



# OA Desert Recovery

July/August  
2015

NEWSLETTER@OASOUTHERNAZ.ORG

## What is the difference between Abstinence and a Plan of Eating?

I think the workshop on May 30<sup>th</sup> spurred discussion among our OA members here in Southern Arizona and maybe got some people thinking about their own abstinence. Neva and I were the workshop presenters and we used the materials that were provided on oa.org. Here is the link so you can look the materials over. <http://www.oa.org/> Click on **Documents** and then scroll down to **Service Body Support** and you'll see links to the handouts, the slideshow, and the **Leader's Guide**. In this article I am italicizing sentences taken from the Leader's Guide.

This workshop was created *to increase the Fellowship's focus on actions required for abstinence because our **primary purpose** is to abstain from compulsive eating and to carry the message of recovery through the Twelve Steps of OA to those who still suffer.*

The definition of Abstinence is the same for all members but the details of the Plan of Eating may differ. *A Plan of Eating is a Tool to help an OA member to maintain abstinence. The threefold disease of compulsive eating is physical, emotional, and spiritual. **Abstinence actions address all three aspects of the disease** so peaceful long-term recovery is possible. The result of working all Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous is a spiritual awakening which changes us physically, emotionally, and spiritually.*

*An effective Plan of Eating helps the member to stop eating compulsively and move toward or maintain a healthy body weight. For a member to stay stopped requires more than just a Plan of Eating. Working the Twelve steps and using the Tools of Recovery brings a return to sanity around food and a fuller recovery experience spiritually and emotionally.*

What this means to me is that **my Plan of Eating is a part of my abstinence**—a big part. Yet my abstinence consists of much more than just what I eat and where and how. My abstinence also includes the service I give, the Steps I work, the meetings I attend, and so on. The practices you take to maintain your abstinence may be different from mine, and hopefully you look at your food plan as a very important piece of your abstinence while knowing that it doesn't totally define your abstinence.

Janis R-Tucson

## RESPONSIBILITY BEGINS AT HOME

The spiritual principle of Tradition 7 is "responsibility." In my active addiction, I was either over- or under-responsible. I carried the weight on my shoulder or I let the world carry me. In OA we are supposed to be equal partners. Think about your home meeting and ask yourself, "Do I fully participate in the group? Do I make token financial contributions, or could I give a little more? To what service do I commit in my home group, Intergroup, Region and World Service? Could I do more? Am I doing too much?"

When I think of Tradition 7, the first thing that comes to mind is passing the basket during meetings. But it is supposed to be more than that. A self-supporting meeting must fill all service positions. A group that continually has open service positions or only one to two people handling most positions is not self-supporting. If I assume most of the service positions in my group, I am over-responsible. If I rarely accept service positions, I am under-responsible.

Think about the financial aspect of Tradition 7. If my group is self-supporting, we can't just consider our expenses such as rent and literature. We must also assume

some responsibility for Intergroup, Region and the World Service Office (WSO) to ensure they can perform their roles. Inter-groups do much we can't do as individual groups. Regions undertake even larger tasks, such as conducting broader outreach. WSO publishes literature, provides other services and has paid employees.



Here are some interesting facts to ponder. This year my Intergroup's budget is almost \$45,000, my Region's is almost \$17,000 and WSO's is nearly \$2 million. When OA was established in 1960, the suggested donation was \$1.00. How many of us still throw only a dollar into the basket? In the U.S. in 1961 a stamp cost three cents, a candy bar cost a nickel, a new home cost \$17,000 and gas was 25 cents per gallon, a loaf of bread was 21 cents, and the median income was about \$5,300 per year. If an OA member attended one meeting a week for 52 weeks at that income, he/she would have given one percent (1%) of his/her annual income.

In 2007 (most recent government-published figures I could find) in the U.S. a stamp cost 41 cents, a candy bar was \$1.00 and gas was over \$3.00 a gallon, a loaf of bread averaged \$2.75, a new home cost \$317,000 and the median income was \$31,000. If an OA member earning that salary attended one meeting per week, 1% of his/her income would mean giving \$6.00 per week. Since 2007 we know the stamps is now up to 49 cents, candy bars are closer to \$2.00, gas has gone up as high as \$4.50 a gallon, a loaf of bread can cost over \$3.00, new homes are probably way over \$300,000 to build, and the median income is probably over \$40,000. Using that last figure for income, a weekly OA contribution should be \$7.70.

A dollar cannot buy what it used to, and we need to recognize that within our groups. Expenses for OA have not remained at the 1961 level either. Think about it. What if each of us gave 1% of our annual income to OA? What if we gave a reasonable amount of our time in service to OA? Imagine what we could do to reach out to the still-suffering compulsive overeater!

