



OA Desert Recovery

March & April 2016

NEWSLETTER@OASOUTHERNAZ.ORG

Trusting God with the Sponsor Relationship

One of OA's tools for recovery is sponsorship. We utilize this tool when we find someone in the OA program who not only has what we want, but someone who can meet with us. **This person has changed as I have grown in recovery.** I picked someone initially that had what I wanted, but we couldn't find any time to meet on the phone or in person.

Eventually, I became willing to accept that I wasn't really using

the tool of sponsorship fully. I contacted another OA, and started a new sponsor relationship with them. We worked on the things that I needed help with: determining a food plan, working through each step in the OA 12& 12 workbook and daily discussing how my day went. We talked when I could talk, which was after 9 p.m.

Over the years of being in recovery, I started feeling that I needed something more from my sponsor relationship, so **I again looked for someone who had what I wanted.** My new sponsor is a better fit for who I am and what I need now.

As I changed and grew spiritually, I needed to grow

emotionally as well. Over a period of time in recovery, **I began to sponsor others. It is a challenging, yet rewarding experience.** I have had to be willing to sponsor people who didn't seem to be a fit for me, and also accept when someone I was sponsoring decided that we were no longer a match without taking it personally.

I have come to understand that I need to trust God for these relationships. God brings people into my life for a reason, a season, or a lifetime and I do not get to know which one it is. **I need to trust God to care for me, my sponsor and my sponsee.**

Anne

UNITY DAY: A NEW APPROACH TO WORKING THE 12 STEPS

On February 27 the three Green Valley groups again co-hosted Unity Day. This event, always held on the last Saturday of February, provides OA members around the world the opportunity to pause and reaffirm the strength inherent in OA's unity. It was pointed out that as those who attended in Green Valley were discussing the merits of our program, members all over the globe were having similar discussions not only in the U.S. and our neighbors Canada and Mexico, but in countries throughout Europe and in far-flung Australia and New Zealand. Access to the same information and materials by which we try to guide our lives is available to any single person in any location where an OA meeting is held.

The main feature of Unity Day was the hand-out of a new piece of literature, "Twelve Stepping a Problem." It presents an approach to using the Twelve Steps of OA to deal with life's challenges without turning

to food. It is also designed to enhance recovery by individual use or as the focus of a workshop experience, such as Unity Day. The 32 members attending were encouraged to take their copies of the literature to their groups and use it as the basis for their individual group sharing or writing exercises.

The first question related to Step One by stating "I am powerless over _____. How does this make my life unmanageable?" Members individually filled in the blank with something or someone troublesome in their lives, and used that subject as the focus for the first step. They briefly wrote about their experience with that subject and then shared their thoughts with one or two other members. Using the writing/sharing method, members continued to focus on the same subject they had individually identified, following it through the remaining 11 steps of the program. During the morning session, some of the subject topics were printed on index cards and posted on walls so that members could see what others outside their smaller discussion groups were working on.

The afternoon session ended with open discussion/sharing about Step 12, dealing with the question, "What spiritual awakening or new insight have I had as the result of working all 12 Steps on this specific problem?" Some of the responses related to character defects, others referred to emotions, but most revealed why members desire or turn to food to deal with their problems. The writing exercise helped to create a new awareness of how to deal with a specific problem by following it through the 12 Step process, and to achieve a kind of solution. Members generally agreed the new piece of literature is a great tool in working toward recovery, and declared the writing exercise a success.

Below is a list of fears, harms and resentments that members used as a guide to identifying their specific problems for the writing exercise.

Selfishness	Greedy
Cowardice	Snobbish
Dishonesty	Sarcastic
Fearfulness	Hypercritical
Controlling	Gossip
Manipulative	Tightwad
Intimidating	Harsh
Power-hungry	Unforgiving
Possessive	Verbally abusive
Prejudiced	Physically abusive
Overly dependent	Sexually abusive
Procrastinating	Impatient
Judgmental	Adulterous
Preoccupied	Sneakiness
Lying	Ungrateful
Cheating	Cynical
Intolerant	Bitter
Self-Pitying	Full of Rage
Jealous	Envious
Insecure	

April 15-17, 2016
Region 3 Spring Assembly
Abilene, TX.

