

Attracting and Cooperating (Not Promoting or Affiliating)

Tradition 5: Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers

Tradition 6: An OA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the OA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

Tradition 11: Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television, and other public media of communication.

How should we carry the message of recovery to those who still suffer both within and outside of the fellowship of Overeaters Anonymous? How can we spread the word to the public – through doctors, nutritionists, therapists, hospitals, treatment centers, teachers, libraries, the media, fitness centers, religious institutions, etc.?

This paper summarizes some of the ideas in the Overeaters Anonymous “Public Information Service Manual” and in the Al-Anon publication “Attracting and Cooperating.”

Simply put, our eleventh tradition means we do not “sell” Overeaters Anonymous. Instead, when others see that we’ve found something they want, they’ll be attracted to OA. **Our job is to make sure that compulsive overeaters know our program exists and how to find us.**

Attraction is sharing how the program works for us and how it can work for others. When we attract, we draw others towards us by our positive qualities. We let them know that we are available if and when help is needed. Attraction is:

- Providing information
- Generating good will
- Cooperating with professionals
- Explaining how OA works in our lives

With **promotion**, on the other hand, we are in the selling mode. When we promote, we may actually encourage resistance instead of the attraction we desire. Promotion means:

- Using pressure tactics and not taking “no” for an answer
- Making promises
- Comparing ourselves to other self-help or professional programs
- Exaggerating or misrepresenting OA’s purpose
- Presenting ourselves as a spokesperson for OA, by allowing our full name, face, and membership to be identified at the level of press, radio, TV, film, and other public media of communication

Cooperation is working with others outside of our program. Cooperation means:

- Participating in programs with agencies or individuals who work in the field of obesity and compulsive overeating
- Providing literature, meeting schedules, and telephone contact numbers to professionals
- Setting up display booths or “take one” tables at outside conventions, conferences and health fairs
- Responding to requests from the media and professionals for OA information
- Offering OA members’ services to share how the program works

We always want to protect our fellowship from outside pressures and to avoid **affiliation** with any outside entity. Whenever we share the platform with outside groups, we make it clear that OA is an independent fellowship, not connected with any other program or enterprise. We do not endorse or oppose other enterprises. Publicly linking the OA name (or the name of any OA member) with another organization constitutes affiliation. But there is a wide area in which we can cooperate. We can offer to provide speakers and literature and to work with other organizations within the limits of our traditions. OA’s function is to make our program available to them as a resource.

Finally, we should also always remember the concepts of being “nonprofessional” in Tradition 8 and of “anonymity” in Traditions 11 and 12. Tradition 8 states that “Overeaters Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional...” OA speakers do not presume to be authorities on the medical and psychological aspects of compulsive overeating. When questions are asked about the disease rather than the OA program, do not hesitate to say, “I don’t know,” or “I’m not qualified to answer.” Also, we need always remember that anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our program, always ensuring principles before personalities.