



OA Desert Recovery

March / April
2015

Unity Day : The Miracle Of Abstinence

Defining abstinence and exploring various ways to achieve that condition were the focus of Unity Day, observed February 28 in Green Valley. Guest speaker for the morning session was Deanna B., a winter visitor from Illinois, who expressively related her struggles with food and alcohol addiction before she was able to **"get stark raving abstinent."** More than 30 members from Tucson, Sierra Vista, Patagonia, Benson and Safford turned out for the event hosted annually by the three Green Valley groups. The afternoon session featured attendees splitting up into smaller groups for a writing exercise and discussion on three key elements of abstinence. Comments were enlightening, thought provoking and spurred even more animated sharing.

Defining Abstinence: Some said this could be as elementary as eating only three meals a day, with nothing else in between. Others said that should include weighing and measuring our food. Counting calories and holding to a certain number per meal was suggested, especially if the goal is to lose weight, but others said we could also count dietary exchanges for good nutrition. Making and following a meal plan, and writing it down, was another view. **Most agreed the main focus ought to be asking our Higher Power to let the food we eat be enough to sustain us,** but if we should drift away from the meal plan, we need to be willing to get back on track.

Long Term Abstinence: Many said the key to this element is being flexible and open to changing our approaches to food and our meal plans if/when they need changing. The morning speaker, Deanna, shared, "I had to admit the lie I was living by telling myself I needed the food (and the fat) to protect myself from being hurt," and added, **"I had to pick up the Steps instead of the food."** Others noted getting a sponsor and putting in footwork are essential, while some said "back-to-back persistence" is needed. All agreed long term abstinence is possible as long as we remember no one achieves it, or sustains it, perfectly.

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TOP 10 REASONS TO BE ABSTINENT

10. Nothing tastes as good as abstinence feels
9. Abstinence allows me freedom from refrigerator jail.
8. Abstinence leads to health and wholeness.
7. Abstinence satisfies my body, mind and soul.
6. Abstinence opens new doors to life and liberty.
5. Abstinence gives hope where despair once lived.
4. Abstinence ushers peace never experienced before.
3. Abstinence offers a life filled with real life joy.
2. Abstinence puts me in touch with my Higher Power daily.
1. **Abstinence is the most important thing in my life----
without exception.**

Abstinence is a gift, you are offered it daily, your daily choice is to accept or reject the gift.

Definition of Abstinence: "Abstinence is the action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behavior while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight"

Attention all thrift shoppers, spring cleaners, yard salers and discount hunters:

Ways and Means is requesting your keen eyes watching out for original **scrabble games with tan wood tiles** only in any condition (except store bought new) to be **donated for reuse/recycle in our projects**. Questions? Contact Chris N. 661-1991 or rainbow.smiles@cox.net. Happy Hunting :)

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After much discussion, it was decided this element consists of five steps.

- (1) Not focusing primarily on body weight, "*When the mind is ready, the body will follow.*"
- (2) *Freedom from food obsession*, or "Nothing tastes as good as abstinence feels."
- (3) The "gift of desperation" or *hitting bottom* in our addiction so recovery can begin.
- (4) *Spiritual awakening* or "When God's will and mine collide."
- (5) Realizing that all our efforts in seeking and/or achieving abstinence are due to our Higher Power or "*The miracle is just HP making His presence known.*"

Peggy P.



OA Workshop May 30th

"The Difference
Between Abstinence and
A Plan of Eating"

St James Church @ 1-4 PM

Region 3 Spring Assembly in
Galveston/Webster, TX, March 20-21

Region 3 Cruise and Convention, March 22-
29, leaves from Galveston, TX and travels
to Roatan, Honduras-----Belize City,
Belize---Cozumel, Mexico

June 26, 27 & 28th, 2015
OA Annual Summer Retreat:

**"Sunlight of the Spirit...
...Let Your Light Shine"**

Embry Riddle Aeronautical University
3700 Willow Creek Road
Prescott, Arizona 86301

POETRY CORNER

I'M FREE!

*Today, I'm free, Thank you! Thank you!
No longer a slave to food,*

*I love myself enough to carry on another day,
"One Day At A Time"
I stumble, I fall, I get up, I rise,*

*Higher Power carries me through;
I'm no longer alone,
Looking up, I reach up and hold on,*

*I'm carried through my journey in life,
Surrendering myself...I'm free!*

Olga W. gratefully recovered Food Addict/Bulimic/Anorexic

GET OUT OF MY WAY

Down in front, I cannot see.
Someone is standing in front of me.
Her identity I try to learn
But when I move, she turns.

