

## Why Food Addicts Need In-Person Meetings

In June 2011, the FA World Service Conference developed and adopted the requirements and standards that define an FA meeting so that a food addict can readily recognize and find FA recovery anywhere in the world (Meeting Guidelines, [Document 1](#)). One of these standards is that, in order to register with the FA office and be listed on the FA website, an FA group must meet in person in a public facility.

Despite best efforts to disseminate meeting guidelines to the fellowship, members continue to ask about phone meetings and/or online meetings. The purpose of this document is to explain why food addicts seeking recovery are best served by in-person meetings.

***At an in-person meeting, all attendees are physically present in the room. No members may listen or participate via phone or video conferencing.***

Limiting attendance to members who are physically present guarantees anonymity. Even if the outgoing camera is disabled, introducing two-way technology can be a distraction for members and off-putting to newcomers. The possibility of experiencing technical difficulties during the meeting can cause disruption and take attention away from the focus on recovery.

In-person meetings are essential for the following reasons:

- **Food addiction is a disease of isolation.** Committing to attend several meetings each week is fundamental to FA recovery. Meeting face-to-face with other recovering food addicts counteracts isolation. Phone and online meetings do not allow for personal connections.
- **Recovery is strengthened by showing up.** In-person meetings provide, for example, opportunities to share a meal before or after a meeting, engage in conversations at the break, or discuss issues at monthly business meetings.
- **Recovery is strengthened by doing service.** Setting up or putting away chairs, arranging literature, providing assistance with rides to/from meetings for members in need, greeting newcomers, or simply claiming one's seat in the room cannot happen remotely.
- **Reading and sharing from the front of the room increases humility.** Facing the group and introducing ourselves allows us to be seen by our fellows and honestly name ourselves as food addicts.
- **Food addicts receive strength from seeing change in others.** Physical, mental, and spiritual recovery are difficult to witness over the phone or online. At in-person meetings, we watch each other attain the "FA glow" that inevitably accompanies abstinence.

## Addressing Some Concerns

### 1) How can I attend regular meetings if I live far away from an established FA fellowship?

Fellows on the frontier can attend committed in-person AA meetings where they talk and listen to other addicts face to face; they will continue to be alone if they stay home to join phone or online meetings. Sharing about recovery from food addiction before and after the meetings may attract others to FA. When two or three willing members have six months or more of continuous abstinence, they might start a local FA meeting.

### 2) What if I am uncomfortable going to AA?

Feeling apprehensive about attending a meeting for alcoholics is understandable. Members may feel like imposters, worry about tarnishing their reputations, or resent hearing about alcohol instead of food. With the help of their Higher Power and fellows, many frontier members have overcome these fears. They are usually accepted and welcomed at open AA meetings where anonymity is respected. Many find comfort in remembering that FA is built on the foundation laid by AA.

### 3) Attending meetings by phone or online supports my needs financially, decreases my stress level, and is more efficient.

Instead of seeing travel as wasted time, members are encouraged to consider the drive as an opportunity to connect with their Higher Power or to reach out to fellows. Carpooling reduces costs and increases time spent with other members. Working with their sponsors and asking God for help with time management will make it easier to let go of other pressures and dedicate blocks of time to in-person meetings. Members can think of the money spent on traveling to meetings as an investment in their physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Besides, food addicts in recovery no longer waste money on excess food.

### 4) I am hundreds of miles from any type of meeting. What can I do?

Members who live on the frontier or are physically unable to attend live meetings will need to rely heavily on the other tools of recovery. The booklet *Living Abstinently* is particularly helpful. To avoid isolation, the use of the telephone is critical. Members often find that scheduled (or “committed”) calls throughout the week are indispensable. Members on the frontier are encouraged to set aside three committed times each week to read the meeting format and listen to an FA qualification; there are hundreds of MP3s available to download on FoodAddicts.org or to stream as podcasts (search for Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous). Physical and spiritual recovery is attractive. When frontier members are open about their experience in FA, others will want to learn more. This is how meetings get started and fellowships grow.