



DESERT RECOVERY

July August 2014

SOUTHERN ARIZONA INTERGROUP OF OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS

Practicing the Principles

Here are some notes I made from the OA 12 and 12 about how I work the program using spiritual principles. I am working my program when I am practicing each principle connected with the Twelve Steps. This is what it means to me.

- *Practicing the principle of *Honesty*, I admit that I cannot manage my life on my own. I cannot do life alone.
- *Practicing the principle of *Hope*, I believe that help is available for me, if I ask.
- *Practicing the principle of *Faith*, I look up to God for guidance and strength to face each and every decision.
- *Practicing the principle of *Courage*, I am no longer ruled by fear, and I can admit my mistakes.
- *Practicing the principle of *Integrity*, I have the courage to face my mistakes and test my strengths in the challenges of life.
- *Practicing the principle of *Willingness*, I am willing to learn, willing to cooperate with God, and willing to learn the difference between my self-will and God's will.
- *Practicing the principle of *Humility*, I can see myself as God sees me and let go of status seeking and the habit I have of belittling myself and others. I trust God's timing in the removal of my shortcomings.
- *Practicing the principle of *Self-Discipline*, I have self-discipline. I am less likely to hurt others and I am quicker to make amends when I do harm to someone else.
- *Practicing the principle of *Love*, I am learning to accept others just as they are and I am able to show unconditional love.
- *Practicing the principle of *Perseverance*, I continue to practice using the tools of the program and work the steps of the program. I do the things which brought me recovery.
- *Practicing the principle of *Spiritual Awareness*, I seek to become more aware of God through prayer and meditation.
- *Practicing the principle of *Service*, I let go of my need to control people, places and things and allow God to serve others through me.

~ Darlyn

Adventures in Sponsee-ship

"...I keep my eyes and ears open for a sponsor whose primary concern will be to help me find what works for me.

For today: Do the strengths of those OAs who have what I want correspond with my needs?"

-- For Today, p. 107

At my first OA meeting, I heard some simple (but not easy!), suggestions about how to get abstinent, one of which was "work the Steps." How to do that? "Get a sponsor." I muddled through and got abstinent with the help of my Higher Power and some kind and patient OA members who shared with me what had worked for them food-wise.

Without excess food, the dreaded Feelings were coming up, and I moved on to other addictions and compulsions, trying desperately to keep my feelings at bay. Finally, feeling too out of control to even leave the house for my regular OA meeting, I started calling people, leaving messages that admitted I needed help, and decided to ask the first person I reached to sponsor me.

No one answered the phone, and I ran out of numbers. Okay, sometimes that means I need to do something else/use another tool. So I sat down and did some writing, and some praying, and felt a bit calmer. Calm enough that I was relieved that no one had answered the phone. But then—oh, oh!—someone called me back, and I couldn't do my "I'm-fine" routine with her: I'd left that desperate message for her only hours earlier. So I admitted that, other than not overeating, I wasn't doing very well. We talked, I asked her to sponsor me, she said yes, and I started my step work.

So fast-forward a few years, and I'm now on my fourth sponsor. I've learned a lot about getting my needs met. I've learned how to end relationships that aren't going in the right direction for me. I've learned that staying in a relationship/sticking with a sponsor doesn't necessarily mean stability; sometimes it means stagnation. I've learned that ending a relationship doesn't always mean I'm running away from something, or that there's something wrong with me or the other person; sometimes it just means that I and my program are evolving.

I've learned from all of my sponsors, about gratitude, trust, perseverance, negotiation, saying no to things that don't work for me, taking risks with things that might work for me, the difference between gossip/breaches of anonymity and appropriate program talk, and the fact that simple disagreement doesn't have to escalate into conflict.

There are probably as many different ways of sponsoring as there are sponsors (and sponsees). Having learned that, I now go about finding a sponsor differently. If she's available to sponsor, I ask when would be a good time to talk about sponsorship, and commit to either calling or meeting with her. I ask what she requires of sponsees, make sure there's nothing there I'm not willing to do, and discuss, clarify, and/or negotiate if need be. And I tell her what I need from a sponsor: someone who is available, not necessarily 24/7, but available for phone conversations a few times a week, at mutual convenience, and who returns phone calls. I know it's my job as the sponsee to initiate phone calls, and to keep my sponsor informed of my progress (or lack thereof!). My food plan is working just fine—while I'm willing to *consider* changes, I don't want that to be a condition of sponsorship. And of course my sponsor needs to be working a good program herself.

Pieces of Me

With excess food, I am guilty, angry, paranoid, and judgmental
With abstinence, I am free, compassionate, forgiving, and tolerant
With excess food I am selfish, ego-centric and short-sighted
With abstinence, I am helpful, present, and open-minded
With excess food, I am depressed, lost, and alone
With abstinence, I am joyful, purposeful and connected
In my journey I have passed through these different places; there are no mistakes in God's universe.
My sorrows, pain, and struggles are important
So I can share the joy, healing, and victories with others
Life continues to be unpredictable; I learn to be teachable.
My disease of compulsive overeating is a curse, turned into a blessing when I see that my Higher Power and you, are with me.



~A Grateful Compulsive Overeater

FREEDOM!



Twenty-eight years ago when I was visiting my daughter and her family, I had what may be called a “spiritual awakening.” A few minutes after my daughter had sorted through the day’s mail, my two-year old granddaughter bounced into my room and proudly announced, “Grandma, I’m free! I’m free!” After acknowledging that I could see that she, indeed, was free, I realized that I, too, was free!

