

Statement approved by the Baltimore Area Intergroup

This document was not submitted to, nor approved by the World Service Office.

Does Overeaters Anonymous Tell Us What to Believe About God?

OA's Third Tradition states clearly:

*"The **only** requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively."*

One of the most precious principles of the Overeaters Anonymous (OA) program is that we strive to be accessible to and inclusive of all people, regardless of their religious beliefs or non-beliefs. This principle was inherited from the very beginnings of Alcoholics Anonymous, (AA.)

When Bill W. drafted the steps for the first edition of the Big Book, the membership demanded that he add the phrase "as we understood Him" to the steps, written in italics for emphasis. Members also demanded that he remove a reference to "getting down on our knees." From the beginnings, the group conscience guided the fellowship to greater inclusiveness.

"God as we understood Him" teaches that it is up to you to develop your own understanding of a power greater than yourself.

Your Higher Power does not need to be the traditional all-powerful, all-knowing God many traditions believe in, but it can be. Supernatural or natural, or not an entity at all for some it is simply the love in the fellowship. It is entirely up to you to decide whether you think of your Higher Power as male, female, genderless, or encompassing a rainbow of possibilities. Perhaps none of these apply.

You do not need to believe the same way as anyone else in the OA fellowship. You do not need to believe the same way as your sponsor. What is important is that we respect each other's definitions of God as each of us understands God, and that no one dictates what another ought to believe. Again we point out our third tradition-"The **only** requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively." You don't have to believe anything at all. Atheists can and do recover in OA.

If this is the case, why don't we reword the steps to keep up with the times?

AA has been very supportive of our fellowship, allowing us to adapt their program to deal with our disease. But they have also asked that we respect their copyrights when reading from their literature. We gratefully honor their request.

Furthermore, OA's first tradition states that "Personal recovery depends upon OA unity." Nothing could be more fundamental to our Fellowship that seeks "Unity in Diversity" than safeguarding our shared 12 steps and 12 traditions.