

Desert Recovery

THE VOICE OF TUCSON AREA OA
May 1991

THE OA PREAMBLE

Overeaters Anonymous is a fellowship of individuals who, through shared experience, strength, and hope, are recovering from compulsive overeating. We welcome everyone who wants to stop eating compulsively. There are no dues or fees for members; we are self-supporting through our own contributions, neither soliciting nor accepting outside donations. OA is not affiliated with any public or private organization, political movement, ideology, or religious doctrine; we take no position on outside issues. Our primary purpose is to abstain from compulsive overeating and to carry this message of recovery to those who still suffer.

THE 12 TRADITIONS OF OA: TRADITION FIVE

Editor's Note: This is the fifth in a series of 12 articles about the Twelve Traditions, reprinted from The OA Reporter, the Tucson Area Intergroup newsletter in 1981.

Tradition Five: Each group has but one primary purpose--to carry its message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers.

In the fellowship, I find my purpose for living that nothing outside it can fulfill. I can carry the message of the Program to the overeater who still suffers. This doesn't necessarily mean to go outside the Program to find a recruit. This can mean sharing my experience, strength, and hope with those who have been around a while and still suffer. In order to help the sufferer, of course, I am best qualified when I am practicing the 12 steps. The steps give me guidance and comfort and help me work through my character defects, so I can really listen to others. By showing concern for other people, I can free myself from bitterness, resentment, and the anguish of repeated defeat by the pantry.

At times, my professional background causes me to believe I am an expert on nutrition, obesity and psychology. I can share what I know, but for the sake of my recovery I need to remember that I am a compulsive overeater who practices the 12 steps of OA and to not indulge in grandiose prescriptions for other people's lives or analysis of their neuroses.

Just as I, an individual member of OA, need to keep my ambitions single-purposed, so do our groups. We can dilute this OA program with money-raising, exercise classes, or lectures on the evils of

sugar. Keeping our primary purpose to carry the message of recovery through the 12 steps of OA simplifies life for our groups. Rather than limiting us, Tradition 5 channels our efforts and energies into the areas where we can be most effective. Our spiritual needs can best be fulfilled as long as we do not try to do things that are beyond our power--individually and collectively.

To sum up the message of this Tradition--"Always to extend the hand and heart of OA to all who share my compulsion, for this I am responsible."

Judith H., Tucson

TRADITIONS WORKSHOP SET FOR JUNE 1, 1991

Mark your calendars for June 1, 1991, when Tucson OA and HOW Intergroups sponsor a workshop specifically dealing with the traditions. Lewis and Bill from Phoenix will be sharing their experience, strength and hope regarding the traditions and there will be plenty of time for sharing. Registration begins at 9:30 and the workshop will be from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. Coffee and soda will be for sale and feel free to bring your lunch. The location is Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Campbell & Helen, Tucson. See the flyer at your OA meeting or call Bruce at 744-4011 or any Intergroup Officer (see bottom of meeting list) for more information.

ABOVE ALL, KEEP COMING BACK

Anniversaries are an occasion to look at a period of time, whether it is on the job, the length of a marriage or relationship, ownership of some thing, how long one has lived in a certain place, or any

number of other things. OA members most often talk of anniversaries in terms of years in the program or years of abstinence. Last month I celebrated an anniversary. It was in April several years ago that I came to OA, ready to get the "diet" and "work" the program. At that time, OA had food plans (a gray sheet, a blue sheet, moderate meals). I had come to my first meeting in February but had only come for a couple of meetings and then stopped coming until that April day; the delay was for my making sure I belonged at an OA meeting, so I observe my anniversary in April.

My abstinence anniversary is some years later, though I had a length of "squeaky clean" abstinence at first. In retrospect, that reeks of the diet kind of definition for abstinence with food lists, portions and other rules. The world was subdivided into good and bad. Foods on the lists were good, sticking to a certain portion size was good, eating three meals a day was good. Foods, portions and behaviors that were outside these definitions were bad. When I ate a food not on the food list or in a controlling way (whether a larger or smaller portion size or at some other time than prescribed), then I was bad. I was a bad person. There was talk, too, of going back to square one when the defined abstinence was not followed closely. This experience was humiliating and shaming for me. It seemed that wherever I had gotten in my recovery, I had to give up the ground gained, and begin all over again. At first the defined abstinence was easy, but then all the diets had seemed easy at first.

