to stay stopped (as far as overeating is concerned).
I am particularly grateful for the OA-HOW program.
Support in meetings - being able to express myself to willing listeners.
Of course the emotional growth that it brings.
Wise guidance on how to live a full, wholesome life. I like who I am when I am abstinent and working the program.
I have not attended any special events as of yet.
God.
It makes me feel safe.
Knowledge that it gives me sanity and clarity when I work it
I feel OA is really the only hope I have left to get better and live my life to the fullest.
Knowing it is the only solution; opportunity to help others with this compulsion.
Don't ever want to go back to abusing myself with food!
Close group of men sincerely trying to work the program.
My friends in OA, fear of returning to my old ways.
It's the only place where I can say anything and everything and be completely understood, without any hint of being judged.
A Spiritual Program for weight loss success as suggested by the 12 Steps of AA / OA.

Question 8. If you have ever left OA, why did you leave? (Listing of Other Reasons)

Other (Please specify)
I was not getting better.
Thought I was cured. Lost 80+ lbs. Meetings too hard to get to and didn't think I needed them.
Just didn't see anyone with long term abstinence that was available as a sponsor.
Wanted to overeat.
I stopped doing the behavior with food and thought I was cured.
Negativity in meetings; not enough emphasis on spiritual recovery; too few men.
Lost weight, went to other 12 step meetings that I thought would suffice.
Death in immediate family.
Moved from one state to another.
Beating myself up over character defects.
Thought I had it licked!
Difficulty identifying with God, accepting the term "compulsive overeater", accepting my condition as a disease.
I'm an addict.
Tried self reliance, wasn't willing to work the program.
I let personalities come before principles.

Projection of my own feelings on to other members of the meeting.
Meeting at Bering Church a long time ago was discontinued.
Obsession of the mind - thinking I could control it again...the program was just "too hard"
had surgery and was simply buned out
powerlessness, I thought I knew what to do and how to do it (on my own)...HA!
Profound loss and disappointment in physical, emotional, and spiritual sobriety of OA

Question 9. What brought you back. (Listing of Other Reasons)

Other (please specify)
I knew I needed it to get better. ED had continued.
I knew that OA was the only answer. It's a spiritual malady and I can't do it alone.
Spiritual needs.
12 step way of life appealed to me.
I missed connecting with people. I had enough OA in me that I couldn't leave it behind.
Gained 100 lbs, became miserable plus realized I didn't like myself anymore and needed the principles of the 12 steps.
Out of control eating...desire for more serenity.
The realization that I needed more than a diet. I remembered the wisdom I had heard.
I had a very good experience on the program 18 years ago.
Not back yet.
Support from members.
The realization that it was the only solution for me.
I know it is the only thing that treats my disease.
HP!
Same symptoms which brought me in the first time...nothing else works!
Humiliation and desperation, again, the scale numbers...and knowing nothing else would work for me.
Commitment to work the 12 Steps for physical, emotional, and spiritual sobriety.

Question 11. List the 3 meetings you attend most often and your perceptions of their greatest strengths.

Note to Readers: If an HMI-area OA meeting is not listed below, it is because none of the members who responded to the OA Renewal Survey provided a response for that meeting. Responses for meetings 1, 2, 3 are grouped together by meeting day/time and meeting name.

DAY & TIME	MEETING	RESPONSES	GREATEST STRENGTH
SUN 8:30 AM	Oasis Club Big Book Study	2	Small, intimate group with ample opportunity for all to share.
			Everyone shares. Like format.
SUN 1:00 PM	OA HOW Chapelwood UMC	5	A lot of attendance; nice people; lots of love
			Food plan.
			Weighed & measured food. 30 people attend.
			Large meeting.
			Large meeting. Lots of sharing. Share time limited to 3 minutes.
SUN 6:00 PM	Steps & Traditions. St. John The Divine Episcopal Church	5	12 steps & 12 traditions
			12 & 12
			The leader who led the meeting tonight.
			12 and 12 work.
			Going through the 12 & 12.
SUN 6:30 PM	"For Today" Reading/Discussion. Closed OA Women's Meeting (GBAI), at Up The Street Club, Webster	2	Fairly strong.
			Wonderfully supportive people.
SUN 7:00 PM	Big Book Study. Northwood UCC, The Woodlands	2	Good reading from 12-step book.
			Some long-term abstainers.

