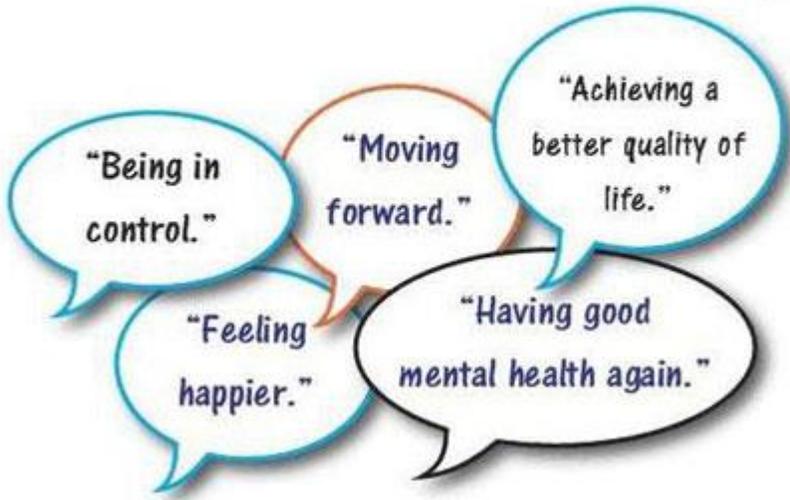


What is Recovery?



OA Desert Recovery

January & February 2016

NEWSLETTER@OASOUTHERNAZ.ORG

My O.A. Fate Depends On It

This morning as I study Tradition One I'm reminded that my obsession with food was so disruptive in my life that it required me to ignore basic needs, both in my own lives and in those close to me. I avoided some basic tenets of self-care without realizing it. I hadn't been to the doctor in years, fearful of what she might say. I would forgo a manicure or pedicure, instead spending my money on eating.

When others wanted to go to an amusement park or camping, I wanted to redirect the conversation

to things I felt more comfortable doing in my physical largeness, knowing I could never hike that far or fit into a roller coaster seat (despite my inner longing to have fun). There was no respectful balance between what I wanted and what others wanted, much less the ability to step out of the way of others' plans...there certainly was no Unity. Wherever the conversation was going, I had to get there first so I could ensure a favorable outcome, avoid embarrassment and - most importantly- avoid acknowledging the truth. I had uncomfortable feelings that came with admitting I couldn't always

be 'part of' with family and friends' activities because of my disease.

In my first year of OA my personal struggle with food seem to be all that mattered. The stress it caused was taxing both physically and mentally. I couldn't even remember members' names from one meeting to the next, and was surprised when they remembered mine. But eventually, I began to gain some perspective on my disease and the importance of others around me. I awoke to the realization while attending OA meetings and working with a sponsor brought some relief by helping me identify and stop some

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STEP ONE: A NEW APPROACH TO LIFE

On my own, I was and am helpless, without the authority needed to make changes in my relationship with food. Most of us have been able to imagine we were powerful over food, for a time, because our addiction to diets worked early in our food experience, giving us the illusion of control. **Then one day, diets didn't work anymore.** No matter how strong our willpower, and I believe most of us demonstrate extraordinary willpower, we could no longer will ourselves to lose weight or keep it off for long. When I reached that stage, I was sure my willpower was the problem.

When I finally came to OA., after six successful years in another 12-Step program, I began to realize that food had always been my primary addiction, present since early childhood. But **I still did not see my own powerlessness over food and compulsive food behaviors.** At that time, food consumed most of my waking hours---planning, shopping, learning new recipes, cooking, eating, and using just the right containers for cooking and storing my precious food.

I learned from my group that I needed a new approach to life. I learned that to retake authority over my life, I had to admit my powerlessness over most of life and its events. **I began to gain an understanding of my helplessness over my disease of compulsive overeating, first intellectually and**

later on an emotional level. At that time, it was an experience for me of utter humiliation and defeat.

By working the OA program with the help of my sponsor and doing the Steps as suggested in OA's "Twelve and Twelve" and the workbook, which really spoke to me, **I began to move from defeat to a new and powerful understanding of my own inevitable limitedness.** I am only a human being. All past feelings of power over life, others, and food began to transform into acceptance and humility.

Judy C.