May 2-7, 2016
World Service Conference
Albuquerque, NM.

Sept.1-4, 2016
World Service Convention
Boston, MA.

Sept. 9-11, 2016
Region 3 Fall Assembly
Austin, TX.



Face
Everything
And
Recover

False
Evidence
Appearing
Real

STEP 3---Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand Him.

MY WILL DOES NOT WORK

Step Three requires action. I've admitted I am powerless over food and my life is unmanageable. I've come to believe in a power greater than myself, and I've made a decision to turn my will over to that power.

The only trouble is, I have relied on my will all my life, so I struggle with turning it over. I know my will doesn't work---it is destructive. I try to control everything, am selfish, depend on others' approval and get resentful if it doesn't work out as I plan. I don't like myself when I am trying to run the show.

When I turn my will over to God, I like myself and feel useful. I don't need to please others or help people solely to gain approval or thanks. I feel peace, and I want to abandon all my efforts to control things and give everything to God---my fears, my worries, my life.

When I've given up my will in the past, I've been relieved of the obsession with food and found new freedom. OA has given me a life worth living. I have faith that God has a plan for me---I just need to do the next right thing---though I might have no clue what I need, I believe God will meet my needs.

Not only have I experienced the many promises mentioned in the Big Book, but also thousands of members have walked the path before me. I know God is there for me constantly, unless my will shuts the door on Him.

I pray to surrender more and more and to be humble, sane and filled with love. I want the abundance God gives me. All I need to do is let go of old ideas and habits. I desire this more than ever.

Dear God, please help me remember that my will does not work. Thy will, not mine, be done.
Christina J.



STEP 4---Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

IT WORKS IF YOU WORK IT

At a recent Fourth Step workshop, someone asked me to share my experience with this Step. I had done a Fourth Step early in my recovery, but more as a life story. The idea of writing an inventory as shown in the Big Book (pg. 64-69) seemed baffling at the time. How was that going to help me? It made no sense to me, so I wrote my life story instead, making sure to include resentments I had with everyone in every area of my life.

The problem was **I did not see the resentments I held.** I was simply telling my story. I did not yet accept others, or even myself, enough to see where I had been wronged. I also had created plenty of wreckage myself. I see how my Higher Power was working by allowing me to continue playing the victim early in recovery.

As I have grown in program, it has become clearer to me how I played a role in these relationships. In that state of mind, I entered the Fourth Step workshop. I understood the guidelines given by the leader: what to do, how to let go and how it was going to help me.

Thus I began my inventory as shown in the Big Book, and it was simple. I wrote down the names of people with whom I was angry or resentful, why I was angry with them and the parts of me that were affected. An amazing awareness came to me. I began to see where my part was. I no longer needed to spend hours figuring it out or thinking about it. It was just there. I realized I finally understood what the OA "long-timers" had been trying to tell me---the program works if I do the work.

This was quite a realization for a person who has spent most of her life being terminally unique, a person no one could understand or resemble. Funny how HP shows me these things---gently, not having to hit me over the head with a frying pan before I understand. **Thankfully, I do not "graduate" from program, and I have a lifetime to learn.**



NEW LIFE FOR A SNOWBIRD

My husband and I are “snowbirds.” That means when the weather turns chilly in our home state, we climb into our RV and seek warmer climates. Unfortunately, this lifestyle seemed to compound my lifelong problem with obesity. I had many excuses: no room to exercise in the RV, takeout and prepared food was more convenient than my cooking healthy meals. I became alarmed when my weight gain began to spiral out of control, and I developed pain in my feet and legs, and shortness of breath. My body seemed to be rebelling at the abuse I had been giving it, but I didn’t know what I could do about it as we were traveling.

Then, at one of our destinations, I saw a notice on a bulletin board about a nearby OA meeting, so I hobbled and panted into my first meeting, weighing almost 250 pounds. A warm, loving and sincere group embraced me, and I embraced the 12-Step program. With the nurturing of that group, OA and my Higher Power, I began to get a handle on my overeating and what triggered it. We stayed near that group for nearly four weeks, but then had to move on to fulfill our planned itinerary.