DAY/TIME	MEETING NAME	RESPONSES	GREATEST STRENGTH
SUN 8:00 PM	OA HOW. Mt. Olive Lutheran Church	1	Fair (small children often times brought to meetings).
MON 5:30 PM	Abstinence. Oasis Club	7	Relatively strong attendance. Good recovery.
			The people who go make the meeting great. Great recovery there.
			Core member consistency & recovery; fresh newcomers.
			It's all about abstinence. It's on Mondays -- Good way to start the week.
			Always talks about abstinence.
			Well-attended meeting.
			Lots of recovery.
MON 6:00 PM	Steps. Bear Creek UMC	5	Lots of long-term recovery.
			Super welcoming.
			Lots of OA longevity in the group, warm, friendly group
			Convenient time and place; good friends there.
			Friends & proximity.
TUE Noon	OA HOW. Speaker/discussion. Holy Name Retreat Center	1	Lots of recovery, maturity, and depth in comments.
TUE 5:45 PM	Newcomers Meeting - St. Anne's Catholic Church	4	New people, not just the same people every week.
			Smaller group.
			Focus on steps 1-3
			Newcomers. Location.

DAY/TIME	MEETING NAME	RESPONSES	GREATEST STRENGTH
WED 10:00 AM	Step Study. Bayland Community Center	9	Friendly, acceptance, fun, step work and support.
			Great amount of recovery; nurturing environment.
			Close bond with other OA members.
			Long-term recovery of some of the members, and the continued study of the steps.
			People who attend.
			Member support to other members; lead rotates.
			Fellowship of committed core members.
			Small; location and time work well for me.
			Tight-knit, truly supportive.
WED 6:00 PM	Open Discussion. Men's Meeting, Live Oak Friend's House	5	Men only.
			Men's only meeting.
			Male focus.
			The wisdom and experience of the meeting leader
			My need for a mid-week meeting though I sporadically attend.
WED 7:30 PM	Abstinence. Trace Baptist Church, Sugar Land	1	(no response)
WED 7:30 PM	OA HOW. St. Michael's Episcopal Church	1	Structure & fellowship.
THU Noon	OA HOW. Big Book. Holy Name Retreat Center	1	Lots of recovery, maturity, and depth in comments

DAY/TIME	MEETING NAME	RESPONSES	GREATEST STRENGTH
THU 5:45 PM	"Safe From Sara Lee". Discussion. Closed Meeting. First Cumberland Presbyterian Church.	10	Very inspirational group of people; very well attended.
			People follow-up with one another; make personal connections.
			People, relaxed atmosphere, location
			Socially free and supportive.
			Core group of committed people.
			The group.
			Safe.
			Great Fellowship.
			The people who go and share, the location is great too, I like that it's a topic/speaker meeting.
			Convenient time.
THU 6:30 PM	Big Book Study(GBAI) at Up The Street, Webster	1	Extremely strong.
FRI 6:00 PM	OA How. St. Martin's Episcopal Church	2	Read the AA 12 & 12.
			Weighed & measured food plan. Read from AA 12 & 12.
FRI 10:00 AM	Oasis Club	1	Daytime (weekday) meetings very appealing; Format.
FRI Noon	Discussion. Atascasita UMC, Humble TX	1	The members & discussions.
FRI Noon	Northwood Unitarian Church, The Woodlands	1	(no response)

DAY/TIME	MEETING NAME	RESPONSES	GREATEST STRENGTH
SAT 8:30 AM	Discussion. Oasis Club.	20	Strength, experience & hope shared.
			Caring people.
			Newcomer outreach.
			Lots of long term Recovery
			Lots of recovery; good attendance.
			Size and stability.
			Recovery and commitment of members
			Long term recovery sharing
			Openness, honesty, level of recovery in the room.
			Lots of recovery.
			Members with lengthy recovery.
			Birthday meetings and celebration of abstinence.
			Diverse group.
			Well attended. Like the format.
			Great information and support for newcomers.
			Variety of attendee and their stories.
			Large group, so it gives me variety.
			Lots of people committed to recovery!
			Member's stories as lead-in to meeting.
			Friends go. Convenient time.
SAT 9:00 AM	GreySheet, Oaks Christian Church	1	Everyone is abstinent and some have long-term abstinence.
SAT 9:00 AM	OA HOW. St. Michael's Episcopal	1	Emphasis on abstinence qualified by sponsors.
SAT 9:30 AM	OA-HOW meeting in Oak Forest	2	Structure and fellowship.
			Honest sharing powerful.

