

DOCUMENT 4: SAMPLE FA MEETING FORMAT

Please note that this sample meeting format will require edits before you print it. For example, add the day, time, and location of your meeting and indicate whether you are affiliated with an intergroup or chapter. You can also change the font size, but please make it no less than 14-point. Also, when printing, please be mindful of the layout of the format, avoiding the need to turn the page in the middle of a paragraph, tool, etc.

The 2015 World Service Conference (WSC) voted to create an alternate, ready-made version of the Sample FA Meeting Format (Document 4A) that includes the suggested introductory language for other meeting format options listed in Document 3 for the section of the meeting after the “Tools of Recovery” are read. This alternate format is intended to be used primarily by small meetings having few members with 90 days. The purpose of creating the alternate version is to simplify the work for FA members starting or administering smaller meetings. Both the existing Sample FA Meeting Format (Document 4) and Document 4A are posted on the FA website. **Please email the World Service office at docrequest@foodaddicts.org to request Word versions of either of these formats.**

The disciplines included in this meeting format were voted in by the 2012 WSC. Much thought and consideration went into these disciplines, and it is recommended to leave them as is. By group conscience, members may make additions as needed. Examples of such additions are:

- Meetings held in a city, where members may be traveling by public transportation, sometimes include a brief announcement at the beginning of the meeting or after the Serenity Prayer: “Are there any requests from members needing rides?”
- If there tends to be a great number of newcomers unfamiliar with FA practices, the format may include a reminder that questions and comments are best posed, and will be answered, during the break.
- Some meetings have requested that members not chew gum, as they find it distracting.

The sample format includes a request that people not clap after each speaker. Applause after a qualification is an expression of gratitude and therefore acceptable. However, it is requested that you not applaud following each person who shares. This is because, in most settings, applause rewards or acknowledges a good performance. In FA, we are sharing, not performing, and abstinence is not an accomplishment. It is a gift from our Higher Power. Further, applause is always uneven. No one should feel unappreciated because of having received less applause. It is also important to avoid clapping for large weight loss. This is a program of recovery, not a diet program, and not everyone is here to lose weight.

For suggestions on how to keep announcements brief, please see “Document 5: Suggested Wording for FA Service Announcements.”



FA MEETING FORMAT

- ❖ Welcome to the (day of the week), (time), (city) group of Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous -- FA. Before we begin, please turn off cell phones and any other electronic devices. [Leader pauses.] Thank you.

My name is _____, and I am your leader for this meeting. After a moment of silence, will you please join me in the **SERENITY PRAYER?**

- ❖ **PREAMBLE**

Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous is a fellowship of individuals who, through shared experience and mutual support, are recovering from food addiction.

We welcome all who want to stop eating addictively. There are no dues or fees for members; we are self-supporting through our own contributions, neither soliciting nor accepting outside donations. FA is not affiliated with any public or private organization, political movement, ideology, or religious doctrine. We take no position on outside issues. Our primary purpose is to abstain from addictive eating and to carry this message of recovery to those who still suffer.

- ❖ We would like to invite anyone, especially anyone who does not yet have 90 days of continuous abstinence, to come to the front of the room to read. Would someone please read the **DEFINITION OF A FOOD ADDICT?**

Food addiction is a disease of the mind, body and spirit for which there is no cure, but it can be arrested a day at a time by our adapting to a disciplined way of eating and the Twelve-Step program of FA. When we abuse food by using it as a drug, our lives become unmanageable.

Food addicts have an allergy to flour, sugar, and quantities that sets up an uncontrollable craving. The problem can be arrested a day at a time by the action of our weighing and measuring our food and abstaining completely from all flour and sugar.

FA defines abstinence as weighed and measured meals with nothing in between, no flour, no sugar, and the avoidance of any individual binge foods.

- ❖ How many FOOD ADDICTS are here besides me?
- ❖ FA is based upon the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. We will now read “How It Works” from page 58 of AA’s BIG BOOK, and the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions as adapted by FA.

