

A Serving of Hope

Volume 3 Issue 9

Oregon Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous

September 2014

**Oregon Intergroup
has a new number!
971-317-6343**

SHARE THE GIFT

A cloak is not made for a single shower of rain.

~ Italian proverb

OA is as warm and safe as a cloak. I am glad for its protection, and I need it as much now as I did in the beginning, although perhaps not in the same way. When I first found OA, people shared gut feelings and then told me, "Let us love you until you can love yourself." And I grew; I came to care for myself and to like the person I am.

Have I let complacency creep into my thinking? When I don't feel like going to a meeting, do I tell myself that they don't need me; they'll do fine without me? At such times I remember what it is like to be a compulsive overeater with no idea that the recovery I have today is possible. Will I be there when such a person needs to see a miracle like the ones that walked and talked at my first meeting?

For today: How can I best help another compulsive overeater? By going to the meeting, whether I feel like it or not.

~For Today, page 98

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.

Until I Believed

I knew when I came to OA that my life was unmanageable and I was powerless over food. However, I struggled with the concept that God could restore me to sanity. I am one of those people who truly "came to believe." In the meantime, the idea that I could act as if I believed saved my life.

That was 14 years ago, when my life was one painful day after the next. Fear paralyzed me, and I could take no meaningful action on my own behalf. I acted as if I believed God had taken care of the problem for me. I acted as if I trusted the God of my limited understanding. Slowly, things began to change. I became physically abstinent, and the volume in my busy head turned down to a reasonable level. My mantra became, "Your will, not mine be done." I said it as if I meant it, in spite of the fear I felt. I learned that faith is feeling the fear, but taking the action anyway.

My life today is beyond my wildest dreams. In the last 14 years, I have left an unhealthy marriage, dated, remarried, left an unhealthy workplace, risked being truly myself with my family and given birth to two children. The Twelve Steps have helped dispel the attitudes that stood in the way of my happiness and usefulness to others. I am currently doing Steps Eight and Nine again with greater understanding of their magic. I look forward to being "amazed before I'm half-way through," to paraphrase the Big Book, because that is when the promises of the program start to come true. Thank You, HP and OA.

*~MCB, Media, Pennsylvania
Lifeline, July 2002.*

Upcoming Events

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

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

November 16, noon- 4 or 5pm. 4th Stepping Through the Holidays: A Mini-4th Step Workshop, SW Washington Hospital, Conference Room A. Contact Judy W. (360) 601-8390, fun4juts@gmail.com or Nicole (360) 907-3996

November 27th, time TBD. 7th Annual Thanksgiving Day Meeting & Potluck @ MerleAnn's, in Portland. Contact MerleAnn (503) 281-8947.

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.

Time-Tested Recovery

At three o'clock in the morning on the Saturday after Thanksgiving, I could not get to sleep. I felt horrible because of the binging I had done for the previous two days, and I was scared. For some time I have been struggling emotionally with a special relationship in my life that is not going the way I had hoped. This relationship has been on my mind constantly, and I've been afraid of what the outcome will be. Feeling very powerless and frustrated, I used the holiday as an excuse to overeat.

I've been in the program a little over six years and am maintaining a 341-pound weight loss. My program is strong, but for those few days I didn't work it, nor did I trust my Higher Power. What I experienced was a major slip for me, and it brought back a flood of bad memories.

When I was growing up I remember turning to food for comfort whenever I was afraid. Since I felt inadequate, the fear of failure was ever present. I came into OA weighing 521 pounds; I was unemployed, divorced, and very desperate. I felt I had failed at everything in life, especially as a son, husband, and father. I did not want to live anymore, but I was too scared to do anything about it. It didn't take me long to realize that this

program was exactly what I needed, so I surrendered myself to it. My Higher Power and the loving, caring people in this program helped me to start facing the mountain of fear I had built up inside myself without having to turn to food for sustenance. With every meeting I went to, every tool I used, every step I worked, and every prayer I prayed, I was gaining strength and courage. The miracle of my recovery was beginning.