DAY/TIME	MEETING NAME	RESPONSES	GREATEST STRENGTH
SAT 10:00 AM	Awakenings, Conroe Medical Center	4	Attendees are loving, currently talking more solution than problem.
			Variety of time in the OA program. Meetings follow the format.
			Good group and leaders.
SAT 10:30 AM	Discussion. House of Prayer Lutheran Church, Clear Lake	1	Nice people.
SAT 10:45 AM	Big Book Study. Oasis Club	17	The wisdom & example of big book study leader.
			I love the group leader and his spirituality and meditation part of meeting.
			The chairperson and the people that attend.
			Content.
			Friendly, Big Book, acceptance, fun, and supportive.
			Learning meaning of the Big Book, writing portion, everyone shares.
			Good speakers.
			Format & leader.
			Long-term recovery, sharing, writing, study work, meditation, leader.
			Leadership, fellowship.
			Strong leadership, format, almost all share due to 1.5 hours.
			Leader. When he took a break, the group almost died.
			Stated assignment and topic.
			The group and topic.
			Format & leader.
			Meeting format.
			Workshop format and recovery/commitment of members.
			The guided meditation, writing, and everyone gets a chance to share. It uses tools I have a hard time with, so I love it when I can make it!

Question 12. List the 3 meetings you attend most often and your perceptions of their greatest weaknesses.

Note to Readers: If an HMI-area OA meeting is not listed below, it is because none of the members who responded to the OA Renewal Survey provided a response for that meeting. Responses for meetings 1, 2, 3 are grouped together by meeting day/time and meeting name.

DAY & TIME	MEETING	RESPONSES	GREATEST WEAKNESS
SUN 8:30 AM	Oasis Club Big Book Study	3	Same people lead and often talk outside the bounds of OA.
			Would prefer a 9 a.m. start (very minor complaint).
			People come late.
SUN 1:00 PM	OA HOW Chapelwood UMC	2	Topic Meeting. Doesn't help people work 12 steps.
			Construction at the church. Hard to find.
SUN 6:00 PM	Steps & Traditions. St. John The Divine Episcopal Church	4	Only a couple of members with a lot of experience in the program.
			Not enough support.
			Low attendance. Lack of enthusiasm.
			Sometimes not well attended.
SUN 7:00 PM	Big Book Study. Northwood UCC, The Woodlands	2	Few recovery members, not as positive and informative.
			Leadership usually falls to one or two people.
MON 5:30 PM	Abstinence. Oasis Club	5	The location of the Oasis Club is rough to get to with 5:00 traffic.
			Slow volunteering for service due to heavy attendance by newcomers.
			Lack of commitment from a larger number of people.
			None.
			Time/area of town - traffic very heavy.
MON 6:00 PM	Steps. Bear Creek UMC	4	Women only; not much variation in attendance.
			Wish we had speakers occasionally.
			Constant turnover; 5 charter members who are faithful.
			Routine; lacks variety.

DAY & TIME	MEETING	RESPONSES	GREATEST WEAKNESS
TUE Noon	OA HOW. Speaker/discussion. Holy Name Retreat Center	1	Seating could be arranged better for a closer unity in this wonderful large room.
TUE 5:45 PM	Newcomers Meeting - St. Anne's Catholic Church	5	Small. Not enough sponsors.
			Smaller group.
			Attendance has dwindled.
			Newcomers addressed indirectly, breaking 12-Steps & 12 traditions blatantly.
			None.
TUE 7:00 PM	OA HOW. St. John the Divine Episcopal Church	2	Topic meeting. Doesn't help people work steps.
			I like the meeting, otherwise I wouldn't attend.
			None.
TUE 7:00 PM	Atascasita Methodist Church, Humble	1	Lack of sponsors.
TUE 7:30 PM	Steps & Topic. Conroe Medical Center Hospital	3	Cross-talk.
			Seating arrangement prevents some people from seeing everyone.
			Not much recovery.
WED 10:00 AM	Step Study. Bayland Community Center	6	Participation low due to time and date.
			People come late.
			Too few people; not enough different people to lead meetings.
			Can't think of any.
			Small group.
			Need more sponsors.

DAY & TIME	MEETING	RESPONSES	GREATEST WEAKNESS
WED 6:00 PM	Open Discussion. Men's Meeting, Live Oak Friend's House	5	Location. I live in The Woodlands.
			Needs more men; meeting often runs less than a hour.
			Not enough participants.
			Poor attendance.
			I need to leave work early to get there on time.
WED 7:30 PM	Abstinence. Trace Baptist Church, Sugar Land	1	Not enough "regulars."
THU Noon	Topic, Atascasita UMC, Humble	1	Lack of sponsors. Too few members/attendees.
THU 5:45 PM	"Safe From Sara Lee". Discussion. Closed Meeting. First Cumberland Presbyterian Church.	7	No Time Limit on Sharing
			Inconvenient location.
			Meetings can get off topic or not be focused on solution.
			None.
			I don't see AA Meetings named Safe from Jack Daniel!
			Can't think of any.
			Not sure, I don't share much in there, but that's my issue not the meetings...not much is weak about it!
THU 6:30 PM	Big Book Study(GBAI) at Up The Street, Webster	1	I can't find one weakness.
FRI 6:00 PM	OA How. St. Martin's Episcopal Church	1	Small meeting - at the most 10 people attend.
FRI 10:00 AM	Oasis Club	2	Can't think of any.
			Needs more attendance.

