

A Serving of Hope

Volume 3 Issue 12

Oregon Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous

December 2014

A new way

There's no limit to how complicated things can get, on account of one thing always leading to another.

--E. B. White

One thing can lead to another only if I allow it. Celebrations needn't be the same from one year to the next. Festivities can be simpler; there can be a switch in emphasis, a change of values. Who says holiday meals must be heavy and elaborate? Why not a simple, satisfying dinner with only the company of those I care about? If I stop and think about what is important, I can put aside the useless, the heavy, the habit. I can plan the holidays so as to be closer to my OA family as well as my own.

For today: The true spirit of giving to myself and to others is in keeping it simple; to let nothing complicate my abstinence and my OA way of life.

~For Today, page 345

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.

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

Oregon Intergroup has a new contact number!

(971) 317-6343

Handle With Care

I finally made it — thirty days of abstinence!

I have had several weeks of abstinence a number of times, but I usually broke it about the twenty-fifth or twenty-sixth day. I always sabotaged myself in some way as I neared the “magical” thirty-day mark. Now that that day has come and gone, I realize there is nothing magical about thirty days per se; but there is something miraculous about every day of abstinence.

As I neared the thirty-day mark this most recent time, I saw how poorly I had been treating my very fragile abstinence. I was handling it carelessly, playing with it, almost daring myself to break it. This was most apparent to me during the celebration of a recent holiday.

As part of my personal plan, I chose to refrain from traditional binge foods that had always represented joy and celebration, and replaced them with healthy, wholesome foods that my entire family could enjoy. To establish a festive feeling, I prepared the table with the best of everything — fancy

~ Continued on page

Upcoming Events

December 13, 1-5pm, Relax & Rejuvenate, Bethal Congregational Church, 5150 SW Watson Ave, Beaverton. Email memberatlarge@oregon-oa.org or call 503-319-4942.

December 25, 1-5pm, 23rd Annual Christmas Day Potluck (1:15pm) & Meeting (4pm), MerleAnn's, 4635 NE 33rd Ave. Portland, 97211. Contact MerleAnn (503) 281-8947. Home is now pet free. Can't make it? Calls are also welcome!

January 1: 14th Annual New Year's Day Potluck (1:15pm) & Meeting (4pm), MerleAnn's, 4635 NE 33rd Ave. Portland, 97211. Contact MerleAnn (503) 281-8947. Home is now pet free. Can't make it? Calls are also welcome!

January 25, Workshop: Sponsorship - hosted by Lake Oswego groups - date and time yet to be determined

January 23-25 2015, OA's 55th Birthday Party Celebration LAX Hilton, Los Angeles, Ca. See website: oabirthday.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.

A Program Barometer

It's been twelve years since I attended my first OA meeting. There have been many phases in my recovery:

gratifying growth leaps, as well as small, and even large steps backward. Today I can honestly say I'm grateful for being a compulsive overeater.

During my years in program, I've been fortunate to experience recovery on all three levels: physical, emotional, and spiritual. All are important, but at different times one aspect has taken priority over another. Now, I believe my Higher Power is guiding me to focus on my spirituality.

When I first came to the program I'd had no experience with religion or spirituality. I was one of those people who had to start out considering the group to be my Higher Power. Hundreds of meetings and thousands of pages of literature later, I find myself reaping the benefits of a conscious relationship with the God of my understanding.

During the past six months, my spiritual growth has accelerated, which has been the most challenging for me. As I stretch myself in this area, I find I am susceptible to my default emotion of fear. And I'm so concerned about doing God's will that I've fallen back into unhealthy patterns of self-criticism. I abuse myself with thoughts that I'm just not doing it well enough.

Then I had a revelation that renewed my gratitude for my disease. I realized that, unlike normal people, we compulsive overeaters have a handy, tangible barometer. If I want to know whether I'm doing God's will, all I have to do is observe what I'm eating. No matter what my head tells me about what I am or am not doing, if my food is clean, I'm on the right track! I still have my ups and downs, both in moods and productivity, but remaining abstinent is all I need to do. Everything else will fall into place according to God's plan.

~ California, *Seeking the Spiritual Path*, page 28.

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.

Staying Abstinent Through the Holidays

Having trouble staying abstinent during the holidays? The Big Book tells us "As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action. We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbling saying to ourselves many times each day "Thy will be done." We are then in much less danger of excitement, fear, anger, worry, self-pity, or foolish decisions."

When I ask my Higher Power for guidance, I must remember to be still and listen for the answer. This is not always an easy task this time of year. The rush to meet commitments I now wish I had not made is enough to drive me to the food. Add the thoughts that for some reason, this Christmas has to be THE BEST EVER, (and all that entails), it's no wonder I feel overwhelmed!

But I know my Higher Power will get me out of this mess if I only ask for the help I need. I ask to stay present, for the courage to put my self-care first, regardless of whom I may disappoint, and, as the Big Book says, I resolutely turn my thoughts to someone I can help. Because I know I am not alone. I know someone else is feeling as I do. My experience has taught me that nothing keeps me abstinent like helping a fellow sufferer stay abstinent. 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.

Handle With Care ~continued from front page.

place mats, our best china, crystal goblets (not used since our wedding), and a crystal candle holder at each setting.

The only thing “out of place,” so to speak, was a cheaper, smaller glass goblet that I set before my six-year-old daughter. I felt I couldn’t quite trust her to handle a large crystal goblet. She cried when she saw that she had a different glass, until she noticed that it too, was fancy and delicate.

As she handled the small goblet, I felt my heart leap into my throat several times. She treated it so roughly, pretending to be toasting with everyone, hitting the glass against every available surface, and setting it down a bit too hard after every gulp.

