

A Serving of Hope

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Oregon Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous

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Honesty

“Honesty is a key factor in our recovery from compulsive eating, and so we will want to develop this trait.”

~The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, p. 51

It's one thing to be honest about what I did in the past or what I ate yesterday, but continuing this honesty in everything I do or say is another. I have found that as my growth in recovery continues, it becomes difficult for me to lie to myself, my Higher Power, my sponsor, or those in my circle of loving witnesses.

“The truth shall set you free” are words to live by. Maybe once I could lie about my weight on my driver's license or on some medical application, but today I do not hedge the truth.

“Today, people can look at me and know that I am a person of my word. My integrity is important, and it comes from my truthfulness, harmlessness, and honesty.

~Voices of Recovery, page 89.

Courage is not about acting without fear.

Courage is about giving yourself no other option than to face your fears.

~Unknown

The views expressed in this newsletter are of the person who wrote them and do not represent OA as a whole. Take what you like and leave the rest. Oregon Intergroup serves meetings from Longview to Tillamook, Salem to Portland, Silverton to Hood River, and includes Vancouver and the surrounding area. Find us online at oregon-oa.org or call (971) 317-6343.

Still Works

I became abstinent almost six years ago at age 62. My abstinence has not been a struggle, but the aging process comes with its own struggles. Abstinence has enhanced my ability to live through those struggles, and to have more energy and a light heart.

I hope aging in OA, attending meetings, and sponsoring enhance the quality of the OA program and Fellowship. The focus must be on the solution - not the problem. We have the same problem, but we know the solution: a Power greater than ourselves. The Big Book gives precise directions on how to find this power: “If I focus on a problem, the problem increases; if I focus on the answer, the answer increases” (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th ed., p. 419).

When I returned to OA seven years ago, I was on one of my diets. I white-knuckled it for some months before surrendering and getting a sponsor who had what I wanted. I slowly managed to achieve a goal weight with a five-pound range. I do this by weighing myself once a month and adjusting my food intake accordingly. My exercise is consistent. My food plan enables me to choose proper amounts of non-trigger foods. My footwork is to follow it., and I do.

As I age and my body changes, I will continue to do what I have always done, and I will get the same wonderful results. I will adjust my food to maintain a healthy weight.

Aging abstinely as a gift I cherish. Abstinence has led me back to my Higher Power. Food is no longer my god - it's my nourishment.

~Croton-on-Hudson, NY, Abstinence, 2nd edition, page 150.

Upcoming Events

September 18-20, Region 1 Convention: The Journey is the Destination, Riverhouse Hotel & Convention Center, Bend, OR. <https://sites.google.com/site/region12015convention/home>

October 3, Monthly speakers meeting, 7:00PM-8:30PM, at Girl Scouts, 9620 SW Barbur Blvd., Portland; contact Ilene 503 268-3064.

October 10, Sponsorship Marathon, 9:30am-3:30pm, Cedar Hills United Church of Christ, 11695 SW Park Way. Contact Pat (503) 319-4942.

October 14, Oregon Intergroup Meeting, 7-8:30pm, at Girl Scouts, 9620 SW Barbur Blvd., Portland. Everyone is encouraged to attend.

Service is the Key

I recently learned that a former OA member died of this disease. I feel sad and wonder why I couldn't help her. This is the second OA member in less than two years that I have known to die after dropping out of the Fellowship. Replaying these relationships in my head doesn't give me any answers. I've been unable to Twelfth-Step anyone in my family either. It breaks my heart to sit by and watch people slowly die of this disease.

I find I can't live in their denial along with them. They may get the impression that I think I'm above them because I don't call, but it's difficult to not talk program to someone who has dropped out, and act as if everything is okay. I was in denial about my disease for so long that I can't continue to enable someone else. So I pray that God will lead me to an answer for still-suffering compulsive overeaters.

I continue to give service because service saves lives. I heard that a lot when I first came into the program, but not anymore. In fact, I've heard a funny rumor that people provide service because of their egos. I find that peculiar. My ego would probably like to think I give service to feed it. But the truth is, I need to be of service to stay alive. The "Big Book" tells me to get out of myself, that I can't keep my recovery unless I give it away. The promises tell me that the Twelve Steps will give me a sane, happy, USEFUL life. Service is the key for me.

I've also learned how to say no, so I don't get burned out on OA service. That's the other side of the ego coin. God is in charge of my ego, not me. Yes, I feel a little twinge when I say no when I'm asked to run for a particular office. But I know the source of that twinge is my ego, not God.