DAY & TIME	MEETING	RESPONSES	GREATEST WEAKNESS
SAT 8:30 AM	Discussion. Oasis Club.	16	Not enough people in recovery.
			Time and distance.
			I'd like to see more weight loss from the group in general.
			Too short. Should be 75-90 minutes.
			The same people talk each week.
			Same people contribute all the time; need new voices.
			Sometimes a lack of focus in topic.
			None.
			Less recovery than others I've attended.
			Only, maybe that the meeting should be longer in length so that everyone has time to share, if they wish to do so.
			Only an hour long, I think I like 90 minutes better.
			It's a larger meeting and I'm not sure everyone who'd like to share gets a chance.
			Large for my taste; prefer smaller meetings.
			Can't think of any.
			Kind of long; but it probably should be.
			None.
SAT 9:00 AM	GreySheet, Oaks Christian Church	1	None.
SAT 9:30 AM	OA-HOW meeting in Oak Forest	2	I like the meetings. Otherwise, I would not attend.
			Deciding and re-deciding issues in group conscience.
SAT 10:00 AM	Awakenings, Conroe Medical Center	2	Cross talk.
			Seating arrangement prevents some people from seeing everyone.
SAT 10:30 AM	Discussion. House of Prayer Lutheran Church, Clear Lake	1	Some power is all mine folks.

DAY & TIME	MEETING	RESPONSES	GREATEST WEAKNESS
SAT 10:45 AM	Big Book Study. Oasis Club	14	Progress on Big Book study is very slow.
			I really can't think of any weakness.
			Leader-centered.
			Distance.
			Meditation is too short.
			Don't know why attendance is down because it's a great meeting.
			It makes a long full Saturday to attend both meetings.
			Lack of key to big (& sometimes mini) literature cabinet.
			Across town from my home.
			Too long.
			None.
			The day, it's hard to keep that time open!
			I prefer the Saturday 8:30 am and am not willing to do both.
			Conflicts with another activity so I rarely attend.

Question 13. How often do newcomers come to meetings? How often do they return? Why or why not?

Why or why not?
Not sure but my perception is they don't completely grasp OA principles/concepts.
I don't know the answers to a lot of the questions being asked here.
They feel at home and hear the strength experience and hope.
Not sure.
It's a personal decision, a lot of people don't see themselves as addicts who overeat.
They find hope and people willing to talk to them.
Because of how the leaders act with all members.
Good abstinence in my opinion.
OA-HOW is a more structured program and not all people can do it.
Not sure why newcomers attend these particular meetings, but I assume all come to overcome eating disorders.
Unknown - likely lack of attendance by men with strong recovery (there are few stalwarts).
Good question - perhaps they are not seeing enough recovery in the rooms. i.e., too much "fat serenity".
I do not attend because of distance since I have moved to Liberty county.
Maybe they are not ready to work the program.
Newcomers are looking for a quick fix and OA is not one.
Don't know. They come back, but often don't stick long term.
Commitment it requires to work the OA-HOW program - it will get you out of the food, but is not for

everyone.
Not sure; I suppose because of small attendance and lack of sponsors.
This was hard to answer. People stay for a bit and then leave.
I do not know why they do not return.
Actually we've had a small burst of newcomers recently and a few have become regulars.
The Wed meeting is very small.
For 5 years the core group was the same with new people coming and going; in last 2 years 3 long-timers left for CEA-HOW, others moved, now only 20% were there when I came back from relapse.
Meeting still very young...it will grow.
I do not know why newcomers do not return, I am not in touch with them.
I don't think that OA can do anything else to retain them.
Good groups.
Structure isn't designed to answer all their questions; they need to learn as they go.
GreySheet abstinence is for the most desperate. Most believe they still have other options.
I have no idea, but I might be the expectation that one will work hard at the program and eat well.
I don't know the reason, I prefer to think it is up to the individual and their HP.
Sometimes regular members don't reach out enough.
Strong meetings with recovery attract people to come back. Small weak meetings have trouble keeping regulars much less a newcomer.
They see results in long-term members (weight loss, lives that work pretty well).
Not really sure about the safe from Sara Lee, I don't see many new ones but I could be missing it.
I don't know. Sometimes they get day jobs or are just "sampling" what a meeting is like are my best guesses.
Meeting 1 is the warmest, friendliest meeting I go to...being in a circle makes all feel welcome and no newcomer or newer people are ever left without someone to talk to after the meeting.
It is hard to change old habits and hang-ups.
Focus on Recovery for Men- few men in OA - group slowly growing.
Why? Because we love on them with words and literature and phone numbers Why not? They're not ready?
I don't know - they may attend other meetings?
Very welcoming, 12 and 12 is basic to OA so the newcomer is introduced to important material.
Believe there is no follow-up encouraging them to attend. Maybe having members available as temporary sponsors.
People seem not to be ready.
Probably lack of phone calls, of contact, of effort to work a 12 Step Program.

