



In our own

OA members share their experience, strength and hope

Saying Yes to Who I Am

I remember the day. I couldn't have been much more than two, and I tiptoed into the kitchen, I knew exactly where to go, and I found the peanut butter. There was nothing like a big spoonful of it. That's one of the ways as a wee child I could become and remain what my parents called me – a fat happy baby. I'm not sure how happy I was with that.

Nothing much was said until I was 10 or so, and then I heard the chorus: Just push away. Just eat less. Perhaps not so much. Eat more of this and less of that. You weigh too much. I didn't care so much about that: what I cared about was eating the food I wanted to eat – and usually it wasn't what Mom

was serving for dinner.

Several years later, I got more serious about wanting boys to like me. That's when I decided I wanted to be bigger in some places and smaller in others. I found that if I let boys do what they wanted to do, they liked me for a while. How mixed I was about all of this. It seemed like my prince would never come! I kissed many frogs along the way – and luckily didn't get any warts on my lips! I wanted to wear smaller sizes, but I didn't want to give up food. I tried this diet and that – and they all worked for a short while, but I couldn't live that way for long. The foods that always beckoned always spoke louder than my desire to get into a smaller pair of jeans.

Every year it seemed as though I'd add another 10 pounds to my bulk. I did the math. By the time I was 20, I'd weigh 200. By yo-yo'ing, I would lose 15 and then add 20. By the time I was pregnant with my first daughter, I decided that I would lose it all after she was born. That plan might have worked, but not long after, I got pregnant with her sister. I shrugged and decided there were more important things in life. So did their dad. Before long, I discovered that he had this girlfriend and that – I was just the wife, the mother, and not too pleased by all of this.

I had gone to school and gone some more – so I had a career of my own.

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To contribute to the newsletter or receive the newsletter by e-mail, contact Michelle S. at newsletter@oasouthernaz.org.

Next Deadline: January 5

Events and Service Opportunities

2013 Convention Planning

Meeting 2013 Convention Committee Meeting will be in January after the intergroup meeting. For more information contact Janis at janisroth@msn.com or 325-4441

NEW MEETING!

A Youth and Friends of Youth meeting will start Tuesday, Sept 27th at 8:30 p.m. At 430 East 7th street. Please pass it on and please come!

Keep them going!

There are two meetings at St. Francis Cabrini that could use your support: Wednesday 7:30 a.m. and Friday 7:30 a.m. Come check them out!

Retreat 2012 needs YOU!

The retreat committee is looking for volunteers. This great event needs folks to keep it going! There are sign up sheets circulating in meetings. Sign up today!

PIPO meeting Nov. 30th!

The PIPO Committee is looking for volunteers! The next meeting is Nov. 30th at 6:30 p.m. at Crave on Broadway. For more info, contact Rae at 239-784-9626 or rstrozzo@gmail.com.

For more events and updates visit the SEAZ web site at <http://www.oasouthernaz.org>

Tool Time

Meetings help one member stay abstinent one day at a time

About a month ago, I received some news about my health- nothing too Earth-shattering, but it was a new diagnosis for me and was a result of my compulsive overeating. At first, I experienced such fear of what would happen and remorse for what I had done to my body. I processed this with my sponsor and with her encouragement, I committed to do 90 meetings in 90 days.

As a full-time working mother, this commitment seemed daunting. The thought of being away from my family filled me with guilt. How would they live without me? What if my daughter would miss me? I had to change my lens...Being in recovery allows me to actually CARE for my family and be PRESENT for them as a wife and mother.

I also got creative to fulfill my commitment! I now attend a phone meeting everyday and get to as many face-to-face meetings as I can. I would certainly like to get to more, however, the phone meetings allow me to connect with other compulsive overeaters on a daily basis and hear the messages of recovery. For me, right now, this is going to any lengths for recovery.

I have been abstinent everyday since I began attending a meeting a day! I am so grateful for OA and the fellowship I find in the rooms...and on the wires.

****Kara**



Image: hinnamsaisuy / Free DigitalPhotos.net

Stepping it up: Members and sponsors talk about working steps seven and eight.

Step 11

From a Member:

I was struggling with my food and with Step 3. I couldn't hold onto abstinence for any period of time. I accepted no human power could relieve my addiction. But I didn't have a belief in a personal higher power. It was hard for me to trust anyone. I had taken Step 2, but how was I going to turn my will and my life over to a complete unknown? I felt "stuck."

My sponsor suggested I experiment daily with different forms of prayer and meditation, including reading spiritual literature or setting a timer and trying to sit still and be "present" for increasing periods of time. Sometimes I drew pictures with crayons and wrote notes to my unknown higher power below them. Sometimes these quiet times were comforting, and I felt love, hope, and peace. Sometimes it was very painful--By being still, I was creating time and space for the emotions to come up that I had spent years running from. It was hard to keep showing up, since I couldn't control how it might feel from day to day.