Food is cunning, baffling, and powerful. I turned to it over this past Thanksgiving holiday in order to cope with the fear I was feeling. I didn't help, of course, it never does - it just made a bad situation worse.

I have finally managed to turn that special relationship over to my Higher Power and will accept the outcome, whatever it is. I feel a great deal of relief and my abstinence has returned. Writing about it has helped too.

One thing that keeps getting stronger as my recovery progresses is the knowledge that no matter how much I may be hurting or how bad things may seem at times, as long as I maintain contact with my Higher Power and this beautiful program, I will be okay, no matter what comes along. This has been proven to me time and time again throughout my recovery.

*~Racine, Wisconsin
Abstinence, page 37-38.*

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.

Why is this space blank??

It's waiting for you to share your story of hope and recovery with your fellows. Where would you be right now if you had not found OA and the Twelve Steps?

Do you remember how you felt the first time you heard your story coming out of someone else's share? The amazing relief and instant understanding when you realized you were not alone?

Give that gift to someone else by sending your experience, strength and hope to newsletter@oregon-oa.org.

Together we recover!

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.

I'm Back

I have thirty-seven days of abstinence today by the grace of God and the Fellowship of Overeaters Anonymous. It's not my first time around; hopefully I'm back for good - one day, one meal at a time.

I commit myself today to an abstinent food plan. I read a story or two from the *Lifeline Sampler*, I talk to my sponsor, I go to a meeting (at least four or five a week), and I ask God to help me.

I had an opportunity for recovery in 1978 when I attended one meeting in California. Unfortunately, a woman passed the "gray sheet" across the table without even a word of encouragement. I took one look and absolutely knew I could not eat that way, and I didn't come back until 1986 in Hawaii. The "gray sheet" was gone, and I found the acceptance, understanding, and compassion for which I'd been longing. I stayed around several months, bought all of the books, found a food plan that worked, went to meetings, and "figured it all out." I stopped going to meetings because a man was coming on to me. I didn't know enough to put principles before personalities, so I lost another chance at recovery. I stayed abstinent a few weeks, and then it slipped away.

In 1990, I made my way back again. I put down the alcohol and the pot and got abstinent immediately. I worked a strong program, lost 130 pounds, became a service junkie, sponsored many, and became well-known. I was given eighteen months of beautiful abstinence by God. It was a treasure, a gift, and a blessing, and I threw it away when I heard that someone was gossiping about me because I wasn't yet at a "goal weight." I was badly hurt, but instead of dealing with it, I ate and gained almost one hundred pounds.

But I've been back for thirty-seven days. I was compelled to write my story for others who have lost faith, given up, and let the carelessness of others take the beauty of the program from their lives.

I pray to God to help me love myself enough to stay in meetings no matter what I feel about anyone else. I pray to find those who have the capacity to love me back and who love themselves. I pray that I may even love those who hate me. I pray to turn resentment into forgiveness and serenity. I have a long way to go, but I have today. No one can take that away from me.

~Hawaii, *A New Beginning*, page 34-35.

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

Need Help? Ask For It!

Several years ago, I foolishly went snorkeling alone in Hawaii. After swimming for about an hour, I decided it was time to go in. When I peeked my head above water, I realized I was all alone in the bay. Well, I thought, no problem, and I started swimming toward shore. Much to my dismay, I wasn't making any progress. Then I thought, maybe if I go at a slight angle toward shore, that would work. Nope! I tried for at least an hour to get to shore without making any progress.

About that time, I started thinking, God—if you're there, this would be a good time to do something!. I also remembered it might be a good idea to raise my hand up to let anyone who might be watching know that I was in trouble. Lo and behold, suddenly a guy appeared with a surfboard who helped me onto it, and told me water rescue was on their way.

