

## Ideas for Welcoming Newcomers!<sup>1</sup>

We were all newcomers once, and know how important it can be to feel welcomed in OA. To help meetings welcome newcomers, we have put together some ideas. You may have other ideas, too. Remember that this is a “we” program. Helping newcomers is part of working our program and helps us stay abstinent. Page 1 has ideas for meetings. Page 2 has for ideas for individuals.

### *At a meeting – the basics*

- Ask newcomers for their name during the meeting, so we might welcome them.
- Provide time for newcomers to share during the meeting.
- During the meeting, pass around a newcomer’s packet so people can write their phone numbers on it, and give it to the newcomer.
- Offer a welcome chip and a welcome hug, at halftime or other appropriate time.
- Have someone available to answer questions after the meeting.
- Have a position of “newcomer welcomer(s),” at least one or two people who will make a call the following week to any newcomer, and perhaps in subsequent weeks as well.
- Stock literature useful to newcomers. (See bullets in the next section for ideas.)
- Have printed *Where-and-Whens* and *Novations* available at the meeting.
- Invite newcomers if people regularly meet before/after a meeting (e.g., for coffee).

### *At a meeting -- additional ideas*

- Have a phone club – a small group (maybe up to 6 people) who commit to talk to each other every week. A meeting can have multiple phone clubs. The idea is just to make it easier for people to make and receive phone calls, by having a small group where each person is committed to outreach to the others and wants to hear from the others.
- Have temporary sponsors for newcomers (e.g., one week, two weeks, a month).
- Have “newcomer buddies” to talk to newcomers regularly for several weeks. (See over.)
- Have a person/people volunteering to go through the OA “30 Questions” with newcomers. (They are in the appendix of the pamphlet *A Guide for Sponsors*, in the Sponsorship Kit.P.
- Stock the 5 pieces of literature for the 30 Questions (AA Big Book, *OA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, *Overeaters Anonymous*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., (Brown Book), pamphlets “The Tools of Recovery” and “A Plan of Eating.” Perhaps make a set for a newcomer.
- Stock other literature useful to newcomers: pamphlets/kits (e.g., *Where Do I Start?*, *Anorexia/Bulimia*), *AA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, *OA Abstinence*, daily readers, wallet cards (e.g., *Think First, Just for Today*), recent *Lifeline* and *Novations*..
- Host a newcomer meeting before your meeting. (See *Newcomer Meeting Leader’s Kit*.)
- Host a workshop for newcomers.

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<sup>1</sup> This literature has been locally produced by NOVA Intergroup. The content reflects the experience, strength, and hope of our local members. It is not OA Conference- or board-approved and does not represent OA as a whole.

*Individuals* can also take action, in addition to whatever a meeting may do. Individuals can:

- Speak to newcomers after the meeting. Get her/his phone number, and offer yours. Check if it is ok to leave a message on the phone number she/he provides.
- Call the newcomer during the next week, or couple of weeks. Ask if he or she has questions. Offer to talk about your experience.
- Offer to be a sponsor, temporary sponsor or OA buddy.
- Ask if the newcomer needs a ride. Offer or help arrange a ride.
- Offer to have tea/coffee with a newcomer before or after a meeting, or whenever.
- Offer a hug, and respect requests for no hugs. Don't be offended by "no thanks."
- When you share, keep in mind that "the newcomer is the most important person in the room." Include in your share something about how this program is helping you.

***What does being a newcomer buddy look like?*** One possible approach is described below. It is to provide some clarity on what this might look like. Other approaches can also be used.

**Why be a Newcomer Buddy:** ... to welcome newcomers, and provide both you and a newcomer an opportunity for connection in OA.

**What does a Newcomer Buddy do?** All you have to do is...

- Be available for 3 phone calls a week, for 4 weeks. Phone calls are at a mutually agreeable time, and each phone call is only 15 minutes, at most.
- Listen and care
- Answer basic questions about OA
- Share your experience, strength and hope about recovery (for example, what has worked for you, what you are working on, why you keep coming back)
- Point to resources that might be helpful:
  - Meetings
  - Literature, such as the newcomer pamphlet "*Where Do I Start?*"
  - [www.oanova.org](http://www.oanova.org) and [www.oa.org](http://www.oa.org) (e.g., newcomers' sections, podcasts, meeting lists ("*Where & When*" and the meeting finder)
- Say "I'm glad to hear from you," "Let me know how it goes," and "Thanks for calling."

You do not have to fix the person, help them get abstinent, works the steps, or tell them what to do. This is just about having a connection, a conversation, someone the newcomer can talk to. It is a chance for you and a newcomer to get to know each other a bit and enrich your programs.

**At the meeting:** At halftime, say, "If anyone is available to be a Newcomer Buddy," please raise your hand. (Add this to the meeting format, probably right after asking for sponsors.) Perhaps add a column to the "we care" page for available newcomer buddies. Being a newcomer buddy can be *in addition to* other people who welcome newcomers and call them.

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