PERSONAL CHOICES CAN IMPACT MANY OTHERS

My home meeting is small and struggling. A number of members with good recovery have transferred to other groups. Some came for a few visits then did not continue. Of the regulars, one member has six years of abstinence. I was the next-most-abstinent member with over one year of successful recovery, and I held a service position that required three-months abstinence. One evening I went home and indulged in a minor binge. I was angry with a friend who had withdrawn from OA because she had too many problems in her life. I did not think of anyone else during that one-hour binge. **I chose not to use any program tools and did not consider the consequences.**

The next morning, I had to face what I had done. Over the next few days, I realized I had been trying to control my friend. Much as I wished for her to make sane choices, I had to leave her free to live her own life, to bless her and hand her to God, who alone changes any of us. But even more, **I had to face the way my break in abstinence had impacted our group.** The only one eligible for the service position from which I had to resign was our one long-timer, but she was already the backbone of the group and could take on no more service.

I am learning, in an embarrassing and painful way, just how much my break in abstinence and with Tradition One, applies to not just me but everyone else in my group. All I can do now is stay abstinent for three months when I can assume the duties again. Then I will function well in it until someone else has both enough abstinence and willingness to take on this service position.

In the meantime, **I have been amazed at the kindness of my fellow OAs,** none of whom berated me; all encouraged me as I began again. Also, other group members have been willing to serve in whatever ways they can to keep our group running. Everyone has realized that our personal recovery depends on OA unity.

Margie

LET GO,
LET GOD

Unity Day

Saturday, Feb. 27, 2016
St. Francis of the Valley
Church
600 S. La Canada, Green
Valley, AZ.
10:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.



TELEPHONE: MY FAVORITE TOOL

I make a daily effort to use as many tools of the OA program as I possibly can, but I have to confess the one I use the most is the telephone. And it's all because of what might be the beginning of a new addiction—my smart phone. Recently, my husband replaced my three-year-old cell phone with a new I-phone and upgraded my service. Now I can not only make calls but also text, send/receive emails, look up any kind of info on the Internet, take pictures---the features and applications are almost endless, and it is in my favorite color. For someone who was only moderately part of an “always connected” world before, **I didn't realize what an asset to my recovery this new phone could become.**

Since my new phone plan allows unlimited minutes, when I have a little time to fill I now call someone from the We Care list to share what kind of day I am having with food. I also check in with my sponsor more frequently because we can briefly text when one of us doesn't have time to talk. She often sends me reminders and information about the workbook study we are doing. I even compose my daily meal plan on my phone since I can easily look up calories and amounts of fat/sugar/protein in each item I eat. It also means I can keep a record of what I eat on my phone.

Then I realized **I could download OA's “Twelve and Twelve” and other program literature/resources**, so now I don't have to worry about whether I remembered my books as I'm going to a meeting. It also means I can pull up something helpful to read anytime I want if I need some reinforcement. And when there is a reference or a Bible verse I don't understand, I can look it up right away. I get a lot more out of what I read because I am able to do that.

I now keep pictures on my phone of when I weighed a lot more, to keep me motivated not to regain the pounds. But I also store a current picture of myself in a nice outfit that I often look at to remind myself my hard work is paying off. It is proof that the program works “and I am worth it.” Recently at a meeting the timer we used for sharing quit working, so I brought out my I-phone and used its clock feature to time each person speaking. I was beginning to wonder if there is anything my phone can't do, until I realized it can't stop me from thinking about sugar when I am depressed, and it can't stop me from putting food in my mouth that I shouldn't be eating. **But it can help me access the means to stop those actions**, it can remind me to get to a meeting and I can call anyone for help when trouble surfaces. That's why my new phone is my favorite program tool, and I am becoming dependent on it---but one addiction at a time.

Leigh

ASTOUNDED AND AMAZED

I believe a Power greater than myself can restore me to sanity because it has been proven to me over and over in so many situations. I especially believe it because I never could stick with any plan of eating when I was relying on my own power. **Even when I lost weight three years ago, the compulsive patterns eventually returned**, my compulsive overeating resumed, and the weight came back.

Now it's going on three months since I took a compulsive bite, and I am astounded and amazed at what has happened to me. I no longer have to abuse myself with food. I don't crave anymore. Somehow I don't obsess about food anymore. Somehow I don't eat when I'm not hungry. I have been restored to sanity, and I believe this is a miracle that could only have been granted by my Higher Power.

Compulsive overeating has caused a lot of pain and hardship in my life. Stuffing down my feelings with food rather than feeling them caused negative emotions to get bottled up inside and never allowed me to release them. Now that my food is clean, I don't have the blood sugar spikes or emotional swings I used to feel daily. I don't have added guilt and self-hate for abusing my body and being overweight. As the weight comes off, so does the emotional burden I've been carrying. Plus, I feel good about myself for being kind to myself. I'm kind to myself by going to exercise class twice a week now, which I never used to do. I'm kind to myself by donating the clothes that are too big for me now. And I am kind to myself every time I keep coming back to OA.