Question 14. In the meetings you attend, what would be helpful to strengthen your recovery?

Response Text
Perhaps the leaders could be a little better prepared. Seems like many show up without much forethought.
My recovery is dependent on my own willingness to work the steps and stay abstinent.
I'm already been helped.
Continue to hear experience, strength and hope.

For sponsors to allow members to become responsible human beings.
Abstinence.
Focus on OA talk and not outside or personal issues that don't deal with recovery.
More OA-HOW abstinent people.
More calls and encouragement from other members.
Attendance needed first.
More and varied attendance.
Reaching out to others.
The continued one to one contact.
Weighed and measured food plan is greatest strength.
More attendees; members.
If I went more.
Variety of people that speak.
Don't know.
To sponsor a workshop.
If I could talk about food. Recovery is great but I need tips on how to manage my food and cook good abstinent food. My sponsor is great but she doesn't know everything. I would like to discuss those things in meetings.
More long timers with abstinence.
Sorry, I can't think of anything.
Less negativity - more focus on solution, not problem.
My regular attendance, an additional meeting between Tuesday and Friday, and periodic workshops.
More sponsors.
Meetings are fine.
More information on available "sponsors".
Practical suggestions of how to successfully eat differently.
Nothing.
More stories of recovery.
I don't know.
I feel my recovery is strong from using meetings as a tool.
More topic meetings.
Being forced to talk by being called on.
More literature.
More Big Book of AA talk/shared experience, more volunteer opportunities.
To hear other's perspectives more frequently.
I don't know.

Encouraging folks to make those phone calls & reach out.
I'm not sure.
Having a commitment to selling literature after every meeting.
More follow thru by new members and more feedback.
More concrete tips and focused topics, more info on other reading materials.
More step study and work that is more spiritual.
Study Traditions.
Other people showing up and being HONEST.
Not sure - sharing with group members helps me a lot. I need to take responsibility for my recovery and use more tools.
More people willing to help and talk to you.
More group interaction.
Be more committed to focusing on the solution.
Not sure.
More fellowship outside the meetings like dances, fun social events.
To follow a 12 Step Spiritual Program of Recovery.

Question 15. How can HMI help make your home meeting stronger?

Response Text
Don't know.
The strength of the meeting has to come from the people who attend it and their willingness to be of service.
Encourage all meetings to give chips and acknowledge periods of abstinence.
I like it the way it is.
Advertise. Years ago, I saw an OA ad on TV. That is what I remembered when I finally became desperate enough to look for help. I went to OA because of the advertisement. Also, come visit, we always like to hear from people with abstinence!
The leaders who run Intergroup are the same people who use their controlling ways in the majority of the meetings.
Reminders of boundaries.
I don't think intergroup is very functional.
Increased emphasis on abstinence and working the recover steps.
More men's meetings at more times and in far north metro Houston.
More PR announcements in local media.
Let people know the Sunday OA-HOW meeting is a very strong meeting, averaging 30 people in attendance.
Encourage attendees/members of larger meetings to attend and offer us support and encouragement and tips.
Have a member attend a meeting and offer feedback as to format, level of discussion, ways to make it more meaningful to longtime members as well as new comers.
Don't know.