~Anonymous, A New Beginning, page 44

Leave the Numbers to HP

I left an OA meeting feeling charged and elated from the evening's sharing and drove out to the university to jog. Upon entering the locker room, I did just what I had told myself I wasn't going to do: I stepped onto the scale.

I hadn't lost as much weight as I thought I had. In an instant, all the peace and serenity I had gained at the meeting slipped away.

Reluctantly, I put on my sneakers and went out on the track. As I jogged around and around, I reflected on what had just happened. I had allowed the numbers on a machine to change the way I felt about myself, to drain my self-esteem and the security of my program.

~Continued on page 3.

Region 1 needs Virtual Sponsors!

The Virtual Sponsorship Committee is in urgent need of more sponsors. Virtual sponsorship is a great way to get your foot in the door if your sponsor says that you're ready to start sponsoring yourself, but you are a little unsure. Your anonymity will be respected at all times, and this is a great way to meet people from across the region! Many people still live in areas where OA is new and not well established, so being able to bring your recovery to someone who is struggling is an amazing gift! It will enhance your recovery and strengthen the program as a whole. Please consider virtual sponsorship today! To apply, go to <http://www.oaregion1.org/sponsor-application.html>.

Send a Rep to Intergroup!

Do you want to help strengthen OA in your area and throughout Oregon? Make sure your voice is heard by sending an Intergroup Rep to your monthly Oregon Intergroup meeting. Give your members an opportunity to serve and help all of us benefit from a strong and diverse OA organization. OIG meets the second Wednesday of every month at the Girls Scouts building, 9620 SW Barbur Blvd, Portland, OR 97219.

Young People's Phone List

Oregon Intergroup is assembling a contact list for young people in OA. If you came into program at age 30 or younger and would like to offer your experience, strength and hope to a young person in our program, please send your contact information to youngpeople@oregon-oa.org. Include your name, phone number, email address and the age you were when you came into OA. WSO defines a young person as someone who is 30 years or younger. If you came into program when you were older than 30 years old and would also like to be a resource to the younger members of our fellowship, you are also welcome to add your name to the young people's phone list.

Got CDs?

Our Intergroup CD library needs your help! A lot of our CDs have been checked out for a long time. We all need a chance to hear the experience, strength and hope found in our CD library.

If you have a CD from our library, please return it so others can strengthen their recovery. You can return a CD by either giving it to your IG Rep or mailing it to the PO Box on the front of the CD package.

Thanks so much for your help. For questions, contact Marie at 503-351-0917.

Beating the Hatred

I can't say enough about keeping a positive outlook on life. I start my day being grateful for another wonderful day. I thank God for what I have, and don't worry about what I don't have. God gives me what I need each day, and I am grateful.

When I was young and overweight, I begged God to let me wake up skinny. I hated school because everyone made fun of me for being overweight. My thighs rubbed together and hurt after I walked to classes. I quit school at sixteen because of my weight. I made A's in all my classes except physical education. I couldn't keep up with the exercises and games because I was obese. The teacher failed me for not changing into my gym clothes, and I hated her. I was only about thirteen then and filled with hatred.

I sought the love and relief in food that I could not find in my life. I started dieting when I became three pounds heavier than my dad. I starved the weight off, worked as a waitress, and loved my life for a while.

Because of the hate I still felt, I slowly started eating compulsively again. The weight came back with the births of my beautiful daughters. I continued to eat compulsively and was on one diet after another.

Through the Twelve Steps, a sponsor, friends, and working the OA program, I no longer feel the hatred. The people, places, and things around me look different today. I thank this program and my Higher Power for these changes. I am grateful to my best friend who brought me to these rooms and gave me the courage to find God. She is the angel God sent to bring me home to him.

Now I realize that God has always been guiding me. I know that I am loved, and I know that I love myself enough to work my program, and share it with others. My life depends on working this program, and abstinence is the most important thing in my life. Without abstinence I would not have a close relationship with my Higher Power or have my positive outlook on life.

Thank you all for being part of my recovery. Without you sharing your experience, strength and hope, the disease would take over my life. You are my lifeline to and from my Higher Power.

I can keep a positive attitude because I know God is taking care of the small things and I don't have to worry. Life is wonderful. I let go and let God do the impossible.

~Anonymous, Seeking the Spiritual Path, page 56.

Leave the Numbers to HP

(continued from page 2)

Had I not had nearly two months of back-to-back abstinence? (The most I'd ever had since coming into the program more than a year and a half ago.) Had I not been staying in touch with a sponsor and with other members of the program on a daily basis? Had I not been working the twelve steps and maintaining contact with a Higher Power?

The answer to all these questions was Yes. I had been working my program more rigorously than ever before, with absolutely fantastic results. Why, then, should a scale affect my serenity?

