

A Serving of Hope

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Oregon Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous

May 2014

WORKING THE STEPS

“For many of us, this freedom came when we took Step Three and turned the entire problem over to our Higher Power.”

~ The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, p. 20.

The Twelfth Step of Overeaters Anonymous talks about the qualities we gain as a result of working the Twelve Steps, but the word freedom appears so many times in all of our literature, I began to think about the freedoms from my disease I gained by working each of the Steps of Overeaters Anonymous:

One: Freedom from the obsession with food

Two: Freedom from insanity and happiness

Three: Freedom from the bondage of self

Four: Freedom from dishonesty

Five: Freedom from isolation

Six: Freedom from running the show

Seven: Freedom from self-reliance

Eight: Freedom from blame

Nine: Freedom from fear of people

Ten: Freedom from complacency

Eleven: Freedom from loneliness

Twelve: Freedom from lack of purpose

~ Voices of Recovery, page 205

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-aa.org.

Abstinent or Not?

Because of military transfers, I have lived in many small towns here I've had trouble finding abstinent sponsors. This forced me to work with sponsors who were not abstinent or who had not worked as many Steps as I had. These were my only options.

Many times I had to face this question: Do I go it alone, or do I work with a person who may not have strong abstinence but gives me someone to talk to if I can't find an abstinent sponsor? My answer has been consistent. It is better for me to work temporarily with a non-abstinent person than it is to try working the program by myself while searching.

Isolation is a huge part of my disease, and breaking this habit was the first thing that helped me as a newcomer. A helpful idea for me is to reserve the term "sponsor" for people in recovery on all three levels and to call others in my support system "OA buddies." No matter what term I use, I must remember, "Together we can do what we could never do alone" (The OA Promise).

As a newcomer, working Steps One through Five with my first OA sponsor brought me several months of abstinence before I moved across country. In my new home, I had to ask someone to sponsor me who had not worked Step Four.

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Upcoming Events

May 3, 2014. "Freedom from Obsession: Out of the Symptoms and Into the Solution, 9:30 am – 3:30 pm. Immanuel Lutheran Church, 7810 SE 15th, Sellwood. Contact Michael 503-351-4035 or dmichael8@comcast.net

June 21st. Abstinence Workshop. 10 am – 3pm. Smirna Church, 31118 So. Hwy. 170, Canby. Contact: Vina (503) 631-2632.

June 27-29. Sunlight of the Spirit Retreat sponsored by the Central Oregon IG. Wesley Meadow Lodge at Suttle Lake (about 15 miles West of Sister). Contacts are Nikkie (541) 280-4382 or Jacque (541) 760-1574.

July 18-20. Serenity Retreat. Alton L. Collins Retreat Center, 32867 SE Hwy 211, Eagle Creek, OR. Scholarships available. email serenityretreat@oregon-aa.org, or call Vee at 449-6005.

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.

Between God and Me

In a meeting, someone repeated a prayer that her sponsor had taught her to say before meals: "God, please come between me and the food before the food comes between me and you."

That resonated with me immediately and continues to resonate as I think more about it. It has caused me to consider some of the things that come between my Higher Power and me. Certainly food. Also obsessive work, worry, taking care of other people, schedules, the need to be "doing" or "accomplishing," the need to be needed, my judgements and criticisms of myself and others, mindless television, perfectionism, ego and self-centeredness.

That leads me to consider the things that help bring me closer to God: getting quiet, being more accepting of myself and others, taking life in moderation, scheduling enjoyment at the same priority as obligations, being satisfied with less-than-perfect, keeping a healthy perspective on my successes and disappointments, and realizing that I cannot be all things to all people.

Today, I am celebrating nine months in the OA program, and for that I am grateful. Through the tools of recovery, I gain awareness that my Higher Power wants me to be happy and free of obsessions. God is doing for me what I cannot do for myself.

~ Reprinted from Lifeline, 2004, edited and reprinted from Intergroup Scoop newsletter, OIG, October 2001.

