

A Serving of Hope

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Oregon Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous

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PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

“What we needed now was a way of being abstinent over the long haul and living sanely through good times and bad.”

--The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, p. 21

When I arrived at the doors of OA, food was my master. In order to be released from its grip, I committed my food to a sponsor daily and abstained from specific foods, eating behaviors, situations, and people who were known triggers. I also attended numerous meetings. Although necessary, these actions put me at the opposite end of the food obsession.

If abstinence is to bring about a sane and useful way of life, I must have a plan that I can live with forever. The plan must be flexible when the situation warrants, allowing me to commit my food or not, to go places I had avoided, and to eat some foods I had relinquished. Once abstinence has become a habit, these things are all possible. If I find myself on unsteady ground, I must once again take the actions that worked in the beginning. Today, by God’s grace, I have balance in my life and live in peaceful coexistence with food.

~Voices of Recovery, page 326

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.

Conscious Contact

The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous makes some “definite and valuable suggestions” on how to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand Him (p. 85-88). I like to read these pages often for inspiration and direction. We are encouraged to “pause, whenever agitated or doubtful” and turn to our Higher Power for help.

I frequently find myself in a mass of doubtful agitation. When I pause, I can sometimes feel as though a “reset” button has been hit, and I’m brought into the present moment. It seems that more and more of my HP’s will for me is to simply be in the present, not regretting the past, fearing the future, or figuring out or trying to understand; but just being *conscious*, so *contact* can be made.

Recently, I was on my way to a meeting, getting agitated over being late, scolding myself and worrying. I had the intuition to know this was probably *not* my HP’s will for me, and got an inspiration to look around at the beautiful fall foliage and sunshine, and to thank my HP. Agitation was instantly replaced with serenity.

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Upcoming Events

March 14-16: Serenity Retreat, Twin Rocks Conference Center, Rockaway Beach, OR. Scholarships available. Call Vee at 503-449-6005.

April 4 – 6, 2014. North Cascade Intergroup Retreat – A Weekend with the Big Book . Camp Casey Conference Center, Whidbey Island, WA. Contact: Allen T. 360-678-9358 or allen@taylor635.com

April 25 – 27. Serenity by the Sea: Focus on Abstinence. 25th Annual OA Men’s Retreat. Camp Alexandra, 2916 McBride St., Surrey, B.C., V4A3G2. Contact is Tom 604-702-1946 or tmhop@shad.ca.

May 3, 2014. “Freedom from Obsession: Out of the Symptoms and Into the Solution 9:30 am – 3:30 pm. Immanuel Lutheran Church (Sellwood area in Portland), 7810 SE 15th (on SE 15th between Bidwell & Lambert) near Tri-Met Line #70. Contact Michael 503-351-4035 or dmichael8@comcast.net

Monthly Speakers Meeting on the 1st Saturday of each month from 7:00PM-8:30PM, at Girl Scouts, 9620 SW Barbur Blvd., Portland; contact Ilene 503 268-3064.

A Positive Definition

I don't eat sugar, salt, flour, bread, wheat, fat..."
 "I don't allow..." "I don't recommend..." "I don't
 suggest..." "Don't eat..." Don't ..."

Why do some members define abstinence with the word "don't"? Overeaters Anonymous offers us a lifetime of happy usefulness, and a way of life that is sane and free. So, why is the most important aspect of recovery defined in the most negative of terms?

I haven't been in OA for a zillion years, so I can't classify myself as an old-timer. But my God knows about my struggles with abstinence, and I have discovered that my own understanding of abstinence clicked into place for the first time when the definition was preceded by "Do".

- DO understand why you want to eat certain foods.
- DO work the tools you have been given to both accept the addiction and fight the compulsion to eat.
- DO appreciate having a program.
- DO make healthy choices in reasonable portions.

- DO eat three times a day if your doctor permits.
- DO listen to your Higher Power.