I don't know.
I think that the OA-HOW meeting needs to keep two things: 1- all of the readings in the beginning of the meeting, 2- the message of keeping the message positive and the crap is to be shared with your sponsor.
Workshops in north Houston.
I wish that Houston OA Intergroup could get a tax number or organization ID for IRS. I am treasurer for one meeting and cannot use Overeaters Anonymous for the name because we have not proper ID number. I have to have my OWN name on the group's account. I don't like this. Could this be looked into?
We need to increase attendance so possibly more emphasis on effective outreach.
Periodic workshops in the area.
They already do all they can.
Like workshops.
Publish a list of other meetings that are available.
I like the workshops. People outside of OA need to know about us, and people inside OA need to see recovery, including with their weight, because for many of them, that's why they come.
Nothing.
More newcomers. More topics.
I think Intergroup is doing a great job.
Providing more quantity meetings.
Easier access to literature. Only place to buy it is Oasis Club, I guess?
Water in the fridge? More service opportunities than just the chair maybe... OH! Maybe highly encourage going out for dinner or coffee time after; encouraging the meeting after the meeting. Same for more meaningful.
I love the Sat morning meaning already and tend to compare other meetings to that one...which is probably not the best to do, but I do.
I don't know.
Not sure I have any answers to this one; perhaps provide info on what intergroup does that affects each meeting.
Let's have a workshop on Service-not just Sponsorship. Talk about service for OA as a whole, maybe even the Traditions. Practicing the Principles. We need GSR's from Home Groups and I admit it is not even mentioned.
Calls from longtime members after meeting.
More workshops on abstinence and steps.
Require more accountability from meetings that are listed--i.e., each group should have an elected HMI rep, meeting contact, sec., etc.
Better advice.
Encourage service work as a part of OA membership. Make it a point to stress service and market service as something to be desired not dreaded.
Make more of a publication to medical facilities. Hold social events more often. Remind individuals to share only their recovery and not to recruit people.
To attend meetings and encourage members in sobriety/abstinence to participate in HMI.

Question 16. How can HMI help make your meeting more meaningful?

Response Text
Perhaps requiring some abstinence to share.
Intergroup cannot help make my home group nor anyones home group more meaningful, it has to be an inside job: That of allowing actual members to share their strength, hope, and experiences so that their groups can strive and grow.
Keep us informed of what is going on, upcoming events etc.
I don't think intergroup is that functional.
More emphasis on abstinence and working the recovery steps.
Need a meeting near my home in the Woodlands so I can have a home meeting.
I do not understand this question.
Offer us words of encouragement.
Provide a list of suggested topics or themes quarterly.
Don't know.
I don't know - it's already a good little meeting.
I am not a fan of the regular OA meeting. I personally needed the structure of recovery. I did not find that in the regular OA meetings. They seemed very "Loosy Goosy".
Is there a speaker list?
Our reps from Integroup do a good job of communicating what's happening. Maybe speakers to share with non-home groups as needed.
OA, all over it seems - not just Houston - seems to be more negative than AA (for example). Not sure IG can do anything about it, perhaps it is just symptomatic of our disease.
I am not sure what Intergroup does/can do.
Don't know.
They're fine.
Don't know.
Learning about what other successful areas of the country are doing and modeling it here.
Nothing.
I already feel that my home meeting is very meaningful.
Organized outreach to hospitals & medical practitioners to really sick compulsive overeaters. Advertising (ie public service announcements).
Not sure, I just think more time spent in the actual Big Book of AA would help alot.
I don't know. I do know that I have enjoyed the workshops. The workshops have centered me.
Suggestions of meeting formats including suggesting that with a group conscience, changes can be made in format from time to time so we don't get so "stuck" in one format or another.
I'm not sure how much I like reading the tools every week. I wish we did that once a month or less often.
Guided meditations.
Stop announcing an "HMI" meeting. What is HMI to a newcomer...I didn't understand its importance for years. Give them a reason to go to the website...talk about it in meetings...that's the only way we learn. Have information on the site that is usable working the steps or something we can have our sponsees use.
Worksheets for home, more reading selections discussed.
Speakers.
Meaningfulness comes from individuals. HMI helps individuals develop their own recovery through events, service, etc., thus strenthening the groups as a whole.
I really like the intimate feeling of small meetings. Would more meeting options reduce the size of

some of the larger meetings?
Encourage service work as a part of OA membership
By attending Meetings and encouraging members in recovery/abstinence/sobriety to participate in HMI.

Question 17. How can HMI help your home meeting more productive?

Response Text
Again, the individual members of all groups must be given the physical, emotional, and spiritual space to make their meetings more productive, stronger, and grow to be more meaningful as a whole.
I don't think intergroup can make much of an impact.
Maintaining focus of the meeting on eating disorder and not letting the meeting stray to other issues.
Need a meeting near my home in the Woodlands so I can have a home meeting.
Each meeting is responsible for sending a rep to IG. It's that person's responsibility to carry the IG message. Have the IG meeting topic include questions such as these for discussion.
Suggestions on how to advertise and grow.
I don't know
Not sure.
I am not sure what Intergroup does/can do.
Don't know
Don't know.
Nothing
I feel that my home meeting is already productive.
Keep doing workshops especially regular OA in collaboration with HOW. Once and for all, end the OA vs. OA-HOW animosity.
Not really sure...keep encouraging anonymity and no cross talk, keeping it to 5 unless that person really needs to get it out.
Produce a paragraph that summarizes plans for the future, what is going on in with other groups or even worldwide. I often tell my home meeting that funds from world service helped me keep going with literature when I lived overseas for 12 years and that they would put others who wrote world service in touch with me.
Pay more attention to the flyers in the books instead of everyone announcing bunches of different things at the end of the meeting. Show the flyer, so shy newcomers can seek it out on the bulletin board. More people remember if they see us showing a flyer to take about the announcement, rather than just hearing it...they think, I'll remember it...oh, that's later, I don't need to sign up now.
More topic oriented less personal stories that wander.
The most valuable part of meetings for me is the sharing. Perhaps groups could consider making the opening meeting comments more brief to allow more time for that?
Encourage service work as a part of OA membership.
We are now revamping the format of our meeting. Please let us know what you think. Additional ideas welcome.