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.

Outreach to Young People...

What Brought Us Here

OA is a worldwide Fellowship, open to all who have the desire to stop eating compulsively. Compulsive eating behaviors may include overeating, undereating, anorexia, bulimia, laxative or drug abuse, over-exercising, or any combination of these actions. Some of these behaviors may have begun in early childhood, but we believe that compulsive eating is progressive and may become even more of a problem for us later on. It can have a dramatic effect on the daily lives, relationships, physical health and aspirations of young people in their teens, 20s or 30s.

Why We Stay

You may feel that you are alone, struggling with feelings of powerlessness and shame over your compulsive eating, body image and weight. You may wonder if anyone else your age feels the way you do. We can tell you that many young people in OA have found recovery and freedom from the crippling effects of compulsive overeating. Members of all ages have discovered that the Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous offer a common solution for all who wish to recover. You are not alone.

From the Suggested Young Person's Meeting Format

Editor's Correction!

An article in last month's newsletter stated that OIG was not fully funded and that we did not have a treasurer. This article was written several years ago when our intergroup was struggling. We are now thriving, with the help of many passionate volunteers, including our treasurer, Dorothy. I believe the message in the article is a good one. However, I apologize for not including a note of context and hope I did not offend anyone or cause any undo alarm. Please accept my amends for the oversight.

~ Your humble editor, Alice W.

Abstinent or Not? (continued from front page)

After my next move, I relapsed. My first sponsor became ill, and the next sponsor fired me when I did not get abstinent within two weeks.

It was a while before I had the courage to try again, but I kept going to meetings and made lots of phone calls. Then I found a wonderful sponsor who helped me move beyond suicidal depression to almost two years of abstinence. But I relapsed again after moving to a place in Europe where OA had few members. The first sponsor I found there admitted to intermittent abstinence, but she had something I wanted: she had made peace with her parents.

Working with OA members who were struggling with their abstinence kept me coming back during several years of intermittent abstinence, so I was ready when an abstinent sponsor came along in 1982. She changed everything for me and taught me that taking Step One means I cannot diet and that a food plan without the Steps is another diet.

If I wanted a lasting, serene recovery, I had to work all the Steps. My sticking point had been making amends. Once I completed all twelve Steps, I felt full for the first time since childhood. This began my transformation from chronic relapser to 29-year abstainer. I've learned that Step work under the guidance of an abstinent sponsor who has completed the Steps was the key to moving me beyond dieting in OA (stark-raving abstinence) to contented abstinence.

Because I prefer face-to-face-meetings, I had to accept that I might have to start a meeting to have one available and had to commit to attending every week to keep it going. That meant perhaps a year or more commitment. If I could not be there, I had to make sure someone was there to open the door.

The most important way to keep a meeting going is for me to be abstinent. If I am not, nothing is there to attract newcomers to come back and no one is available to serve as an abstinent sponsor to help newcomers begin their recovery.

Fortunately I have not encountered the lack of abstinent sponsors for many years. Should it crop up again, I have the option to find one by searching phone meetings.

Face-to-face or long-distance, I need in my life other compulsive eaters, abstinent or not, so I can keep what I have by giving it away.

— B.G., Maryland, A Step Ahead, Fourth Quarter, 2013

Six Little Words

I sat over coffee after a meeting, looking as miserable as I felt. I was deep in self-pity and resentment. After several wonderful months of "pink cloud" recovery, my bubble had burst with the news of a friend's terminal illness. It was so unfair. How could God let this happen, on top of my other problems? My sponsor approached and asked what was wrong.

"I'm angry with my Higher Power," I blurted out.

"Did you pray about it?"

Obviously, she had not heard properly. "It's my Higher Power that I'm angry with. How can I pray about that?"

"You need to pray about it."

I looked at her in amazement. Clearly, the woman had learned nothing in her 18 years in OA. "Poor thing," I thought, "she's losing it." I began, with carefully chosen words, as if talking to a child, to explain my pain and anger.