By defining my abstinence as doing certain things, I have found that I understand the concept of not eating compulsively far more thoroughly than I did when my abstinence was defined by "don't-ing," which for me, led to defiance and frustration. It felt suspiciously like a diet! My physical, day-to-day eating program did not change, but through the change in definition from the negative to the positive, I have finally been able to approach my abstinence through accepting good health. My program supports realistic eating habits and self-discovery, and I don't feel as though I am denying myself the foods I like.

I now have a positive approach to my abstinence rather than a negative one, and because of that, I can be happy, joyous and free - and NEVER on a diet again.

*~ D.G., Miami, Florida
 Lifeline November 1997.*

Stumbling or Building Blocks

Which set of blocks do I choose this day? Stumbling blocks come from old patterns of self-defeating behaviors either in their original forms or in newer, more sophisticated versions. They can be hard to spot until they've gone on long enough to cause problems.

The only answer I have found for any long term success are the building blocks known as the 12 Steps. They form the basic foundation upon which good, clean living is built. Consistent implementation guarantees forward progress and hope, and blocks old habits from sneaking back into our lives and causing further havoc and failure.

~ Marie

Things overheard on Unity Day ...

- Isolation is the darkroom where I develop my negatives.
- I can remove the obsession, but not the allergy.
- Food is like a controlled substance...Weighing and measuring is my prescription.
- The OA Guarantee - "Once we compulsive overeaters truly take the Third Step, we cannot fail to recover." OA 12 & 12 p. 31

Young People's Phone List

Oregon Intergroup maintains a contact list for young people in OA. To request a list, please send an email to youngpeople@oregon- oa.org.

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.

A Delegate's Lessons

Dang it! Every time I attend some OA function I can't help but get honest about certain things - like my food, for instance. Like working the Steps. Like what God really wants for me.

The 1997 World Service Business Conference in Houston was one such function for me. I never know what to expect when I agree to do OA service, but I know that if I keep my ears open and my abstinence clean, God can maximize the experience for me.

Seeing the big picture of OA's service structure was not important to me when I first started attending meetings. Intergroup was a mystery, and region could have been Mars. My focus was to define an abstinence, a way of living and eating, that worked for me. I got a sponsor and began working the Steps. That was enough.

I was given opportunities for growth and recovery. Recovery broadened my horizons in unexpectedly brilliant ways. Gratitude for an abundant new life filled me, and I began to look for ways to give back to OA. Someone suggested I give service beyond the group level by attending intergroup meetings. I groaned at the thought of attending another business meeting, but I asked for willingness. I was delighted to find a place for myself there.

I had mixed motives. I wanted to give back, but I was also driven to be a star - to be better than the typical member. I wanted to make sure that I was "enough."

Then I learned another aspect of anonymity; I discovered the pressure of keeping up that facade. I now try to keep a low profile, to be a part of the group, and to accept that I cannot control God's creation. All I can do is allow time for God to reveal the multiple facets of who I am.

Attending OA functions worked well for me when I approached them in a step-like manner. My first step was attending meetings; the second step was intergroup; the third step was region, and this most recent step was the World Service Business Conference.

What I've learned at every step has been invaluable in my family and in my professional life. What I've been able to share with my intergroup and my meetings has, I hope, enabled others to broaden their horizons just a bit.

Are you considering being a delegate? Perfection is not required. Expect nothing and remain open to receiving from your experience of service and willingness what God has for you. You will be amazed.

~ C.W., Puyallup, Wa., *Lifeline*, January 1998.

Conscious Contact, continued from page 1

As part of a rehabilitation program, I water walk in a local pool several times a week. This is proving very helpful in my rehab, but I can get bored and feel "put upon." I was walking and repeating some short prayers one day when I had the intuition that my mind could be better occupied. I asked for and was given the inspiration to feel the water on my body and to be aware of my body moving through the water...to be truly present in where I was and what I was doing. Drudgery became joy.

For me, the real power is in the pause. That is where I find my Higher Power.

~ Mary B., reprinted from *Today*,
St. Louis Bi-State IG newsletter, 4/2010.