I know this transformation could not have come about without the help and strength I have received from my Higher Power. I know I can't do it on my own because any time in my life I tried, I always went back to my old ways of compulsive overeating. This new reliance on HP makes me feel completely different because, for the most part, I've lost my cravings for bad food. For about five minutes earlier this week, I had cravings for the wrong things. I asked my Higher Power to take away my cravings and within moments they were gone.

I especially know I can't do this on my own because my own willpower has failed me every time---consistently and predictably. And just as consistently and predictably, I know that my Higher Power has already restored me to sanity and will continue to as long as I am willing to seek help and follow the OA Steps.

Rachel D.

A MEETING AND A PROMISE FULFILLED

When I think of the OA program tool Meetings, I conjure up a group of people who have similar issues, sitting around a table sharing how they deal with those issues, helping each other figure out how to live with and manage our crazy food addiction. It's not hard to imagine that scenario happening because I have experienced it countless times in the years I have been attending OA meetings. But the **most powerful meeting I ever attended**, the one that affected me the most strongly, involved only two people huddled together on a stone bench in a semi-dark church parking lot.

I had been coming to OA meetings for only a few months when the Thanksgiving weekend rolled around and my husband and I planned to spend it at his parents' home, a three-hour drive from where we had recently moved. I had been married about 15 years but didn't have a close relationship with my in-laws because we had lived in another state and had seen them in only occasional visits. As my husband and I traveled, we were discussing what family members would be there and a knot of dread was already forming in my gut, for we would be the only childless couple present. Our not being parents was a big disappointment to us, but my mother-in-law seemed to take it as a personal insult that we had not produced any grandchildren for her.

There was a large family dinner that first night, a huge breakfast and "light" lunch the next day. At each meal the table was covered with piled-high dishes of food, a lot of it being items I shouldn't eat, that weren't on the type of meal plan I had been formulating with my sponsor. I was trying to eat sparingly, using "my diet" as an excuse for not over-eating, though if my in-laws didn't understand or like it. Then disaster struck and my husband got the call to report to work by 1:00. My mother-in-law was angry he would miss dinner and got really upset when he told her he might not return for 24 hours. He arranged for someone to pick him up, leaving our car with me, which later turned out to be a powerful blessing.

At 4:00 my husband called to say there was a major emergency at the job and his weekend off had been canceled. That gave me the excuse I needed not to stay and I began packing. My mother-in-law didn't even pretend to be upset that I was leaving, so I left within the hour. As I drove, I was feeling hurt and anger and rejection---and hungry. My feelings were further confused when I stopped for gasoline and discovered a box of food on the back seat. I knew my in-laws had prepared it and I wanted to eat all of it. **I knew I was in deep trouble, so called my sponsor**, and gave me the location of a meeting I could attend if I hurried. When I found the church and pulled into the parking lot, there was only one vehicle there and I saw a woman sitting on a bench near the entrance. As I approached her, she asked if I had a key to get inside. When I said no, she moved over and beckoned me to sit down. Thus began the most powerful meeting of my life.

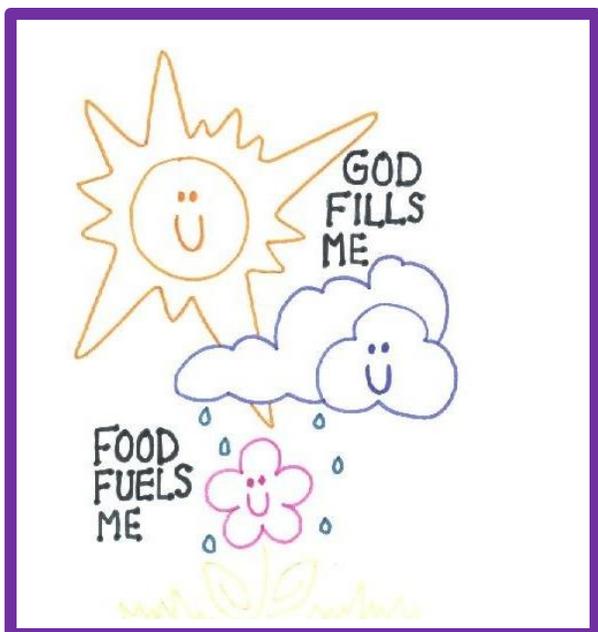
I read the Steps and Traditions from her small devotional book, and she recited them along with me without having to look at the page. She was frail and elderly, spoke softly but with confidence, and, best of all, she was kind. She shared how she had spent the holiday, which allowed me to tell her about mine and my in-laws. She shared how she was doing with her food issues, which encouraged me to tell her mine. As we sat there on that stone bench in that semi-dark parking lot, huddled together against a cool breeze, the strength of her strong recovery kept me warm. And it also **inspired me to stay abstinent for the rest of that day**, to not eat over the emotions of earlier hours. As we

prepared to leave, she gave me a firm hug and told me to "keep walking with God."