A friend gave me an image that helped me keep going during tough times:

He said to imagine a house where the water had been turned off for a long time. When water finally started to flow through the pipes again, at first, they were likely to be clogged. It was possible that rust, debris, and maybe even some critters might come out before the water would



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Image: renjith krishnan / FreeDigitalPhotos.net

Out of Town Not Out of Program

The beauty of being away from home is celebrating life with others in OA

This past summer, I spent five weeks living and teaching in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Honestly, I had never really given Oklahoma much thought beyond humming a few bars of a song from the musical with the same name. And as often happens with my seasonal teaching job, I was sent somewhere I probably would have never gone on my own but came home exceedingly glad I'd been there. Program was the thing that made my weeks in Tulsa so amazing. I met a really enthusiastic and welcoming crew at the first OA meeting I attended. And then I went to meetings three days a week the entire time I was there. I was hooked! One of the meetings I attended early on was a speaker meeting. The fellow who was the speaker was a really dynamic and fun guy who I am proud to call my friend. He shared his story, and I wanted to share part of it with you.

My friend "Charlie" has a blog. On his blog, he was talking about struggling in his program and venting his discouragement and lack of willingness when a long distance OA friend wrote him a letter. This letter helped him find his footing and his abstinence. Here is what his friend wrote:

"Looks like you've got a serious case of the 'fuck its.'" It's ok, it happens to all of us. I understand losing your willingness. It's a horrible feeling. For me, right now, my real willingness battle is with praying.

I talk to God all the time, but I'm supposed to be praying specific prayers at specific times *in addition to* freestyling prayer, as my sponsor calls it. I want to want to do it, because I know how beneficial it is, I know it makes me feel good when I'm in that rhythm, and I know that God commands it. But the willingness isn't there right now, and I don't have my daily prayer community here to pull me along. So I'm out of my pattern, and it makes me feel like a failure. And everyday that I don't pray leads to another day when I don't pray. It's just too much effort to pick up the tallit (prayer shawl) tefillin (phylacteries) and siddur (prayer book) and go through the motions. My heart just isn't in it.

But, I know the solution, Charlie. And you know what... starting as soon as I finish writing this email, I'm going to imple-



ment that solution: the solution is to DO IT ANYWAY! YES we should go through the motions even when our hearts aren't in it. Why? Because it's hard. When it's hard is when we are in the most danger and need the most to hang on to whatever shred of connection we have, even if it feels disconnected... and connection will eventually follow.

You made the distinction, Charlie, between a slip and a relapse. Well, let me tell you, there is no difference. Know why? Because all any of us has is Today, This Moment, Right Now. There's no such thing as relapse, there is just "Are you slipping now? How about now? What about now? Did you slip now? You gonna slip now?" Every moment that you don't slip, you are abstinent. When you slip, you lose that abstinence. You need to make a decision, Charlie. From this moment (if you are eating something not abstinent right now, stop. Just stop. Now. Just for this moment STOP!) you are abstinent. You are abstinent RIGHT NOW as you are reading this. The decision you have to make RIGHT NOW Charlie, is to NOT LOSE YOUR ABSTINENCE RIGHT NOW. Just for this moment. And now the moment has passed. And now in this moment, DO NOT LOSE YOUR ABSTINENCE! Just for this moment... and now the moment has passed.

That is all you have to do Charlie. And it is so hard not to string the time together and lose track and lose sight of each individual minute, but that is what we have to do. We who suffer from the disease of addiction have to remember moments like other "nor-

mal" people can get away with ignoring. Sometimes it really really sucks. But you know... I think overall it's a blessing. How many Normals routinely make the effort to experience every minute of their lives and to be grateful for it? Our lives depend on it. In that sense, we are the lucky ones.

I'm with you Charlie, and so is God. God loves you even when you forget to take His hand. He's still reaching out to you. And when you have one hand in mine and one hand in God's, you have no free hands to pick up.

I wish you an abstinent weekend and look forward to hearing from you. :)
-g"

I was moved to hear him read this to the group I was in. And it really did make me stop and really think about the moments I was being given. I was handed the opportunity meet people, to make friends, and be a part of a recovery community in a new place. And I had the opportunity to be abstinent while I was away from home. Because I worked to stay in the moment, I got to experience Tulsa in a way I never would have otherwise.

