

Reasons FA Meetings Are Defined As In-Person Meetings

Introduction

In June 2011, the FA World Service Conference developed and adopted the requirements and standards that define an FA meeting. ***One of these standards is that, in order to register with the FA Office and be listed on the FA website, an FA meeting group must meet in person in a public facility.*** Despite the World Service Board's best efforts to disseminate meeting guidelines to the fellowship worldwide, the 12th Step Service Council, Traditions Review Committee, Inquiry Response Committee of the WSB, and the FA Office continue to receive regular inquiries pertaining to phone meetings and/or online meetings. The purpose of this document is to provide a summary, accessible on the FA website, of what we have learned from experience with phone and online meetings and about why food addicts seeking recovery are best served by in-person meetings.

The Importance of In-Person Meetings

Attending and committing to several meetings each week is fundamental to recovery from food addiction. **In-person meetings** are essential for the following reasons:

- **Food addiction is a disease of isolation.** Meeting face-to-face with other recovering food addicts counteracts isolation. Newcomers or shy members who may feel inclined to "hide" will be greeted and gently encouraged to participate. Phone and online meetings do not allow for this connection.
- **Recovery is strengthened by showing up.** In-person meetings provide, for example, opportunities to share a meal with others before or after a meeting, engage in spontaneous conversations at the break, or work through important issues at monthly business meetings. FA is a program of attraction.
- **Recovery is strengthened by doing service.** Setting up or putting away chairs, arranging literature on the table, providing assistance with rides to/from meetings for members in need, greeting newcomers, or simply showing up and 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 others 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 meetings, members have the opportunity to see the sparkle in each other's eyes, the tears, the smiles, and the body language. We watch each other attain the "FA glow" that inevitably accompanies FA abstinence.
- **FA members can help spot when another member is "off the beam."** A member who consistently arrives late or leaves early, for instance, may need support. Late arrivals or early departures from a phone call can easily go unnoticed. In addition, seeing others at meetings helps food addicts stay honest about weight gains and losses.

Phone or Online Meetings: Addressing Some Concerns

In a spirit of helpfulness, the following list offers some best practices in response to frequently noted concerns expressed by FA members seeking phone or online meetings.

- 1) **How can I attend regular meetings if I live on the frontier, at least 100 miles or 160 kilometers away from the nearest FA meeting?**

Individual members will continue to be alone if they stay home to join phone or online meetings. Meeting other addicts at committed AA meetings and sharing about recovery from food addiction with AA members or with other people in their lives may attract others to join FA. When two or three willing members have six months or more of continuous abstinence, they might look toward starting a local FA meeting.

2) What if I am uncomfortable going to AA?

Feeling apprehensive about attending a meeting for alcoholics is valid. One may feel like an imposter, be afraid of tarnishing one's reputation, be confused by hearing about alcohol instead of food, or be misunderstood by family members who dislike the association with "drunks." With the help of their higher power and fellowship, many frontier members have had success in overcoming these and similar situations. Members have found that they are often accepted and welcomed at AA meetings and that anonymity is taken very seriously. Many have found comfort in remembering that FA grew out of the foundation laid by AA.

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

Most (if not all) members have full, busy lives. Some may want to avoid "wasted" travel time to and from meetings as well as the cost of travel. They prefer the efficiency of "meeting" with others on the phone or online from their homes or offices, and sometimes even multitask during these "meetings." It may help to remember that food addicts in recovery are no longer wasting money on excess food. The money spent to travel to meetings is an investment in one's physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Carpooling to meetings reduces costs and increases time spent with other members. If traveling alone, a member can use the drive as a time for quiet connection with his or her Higher Power. 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. *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the Big Book, states, "Half measures availed us nothing." The benefits to our recovery of fully participating in in-person meetings outweigh the comforts of staying home.

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

FA recognizes that physical disability or geography may prevent some food addicts from attending FA meetings in person. In that situation, a food addict should contact the FA Office for assistance in finding a sponsor who will offer daily telephone support. The sponsor will assist the person to diligently work all of the FA "tools of recovery," including the telephone. Scheduling consistent daily times to initiate phone calls to FA members, committing to weekly calls with experienced FA members, listening to FA qualification CDs/MP3s, and reading FA literature will provide strong messages of recovery. The newest addition to FA literature, the book *Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous* (the "FA book" or the "gray book"), is a particularly comprehensive resource for teaching the FA program as it is practiced. In time, opportunities to start a local meeting will arise, and a strong foundation garnered from the use of the FA tools of recovery will be a valuable asset. At one time or another, many of us have been prevented from attending meetings, in person, due to illness or distance, and we have obtained or maintained abstinence.

For More Information

FA was conceived so that its members could freely practice a program that, in their experience, worked. The meeting requirements and standards encapsulate best practices for FA meetings, garnered from years of experience. The 2011 FA World Service Conference adopted these practices so that **no matter where in the world one finds an FA meeting, one can readily recognize and find FA recovery in that room.** Again, requiring FA meetings to be held "in person" is among these standards. For more details, see <http://www.foodaddicts.org/meeting-guidelines> (Document 1).

*This document was developed with input from the following:
Traditions Committee, Inquiry Response Committee, 12th Step Service Council, FA Office, and the World Service Board.*