As I drove home, I realized **I had been walking with my Higher Power since I had left the day before**. He had been with me every time I refrained from over-eating at my in-laws' house, at the gas station where I closed up the box of food on the back seat and put it in the trunk, on the phone with my sponsor who found a meeting for me when I really needed one.

But best of all, He was sitting on a bench with me and a woman I never saw again, listening to us pray for relief from food addiction and guidance in our lives. That weekend He fulfilled the Promise: **"God can and will do for you what you cannot do for yourself."**

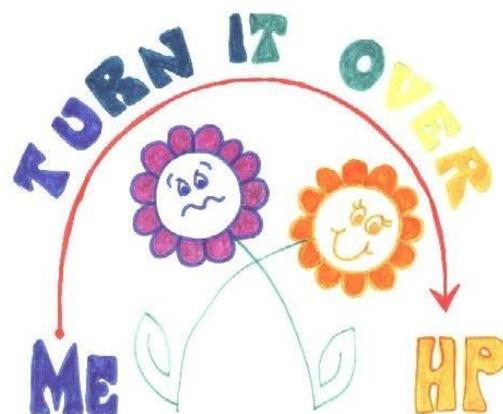
Peggy P.



FINDING SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT IN THE TRADITIONS OF O.A.

*I'm a grateful compulsive overeater who has been in OA for 10 years. By the grace of a loving Higher Power and the Fellowship, I've been blessed with more than nine years of abstinence. I've lost over 35 pounds and have kept it off for over six years. My home group alternates between studying a Step and a Tradition each month. I learn much from Tradition meetings. **Tradition 2 reminds me that a loving God, as expressed through the conscience, is in charge of our OA groups.** When I try to control how the meeting is run, my self-will is operating and not the group conscience. It's important for me to remember that I may voice my opinion about a topic but must also listen to others express their opinions.*

*What is a group conscience? According to the Twelve and Twelve manual, "the group conscience is not the same as majority rule. This conscience is an expression of the group unity spoken of in the First Tradition, a common bond which grows among us as we each let go of self-will" (p.120). **To have a true group conscience, I think it's critical to let everyone in the group be heard** in a group discussion, even if one or two people have unpopular opinions. I need to let go of self-will so I can hear what other members have to say. I grow a little when I can do this.*



*I find spiritual nourishment in giving back to OA. However, I think rotation of leadership is important because it keeps me humble, and I need to let a service position go at some point. **It keeps me from thinking that everyone in OA depends on me,** and I'm the only one who knows how to do it right. Rotation of leadership means that I let go of a position after a designated amount of time, so someone else can give service.*

***The Second Tradition tells me we all have a chance to participate in this Fellowship and to express our opinions.** When we all have a chance to express our views, then a fair group conscience can be formed. Most of the time the group's Higher Power, as expressed through the group conscience, includes loving consideration of every group member.*

I am grateful to OA and give thanks to everyone in it. The life-transforming principles in the Steps and Traditions have given me a life beyond my wildest dreams. Anonymous

We have an on-going need for stories, articles, poetry and original artwork to be published in the newsletter. Issues are bi-monthly, published in the odd-numbered months, and deadline for each issue is always the 5th of that month. In 2016, we would like to focus on the Tools of Recovery. For the March/April edition, we will feature: Sponsorship. The co-chairs meet weekly to edit items received and need submissions to be as early as possible.

Newsletter@OASouthernAZ.org

(Continued from Page 1)

My O.A. Fate Depends On It

destructive food behaviors. In order to heal and grow, I was going to have to find a way to better my relationships with those around me. Not only was I learning not to eat under stress and conflict, but it became clear I also needed to learn how to reduce my contributions to the stress and conflict that arose in my relationships.

For years I tried self-help methods; books, courses, talk therapy. Relying solely on self-will felt exciting, inspiring and powerful at first, but unwittingly I cut myself off from others. Today, I know when I think something is missing in my life, God has simply created an opening for me to let others in. [The voids in my life are simply opportunities for God to connect me with others, and with joy.](#) Because I was using food as joy for so long, I just didn't know any better. Back then, my own story was somehow always more important. It was all I thought about, like a hum in the back of my mind, all the time.