I want to hear what she has to say
But there's always someone in my way.
Again I try to see who it could be
Who always get in front of me.

I'm looking right at her; she's staring right back.
I begin to wonder, is it manners she lacks?
Why won't you move and **get out of my way?**
I'm trying to move forward, start fresh if I may.

Then, suddenly, her face I could see.
Here, all along, that someone was me.

Reprinted from K.P., "Lifeline" February, 2004, 2004

Step 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

*I had a problem---food. I just didn't realize it would take me 23 years to find a solution. In desperation I had been searching through diets, exercise, excessive weight loss and gain, laxatives, pills and surgery. What was missing were those three little (now bigger-than-life) letters: **G-O-D.***

*My miracle! And God set me free to experience many more miracles. At the end of Step Three, I realized my weight had never stayed off because God had never been involved in my diet programs. **I finally got it.***

Or did I? Although OA introduced me to God, I had to open my mind to see and do his will, or I would fail as I had before. After letting God into my life, I still had some difficulty staying at goal weight. I did not let Him work through me or let Him into my food plan.

I have been in OA for two years and have maintained my physical recovery for one year. As I look back, I realize that if my eyes and heart had not been so wide open, I would have given in to my struggle with food long before I found OA. God loved me enough to give me one last chance. He opened the doors to OA and pushed me through them with love.

Edited and reprinted from Lifeline, March/2009

Step Four: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

After working Steps 1, 2 and 3, I was filled with the joy of abstinence and recovery. However, this was quickly over-shadowed by terror because I realized it was time for Step Four, the first of what I referred to as the "Scary Steps."

A few events from my adolescence filled me with shame, and I was horrified that I would have to actually write them down. Even more, I was nauseated that I would have to share them with someone. And then the amends! Oh, God, the amends!

I was way ahead of myself, consumed by guilt and thinking several Steps into the future. *I began praying about Step 4* to my Higher Power and, at first, began trying to cut a deal. I promised if I could leave those shameful events out of my inventory, I would be honest about everything else. Grippled by fear, I continued to pray/bargain with HP, but deep down I had willingness because I wanted more than anything to keep my precious recovery.

Two weeks later, as I was continuing to pray, *I was suddenly filled with peace and happiness---God gave me his answer.* I felt directed to begin my inventory with the very events I felt the most shame about! I could even list my "unmentionables" right on the first page! Amazingly, I felt such joy at getting an answer; I could hardly wait to begin writing about the events that had made me feel worthless for so long.

Once I scribbled them furiously on the page, I stared at them. Each time I ran my eyes over the words, they had less and less power. Once I got the painful (just human) events out of the way, I was free to delve deeper into more important, recent and elusive events. I am still writing. With the help of my HP, OA and my sponsor, *I am moving with sanity and abstinence through the not-so-scary Steps, one day at a time.*

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A NEW BEGINNING

*For me, each day is **a new beginning**, or if I'm having a rough time, then each moment or 5 minutes or 15 depending on where my head is and how persistent, relentless and/or vicious my demon voice is being.*

*If I didn't believe in **new beginnings** or fresh starts I would have given up on me long, long ago. I have been up and down and around and around with this disease and I have finally gotten it through my thick, stubborn, self-willed head that **as long as I don't EVER pick "it" up, then I'll never have a relapse.***

*For me it's as simple or as complicated as that. Early January, at my home meeting, someone was once again mentioning that we are the only 12 step program that takes the tiger out of the cage 3 times a day and then tries to shove it back in. **I had this amazing moment of clarity, realizing that while, yes I had to eat, I did NOT have to ever again eat my trigger foods....Wow!! Why it took me 17 years to own that and move forward in peace. As I have heard and read "it takes what it takes"....***

*I am grateful to be sane, sober, safe and truly free today, recommitting to abstinent living on August 18th of this year and to date I have been relieved of 24 lbs, one day at time, one **new beginning** at a time.*

*I wish all of you peace, serenity, and true freedom from our addictions.
Hugs*

MMM

Steps, Traditions and Concepts Work Together

I would like to share some thoughts about the Third and Fourth Tradition and the Fourth Concept. I see them as interconnected. The third and fourth traditions protect those who can become a member of OA and are working with the spiritual **principles of identity and autonomy**. The Fourth Concept is safeguarding the ability to be an active member and deals with the spiritual **principle of equality**.