I worried if I would be able to continue working the OA program as we traveled, so on the advice of the group I tried to find an OA meeting near any destination we stopped at for more than a day. As we criss-crossed the country I found that not all OA meetings are alike, that meeting formats can be as different as the people who attend. Some had two or three-minute time limits for sharing, some had people stand up in front to share their experiences, while others had everyone sitting in a circle. One teen meeting didn’t like to hold hands at the closing, so members touched the foot of a person next to them. And the most unusual, to me, was the format that allowed for members taking a break if deer were spotted outside!

The differences in format were sometimes confusing, sometimes exhilarating, but they always centered around the practice of the OA program and by many different kinds of people, which I found a rich and educating experience. I

listened to stories about anorexia, bulimia, extreme obesity, weight loss of over 100 pounds; about being gay or lesbian, of faith practiced in many religions, of having no religion at all. In those stories and group discussions I found many “tips” to help me keep focused on the way I worked the OA program, the first being purchase of OA literature.

Then I bought an on-line subscription to *Lifeline* magazine. When there was no meeting in a town where we stopped, I had my own mini-meeting by reading information in the literature and inspirational stories of recovery in the magazine. It was in those pages I learned about on-line meetings and telephone sessions too, so when I was in desperate need of connecting to another OA’er, I tuned in to one of them. I even found someone willing to sponsor me on-line, and with her help I designed a meal plan to fit my eating needs and dietary restrictions. The weight began to come off, my leg pains and my breathing troubles eased, and I am finding a new serenity in my life---all thanks to finding an OA notice at an RV park.

I have continued to travel in the RV for a few years now, taking my OA materials with me and finding a meeting wherever I can. Each group may be different, but none of them is wrong. Recovering from compulsive eating is our main purpose, and just as people’s programs are their own, each meeting has its own way of doing things. Recovery is the common goal.

Kaye

TRUE BLESSINGS

Nowhere can I go alone,
Nor can I hurt and cry alone,
For He is always with me
To lead me down the road.

When I feel I am put to the test,
And can go no further in my humanness,
There He is to hold me,
And in His arms I rest.

Thank you, dear Spirit, for guiding
My soul to You for rest,
And for taking my brokenness
Within You to bless.

And thank You for leading me
Into the fellowship of my friends
Who help me learn to listen and to heal,
Who teach me how to follow the
Steps to recovery.

No longer alone, no longer lost,
I have truly been blessed
With a Power to love and guide me,
Twelve Steps to lead me,
And friends who will remind me,
This too shall pass.

D.K.

You’re either surrendering to your HP or the food—there is nothing in between.

A WORLD OF LOVE AND TOLERANCE

Thank God for Tradition 3. Without it, I probably wouldn't be in OA today. I was a normal weight when I came into the rooms, and some people asked what I was doing in OA because of it. *Perhaps they would have asked me not to come back if not for this Tradition.* Thank God they did not and I found recovery.

Some anorexic and bulimic members of our Fellowship have felt rejected at times. I find that sad. The OA "Twelve and Twelve" says, "A person can never be too overweight, too underweight, or too normal in weight to be an OA member" (pg.129). If we turn our backs on the dangerously thin or the morbidly obese among us, where are they to go? The Big Book says the choices without recovery are death or insanity.

I am also grateful OA does not discriminate. My best friend is a lesbian, and I find it comforting she can share her story honestly without fear of rejection or violence. Gays and lesbians still suffer from violent hate crimes, but not in OA. Nor does anyone kick us out for our past transgressions. My sponsor knows all my dirty little secrets, and has never said I could not come back because I had done X, Y or Z.

The power of this Tradition goes beyond membership in OA. A world of love and tolerance opens to me when I translate this Tradition into "The only requirement for membership in the human race is being human." I've spent much of my life separating people into categories: those I like, those I don't like and those I'm indifferent to. I latched onto those I liked. I judged and rejected those I did not like, and generally with no real information about them. I entirely ignored the vast majority.