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Signs of Spiritual Awakening

- A tendency to think and act spontaneously rather than a fears based on past experiences
- A loss of interest in judging one's self and others
- Loss of interest in interpreting the actions of others
- Loss of interest in conflict
- Loss of ability to worry
- Frequent overwhelming episodes of appreciation
- Contented feelings of connectedness with others and nature
- Frequent attacks of smiling
- Increased tendency to let things happen rather than make them happen
- Increased susceptibility to the love extended by others
- Uncontrollable urge to extend love.

~ Adapted from "Loveline," newsletter of the Greater Detroit IG,

How has OA saved your life? Share your story of recovery. Email your submission to newsletter@oregon-oa.com

Ask, Listen and Do

In May 2006, I walked into my first OA meeting (held in Marietta, Georgia) weighing 313 pounds. I only came to prove to my doctor that like diets, OA wouldn't work either, and she would have to approve me for bariatric surgery. What I found instead was profound relief that I was not alone and the knowledge that perhaps a better solution existed.

Today I look down at my 173-pouced long walks on the beach, 18 holes of golf, tennis, happiness, peace and serenity "beyond my wildest dreams"- without surgery!

This past week our Step-Study meeting asked each member to select one question from the OA Workbook, Step Three and to write about it for 10 minutes and then share with the group. I selected,

"How do I feel about completely turning my life over to a Higher Power for guidance?" (*The Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous*, p. 22).

I feel profound relief. All my life I believed it was my duty and power to fix and control everything-my eating, family, people around me and the state of the world-an impossible and onerous responsibility. What a relief to learn in Step One I have no such duty or ability to control. I am powerless to control anybody or anything outside myself, even what seems like an insatiable desire to binge.

So turning over everything to my Higher Power gives me an exhilarating feeling of profound relief. No more guilt. No more beating myself up over my lack of

willpower or any power to change other people, places or things.

All I must do is pray daily for abstinence, guidance, strength, wisdom and serenity. The I hear his word and follow it, no matter what. God tells me, "Put down that fork. You've eaten enough." I say, "Okay, God." God says, "Stop belittling you wife with sarcasm. Treat her with kindness, patience, courtesy, dignity and respect." So I say, "Okay, God."

All I need to do now is ask, listen and do. The opposite of *not being* in control isn't *being* in control, it is *not needing* to be in control. I give up that responsibility. I turn my life and will over to his care. I turn "control" over to Him. His will be done.

~Sander B, Georgia,
Lifeline 11/2010.

Six Little Words (continued from page 3)

The words came faster and faster as I poured out my heart, trying to help her see that my problems were more complicated than she could understand.

When I finally stopped, exhausted but sure that now I would hear the words of wisdom I had come to expect from her, she said: "You need to pray about it."

I sat back, shocked and disappointed. She had not heard a word I'd said. She had not heard a word I'd said. She had always been so helpful before. Why wasn't she getting it? She made me promise to pray and I did, just to get away from her. But I did not mean it.

I went home, still angry, and went to bed. All I could hear in my head was, "You need to pray about it," and it made me even more rebellious. This program was useless! Why did I ever think it would work? Finally, I said out loud: "All right! I'll do what I promised — just to prove to you that it doesn't work."

And I did. Grudgingly, at first, then with more openness, I told my Higher Power exactly why I was so angry with Him.

In addition, I mentioned why I could not trust Him. Suddenly I realized that, for the very first time, I was actually having an honest, no-holds barred conversation with God. I had been the one keeping that door closed, not my Higher Power. There came over me a sudden understanding that God was not there to prevent me from feeling pain but to help me face it, and I felt both deeply humbled and comforted at the same time. I was no longer struggling alone.

After my emotional torrent of complaints, my sponsor had listened and helped me with just six little words. I guess my sponsor had learned a thing or two, after all!

~H.N., Toronto, Ontario, Lifeline 11/1997.