

A Serving of Hope

Volume 3 Issue 8

Oregon Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous

August 2014

act as if

“At this point we learned we could “act as if.” This didn’t mean we were to be dishonestly pious or pretend we believed in God when we didn’t. It meant we were free to set aside theological arguments and examine the idea of spiritual power in the light of our own desperate need for help with our lives.”

~The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, p 14.

I came to OA through AA, where I had been struggling, miserable, and unable to work the program; I simply didn’t believe anything could restore me to sanity from my eating and self-harming behavior. Once I had admitted that I was powerless over food, the above quote helped me to take Step Two and move on. Yes, I was absolutely desperate. I could stop being logical, forget my prejudices about the word “God,” and “act as if” a power greater than myself was working in my life. “Acting as if” enabled me to start trusting that I would be okay, that I could get through the day without eating compulsively or hurting myself. I don’t know what I trust in precisely, but it doesn’t matter; I have faith that it works.

~Voices of Recovery, page 18.

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.

Finding The Balance

Before finding OA, I didn’t know the meaning of the word “balance,” and I didn’t know that my life was unmanageable. I viewed the word in black and white extremes: everything was either wonderful or awful, perfect or a total disaster. People were either good or bad, and I loved them or hated them. I was either wealthy or poverty-stricken, and of course, if I wasn’t thin, I was fat.

And those misguided people in Overeaters Anonymous! Whenever I’d suggest one of my “perfect” solutions at a meeting, they’d debate it and discuss it, and usually reject it. Like the time I suggested we use a non-conference-approved book. When they turned down my sage advice I was hurt, upset, and just plain mad!

Yet I kept going to meetings. There was no place else for me to go. I’d tried controlling my compulsive eating in many ways: diets, diet pills, rewards for losing weight (also known as compulsive spending), and starving. I’d lose the weight, then put it back on plus more. I knew OA had answers for me because the people there said I had a disease. They said that I was not a bad person trying to become good, but a sick person trying to become well.

Today I find that discussing differences of opinion helps me grow. At first when people in my OA group said “Take what you like and leave the rest,” I thought “Yeah — I take it that you’re crazy and I’m leaving!” Now I am learning to separate issues from personalities. Today it is okay for me to have opinions, values and boundaries, and for others to have differing ones. It’s also okay for me to change my ideas, and, later on, change them again.

Before OA I always thought I’d be happy “when.” When I get thin. When I get married. When I get divorced. When I get a good job and make lots of money. When I retire. The “when” list went on and on.

Before OA, I lived in grief, depression, disappointment, guilt, shame and despair over past events. I decided I had to work the steps because I wanted the pain to go away.

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Upcoming Events

August 24. Sunday. 10am-4pm Annual pool party at George and Louise’s house. Contact Louise 503-245-8506, llainpdx@gmail.com

September 12-21. Region 1 Convention. Hampton Inn, Bellingham, WA. www.oaregion1.org.

October 25, 9:30am-3:30pm, Hope for the Holiday, Cedar Hills UCC, SW Park Way, Beaverton. Contact Alice apw91@yahoo.com

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.

Pinball Steps

Last week I had my fifth step scheduled for Saturday. With my fourth step in hand, I was waiting for the big day. But my HP had something different in mind and she decided I needed to take a quick stroll to Step 1 for a special awe-ha moment. This experience got me thinking about how we work through the steps and the vision of a pinball machine emerged. Picture this if you will:

Step One is at the top and Step Twelve is at the bottom. We begin our program with a big energy push as we fly to the top and start our journey. We hit Step One, move to Two, on to Step Three and maybe bounce back to One for a bit before moving to Step Four. You get the idea. Some steps have lots of bells and lights, others are more subtle, but each step must be visited for full recovery. We move our way down to Step Twelve in our own time and own pattern of bounces.

In the center of the Steps, there is a big power booster available; it's called service. Service gets us moving again and can change the direction we're heading.

Service also adds excitement to the game; you will want to bounce on it regularly.

