



**Program Based on Alcoholics Anonymous Gives Real Hope to those Suffering with Food, Weight and Body Image Issues**

## **Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous Offers Solutions for 2009 and Beyond**

According to Food Addicts in Recovery (FA) member Brian, until recently, New Year's Eve was no time for celebration. "For me, New Year's Eve used to be about isolation. I felt so bad about my body and the way I looked, I never wanted to show up to holiday parties. Instead, I would sit in my house, eat and feel sorry for myself. Ever since I found FA four years ago, I have happily attended all holiday parties I could. After a 140 pound weight-loss and freedom from food obsession, I feel self-confident and am happy to ring in the New Year."

Founded in 1998, FA is an effective, long-term solution to food addiction for many people who use food as a drug, whether they under-eat, overeat, are bulimic, or are otherwise obsessed with food or their weight.

Based on the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), is an international fellowship of individuals who, through shared experience and mutual support, are recovering from food addiction. FA is not affiliated with any public or private organization, political movement, ideology or religious doctrine. Membership in FA is free and is open to anyone who wants to recover from food addiction. The group is comprised of thousands of women and men diverse in age, ethnicity and socio-economic background who have experienced difficulty controlling the way they eat.

Before joining the program, many adult and teen members were overweight, some by as much as 250 pounds. Others were dangerously underweight or controlled their eating to the point of obsession through under-eating, bulimia, laxatives or over-exercising. Today, many lead fulfilling lives without abusing food, free of diabetes and other food-related medical problems. The program is free to all, sustained through nominal donations.

Much like alcoholics in AA, lives are reclaimed in FA when the despair brought on by constant thoughts of food and eating, or not eating, is lifted.

### **Food Addicts in Recovery – Helping Individuals**

Case in point, Katie, an FA member for almost seven years says, "I can't believe how my life has changed. This is particularly noticeable to me around the holidays. One year, before FA, I recall having fun at a New Year's party for a short time, then something happened and I found myself at the buffet table eating all the goodies. That night I felt so disgusting that I hitched a cab and had the driver take me to my empty office building so I could go throw up. That's how I spent my New Year's Eve."

Now in recovery, Katie is able to truly enjoy her holidays in the company of others instead of in the throes of her bulimia. "Since joining FA, I also notice recovery changing my life in how I relate to my friends and family members at this time of year. I am more loving, tolerant, kind and just fun to be around. Instead of getting upset that I don't fit into my clothes or that I feel gross from eating too much sugar, I can be present for my friends and family."

Karen, 26, and a recent college graduate, suffered from a lifetime of food addiction and a top weight of 233 pounds at 5'4" before finding a solution in FA more than six years ago. She is now maintaining a 120 pound weight-loss and living a life free from the misery of food obsession. According to Karen, "I was completely hopeless when I walked through the doors of FA. I spent my junior high and teenage years miserably obese and looking for answers in unhealthy diets and exercise routines. I didn't know how to eat and live my life until I found this program. I came to FA looking for a thin body, but I found so much more – freedom from weight and food obsession and an end to my lifetime search of happiness."

Cassie, who started the program at age 14 recalls, "At first it was tough balancing school and FA meetings, but I had to put my recovery first. I watched my grades go way up and can now concentrate on what I'm studying, instead of obsessing about what I'm going to eat." As a result, Cassie, now a 23-year-old college student, is in a graduate medical school program in an area where she participates in the FA program long-distance.

Before joining the program, many members like Karen and Cassie were overweight. Others were dangerously underweight or controlled their eating to the point of obsession through under-eating, bulimia or over-exercising. Derrick, 33, experienced the first symptoms of his food addiction in high school which then carried over into college. Derrick remembers, "I was thin, but I was miserably obsessed with food. I found that 'thin' was not 'well.' I exercised constantly and had no peace until I found FA. At first I was one of the few guys, but there are more and more men coming into FA."

### More about Food Addicts in Recovery

The number of FA members in 2008 is estimated at 3,700 worldwide. Membership spans 40 states in the U.S. and countries including France, Germany, Israel, Japan, Australia, Canada, Qatar and the United Kingdom. In the United States alone, there are more than 418 weekly FA meetings available for those looking for freedom from food addiction. While most members attend meetings locally in their region, some members follow the program long-distance.

For more information about FA, visit [www.foodaddicts.org](http://www.foodaddicts.org), or call the FA World Service Office at (781) 932-6300.

*Article provided by Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous  
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## The 20 Questions *Are You a Food Addict?*

Ask yourself the following questions and answer them as honestly as you can.

1. Have you ever wanted to stop eating and found you just couldn't?
2. Do you think about food or your weight constantly?
3. Do you find yourself attempting one diet or food plan after another, with no lasting success?
4. Do you binge and then "get rid of the binge" through vomiting, exercise, laxatives or other forms of purging?
5. Do you eat differently in private than you do in front of other people?
6. Has a doctor or family member ever approached you with concern about your eating habits or weight?
7. Do you eat large quantities of food at one time (binge)?
8. Is your weight problem due to your "nibbling" all day long?
9. Do you eat to escape from your feelings?
10. Do you eat when you're not hungry?
11. Have you ever discarded food, only to retrieve and eat it later?
12. Do you eat in secret?
13. Do you fast or severely restrict your food intake?
14. Have you ever stolen other people's food?
15. Have you ever hidden food to make sure you have "enough?"
16. Do you feel driven to exercise excessively to control your weight?
17. Do you obsessively calculate the calories you've burned against the calories you've eaten?
18. Do you frequently feel guilty or ashamed about what you've eaten?
19. Are you waiting for your life to begin "when you lose the weight?"
20. Do you feel hopeless about your relationship with food?

If you answered "yes" to any of the above questions, then you may be a food addict. You are not alone. FA offers hope through a real solution to food addiction.



# ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



VIBRANT COMMUNITY



NATIONAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS



ANNUAL CONVENTION



ADVOCACY



PUBLIC EDUCATION

## LEARN, CONNECT, ENGAGE

The OAC knows that the journey with weight can be challenging but we also know that great things happen when we learn, connect and engage. That is why the OAC Community exists. Our Community is designed to provide quality education, ongoing support programs, an opportunity to connect, and a place to take action on important issues.

### Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
  - Community Discussion Forum
  - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
- AND MUCH MORE**



**JOIN TODAY: GO TO [OBESITYACTION.ORG/JOIN](http://OBESITYACTION.ORG/JOIN)**

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