I called a sponsor to commit a food plan each day; there was writing done on the first three steps. I wrote about powerlessness, not having a sane relationship with food, and becoming willing to turn my life over to the care of God, as I understood God at that time. My concept of God and a spiritual program did not resemble that of the present. It has changed, sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly. Even when I was faced with the square-one idea, I knew that I had something that I did not have before I came to OA. I really could not go back to the same place I had been physically, emotionally or spiritually when I came to OA.

When I was abstinent, feelings surfaced. The way I dealt with them at that time was to attend meetings and to listen to other OAers share their stories. Later, I made my first attempts to do my own sharing. I see now that I practiced behaviors because of the feelings that were coming up. If I felt

inadequate, I became defensive, for instance. Anger and hostility came through the words I used and my tone of voice. Prior experience would have me sense the feelings, participate in the behaviors and then stuff them with my drug of choice, most often food, though my compulsion has shifted to other areas at times.

OA has helped me to accept who I am and to love myself, inadequacies and all. Feeling inadequate is not my only character defect, but OA helps me to accept each as a part of me and to give each of them up to God. After all, each one of them had a payoff--that is why I held on to them so tenaciously for so long.

Feelings continue to surface today, and sometimes those old behaviors reappear, but I was never promised that those behaviors were forever banned and no longer part of me. A couple of slogans I heard recently help here: "So what, now what" or "Pain is inevitable, suffering is optional." Life does go on and I have an opportunity to live today. I can share my feelings without expectations of someone else.

To face life I have the 12 Steps and the tools. The 12 Steps are most important to me, but some tools are important, too. Abstinence is the way for me to get in touch with my feelings and then to become willing to look at those behaviors I practice as a result of my feelings. So, for me, abstinence is the place it begins. It works for me, so I use it. If your experience is different, neither of us is right or wrong; the important thing is that each of us does what works. I hear this sometimes as "Easy Does It, But Do It," or in the words of a current advertising campaign "Just Do It."

Secondly, working with others as in a sponsor relationship has been important, too. A sponsor is, to me, a friend. Sometimes a sponsor is a sounding board, sometimes offering feedback, but most importantly another human being to share with, one-on-one.

Lastly, service has kept me coming back. I have had a lot of the jobs that it takes to keep a meeting going, and have served at the Intergroup level, Region and WSBC. No matter what the job, there is a commitment on my part to the position. I affirm my personal recovery and am able to do my part to carry the message. Again, it keeps me coming back.

So, here it is anniversary time, and looking back, I can see that I have come a long way. OA and the Twelve Steps have given me an opportunity to experience personal growth. I have been able to live

through major life events that have occurred since I came to OA. The events have not always been easy to face, and sometimes there has been pain and anguish, but I have lived through them and for that I am grateful.

God, my Higher Power, loves me today and accepts me as I am. In my humanness, I am able to be gentle with myself and to be willing to begin again. Just for TODAY.

Keep Coming Back.

Anonymous, Tucson

ABSTINENCE--AN ACT OF LOVE

Learning to be kind and gentle with myself is one of the great lessons offered by Overeaters Anonymous. Stuffing myself with food, isolating from others and beating myself up with negative thoughts and feelings was a daily occurrence before OA took me in and gave me a new life.

Abstaining from compulsive overeating is the first act of self-love I learned through OA meetings, friends and literature. From the beginning, I committed myself to a food plan--drawing each day on the wisdom and strength of my Higher Power in order to avoid veering from this course. Though withdrawing from excess food was painful and living through previously numbed emotions was frightening, I have come to discover that I have talents, interests and facets of my personality that were buried beneath mounds of food.

It was Chuck C., author of "A New Pair of Glasses," who said in reference to Alcoholics Anonymous: "This is not a program of self-improvement. It is a program of self-discovery." He professed that the 12 steps allow us to uncover, discover and discard--a means by which we go within and find God's true purpose for our custom-designed talents and abilities.

Living abstinent each day, staying with my food plan no matter what, has allowed a new me to emerge. Old ideas and behaviors have been set aside, replaced by a wonderfully fresh and innocent way of living. The very finest form of love for myself and the world around me does indeed begin with abstinence. Out of it grows my self-esteem, creativity, personal freedom, and an ever-increasing hope for a still brighter tomorrow.