I have been working a program of recovery since 1991. At first, I did not see how anything I learned in recovery could help me deal with my life outside the meeting rooms. I began to see that I had trust issues with people, and they were rooted in my relationship with God, my Higher Power. I did not trust Him to care about me or help me with anything. **When I developed a relationship with God, miraculously my other relationships improved.**

In recovery, the Steps help us in how we deal with ourselves and the Traditions with how we deal with/relate to others in the group/family/community. The Concepts are guidelines that help in giving service to others. To me, these **principles are like a spokes on a big wheel**. We have to have a sense of identity, which is who we are to ourselves, to our families, to our group; we also need to be able to work independently from the roles we play. **To effectively belong to OA, we must take our place as one part of the whole**. This is a difficult idea to grasp when we are actively in the disease because we isolate. Through the Tools and Steps we learn to look at who we are, how we react/respond to life circumstances and what triggers us to compulsively eat.

Once I had surrendered my plans for a family; I received one. But I wasn't as happy as I thought I should be. My expectations were causing issues in my marriage and my family. I expected my husband to know what I needed and meet all my needs. My identity was tied up in him and not in God. **I needed to understand that everything begins and ends with God**. He created me, He keeps me living one day at a time. If I do not acknowledge that I am not in control and I cannot do it alone; I am in denial. God defines me. **I need to see my identity in God**.

How does autonomy fit into that puzzle? Each person has his own relationship with God. Each group wanting to do God's will, using a group conscience with **God as the Head**, is autonomous. I cannot change you and if I try to change you, I am not allowing God's work to be done in your life. I do not know what the "best course of action" is for you or you for me. I believe our job is to love each other and pray for each other.

I am not to replace God, try to soften the road or in any way interfere with the path that God wants you to follow. The only way that I can do that is when I have my identity rooted in God.

Darlyn

Concept Three – The right of decision, based on trust, makes effective leadership possible.

Trust is the principle behind Concept 3. To paraphrase something Bill W. said in the original essay on this concept, in recovery we learn to trust God, trust ourselves, and trust each other. Our 12 Step programs could not function without this vital principle.

For major decisions not clearly outlined in job descriptions, Bylaws, or Policies, a group conscience is sought. Trust allows them to exercise their own judgment. Those in leadership positions follow similar guidelines in making decisions for their Intergroup, Region, or OA as a whole. So, ***trust is the guiding principle of Concept 3.*** Allowing our leadership the “right of decision” regarding what is best for OA as a whole helps keep our fellowship vital and growing. There was a lot of stuff in those Concepts that I needed to apply to myself. *Personally*, this is what I’ve learned:

First - trust God as I understand God. Whenever I was asked to do something I was afraid to do, I had to get a bigger Higher Power to help me do it. I had to work on my understanding of God – and I still do. ***Next - trust myself.*** For me that came more slowly. I had to have one obstacle/distraction/dependency removed after another until I was standing alone with my Higher Power to get this one. Nothing I ever did was good enough until then. Until I could trust myself, I went through life faking it. I was a great impostor – or so I believed. HP had to take a lot away from me to prove that I really could trust myself. ***Then, I learned*** that if something seemed impossibly huge and complicated, but I was willing to take my sponsor’s suggestion that I try it – I could break it down into small do-able tasks. And, ***I could ask for help.*** I had to learn this in service work before I could start to apply it effectively in my life.

Before OA, I was a person who could never make a decision unless everyone I cared about agreed with it, and I had a guarantee that it would succeed. ***OA taught me to just try something,*** and if it really didn’t work I could try something else. I tell people that my abstinence is evolving. What that means is that I’ve made a lot of mistakes and more has been revealed over time

It’s hard to separate out all of the spiritual principles of this program. One of the things ***OA service has taught me is to stick with a commitment.*** And, that, in turn, has helped me to learn to trust HP and myself. My old black and white thinking would have had me backing out at the first sign of trouble. Now I know that I can stick it out and trust myself to finish what I begin in service, in recovery, and in life.

Each time I re-read and meditate or write on the Steps, Traditions and Concepts I learn more about myself. That just makes me grateful all over again for that fateful day a carpool buddy first told me about OA. ***Thank you HP for everything.***

Neva