Suddenly, I saw myself in her. I had been handling my abstinence roughly also. As I’d seen the thirty-day mark approach, I was so sure that I would break my abstinence again that I toyed with it. I let myself taste things that I had no business tasting. I wasn’t caring for my abstinence lovingly or carefully. Instead, I banged it against every tantalizing situation. No, I never really broke my abstinence — just as my daughter never really broke the goblet but I had many close calls.

And you know, I could tell that my Higher Power was standing near me, guarding the abstinence so graciously given to me. God reached out to catch me whenever I risked falling, just as I had kept a careful eye on my daughter.

My abstinence is so very delicate. I know now that even though I have passed the once-elusive thirty-day mark, I must treat my abstinence with tender loving care and gentleness lest it be broken.

~ *South Jacksonville, Illinois, Abstinence, page 82-83.*

On Humility...

To those who have made progress in A.A., humility amounts to a clear recognition of what and who we are, followed by a sincere attempt to become what we can be.

An improved perception of humility starts a revolutionary change in our outlook. Our eyes begin to open to the immense values which have come straight out of painful ego-puncturing. Until now, our lives have been largely devoted to running from pain and problems. Escape via the bottle was always our solution. Then, in A.A., we looked and listened. Everywhere we saw failure and misery transformed by humility into priceless assets.

~ AA 12x12, p58, 74-75.

The Paradox of Powerlessness

I felt I didn’t have any power over life. I couldn’t make things happen and I couldn’t get people to do what I wanted them to do.

But food I could get right away. I had supreme power over it. I could buy as much as I could carry and eat as much as my stomach could hold. Food was the symbol of all of the things I couldn’t get. I used it for power and pleasure and it made me fat and ugly and sick.

Now the paradox: the first step. I admit I’m powerless over food.

Yes, I can see that. It has become a compulsion, a physical addiction and a mental game I can’t stop. From the beginning I knew I had no power over circumstances, so I set up my food game.

So now, what have I got left? I’m powerless. I’m beaten. I surrender.

When I look in the mirror can I honestly say that’s all there is?

No. There is a Power greater than myself. It’s absolutely available to me. It’s mine, it’s there — it’s God.

If I can accept that Power now and let God love me and give me things and care for me, then...

I can accept myself and love me and give myself things and care for myself and ...

I can accept you and love you and give you things and care for you.

When I allow this surrender, miraculously I cease starving and start living.

So, operating the old way I was powerless. But in using a Power greater than myself, I’m not.

It is my wonderful secret! I’m loved and loving and free.

~February, 1982, *Lifeline Sampler, page 133.*

What one thing can you do today to ease someone’s suffering?

What are you waiting for?

Abstinent Today

One of our members shares her experience, strength and hope.

I started OA 40 years ago in Chicago. I had been overweight and unhappy all of my life. When I came to program, I was eating a whole frozen cake with my hands - and more - at one sitting. I came in just to lose some weight.

After my first meeting, I had a deep, deep feeling that I was "home." From the beginning, I went to 3 to 6 meetings a week. I lost weight rapidly. In the first year I lost all of my weight (60-70 pounds). I saw other people lose weight. I saw and heard the incredible changes in their lives. The unconditional love and acceptance kept me coming back, and still does. I was 24 years old and it was the first time I had ever felt that unconditional acceptance. It is still one of the big reasons I come back.

By the end of the first year, I was starting to put together somewhat regular abstinence. It took 2 years to get to a point of consistent abstinence and that has continued now for 38 years.

Abstinence from compulsive overeating is the most important thing in my life without exception. I don't eat no matter what. No matter what, I don't eat.

For me, abstinence is the manifestation of the first three steps. I believe it is God's will for me — it is a spiritual commitment.

I realized that my will was to eat all of the time, for every and any reason. I came to believe that God's will for me was to abstain. This is the ONE piece of God's will I know for sure for today. Abstinence is my spiritual path. It is the first three steps in action. What more faith could be asked of me than to be willing to go through the day without my drug of choice? Instead, I seek spiritual strength and grace by using the tools and working the steps. The ONLY thing I have to do today is be abstinent. Being abstinent is faith in action, for me.

In my first year, I literally locked myself in my room in the evening because I knew I would binge if I went out. I stayed on the phone for hours to stay abstinent. I go to meetings where ever I am. I've cried, scream and stared out the window for hours to stay abstinent.

To stay abstinent, I take care of the logistics and mechanics of being such as meal planning and shopping. I have taken my own food on airlines, called ahead to restaurants to see if they had food appropriate for me and, if not, eaten somewhere else. I have had special meals prepared for me at fancy business luncheons. I fight like a "scrappy dog" for my abstinence!

Vital to my abstinence is to be

present and living in the day. I remind myself to "stay in the day", "stay in the day," "stay in the day." I stay in this set of 24's. If my thoughts dwell in the past or future, I am diluting the spiritual strength I need to draw from to be abstinent today. Being abstinent means I will have feelings and I have to be willing to tolerate these feelings, to endure these feelings, to accept these feelings, to accept life on life's terms today.

Important too are the roles of meetings and fellowship in my life. I cannot maintain perspective on life without the meetings and the fellowship. I like saying, "My mind is a bad neighborhood where I shouldn't go alone." Without meetings, I get negativity, and if I am in that negative state long enough, I will go to the food. The meetings inspire me to a better life. I am always changing and enriching my life. Often, the people in meetings carry the spiritual message I need. I have never tired of OA in 40 years!

I work the Twelve Steps to the best of my ability every day. I live the Steps - they are integrated into my life. I especially focus on the principles of the Steps as summarized in Step 12 of the OA 12x12. And the bottom line is, if I only do Steps 1, 2 and 3 (abstain), that is good enough for today!

~Martha J.

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.