Question 18. Additional Suggestions Concerning Information or Activities that Would be Useful to OA Groups.

Other suggestions
Don't use the Lord's Prayer - it is not non-denomiWorld Service Office.
Game night with board/card games or just socializing nights.
Maybe more information on line or chatrooms. And more spanish information.
Going back to the basics of the original OA 12-step program.
A structured way of using food plans to stay abstinent.
I think a specific meeting in which the steps are systematically worked within the group would be helpful.
I really like the plan of eating. I need ideas on how to have a food plan that doesnt make me feel like I am depriving myself.
I am not sure what OA policy is on contacting newcomers or dropouts, but a phone call offering support to each one might be helpful.
More groups around the city.
Help create meetings in underserved area of town---ie, midtown, near east side, etc.
Big Book studies.
Child friendly meetings.
Sponsor another Recovery from Relapse series.
I can only guess at these.
Very detailed directions or map to Oasis with landmarks.
Workshop on Traditions and Service Concepts - Intergroup responsible to groups, traditions 2 & 9.
I like that we're having more workshops.
Loving yourself.
Making available a listing of the various formats being used at meetings could provide other meetings with ideas for their own.
Supporting long term members of the fellowship.

Question 20. Please share suggestions on how HMI could help strengthen your group.

Response Text
HMI could actually sponsor game nights and social nights at the oasis club.
I have social anxiety, so is hard for me to share even whwn I really want too. That's one of the reason it took me too long to go to OA, it will be great to have more help for people lke me, that's what I think that chatrooms will be helpful.
HMI members are welcome to visit. It would be great to see members and hear their experience, strength and hope.
Make the original OA 12-step program and the HOW Concept be totally separate and apart from each other.
Abstinence meetings.
Help keep us all focused on working the steps.
Members, both men and women, need to encourage men to attend men's meetings.
Send secretraies suggestions; tell us how Intergroup stays as large as it does – other than location.
Don't know.
Sorry, don't have any ideas here either.

More sponsors that have time to listen.
Nothing.
Child care. Having additional "clubs" in other areas of town in order to meet with sponsor(ees).
Run ads (PSA's) in small town newspapers with meeting info. Work on radio/TV PSA's again.
Create an announcement recommending that each meeting elect a representative to HMI, whose task would be to report back to the meeting. Too many people don't know that it is available and recommended.
I think that covers it! Just maybe more service opps on a smaller scale...and encouraging the meetings after the meeting for fellowship at dinner or coffee.
It would be nice if towards the end of each meeting, someone could make copies of the phone list and we could each take a copy to have during the week to make calls.
We need a rep for both my mtgs.
HMI should offer help in understanding the importance of the group concept to the fellowship and to recovery - so often "meetings" function as out-patient therapy - this is how newcomers understand OA - this reflects itself in the lack of business meetings. I/G becomes the defacto business meeting for the area fellowship.
Again, REQUIRE active HMI reps from each group. Addicts need accountability! This also fosters communication between members.
We need to have some more experienced members attend who are willing to sponsor new people. Can you get the word out? Ask some folks who are willing to sponsor attend our group.
To define, for the medical profession to have a connection to meetings. Getting more publication out there.

Question 21. Other Comments and Suggestions.

Response Text
This survey was too complex - sorry I couldn't answer more of it.
I think that World Service Office there is a fear of people who attend meeting that OA is losing members. I believe that a lot of people, with the advent of technology, are going to online and phone meetings so the face to face meetings may dwindle but lots of people are still going to meetings out there. We just don't see them.
I'm also a Hispanic and my community is in great need of help, so more information in Spanish in the website would be great.
I would like to see an advertising campaign initially targeted to those areas where meetings are the strongest. When newcomers arrive, they will have people to help them recover. We need to get the word out, but we need people to receive the newbies coming in.
Yea, that any and all members be able to share their experience, strength, and hope up to their own personal level of recovery.
I was in Regular OA for 20 years and didn't get the kind of recovery I needed for long term abstinence. I went to OA-HOW and found a better way of recovering from my eating disorder. They offered me a plan of eating and a guide to working the steps. There was more success in that program than I found in regular OA. I don't attend regular OA meetings anymore. They do not have what I want which is true OA recovery from this deadly disease.
More emphasis on recovery, abstinence, and especially working the steps.
Thank you for your service. The call from a member that prompted me to answer this survey also prompted my first involvement in the program since 2005. Thank you for "keeping coming back."
Remove meetings from HMI meeting list that no longer exist. Update the HMI phone list by re-creating it from scratch. Names and numbers are dated. At least one deceased person's name was on