Dare to be what you are,
and learn to resign with a
good grace,
all that you are not
and to believe
in your own individuality.

~Henri-Frederic Amiel

Taking the Spiritual Path

Spiritual values are important because they deal with the whole person. Wholeness in this sense is related to "holiness," as well as "balance." A holy person is one whose body, mind and spirit share equality that was (and is) the intention and plan of God for all. Such a person takes his or her place within the community with ease and grace, motivated by a deep and abiding sense of thanksgiving. Such individuals become creative and constructive, not only with the family circle or community, but in the arts and sciences. Their creative energies are not blocked by shame, guilt, self-pity or hate, not by the facades of arrogance, aggressiveness or uncaring attitudes.

~copyright, 1980, *Overeaters Anonymous*, p.196,
Overeaters Anonymous, Inc.

The Disease Talks Back

I have been in the OA program since Valentine's Day 1989. I had a pretty good abstinence up until the summer of 1996. I left OA for about a year at that time, because I was listening to a person who had led a retreat on the Twelve Steps and spirituality. His suggestion was to develop a relationship with God aside from going to Twelve-Step meetings. I decided I could live an abstinent life without going to meetings if I could cultivate a "good enough relationship" with God. Well, God had different plans for me and, fortunately, I had a therapist

who could see that I had slipped into relapse and desperately needed to get back to OA. My group welcomed me back, and I immediately signed up to do the First Step because I was feeling so powerless and my life had become so unmanageable.

During my relapse, the voice of my disease was loud and clear. After I returned to OA, I remembered and wrote down the voice I heard. Here is the letter I read to my group.

*~ P.W., Minneapolis, MN,
Lifeline, October 1997.*

Dear OA Members,
I am your friend's food problem, and I've written to say a few things about her. I don't think she belongs in OA. I've wanted her to leave since she first came to OA in 1989 – this recovery business has gone far enough! She's exposing herself in front of all these people, some of whom she does not even know. What if she gets hurt? I keep her from feeling all that sadness, pain and rage. She's had a lot of depression, especially since she became chronically ill in 1992. For a while, she was out there dealing with it all, but then came a point where she finally embraced me again. I'd been there waiting all the time for just the right moment.

The more she reads that literature, goes to these meetings and talks about her feelings, the less she wants to do with me. I love the taste of all those "forbidden foods." I've worked hard over the years to know

just the right moment to make my voice heard. "This won't hurt you." "You deserve it after all." How long has it been? You can control it all now."

This last summer I was there when she was really out of it; she did not want to feel all those feelings of being overwhelmed and rageful. "Just have a few bites," I told her, and she was listening. She hadn't listened to me in years! It reminded me of the old pre-OA days when she would stuff herself all the time, whatever she was feeling. We were in our "honeymoon phase" again!

Then she got this terrible idea of going back to OA and reading that Twelve-Step stuff again. I feel that I hardly have a chance anymore now that she's back in OA. I gave it all I had to hold on, but she's got that Fellowship now, and she doesn't need me anymore.

I can lurk in the background; maybe she'll be stressed out on Halloween and see all that stuff the kids win, and I'll whisper sweet somethings in her ear. I've been through this food thing with her over the years in many ways. I have a lot of tricks to keep her off guard. They don't call me cunning, baffling and powerful for no reason. But I am not hopeful. I am not happy about this Step One, powerlessness business, and I will continue to fight for control when I get the chance.

I would love for us to go on binging day in and day out, living in denial, being numb to any feelings. When I can get her too HALT (hungry, angry, lonely and tired), I'll be looking for another opportunity. Don't tell her I've told you all this; she thinks she's got me under control! It's part of my plan to keep her isolated and shameful, believing she's the only one with a voice like mine."

Calling All Meetings: Is Your Voice Being Heard?

Do you want to strengthen OA in your area and throughout Oregon? Make sure your voice is heard in full force 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. Oregon Intergroup meets the second Wednesday of every month at the Girls Scouts building, 9620 SW Barbur Blvd, Portland, OR 97219.