I discovered that Tulsa has a beautiful riverfront with lots of places to walk, rather than only remembering what I ate near the river. I discovered that Tulsa has this funny public art project with hidden painted penguins all over the city, rather than discovering how many McDonald's drive thrus there were between my house and my teaching site. And rather than being alone with the fridge or the takeout box in my hotel room, I also discovered that Tulsa has a wonderful wonderful group of folks who are going to meetings, working the steps, sharing honestly, welcoming newcomers like me with open arms, calling their call buddies, and making it along together one day at a time! It really is true that where ever there are OA meetings, I have a community and a home! Thanks Tulsa OA for being part of my recovery here in Tucson and wherever I go.

And thanks so much, to my Tucson OA family for allowing me to serve as your newsletter editor this year. Thanks for submitting, for reading, and for all the encouragement! It has been a pleasure and a privilege to be trudging the road of happy destiny with you all.

****Rae**

Step *continued from page 2*

start eventually running clear. From time to time, some old corrosion might work its way loose. The way to minimize this happening is to run the water regularly so the plumbing doesn't get blocked up again. He said the same messy thing can happen when I start letting my feelings out, or for me, when I neglect conscious contact with my higher power. When I let time go by and then try to reconnect, it can feel awkward, and the feelings and thoughts that come up can be rough and seem random. When I show up regularly, it keeps me more current with my emotional and spiritual life, and it is easier to slide into the groove of opening my mind and heart. Occasionally, painful things still come up, but it is much less frequent, and it's usually because they are related to what is happening in my life today.

So, how did practicing a regular "quiet time" help me stop eating compulsively then, and how does it help me stay in recovery now?

Then:

- * It let me experience that I could find comfort and hope without turning to food--and food always let me down, anyway.
- * It taught me that it was possible for me to be still for half an hour without jumping up to act on my impulses, which helped me do the same thing when I wanted to eat compulsively.
- * I found out anxiety and other feelings didn't kill me (though they can still be hard to sit through).
- * It showed me there is a source of power and insight available to me. Not "on demand," but there if I keep showing up. There are definite actions I can take to have more of that power in my life.

These things showed that I did have some kind of personal experience of a higher power, one that could bring good into my life. It was no longer so hard to imagine opening myself and my life up to this kind of higher power on a continuing basis. Taking Step 3 became possible!

Some of the gifts I receive today:

- * Being willing to FEEL uncomfortable emotions during my quiet time with my higher power means I'm less likely to ACT on them later in a way that hurts me or other people (which could eventually make me want to eat compulsively or otherwise harm myself).
 - * Practicing prayer or meditation in the afternoon can boost my energy and clear my head much better than food, and without the dangerous consequences of compulsive eating.
 - * Step 11 fuels me in practicing all the steps, when I am willing.
 - * Seeking to be more honest, present, and open to conscious contact with a higher power pushes me to grow emotionally, which is helping me have healthier, more satisfying and intimate relationships with people.
- More will be revealed!

****Andrea M.**

Step 12**From a Member:**

Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to compulsive overeaters and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Having trouble staying abstinent? Here are some questions to ask yourself:

Do I believe the 12 Steps is my last chance for recovery from your food addiction?

Why did Bill W devote a whole chapter to the 12th Step?

Why are there 72 musts, and words like imperative, vital, specifically, precisely, absolutely in the Big Book?

Do I think the 12 Steps are just suggestion?

Am I practicing the 12th Step as directed by the Big Book?

If not, what is holding me back?

I will be celebrating 10 years as a member of OA soon and it took me a few years to understand the absolute necessity of working the 12th Step. Here are some of the ways I maintain my abstinence.

I have placed a posters and literature in the library I use, the gym I am a member of, and the resource file where I work. I monitor the need for more literature and business cards and have recently changed the poster in the library to the new one with the pizza.

When the opportunities present (sometimes I create opportunities) I share information about OA.


For instance, when the nurse doing my preop assessment for a colonoscopy asked "How do you stay so skinny?" I responded "Do you really want to know?" so I told her, and as she wheeled me into procedure room she says "This is Janet she has been in OA for 10 years".

I guess what I am trying to say is OA has saved my life and I owe it big time. I know it is the answer for many, many people who have food addictions and behaviors. So the two major things to do to support OA are to raise the public and professional awareness and to have strong meetings with members in recovery.

I WANT OA TO LAST FOREVER!.