AA has asked us to leave the text of “How It Works” intact, so the words “alcohol” and “alcoholic” remain. We have not replaced them with food-related terms.

- ❖ Would someone please read **“HOW IT WORKS?”**

Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.

Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it—then you are ready to take certain steps.

At some of these we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.

Remember we deal with alcohol—cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power—that One is God. May you find Him now!

Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon. Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery.

❖ Would someone please read the **TWELVE STEPS**?

1. **We admitted we were powerless over food—that our lives had become unmanageable.**
2. **Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.**
3. **Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.**
4. **Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.**
5. **Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.**
6. **Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.**
7. **Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.**
8. **Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.**
9. **Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.**
10. **Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.**
11. **Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.**
12. **Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to food addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.**

❖ [LEADER reads from the Big Book, p. 60]:

Many of us exclaimed, “What an order! I can’t go through with it.” Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:

- (a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.
- (b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.
- (c) That God could and would if He were sought.

Would someone please read the **TWELVE TRADITIONS**?

- 1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on FA unity.**
- 2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.**
- 3. The only requirement for FA membership is a desire to stop eating addictively.**
- 4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or FA as a whole.**
- 5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the food addict who still suffers.**
- 6. An FA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the FA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.**
- 7. Every FA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.**
- 8. Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.**
- 9. FA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.**
- 10. Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues, hence the FA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.**
- 11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.**
- 12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.**

The **DISCIPLINES** of this meeting are:

1. No smoking, food, or drinks please.
2. We encourage people to arrive early to help set up the room and greet newcomers.
3. Please refrain from texting, doing handicrafts, or engaging in any activity that might distract others.
4. Business meetings will be held after the first meeting of every month. All members are welcome to attend. Members with 90 days or more of continuous abstinence in FA, who regularly attend this meeting, will have a voice and a vote and service positions open to them.
5. We do not mention food by name or describe it in detail, as this may make some of our members uncomfortable.
6. We ask that you not bring infants and children to the meeting. However, those who have identified themselves as having a problem with food are welcome.

- ❖ **SEVENTH TRADITION:** We will now pass a basket for the Seventh Tradition donation. The Seventh Tradition states, “We are self-supporting through our own contributions, neither soliciting nor accepting outside donations.” Our expenses include rent, literature, support of our Intergroup [or Chapter, where applicable], and support of the FA World Service Office. Please contribute generously to the Seventh Tradition.
- ❖ **LITERATURE ANNOUNCEMENT:** Free newcomer packets and phone lists are available at the literature table. Books, pamphlets, CDs of individual stories, and copies of *connection* magazine are for sale there as well. We also have trifold to post in the community and letters to take to health care providers and/or faith community leaders. Someone will be at the table to assist you during the break and after the meeting. Would the literature person please stand and identify him or herself?
- ❖ ***connection* ANNOUNCEMENT:** *connection* is a magazine of experience, strength and hope created by food addicts for food addicts. Subscribe at www.foodaddicts.org or purchase an individual copy at this meeting. You can also submit art and articles. Would the *connection* rep please identify him or herself?
- ❖ Are there any other **FA or AWOL ANNOUNCEMENTS?**

- ❖ Again, we would like to invite anyone, especially those who do not yet have 90 days of continuous abstinence, to stand and read one of the **TOOLS OF RECOVERY**.

ABSTINENCE: We obtain abstinence from addictive eating by weighing, measuring, and committing our food to a qualified sponsor. We have found that we must abstain completely from all flour and sugar.

SPONSORSHIP: We ask a qualified sponsor to guide us through the recovery program on all three levels: physical, mental, and spiritual. Sponsors are FA members who are committed to abstinence and to living the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions to the best of their ability. Sponsors share their program up to the level of their own experience. Ours is a program of attraction. Find a sponsor who has what you want and ask how it was achieved.