Along the paths there are roadblocks in the form of pegs. Pegs are those things that get in the way of our progress, such as dishonesty, fear, perfectionism or righteousness. We can work our way around them if we're willing to do the "bouncing" our HP has planned for us.

Along the way of our journey, we gain learning points (the score). Some may think a bounce backwards is starting over, but in reality, we are gaining more learning points. Learning points are cashed in for prizes such as serenity, wisdom, sanity, and a better life.

For many of us, there are times when we feel complacent and we may fall to the bottom where we wait until another push of energy shoots us back to the top, so we can continue our journey.

So the next time I am asked by my HP to revisit a Step, I will remember my pinball machine and bounce with the flow.

~Kym, Portland OR

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.

Changed Woman

This year marks my 23rd OA anniversary. I have had a *Lifeline* subscription for almost as long. I can't imagine what I would be like if I did not have both the program and the journal of recovery in my life today.

I don't like being a compulsive overeater. However, I am eternally grateful to the people in OA, my HP, the Steps, the Traditions, the slogans and all of the other parts of the program. They have changed me from a 185-pound bundle of rage who couldn't stop eating to a recovering 135-pound woman who can deal with life on life's terms without the crutch of food.

Thank you, God; thank you, OA; and thanks to all the recovering compulsive eaters whose articles I have enjoyed reading in *Lifeline*.

~A.S., Boston, MA, *Lifeline*, August 2000.

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.

Turning the Switch

After more than eight years in Overeaters Anonymous, I find that if I don't have a sponsor, I don't have a program. I am a slow learner, so it took me eight months in program to surrender and find my first sponsor, who gently and lovingly placed my feet on the road to recovery. I found that all I had to do to recover was to do as she did.

She introduced me to the Big Book and helped me find myself on every page. She encouraged me to make at least two phone calls each day besides the one I made to her. As a courtesy to her and a discipline for us both, she stressed I call her each day at the agreed-upon time. She didn't criticize me. She loved me. She explained how it worked for her. She shared her spirituality. She enabled me to see things from more than one point of view. She didn't dictate, but made suggestions.

She generously gave me a day to hear my Fifth Step. She shared her experiences so I would feel comfortable sharing mine. God is my Higher Power, and I never heard Him as vividly as I did through my sponsor. She truly practiced love and tolerance as the Big Book suggests. She is an example to me of what a sponsor should be, and I try my best to be the kind of sponsor she was to me. She shared her program with me one day at a time for several years, until she moved out of the area.

After she left town, I found another beautiful sponsor, who is still my sponsor today. From these women, I learned how to sponsor others and how to live my life based on the will of my Higher Power.

After I started sponsoring, I was so busy taking care of others that I wasn't calling my sponsor every day. That meant I wasn't sharing my feelings daily, and I wasn't seeing myself reflected back by my sponsor. I wasn't being honest with myself, and I suffered by losing some of that happy, joyous and free feeling. One of my sponsees said something that turned on a switch in my brain, and I started calling my sponsor every day. This has made all the difference.

I have attended many OA meetings worldwide and find much recovery in sponsoring by mail. Some of my sponsees are in California, Tennessee and Italy. Recently, I spent time in San Juan, Puerto Rico and Racine, Wisconsin. In both places, I found a local sponsor and attended meetings. No matter where I go, God supplies me with sponsors and meetings.

Through God's grace, a wonderful sponsor and this Fellowship, I have been abstinent for more than eight years. I'm very grateful for my recovery, sponsor and sponsees. I am also grateful for this opportunity to share my experiences with the powerful tool of sponsorship.

~Anonymous, Lifeline, August 2000.

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.

Questions from God

What will your Higher Power ask you when you die? Here are eight things HP won't ask you.

1. God won't ask what kind of car you drove. He'll ask how many people you drove who didn't have transportation.
2. God won't ask the square footage of your house. He'll ask how many people you welcomed into your home.
3. God won't ask about the clothes you had in your closet. He'll ask how many you helped to clothe.
4. God won't ask what your highest salary was. He'll ask if you compromised your character to obtain it.
5. God won't ask what your job title was. He'll ask if you performed your job to the best of your ability.
6. God won't ask how many friends you had. He'll ask how many people to whom you were a friend.
7. God won't ask in what neighborhood you lived. He'll ask how you treated your neighbors.
8. God won't ask about the color of your skin. He'll ask about the content of your character.