Brenda T., St. Paul, Minnesota  
Edited and re-printed from *Lifeline*, July/2012

### SAVE THE DATE

Annual SEAZ OA Retreat

October 23-25, 2015

Holy Trinity Monastery, St. David, AZ.

### Lost and Found:

Bright pink water cup left  
at Abstinence workshop.

Contact [JanisTucson@gmail.com](mailto:JanisTucson@gmail.com)

or (520) 325-4441.

## STEP SEVEN: HUMBLY ASKED HIM TO REMOVE OUR SHORTCOMINGS

### GIFTS FROM ABOVE

*As with the other Steps, I'm not in control in Step 7. In Step 6, I had to work at becoming entirely ready to have God remove my character defects. It is not my job to remove them but to surrender them to God's control.*

*With the food, I committed to a food plan. At first, I white-knuckled it. But as I worked the Steps, the need for excess food began to diminish, until one day I realized I no longer needed to compulsively overeat and **that God had granted me the gift of abstinence.***

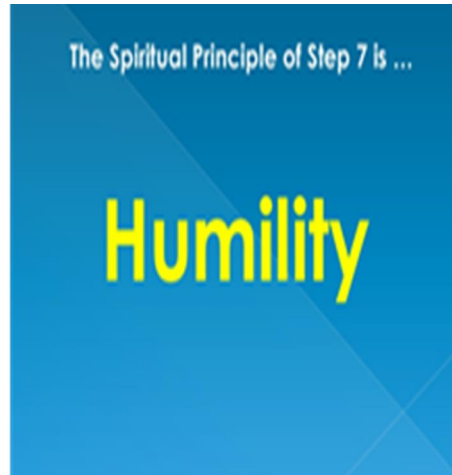
*The same is true for other defects. AA literature talks about looking at our grosser defects. This says to me I never have to strive to be perfect. Just as I eliminated excess food, I need to eliminate the attitudes and behaviors that make my life unmanageable. These defects, if left unchecked, will send me back into the food and create the need to make amends for my behavior. I'm thinking of procrastination, perfectionism, control issues and lust.*

*God can do for me what I cannot do for myself. Each day I commit to a set of behaviors, including my food plan, and give God a little more, until the day comes when I realize other problem behaviors have been removed, just like the need to kill myself with too much food has been removed.*

*Like the other Steps and my food plan, this Step was much easier to work on with a sponsor, who pointed out issues I hadn't thought of. She helped me look at things with a neutral set of eyes (mine see only the defects) and helped me see how I used my defects to protect myself. Now I realize my defects do me more harm than good.*

*I highly recommend reading about Step 7 in both the OA and AA versions of "Twelve and Twelve." If you haven't recently discussed them at your group meeting, they are worth revisiting. **Don't just read the chapters----study them!** They have much to reveal.*

*Edited and re-printed from Today Intergroup newsletter, St. Louis, MO ---July/2004*



### TRUST ENOUGH TO JUST "LET GO"

Letting go of my attachment to how many sponsees I could manage and which candidates were a good fit was a huge change. **It was not for me to judge God's plan.** The message was "not your job, not your decision." Not my idea! How could I trust that?

But the directions I heard more than once were clear. When the meeting leader asks for sponsors, raise your hand. Sometimes I do this with cheer and willingness. Sometimes I have to use my right hand to push up my left elbow, even when newcomers are present. I regret the occasions when I willfully refuse.

Here's the thing: in 22 years in OA, the number of my sponsees has ranged from zero to four. I never really had control over this decision. **I know that God is in charge**, so I can relax. When I'm not working a strong program, the number of sponsees is zero. The number has nothing to do with my perception of busyness.

November, I was so exhausted I nearly fell asleep on a metal chair. That month God put four sponsees in my life. Not now, God! You know I have no extra time. His message: trust this. Yes, it was a gift. In the midst of a chaotic month, I kept focused and grounded because of standing telephone appointments with sponsees.

**God's sense of humor also promotes humility.** Somehow humor makes me more receptive and teachable. A newcomer sponsee said, "I chose you because you admit you have so many flaws. Even after years in program, you're not so perfect." I laughed.

A woman in my home meeting gave me many opportunities to practice Tradition 12, reminding me to place principles before personalities. We had different food plans and approaches to recovery. After we carpoled to an OA event, she asked me to sponsor her and said, "We're not that far apart." Remembering **that who I sponsor is not my decision**, I said yes. God put this person in my life.