Without even realizing it, I used to manipulate or mow over people, places and things in order to ensure my own desires were sated, my own beliefs upheld. I did not trust my needs could be met in any other way, on any other timeline - least of all in God's time. Today, this gives greater meaning to "Thy will be done, not mine".

[Living in Tradition One today reminds me to treat myself and others as spiritual equals.](#) My genuine needs are neither more nor less important than others. That parking spot belongs to them as much as me. Things that are insignificant to me may be quite pertinent to my boss or my coworker. I no longer judge or discount another's opinion just because it is different than mine. My spouse may feel just as strongly about something as I do, yet his version of events is the opposite of mine. Today I know his voice is just as valid to the conversation as mine - regardless of how I feel about it.

I've come to learn that feelings are not facts. I enjoy the old adage "Feelings are like children. We don't want to stuff them in the trunk but we don't want them in the driver seat either". To me, living in Tradition One also means that while we may not be at the same place in life at the same time, we do all have the same spiritual potential. God does not make junk: this applies to me *and* to others. I have just as much to learn from a newcomer as an old-timer, if I make room for God in the relationship.

[I have learned the difference between dependence and healthy interdependence.](#) I have a new, healthy family in OA based on the spiritual principle of Unity that helps me practice living in the present. I am not a child now, and the situations that gave bloom to my compulsive overeating and compulsive food behaviors have long since passed. These simple things that most people do without a second thought are carefully executed, every-day acts of healing and self-love for me. An inconsistent ability to access food no longer drives my compulsive eating disease today. It is the myriad of compulsive eating behaviors that arose out of trying to manage my life in an unmanageable environment. Today, when my life becomes unmanageable, I can turn to a Power above the access to food and above my old self-reliance. This power can do for me that which I cannot do for myself. Getting right-sized on the inside using Tradition One has somehow effortlessly caused me to become right-sized on the outside. [My angst and frustration, my fear and self-loathing about who I am and who I want to be is what truly drives my compulsive overeating behaviors today.](#)

Getting out of my own will and away from my self-interests frees me from this vicious cycle. There are numerous right ways to run a meeting, be in a relationship, earn a living, make friends, recover and maintain abstinence. My old ideas of right and wrong have been smashed and replaced by a new-found freedom, and interdependence on the program, fellowship and respect for every compulsive overeater I meet. If I don't set aside my differences and let it begin with me, how can I expect others to when it matters most? If I don't put the greater good of my home group first, how can I expect it to be there for me when my disease has got me firmly in its grips?

By allowing God to heal these isolated places in me, I not only get to take my true place in life as an everyday woman, He also takes the fuel out of my disease. He is literally doing for me what I cannot do for myself. When I don't have to have all the answers, my anxiety is reduced and along with it my cravings and mental obsession. My spiritual malady gets a momentary reprieve. I am free.

In my Fourth Step [I was surprised to learn that I have limits.](#) I need other people and relationships. I need to feel "part of", to be loved and to give love. I learned in Steps Five and Six that I need a certain amount of rest, work, nutrition, fun and physical activity in order to be balanced or present for all my relationships---with myself, God and other human beings. What I know today is that being aware of my limits, respecting them, and acknowledging my basic needs allows me to more graciously do the same with others. It allows me to see that other people have their own needs that are just as important as mine, even if I don't agree with or understand them. And this is where I find the freedom I've been seeking all my life; acceptance is the answer to all my problems today.

This quiet acceptance of that which I have fiercely railed against and ravaged my body over for years is also the very thing that allows me to be more happy, joyous and free. Funny how that works...[the handle was on the inside all these years](#) but I didn't know how to open the door on my own. I had to ask for help. Today I know my OA recovery depends on an environment of mutual need and trust; be it in the meetings, the workplace, or my intimate relationships. When I am part of these unified 'groups', I thrive. When I am not unified, no matter if I am different, right or wrong, I simply do not thrive---nor do others around me.

[By considering others, I become a humble part of the human race](#) – instead of a superpower capable of changing myself and others through my own self will. It puts the importance of my relationships with others into even greater perspective. It also places the continuity of the power to live so freely squarely into my own hands.

This morning, I am meditating on the questions "How will I honor and enact this freedom in my own life today? If I am with my family, my co-workers or my spouse, how will I strive for Unity, knowing my own fate depends on it?" I pray for God to place before me the opportunities to know the difference.

Melissa