I had been in Overeaters Anonymous for seven years and had been free of 110# for five years and imperfectly abstinent for seven years. I made a “deal” with my little granddaughter; I offered her a piece of sugar-free gum for that sticker. Because I still have that sticker, the sticker reminds me daily of what I have been given! Three days ago I celebrated my 35th year of being “free”(abstinent and 20# more off my body)! This program has saved my life and has given me a life.

I believe that my freedom requires of me commitment and responsibility. I am committed to these Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, and it is my responsibility to be abstinent, to be grateful, and to spread this message of recovery to still-suffering compulsive eaters.

I saw and heard HOPE at my very first meeting. Keep coming back and **show** and **speak** HOPE to each newcomer! Thank you to all of you for being here for me!

~Anonymous

Living in Abstinence... literally means living because before OA and abstinence, I had no life, only an obsession that dominated every moment of my life and every fiber of my being.

| Action | Benefit |
|--|--|
| Plan three meals for the day in the morning before I eat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only think about food once a day • Do not have to make on-the-spot decisions (not my food, not what I planned) • Never feeling guilt • No longer needing my amazing math skills that could reassign calorie counts to adjust for the amount of food I ate |
| Eat moderate, nutritious meals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoying my food • Trying new recipes • Increased health • No longer buying a bottle of TUMS each week • No longer charging food on a credit card to binge and pay later |
| Meals are spaced out throughout the day | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Haven't used up all my calories by 9 AM • Rarely hungry and if I am, I have six years of experience that tells me I will be okay • Having a life between meals |
| Eliminate trigger foods | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom from obsession • Not living as a slave to certain foods |
| Exercise daily | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fit in my clothes • Sleep well most nights - rarely suffer from lifelong insomnia • Feel energized |
| Attend OA meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a family (the kind I always wanted!) • Finally feel like I belong somewhere and fit in |
| Maintain spiritual condition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance, love, and acceptance from a Higher Power • Freedom from obsession • Good relationships |
| Use the telephone | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No longer afraid of it • Help is always available • Keeps me out of isolation |
| Work with a sponsor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Someone who truly knows the real me - how I think, act, and feel |
| Sponsor others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chance to learn and grow |
| Use the tools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature to read • A realistic action plan I can actually follow • Anonymity |
| Give service | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel valued, loved, and accepted • Chance to serve others |

Progress and Perfection

"No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles..... We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection."

Big Book pg. 60

How many times have I read or heard this? Too many to count. But what I heard over the past 12 plus years was "progress not perfection" related to my food plan (not spirituality), allowing me to get sloppy with my food because "no one could do it perfectly." The Big Book said so. Those alcoholics and drug users were lucky they did not have to use their drug of choice to sustain life.

By no means of my own was I relieved of the addiction to sugar. It was a miracle from HP. One morning I awoke and realized I couldn't remember when I had last had sugar. I have not indulged in recreational sugar for the last 10 years or so.

Food was another story. When I was no longer under the influence of sugar my thinking cleared and was able to hear words like, "half measures avail us nothing, willing to go to any lengths" and was able to follow a food plan of 3 meals a day with nothing in between for many years. Then I developed health issues that required modifying my food plan with snacks to maintain my blood sugar level. Once I took the snack I could not stop, forcing me to admit powerlessness once again. Once again, I was given the grace I needed to eat in response to a physical need only and not to indulge my addiction.

Well, I finally read and heard the entire quote as written; it is SPIRITUAL progress not perfection. It does not relate to my food plan. So here is my new food plan.

- 1) I will eat 3 meals a day with nothing in between except to respond to low blood sugar, not hunger; I will not starve before the next meal;
- 2) I will weigh measure and document my food;
- 3) Those 3 meals should only be enough to sustain my health and well-being;
- 4) I will not eat compulsively no matter what;
- 5) I will make a conscious decision not to indulge my addiction to food and compulsive eating;
- 6) I will not eat my binge foods;
- 7) I will not cross the abstinent line.

With HP's help, this is where I can practice perfection. Just as it came to pass in one area of my life (sugar) and just as the recovering alcoholic/drug addict does not cross that line and use again, I can commit to the above and truly be a recovering food addict.

Please consider writing for the next issue, due out September 2014. (Deadline September 5th) Send your writing to newsletter@oasouthernaz.org (or give me your hard copy at a meeting). Original art and poetry are also welcomed, as are OA related announcements. Submissions can be printed with your first name only, or as "anonymous."

Articles may be edited for space reasons. All personal stories in this newsletter express the experience of the individual member and do not represent the opinion of OA as a whole. Any other OA group is welcome to reprint an article without permission.

"Supersize Your Recovery"

2014 SEAZ Intergroup Fall Retreat

October 10-12, 2014

Holy Trinity Monastery in St. David, AZ

Registration Fee: \$125 before 9/10/14 and \$140.00 after 9/10/14 (2 Nights, 5 Meals. & Retreat)

Saturday Only Registration (Includes 3 Meals) Fee:
\$50 before 9/10/14 – \$65 after 9/10/14

See www.oasouthernaz.org for more info



Sailing Into Recovery

OA Region 3 2015 Cruise!

Sailing out of Galveston, Texas on Royal Caribbean's Navigator of the Seas

Prices will be in the neighborhood of \$829 per person in double, inside rooms; \$969 per person in double outside rooms; and with a balcony each person in the double room will pay \$1059

There is also a drawing for a free cruise!

The tickets are three for \$25, \$10 for one.

See www.oaregion3.org for more info

Let it Be Me!

OA Region III Convention & Assembly

Tempe, AZ. August 8, 9 & 10, 2014.

There will be Keynote Speakers, English and Spanish meetings, Writing meetings, Entertainment, Raffles and MUCH MORE

Complete weekend (not including hotel) is \$100

Saturday only (no banquet) is \$55

See www.oaphoenix.org for more info.