Step 7 in the AA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions says, "We never thought of making honesty, tolerance, and true love of man and God the daily basis of our living" (pg.72). *I never thought of living this way when I was in the food. Now I want to live to my full potential as envisioned by God. For me, this includes accepting deep in my heart that everyone on the planet is a member of the human race and deserves honesty, tolerance and love.*

The literature has taught me that I cannot afford to hold ill will against anyone for any reason. Tradition 3 teaches me love and tolerance, which protect me from the poison of anger or hate that would drive me back to the food. I do not want to, I MUST NOT GO BACK TO that dark place in my life again.
E.M.T.



FINDING THE FOUNDATION OF AUTONOMY

What does the word autonomous mean? And why would OA's founders set this tradition even before Tradition 5, which states our primary purpose? So I decided to research it and spent a long time reading about the Traditions and the founders before the importance of Tradition 4 became clear to me. The reason for autonomy is simple. **No other group can tell my home group what to do** as long as we are practicing the Steps and Traditions to the best of our ability.

This Tradition is an important foundation for all of OA. Each group can have whatever meeting format it wants. This gives awesome power to each meeting. The only things guiding the meeting, then, are the three previous Traditions, which are: unity, a Higher Power as "He many express himself in our group conscience," and a requirement for membership based solely on our desire to stop eating compulsively.

The health of the group is in the hands of each member. Since we are all supposed to be equal, it is up to the group conscience to determine how to run the group. It is also each member's responsibility to speak up when a Tradition is broken or when changes to the meeting are necessary.

The First Tradition of unity holds the group together. When I get angry with another member or don't like what was said at a meeting, I go back to the First Tradition and remember **unity is more important than staying angry.** I didn't realize this until I started a journal and the writing helped bring my thoughts into focus.

I work the Traditions in the same way I work the Steps. They fit together and build on one another. **Tradition 4 can only work for me when I use the first three Traditions.** It also works because it relieves me of worrying about other groups and members over whom I have no control. T.N.

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 May/June edition, we will feature: A Plan of Eating. The co-chairs meet weekly to edit items received and need submissions to be as early as possible.

Newsletter@OASouthernAZ.org

Sponsorship: The Key to My Abstinence

The AA pamphlet *Questions and Answers on Sponsorship* defines sponsorship very simply: “An alcoholic who has made some progress in the recovery program shares that experience on a continuous, individual basis with another alcoholic who is attempting to attain or maintain sobriety through A.A.” That is a simple answer to **a powerful tool, necessary for me to work the O.A. Program.**

I was overwhelmed when I first came into OA and would not have stayed had I not found a sponsor with whom I felt comfortable and could talk freely, openly, and confidentially. The sponsor who guided me through my first five years of abstinence was compassionate, loving, kind, and always brought me back to Program--no matter what my question, problem, or current life crisis was. We always worked the Steps, discussed the literature, prayed to Higher Power, and used the tools. **She was amazing and truly the first person who loved me unconditionally, and taught me to do the same.**

Sadly, when she had to let me go, I went through a very difficult time. I took it personally even though she swore I shouldn't. I avoided meetings, and to be honest, I cried – a lot! I cried alone, on the phone with OA friends, in meetings, and in my prayer time. Eventually, though, I realized that **I needed a new sponsor with experience, strength and hope to share.** I really felt my Higher Power guided me to the perfect person – and then she said no. I was in a quandary, unsure what to do when I really believed HP was pointing me in this direction. So I found another person and the relationship went well, but I didn't feel I grew emotionally or spiritually. I just maintained my weight, which was good, but my recovery program felt stagnant.

Finally, I reached the painful decision that **I needed someone else**, someone whose program I admired, whose serenity called to me, and **who always “walked the talk”** of Program. She lived it and I felt she could guide me. I asked her some questions about how she sponsored, she asked me some questions about what I was looking for, and we decided that we might be a good fit.

Already I feel invigorated as I am getting to know someone new and revealing myself to them. In looking back at Step One with fresh eyes, I am getting a fresh perspective, and, most importantly, have a sponsor who guides me through the work. **The process keeps me abstinent and sane.** I could not be either way without a loving sponsor to guide me. I am so grateful for all that I have learned and will learn from generous sponsors willing to give of themselves for my recovery. It is a miracle I hope I will never take for granted.

Anonymous