I guess the analogy is this: we can easily mess around and lose ourselves in our disease. When we realize we're in trouble, we usually try all sorts of ways to extricate ourselves from our predicament. It usually takes desperation for us to finally ask our Higher Power for help, and when we honestly do, HP is only too willing to help us out of the mess.

~Anonymous

If you are not
working on
your recovery,
you are
working on
your relapse.

How has my level of Shame changed as I recover?

Members from Region Six write about shame and recovery.

When I first came into OA I felt like a total failure: I could not stop eating, I hated the way I looked and felt, and I was convinced that I was the only person on the face of the earth who had ever felt that way.

I felt more like an animal than a human being. All I had then was the faintest glimmer of hope that this place would work for me. As I lost weight, refrained from compulsive overeating, and started to maintain my weight, I started to recover from the blanket of shame which had covered me. I learned that I was not alone at all: I had plenty of company in the rooms of OA. I had a disease- what a concept. And there is a solution- how amazing.

The tools, the steps, the fellowship, the literature- all of these helped me to recover. Today the shame is gone and there is so much compassion for all who share my disease.

~Anonymous

I am so grateful that once I walked into my first OA meeting, the level of shame started to lessen. I was so amazed and relieved to meet people who thought about and did the same crazy things I did with food. The sharing from others assured me that I was not alone, and that I was not stupid, an idiot or a loser. It freed me to start talking about my issues, helped my journey of rigorous honesty with the food and other emotional and spiritual issues. This is a continuing process and my intention is to keep coming back as the miracle happens.

~Marilyn C. Montreal English IG

Shame shrinks as maintenance grows. I ate over my shame on a daily basis. The worse I felt about myself the more I tried to stuff down my self-loathing with gooey and greasy food.

When I came into program, I found others who medicated with gobs of food the same way I did and I quickly felt a part of something instead of apart from everything.

The shame ebbed the longer I stayed in the rooms. I saw I wasn't different, I wasn't alone, I wasn't a loser.

My shame melted as I began to understand that being overweight is not a sin against humanity; instead, I learned compulsive overeating was my attempt to find comfort in an alien environment. After years in a normal body, with a mostly clear mind, I now see I'm as good as every other bozo riding the bus called life.

~Gil P. South Coastal Mass IG.

Before I came to OA, I was so deeply mired in my shame about my inability to stop eating continuously that I envisioned driving into a bridge abutment at turnpike speeds as the only possible way to stop eating. I lived in total isolation in a well of self-pity built on my terminal uniqueness. I believed I was the only one in the world unable to eat normally. My first few OA meetings told me I wasn't alone. I wasn't unique. Others had my problem and had recovered. This awareness came to me as a deep blessing, bringing me peace and abstinence.

That was over a hundred pounds ago and today I am free of that shame, free to look people in the face without fear of their judgment of me as a freak and failure. OA has saved my life and given it to me as a rich dessert of joy and serenity.

~Anonymous

My shame about compulsive eating has been released through my two years and eleven months of abstinence, step work and use of the tools of program. My shame occurs more often about my behavior, requiring many inventories and apologies after my daily review. However, I have for the most part learned to release myself from incessant "replays" of shameful incidents and the "woulda, coulda, shoulda's. Giving away my 4th step was a big breakthrough and I learned that I am not alone in my behaviors and character defects.

I am now working on my other major compulsions; compulsive busyness, which can lead to eating compulsively. I can see now the shame that has come from the treadmill of trying to achieve perfection and thinking of myself as indispensable. Soon I will be working on another compulsion, buying yarn, something that at times of clarity or comments from my husband can bring shame and remorse.

~Barb B. Mid Hudson IG

I am free to share my disease and program with others as I recover instead of hiding behind anonymity. So much goodness and healing has come from recovery, and I want to tell others. I am saying YES to Life instead of isolating at home, and eating away my hurts and fears.

~Chauncey T. Montreal English IG

-Reprinted from Messenger, Region 6 newsletter, Spring 2013