MEETINGS: We attend meetings, which enable us to identify and share our experience, strength, and hope with each other. We have found that unless we give to newcomers what we have received from the program, we cannot keep it for ourselves.

TELEPHONE: Food addiction is a disease of isolation. The telephone is a means of communicating with another addict between meetings.

- a. We begin by committing our food daily to our sponsor.
- b. We share hope with each other.
- c. We have immediate contact with another FA member in times of stress.
- d. We call before we take the bite.

ANONYMITY: Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our program and is essential for our recovery. In order to get well, we must be able to speak openly and to trust one another. We reach out to help, but we do not gossip or reveal anyone's membership in FA except our own. Each person's story is his or hers to reveal. At the public level, we safeguard our anonymity by concealing our full names and faces. No individual member should ever be seen as representing FA as a whole.

LITERATURE: We study FA Conference-approved literature to strengthen and reinforce our program. When we read it on a daily basis, the literature impresses on us certain basic truths we have found vital to our growth. Literature is an ever-available tool that gives us insight into our problem, strength to deal with it, and the very real hope that there is a solution for us.

WRITING: In addition to writing our inventories and the list of people we have harmed, most of us have found that writing is an indispensable tool for working the Steps. Further, putting our thoughts and feelings down on paper or describing a troubling incident helps us to better understand our actions and reactions in a way that is often not revealed to us by simply thinking or talking about them. In the past, addictive eating was our most common reaction to life. When we put our difficulties down on paper, it becomes easier to see situations more clearly and perhaps better discern any necessary action.

SERVICE: We do service by staying abstinent, giving us the freedom from compulsion and obsession with food to allow us to be available to others. Any service that will help reach a fellow sufferer adds to the quality of our own recovery. Sharing at meetings, talking to newcomers, answering the phone, putting away chairs, doing whatever needs to be done for FA, including supporting intergroups [and chapters]* [and local service groups]* and attending business meetings, are ways we give back what we have so generously been given. Do what you can when you can. "A life of sane and happy usefulness" is what we are promised as a result of working the Twelve Steps. Service fulfills that promise.

**Any statement included in [] is optional*

- ❖ **LEADER QUALIFIES:** Shares experience, strength, and hope regarding recovery in FA. (Until approximately ____ a.m./p.m.)

OR for Sharing Meeting: The meeting is now open for sharing from all those with 90 days or more of continuous abstinence in FA who are working with an FA sponsor. We ask that you please refrain from clapping. (Until approximately ____ a.m./p.m.)

- ❖ We would like to welcome any **NEWCOMERS**. If you are here for the first time, would you stand and give us your first name only, so that we may welcome you? [PAUSE] Is there anyone here for the second or third time? [PAUSE] Welcome to you all.
- ❖ **NEWCOMER GREETERS**. If you are new or have any questions, greeters will be available during the break and after the meeting. Would the greeters for this meeting please stand and introduce themselves? [PAUSE] The Fifth Tradition states that we are all responsible for greeting newcomers. If you are new and uncertain about FA, we encourage you to attend several meetings to gain an understanding of what the program offers.
- ❖ **SPONSOR ANNOUNCEMENT**: Sponsors are FA members currently being sponsored and living the Twelve Steps. FA recommends that a sponsor be six or more months abstinent. Sponsors help us begin the FA program and guide us in our recovery. We recommend that newcomers and anyone without a sponsor speak with one of these people. Would all qualified sponsors with time available please stand and identify themselves?
- ❖ We will now take a 10-minute **BREAK**.

- ❖ **SHARING:** The meeting is now open for sharing from all those with 90 days or more of continuous abstinence in FA who are working with an FA sponsor. We ask that you please refrain from clapping.

- ❖ [Reminder to the leader: the meeting closes at ____a.m./p.m.] Would someone like to read the **PROMISES OF THE PROGRAM** from the BIG BOOK, page 83?

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook on life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

- ❖ Will you all remain in your seats, and those who wish, please join me in a moment of silence and the **SERENITY PRAYER**?