Reprinted from Communique (Orange County, California), February 1991

MORNING PRAYER FOR ABSTINENCE

Higher Power, today is a new day for me and with your help it can be a day of abstinence. I ask for your protection in case some time during the day my desire to overeat is greater than my desire to abstain.

I ask also for your protection today from anyone and anything that may interfere with my abstinence.

I know that I am powerless over food. I believe you will relieve my compulsion and restore me to sanity.

Please help me to know your will for me today and give me the willingness to carry that out. I turn my will and my life over to you.

(from Reach Out & Touch News)

The above prayer was published in the newsletter soon after I came to OA about 14 months ago. It has been very meaningful to me in my morning meditations, so I thought it might be good to reprint it.

I soon discovered that "anyone that may interfere with my abstinence" could very well be me!

Barbara M., Nutrioso, Arizona

FOR YOUR INFORMATION . . .

Carpooling for the Prescott Retreat (June 7-9, 1991) is being organized by Bruce. There is still time to register for the retreat (see flyers at your OA meeting or call any Intergroup officer listed on your meeting list). And if you want to share driving, call Bruce at .

Money Matters: KG, Intergroup Treasurer requests that group treasurers follow either of these two procedures regarding accepting checks from members: (1) If you accept checks, have them made payable to you; or (2) send these checks to KG immediately. Backdated checks can become a cashing problem and KG makes the contributions for World Service, Region III and Tucson Area Intergroup from the money she receives from meetings.

Professionals and Institutions Committee: Two different informational meetings are being held at treatment facilities in the Tucson area: at Westcenter on the 2nd Sunday of the month at 3:15 p.m.; and every Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. at Sierra Tucson. Volunteers are still needed to share their stories at these meetings. Please call Fred M. at _____ 1 if you would like to give service in this area.

Meetings and Groups: Please remember to inform Jean S. (Intergroup Secretary, _____), of new officers in your groups. Jean is responsible

for keeping WSO informed of group status and officers.

New Meetings: A new meeting has been started in Oracle. It meets on Monday from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. at Huntington Health Chiropractic Health Center. For directions or more information, call Mary at

And yet another reminder to support the new meeting in Marana on Mondays at 5:30 p.m. at the Sky Rider Coffee Shop, 11701 W. Oracle Ave. Contact Lori at 774-1 for more information.

The Tuesday "Going Sane" meeting needs our support. It meets at 5:30 on Tuesday at the First Christian Church (see meeting list).

The Green Valley meeting needs speakers for their meeting on the last Sunday of the month. Please contact Martha at or Donna at 4 if you would like to help carry the message in this way.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

TRADITIONS WORKSHOP

sponsored by Tucson OA & HOW Intergroups

Saturday, June 1, 1991

9:30 am to 5:00 pm

Our Saviour's Lutheran Church
Campbell & Helen, Tucson, Arizona

14TH ANNUAL PRESCOTT RETREAT

June 7-9, 1991

Embry Riddle Aeronautical University

Contact: 2050 W. Hazelwood Parkway

Phoenix, AZ 85015

See Flyer at your OA Meetings

TUCSON AREA RETREAT

sponsored by Tucson OA Intergroup

October 11-13, 1991

Picture Rock Retreat

WATCH FOR MORE DETAILS

Desert Recovery gives permission to any other 12-step anonymous group to reprint any article from this newsletter, as long as credit is given.

Please send articles and comments to Liz
by June 7.

TAKING A TRIP THIS SUMMER??

If you're planning a summer vacation and need a listing of where to find OA, remember that directors of registered OA groups and intergroups are available from WSO for a nominal charge.

| <u>Area</u> | <u>Charge</u> |
|---|---------------|
| California | \$3 |
| New York State | \$3 |
| All other states (each) | \$1 |
| Entire U.S.A. | \$15 |
| Canadian provinces (each) | \$1 |
| Other countries (each) | \$1 |
| All foreign countries (including Canada) | \$5 |
| Region and intergroup offices only | \$1 |

Mail your request along with a check made out to
OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS to:

World Service Office

P.O. Box 92870

Los Angeles, CA 90009

HANDLING THE MONEY

OA INTERGROUP makes donations to REGION and WSO in the name of all groups. Please send donations monthly after expenses and \$25.00 reserve. Use the form below for proper credit for your group's contribution.

GROUP NAME _____

MEETING DAY AND TIME _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED _____

Make Check Payable to: Tucson Area OA
Intergroup. Mail form and donation to:

K.G. Knez

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