It did not take me long to bounce back, but that experience drove home the truth of something I once heard at a meeting: "My weight is God's business, not mine."

~July 1982, Lifeline Sampler, page 311.

Binge Foods and Diet Books

When I came through the doors of OA, I couldn't stop bingeing for seventeen hours; I couldn't stop thinking about food for seventeen minutes. By the grace of OA, I have not compulsively overeaten for over seventeen years. Never once have I asked this imagined Higher Power for help that it has not come.

The spiritual awakening promised as the result of working the Twelve Steps has been the most remarkable experience of my life. I don't know how it works, but it does. In the words of the Big Book, "The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous. He has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves" (Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., p. 25).

For more than seventeen years, I have enjoyed freedom from compulsion, freedom to enjoy moderate eating, and the joy of carrying the message of OA. The gorgeous life of my imagining has become reality. I recently turned 40, and instead of being confined to a wheelchair, I gave birth to a healthy baby girl. Instead of heart disease, my heart is bursting with joy with the daily reminder of the depth and wonder of the grace of God.

*~excerpt from
Overeaters Anonymous, 3rd Ed., p 79.*

Why Should I be a Sponsor?

If not for the guidance of my first sponsor, I would not be alive today. I have not doubt that this disease would have swallowed me whole. She freely gave to me what she was freely given by her sponsor. Why would I not want to give another OA what saved my life? To me, when I choose to sponsor someone, I am choosing to keep my recovery. Working with another COE keeps me sane and free from the obsession. It is a gift I give freely to you, and to myself.

~Anonymous

Learning Surrender

I've shared my definition of abstinence at some meetings and people tell me they wish it were written down for them so they could study it. Developing a healthy plan of eating has been essential to my recovery.

First, I made a specific list of the foods that I had been using when I was angry or fearful or lonely and needed comfort. Those are my binge foods. Most OAers have them, but they are different for everyone. My list grew over time, too, as I continued to encounter all those situations where I wanted to eat.

Then, I listed what is "situational" compulsive overeating for me: weddings, birthdays, holidays, all-you-can-eat menus, parties, church potlucks, movies and baseball games. You can probably think of others.

They say failure to plan is planning to fail, so even for weddings, I've started carrying low-cal soda in my purse or leaving extra pocket money at home. I started talking to everyone present as though it was a game to see how much I could talk, instead of eat. I've become a best friend with the garbage disposal in my kitchen. Its yawning jaws are always willing to take what I should not eat and get it forever out of sight and out of reach, if I will just give it up.

When I go to the grocery store, I imagine my sponsor walking along with me down each aisle. If there is any food item about which I feel I have to

make excuses, I simply leave it on the shelf. I have gotten healthier by remembering these words at the store: low-cal, low-sodium, caffeine-free, non-sugar, individual pack, fresh, raw, unprocessed and fat-free.

Other things that I consider important to maintaining abstinence are:

- listing my foods for the day and calling my sponsor;
- covering and putting away food at the end of the meal;
- eating only one plateful or smaller portions;
- purchasing smaller quantities
- not eating foods that I actually dislike;
- clearing my cupboards of tempting foods;
- refusing to eat someone else's food;
- learning to say "No thank you, I've had enough";
- using the 12 steps and all of the tools.

Asking my Higher Power and my sponsor for help is also part of abstinence for me. Turning the food over to them and then forgetting about it until mealtime has removed burdens from me. This has helped me to eat three meals a day with lots of living in between. Now I have time to live.

-I.V., Missouri, Lifeline, 11/1997.

OA Newcomer Testimony

Growing up, our home was full of love and laughter, as well as rage and tears. My parents fought, my brother harassed me sexually, and I felt very alone. When we gathered for dinner, however, everyone seemed content, and so I began to associate food with happiness.

After my parents divorced when I was 12, I ate food to quiet the raging storm inside my soul. I learned that food, even for a moment, rescued me from my pain. Though I was grateful for the brief periods of peace, I was ashamed. I hid, sneaked, lied and even fantasized about food. I have been eating to comfort and numb my broken heart ever since.

Until 30 days ago, that is, when I walked into an Overeaters Anonymous meeting. I thought I would discover a new diet and we would all deprive ourselves and suffer together! What I found was a group of people who were telling my story, and I heard hope and recovery from the insanity that was consuming me. For the first time in my life I don't feel alone. I have real hope, I have freedom from the obsession, and I have a growing intimate relationship with God. I am peeling away the layers of pain and resentment, and I am learning new ways to cope with life. I have found joy, peace, and self-love beyond what I ever dreamed possible, and this is only the beginning!

~Melanie H, Modesto, CA

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