This time around Step 7, I am willing to let go of my belief that leading the meeting is a service we should share equally. No more tracking or monitoring to keep the rotation balanced. Based on the size of the meeting, I choose to wait at least two months before offering to lead. What anyone else does is none of my business. And honestly sharing my struggles is another action I can take, in hope I gave someone else something to think about. **Again, it is simple, but not easy.**

Patricia D., Concord, NH Edited and reprinted from Lifeline, July/2012

## NO STRINGS ATTACHED IN DOING OA SERVICE

How many of us, before coming to OA, would willingly have put our time and effort into a project that had no strings attached? Certainly not me---I always wanted something in return. But as my life unfolds in OA, I find that the principle of **giving freely to one another, with no strings attached and no expectations**, has become an important part of my personal recovery.

Our foundation of freely sharing our experience, strength and hope makes OA unique among programs for compulsive overeaters. It also has a unique healing power that you won't find at a local pay-by-the-pound weight loss center. Remaining non-professional and steering clear of the profit motive enables us to trust each other, speak from our hearts, share what we've learned and listen with compassion to fellow members. **Non-professionalism means equal opportunity to grow and to share in doing service.**

The second part of this Tradition allows us to hire special workers who get paid to do the business of OA, e.g., in a business office. This necessary function cannot be filled by our members' volunteer work. It fosters effective business management, which helps OA grow stronger by conserving resources. However, those of us who do service are never paid for the hours we spend carrying the message of recovery or leading OA-sponsored events or retreats, even if we are professionals who command fees in non-OA settings.

Non-professionalism means different things to different members. To me, it signifies that **I am responsible for willingly sharing with and listening to other members**, but I must not expect them to solve my problems. And I don't expect to be repaid for helping others.

The more I understand and embrace this concept, the more service becomes its own reward. **My reward is loving and trusting others and myself**, and knowing that others love and trust me. A pretty good return on my investment, I'd say!

*Edited and reprinted from **Scoop**, Oregon Intergroup newsletter, August/2006*



## RECOGNIZING AND THANKING THOSE WHO SERVE

In OA, **we compulsive eaters get to share our personal experience, strength and hope**, no matter what our outside credentials may be. Members who are professional counselors to compulsive overeaters are cautioned to honor anonymity. They may be referred to as "two hatters" and are asked to avoid speaking as experts or implying endorsement of outside interests.

We don't pay for our usual 12 Step work, but **we can hire people for certain services that need labor or technical skills**. This frees us from much of the nitty-gritty business and allows us to concentrate on 12 Step work. Employing special workers helps us save confusion and "keep it simple" as we carry the message. Volunteers are vital, but we cannot expect them to provide the consistency needed to carry the load day in and day out.

The more than 50 groups in our widely scattered bi-state Intergroup share the cost to hire a part-time but steady and highly professional office manager. To understand compulsive overeaters and follow our Traditions, **we've found it works best to hire an OA member** who has the technical skills and diplomacy to work with the public, to bank and account for funds, to keep printed materials organized and ready, and other like duties.

We also benefit from hiring a dependable person to maintain a stock of literature, order it at bulk rates and have it readily available to members and the public. We pay professional printers to make copies of our newsletters and flyers. And to keep from being too glum, we have been known to hire a DJ.

**OA deserves the best.** I send a big hug of gratitude and love to our office manager and our literature chair, as well as to all our talented and generous volunteers.

*Edited and reprinted from **Today** newsletter, St. Louis, Missouri Bi-State Area Intergroup, August/2006*



## ***To Become Humble (a recipe for humility)***

*Go to meetings.*

*Sit and listen.*

*Read the literature.*

*Get a sponsor.*

*Do what is suggested.*

*Use all of the tools*

*Get abstinent.*

*Work all of the steps.*

*Get a Higher Power you can trust and take direction from.*

*Stay connected to the Higher Power.*

*Write and share a searching and fearless inventory of yourself.*

*Make amends.*

*Work with others.*

*Be of service in all areas of life.*

*Keep coming back.*

*Keep listening.*

*Keep growing spiritually and emotionally.*

*Work the Traditions.*

*Work the Concepts.*

*Repeat one day at a time.*

**Recommended by a grateful member of the fellowship**

## **FORGIVING MISGUIDED CHILDREN**

My personal research on Step 8 has convinced me that the principle of **forgiveness**, rather than discipline, **is more descriptive of the aims of Step 8**. In fact, the word forgive, in one form or another, appears at least 15 times in our “Twelve and Twelve.”

There must be a period of healing before making amends. For me to tell someone I am sorry for hating them does not address the painful emotions behind the hate. Many years ago a member shared at a meeting, **“First you deal with the emotion, then you deal with the situation.”**

In practicing this, I discovered there were some things I didn’t have the power to forgive. Instead, I pretended they didn’t matter. I excused or rationalized them. Of course, that only buried them deeper. Then it occurred to me to **pray for a spirit of forgiveness**.

Suddenly things began to happen. All the rage and anger began boiling up and spilling out of me. I had to talk and rave and cry about it to get it all out. Fortunately, there was an understanding sponsor to help me through it.