~ Author unknown

Got CDs?

Our Intergroup CD library could use 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 Jenice at 503-705-5599.

Save Someone's Life!

Is there something written in your OA journal that might help someone's recovery? Share it in the newsletter. You might just save someone's life!

Submit to: newsletter@oregon-oa.org

Sold on Recovery

Finding OA is the best thing that ever happened to me. I'm very grateful to someone special who told me about this wonderful program. I wanted what she had. In my case, "attraction, rather than promotion" really worked.

I went to my first OA meeting in July of 1981. I weighed two hundred pounds and felt very fat, ugly, and depressed. I could relate to everything that was said, and I knew I was home.

I didn't talk much that first year, but I paid attention at every meeting. I ate three meals a day and lost forty pounds. Although I had trouble maintaining a consistent abstinence, I never gave up hope.

On July 6, 1986, my husband and I went away for a weekend. While he went to a baseball game, I went to a mall to shop for the day. I started with one compulsive bite and was

gone. I ate all day and felt as if I'd gotten away with something. At home, again, however, I told my sponsor:

"This is it. I'm either going to work this program 100 percent, or I know I am going to be 300 pounds." I committed to three meals a day and calling my sponsor daily.

I've lost seventy-seven pounds, going from a size-twenty to a size-five dress, and have stayed the same weight for four years. I weigh myself only once a year at my doctor's office.

There have been so many miracles in my life. I have a great relationship with my HP. I have a beautiful marriage and a supportive husband. I've learned to tell him everything, even how I feel. My family and in-laws have also been very supportive. One special memory I have is of the Christmas when I had

lost fifty pounds. My brother said that he, as well as everyone else in my family, was very proud of me — and they all clapped for me. It meant so much and brought tears to my eyes.

In OA, I feel I have found the answer to my life. I have an illness. At thirty years of age, I'm the happiest I've ever been. To stay that way, I have to maintain my conscious contact with God. As long as I have my abstinence, peace, and serenity, I have everything.

I want to thank all of the very special friends I have made in OA over the last nine years. You have helped and inspired me so much. As long as I keep doing what I'm doing every day and work with my sponsor, I'll stay in recovery. If I can do it, so can you. So "Keep coming back, and don't leave before the miracle happens!"

~ Wisconsin, A New Beginning,
page 91-92.

Finding The Balance

(continued from front page)

Black-and-white thinking was one way I made my life unmanageable. Seeing the world in extremes kept me from people and from myself. Most of all, it kept me from an intimate relationship with my Higher Power.

Today I choose to go through problems, rather than avoid them, seeing them as opportunities for growth. I recognize this world and the people in it as conduits through which my Higher Power contacts me.

Through OA, I've found a way to be happy now. Call it whatever you want: acceptance, balance, growing up, "living life on life's terms." I call it being abstinent, in contact with my Higher Power, and living one day at a time.

~ Crystal Lake, Illinois, Abstinence, page
105-106.

How has my level of shame changed as I recover?

My shame level when into the food and disease was totally encompassing. I had no self-respect, and I was embarrassed to leave my home. When at my job, I tried to sit at my desk and move only when absolutely necessary. I avoided social invitations with all types of excuses.

After being abstinent for even a month, my shame lessened and I felt I deserved to be part of the human race. Today, after 11 ½ years of abstinence and recovery, I accept myself exactly as I am and am rarely ashamed of myself. My life in recovery is one of honesty, self-respect and service. I relieve myself of any shame that might occur through writing my Tenth Step at night, so that there's no room for shame to accumulate.

I live a happy, joyous and free life thanks to OA, my Higher Power, and working the steps on a daily basis.

~Nancy H. Central Mass IG, *The Messenger*, Spring 2013.