

GROUP CONSCIENCE MEETING

NOTE: For those seeking more information on the Overeaters Anonymous Suggested Group Conscience meeting format {where the template for this meeting originated}, please go to:

<https://oa.org/app/uploads/2019/12/groupconscience1.pdf>

Introduction: Welcome to the group conscience meeting of the _____ group of Overeaters Anonymous. My name is _____, and I am a compulsive eater and the chairperson of this meeting.

Serenity Prayer: Will those who wish to, please join me in the Serenity Prayer. For this we might use the “WE” version: *‘God grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, courage to change the things we can, and wisdom to know the difference.’*

Introduce: [The Twelve Steps](#), [the Twelve Traditions](#) and [the Twelve Concepts](#) {if appropriate}.

Establishing Ground Rules: The purpose of this meeting is to make decisions that affect our group. I encourage everyone here to participate. If a matter comes to a vote and you do not attend our meeting regularly or do not plan to, please consider whether it would be reasonable for you to vote. However, we welcome everyone’s viewpoint; we can all learn from one another.

Please remember Tradition Five: *‘Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers.’* Therefore, anything we decide at this meeting must reflect that purpose. No matter what we believe as individuals, we must be united in our purpose to carry our message as best we can to the compulsive overeater who still suffers. That person is our focus. May we do our best for him or her.

Minutes from Previous Meeting: Are there minutes from our last meeting? {Secretary reads minutes, if available, or distribute s copies.} Any corrections or additions? Applicable corrections or additions are made.

The Agenda: The chair will now present the agenda and will ask for additions or amendments. The agenda often results from discussions at previous meetings, or people at the current meeting may make suggestions. The chair should make certain that the agenda is clear, in a logical sequence and agreeable to those attending the group conscience meeting. The attendees will then address each item on the agenda.

Making Decisions: Some agenda items may require collecting information before the meeting; e.g., if one item is *“should the meeting start half an hour earlier”* it would be important to check if the room is available half an hour earlier. Depending on the nature of the issue, decisions can be made in different ways. The issue might not be controversial at all. It might be supported or opposed by most

people in the group, but vehemently opposed or supported by a minority. It might have the support of only slightly more or less than half the group. Each of these possibilities can require a different approach.

Begin with a General Statement: To determine how to handle the issue, the chair might begin with a general statement, such as: *“The issue here is whether or not this group should change its meeting format to have a Traditions meeting on the last Monday of the month. Does anyone feel strongly one way or the other? Let’s go around the room and have people indicate how they feel, what they think would be best for the group, and why they think this would be helpful to the group.”* (or *“Let’s have a quick vote. Those who like the proposal, please raise your hands. Now, those who don’t like the proposal, please raise your hands.”*)

Depending on the show of hands one of the following might be applicable:

General Consensus: If it becomes clear that the members generally share the same opinion, the chair can say something like the following: *“It seems that we may have reached a consensus. Let’s make certain. Does anyone oppose (or support) this proposal?”* If no hands are raised, the chair may say: *“Let’s go on to other business. Would our secretary please record that we reached a consensus to have (or not have) a Traditions meeting on the last Monday of the month.”*

Some Support or Opposition: If it is apparent that some feel strongly for or against the proposal, the chair may say something like the following: *“It is clear that at least some members feel strongly that this proposal should (not) go forward. We in OA try to find a consensus, so it is important that we hear all points of view. Often those who disagree with the majority can best educate us by explaining the reasons for the views they hold. Let us remember that whatever decision we make can always be changed if our experience suggests it isn’t working. Let us have two people who support the proposal and two who oppose it speak for two (or three or five) minutes each, alternating one for and one against, followed by another vote.”*

Clear Result from the Vote: If the results of the vote are clear—very few members either oppose or support the proposal—then the chair may say something like: *“It appears that this proposal has (or does not have) the support of the majority of the group. Accordingly, would our secretary please record that we reached a group conscience on_____.”*

A Large Minority

If the vote doesn’t show a clear consensus, in the interests of developing a true group conscience, the chair should try to work toward a greater consensus in the following suggested manner: *“Concept Twelve (d) says, ‘all important decisions shall be reached by discussion, by vote and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity.’ In my opinion, we have not reached substantial unanimity. A large number of members present oppose (or support) this proposal, and to go with the majority would not achieve unanimity.” Does anyone have an idea of how to develop our informed group conscience in this situation?”*

Here are some ideas that different groups have used to develop a group conscience:

- Ask for suggestions, changes or amendments to the proposal that might address some of the reasons it has not found substantial unanimity. Perhaps those in the minority who are opposed to the proposal largely support it but disagree with one or two parts. Those parts could result in substantial unanimity with the addition of a ‘friendly amendment’.

- Appoint a committee of two, four or six members, evenly divided on the issue, to discuss it and make recommendations to the group.
- Try the proposal for a limited time and monitor its effectiveness. Schedule a group conscience meeting for one to six months in the future to decide whether to continue using it.
- Hold the proposal until the next group conscience meeting, and announce at each OA group meeting that it did not achieve substantial unanimity and that it is important for all regularly attending members to be at the next group conscience meeting to discuss the proposal fully.

Closing: Is there any further business to conduct? Does anyone want to raise an issue for a future meeting?... Thank you for coming. To close the meeting, let us have a moment of silence followed by [a closing of your choice].