When my tirade subsided, I was able to think more clearly. I realized I had been holding people responsible who really did not know any better. **It was like resenting a two-year-old for acting like a two-year-old**. I was able to see my “enemies” as misguided children and to forgive them for acting out what they themselves had been taught. It had never occurred to me to forgive them, and I don’t think I could have even if I had realized it.

**My old resentments seemed to dissolve and float away**. It was such a freeing experience. It was as if the events I had resented for so long had never happened. The negative emotions were gone---all replaced with love---and, even after 10 years, they have never come back.

Discipline is certainly necessary in working every part of the OA program, but the only Step which really focuses on the principles of forgiveness, as I see it, is Step 8.

Charlotte P.

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.

For the September/October edition we would welcome items tied to #9 and #10 Steps, Traditions and Concepts of program recovery. However, the co-chairs meet weekly to edit items received and need submissions to be as early as possible.

**Newsletter@OASouthernAZ.org**

## How #7 and #8 Principles Apply to Me

Looking at the #7 and #8 steps, traditions and concepts, I see what the principles are behind each one. The spiritual principles are: **humility, self-discipline, responsibility, fellowship, balance** and **delegation**.

What do I think about when I hear the word **humility**? To me, it is not being proud and thinking that I can remove my shortcomings of temper, impatience and sarcasm by myself. I wonder why I think of these shortcomings first? I can see God has removed them from my list of character defects, on a daily basis, when I walk in His ways.

**Humility** is also giving up my rights to do whatever I want. Most of the time, this is the right to eat whatever I want, but I can't do that and maintain my conscious contact with God. I have found that when I give up my freedom to choose what, when and how much I eat, I gain freedoms I never would have---like peace of mind and contentment. By putting limits on myself, I achieve **self-discipline**. I choose to put myself under the leadership, guidance and direction of my Higher Power. When I act on the belief "I can't, God can, and I think that I will let Him," I gain a freedom I have never experienced because I was out of **balance**. When I hear the word **balance** I think of the "H.A.L.T." slogan, that I shouldn't get too "hungry, angry, lonely or tired." I shouldn't get too much or too little of whatever I need to stay **balanced** emotionally, physically and spiritually. I couldn't get and maintain abstinence until I worked the steps, with a sponsor, and incorporated the tools into my daily regimen. I had never seen the connection between how I related to food and how I related to other things, like work and relationships.

When I was in the food, I acted on an "all-or-nothing" belief about things. I was trying to control people, places, and things (like food) and there was no gray area. I have come to realize that in recovery I have to learn balance and moderation. I cannot 'eat' an entire 300-page book in one sitting, just like I can't eat a container of something salty/sweet and not be out of balance. I can't change any of my bodily/fleshly desires. With God's help and working through the 12 Steps and Traditions, I can, one day at a time, refrain from acting on my compulsive desires. I have to take **responsibility** for myself and what I am doing.

I have come to understand that the 7<sup>th</sup> tradition is about being fully self-supporting, meaning I shouldn't let someone do for me what I can do for myself. I used to allow others (parents) to buy me things that I could buy for myself. I remained under their support when I was a working adult. I realize when I allow others to take care of me, when I am fully capable of taking care of myself, that I lose balance, perspective, freedom and the desire/ability to grow up. Taking **responsibility** for me and my recovery was a step toward growing up. When I was in the disease, I was stuck emotionally. I didn't mature as I should have. I was immature, impatient, when it came to doing without anything. I wanted what I wanted, when I wanted it. In recovery, I have learned to wait for a breakthrough, for abstinence, for the next meal, and that the waiting won't kill me.

The principles of **delegation** and **fellowship** are a bit harder to define and apply to myself. I know that I have to be willing to let others do some of the jobs that I feel are my responsibility. Now that I am working, I can't get to our monthly Inter-group meetings; I need to be willing to let someone else represent me and my interests---**delegation**. I can also apply this spiritual principle in my personal life by allowing my husband/son to do some of the jobs that I don't have enough time/energy to do, like making dinner and doing the weekly loads of laundry. I have to let go of my desire for perfection and be willing to trust someone else to do some of the jobs that I used to do.

I see the spiritual principle of **fellowship** as the flip side of isolation. I know when I am food-focused, I don't want to be around anyone, to share with anyone, or be accountable to anyone. I realize this disease is very cunning, that it wants to get me alone so I will be unable to resist the temptations that come my way. When I go to meetings or talk on the telephone with my OA sponsor or other OAs, I'm not in isolation. I think of the Bible verse that says, "Where two or more are gathered in My name, I will also be." That is a promise from God that He is with me when I am in **fellowship** with others who share my compulsion, and when we are walking in recovery.