a recent list. Starting from scratch would provide accurate names and numbers and make it a more useful resource,
I honestly don't know. I am sometimes put off by not knowing how to get to workshops, even though there's a map.
I cannot say enough about getting out of the food using a weighed and measured food plan. It is the only way I know consistently that I am nourishing my body and not my food addiction. A weighed and measured food plan gives me FREEDOM. That is why I go to OA-HOW meetings. My BIGGEST COMPLAINT about regular OA meetings, workshops, conventions is that MOST people are NOT out of the food. That is why I go consistently to OA-HOW meetings.
I would like to see meetings end with the serenity prayer or third step prayer rather than the Lord's Prayer. I think they are more inclusive.
I rarely attend the Sat. Oasis group, but sometimes I do. I LOVE having that "home base." I appreciate the quality of these meetings. I just find it easier to attend during week and live in far NW Houston. Thanks so much for all your work and concern in doing this survey. Really appreciate the Spring Retreats.
This is just me: I have to work at translating the exclusive reference to God, men and businessmen in the Big Book to HP and person. I appreciate the change in OA literature to a more inclusive Higher Power.
My experience with HMI was not great. It was a fast meeting encumbered by a lot of rules. Keeping up with Parliamentary Procedure and the other rules and Traditions was nearly impossible, and I didn't feel like my input was welcome.
No - thanks!
Discussion of invites to other OA'ers from other communities to lead meetings and also possibly have a forum on how to strengthen Houston's OA.
I think "public information night" sounds like a good idea, however, I think, also, that anonymity should also be of the utmost concern since it is so valuable to members.
HMI is doing a great job in my opinion. More representatives are needed so that ALL area groups have a voice in what goes in the greater Houston Metro area. Such a small group of volunteers burns out quickly.
You are doing great HMI! Thank you for your service and hard work!!!
At the present moment I do online meetings because of transportation problems.
No suggestions.
Thanks for this great idea!
OA, lacking the group concept - the cornerstone for the OA fellowship - inevitably leads intergroup to become the only place where OA does business and personalities begin to dominate - there becomes endless co-dependent discussions focusing on trying to 'fix' the fellowship - mainly how do we get more people to do service at the intergroup level - result, same small group of abstinent and non-abstinent people do I/G service - I/G continues to function though hardly any groups send reps to I/G meetings. There is no realization that w/o a group there is a substantially diminished likelihood of recovery - - we compulsive overeaters are isolators, we need a group to break this aspect of the disease. Second, many OA's come from families influence by alcoholism - I send sponsees to AI-Anon once we reach step 6 - relationship problems are best dealt with there - too many OA meetings become AI-Anon meetings without AI-Anon tools and recovery literature (it's made a hell of an improvement in my program going to AI-Anon. AI-Anon behavior (co-dependency) is endemic in OA and destructive to it. Imagine if you will, a person who is abstinent but shows up to meetings drunk. Here, we have people who are abstinent but still suffer from a compulsion to control others, to run the show. Sponsors are training sponsees how to sponsor others, and if they are not cognizant of the group concept, this cornerstone for the fellowship disappears. The close connections that are terribly important to overcome this disease are never formed. This is why I think OA HOW does better than regular OA - there is a stronger sense that you "belong" and must take responsibility for the group - no group, no recovery. My AA friends talk of their groups with warmth and affection, I do not find this in OA. This is my experience. My suggestion: workshops on the group concept, things your sponsor may

not have taught you - and have an OA group(s) sponsor it - a true "intergroup" activity.
Service opportunities (i.e. convention planning, HMI, Oasis club officers, even chairing meetings should not be presented to people/groups in a shameful, deprived, martyrs' way. Service opportunities are an HONOR and should be presented as such! People in charge should move on BEFORE they get burned-out and negative! Good survey! Keep up the good work! And thank YOU for your service!
What would I do without you?
Used to have a game night at Oasis Club. Though I suggest it I might not be able to support it as it is an hour's drive for me. Maybe there is a more central location?
Abstinence, for me, begins with physical recovery from compulsive overeating. I cannot practice a spiritual program if I am not sober/abstinent FIRST.