****Janet**

Come Share Your Gratitude



Thank-a-Thon

Thursday, Nov. 24
Three meetings
starting at 8:45 a.m.
St. James
Methodist Church
3255 N. Campbell

www.oasouthernaz.org OA MEETING LIST – November/December 2011				
DAY& TIME	GROUP NAME & NUMBER	LOCATION	CONTACT & IR	NOTES
SUNDAY 11:00 -12 Noon	MIRACLES HAPPEN Literature Varied Format #23957	4180 W. Sweetwater Dr. (WEST) Look for OA signs	IR: Sally H. 429-5318	WC
SUNDAY 5:30-6:30 PM	HOPE, LOVE & ACCEPTANCE Varied Format #45377 Tradition/Step and 1-1/2 hr Big Book Study	Streams In The Desert Lutheran Church Classroom A in Fellowship Hall 5360 E. Pima (CENTRAL)	Elisa M. 299-3200 IR: Susan C. 747-5018	WC
SUNDAY 5:30-6:30 PM	SEEKING THE POWER 11 TH STEP MEETING #49744	University Medical Center, (CENTRAL) 1501 N. Campbell Rm. E/F (S end of Café)	Janet G. 795-7492 Andrea M. 977-9980	Fragrance-free* WC **Parking
MONDAY 5:30-6:30 PM	GOING SANE Big Book Study Speaker 1 st Monday #39507	First United Methodist Church, Carillon Room (4 th & Park), 915 E. 4th St. (CENTRAL) Park behind church, enter lot from 4 th Street ,	Felice G. 891-8900 IR: Jonathan K. 609-0939	WC
MONDAY 7:00-8:00 PM	FAR EAST ABSTINENCE / STEP STUDY #40522	Abounding Grace Church, 2450 S Kolb Rd (FAR EAST) N. of Golf Links on W. side	Debbie F. 312-7597 IR: Jan H. 790-2658	WC
TUESDAY 10:30-11:30 AM	RECOVERY #30601	Posada Del Sol (NORTHEAST) 2250 N. Craycroft (Park at Safeway)	Judith H. 323-9845 IR: Lauren M. 241-3616	Fragrance-free* WC
TUESDAY 10:30-10:45 10:45-12 Noon	NW TENDER SOLUTIONS Newcomers meeting OA 12 & 12/ Sharing #40963	Dove of Peace Lutheran Church 665 W. Roller Coaster Rd. (NORTHWEST) West of Oracle Rd.	Neva S. 877-8420 IR:	WC
TUESDAY 5:30-6:30 PM	TUCSON MEN'S SANITY #49144	931 N. Fifth Avenue (CENTRAL) 1 ½ blocks south of Speedway	Jim D. 250-0509 IR: Ron R. 320-9675	
TUESDAY 8:30-9:30 PM	Young People's Meeting #45374	Wingspan (CENTRAL) 430 E 7 th St. Just East of 4 th Ave.	Joe N. 551-2039 IR:	
WEDNESDAY 7:30-8:30 AM	GOING TO ANY LENGTHS Big Book Study	St. Frances Cabrini Church, Education Bldg. Rm. 5 (Except 3 rd Wed. Rm 1) 3201 E. Presidio CENTRAL)	Wendy A. 955-0710 IR:	Fragrance-free*
WEDNESDAY 11:30-12:30 PM	WELCOME HOME #04330 Sharing	Streams In The Desert Lutheran Church, Ginsler Hall S. Side of Church 5360 E. Pima (EAST)	Sue R. 358-7358 IR: Barbara M. 327-2709	Beverage only
WEDNESDAY 5:30-6:30 PM	VOICES OF RECOVERY Leader's Choice Literature #49188	St. Thomas More Newman Center Library 1615 E. 2nd St. (CENTRAL) Cherry & 2 nd Park & enter from rear	Andrea M. 977-9980 IR:	
WEDNESDAY 6:00-7:00 PM	11 th Step Meeting 10 Minute Meditation #51730	Oro Valley Urgent Care 13101 N. Oracle Rd. (Oro Valley FAR NW) Enter front entrance (east side)	Lisa T. H. 409-2596 IR:	
THURSDAY 10:45-11:45 AM	SEEKING THE SPIRITUAL PATH Book study #00439	Oro Valley Urgent Care, Comm. Ed. Room 13101 N. Oracle Rd. (Oro Valley FAR NW)	Diane 638-5583 IR: Marie R. 270-9568	
THURSDAY 5:30-6:30 PM	OVER AND UNDER MEETING Lifeline/Discussion #50226	St. Frances Cabrini Church, Ed. Bldg., Rm. 5 (E. of church) 3201 E. Presidio (CENTRAL)	Beth M. 577-8745/349-0810 IR: Ellen F. 290-3235	WC
THURSDAY 7:00-8:00 PM	BIG BOOK STUDY #47942	Abounding Grace Church 2450 S Kolb Rd (FAR EAST) N. of Golf Links on W. side	IR: Mary M. 248-6480	WC
FRIDAY 7:30-8:30 AM	FRESH START #49600	St. Frances Cabrini Church, Ed. Bldg., Rm. 5 (E. of church) 3201 E. Presidio (CENTRAL)	Janet G. 795-7492 IR: Lynne L. 745-5954	Fragrance-free* Service dogs only
FRIDAY 10:30-11:30 AM	LIVING IN THE SOLUTION Sharing #14251	Streams In The Desert Lutheran Church Class Room A in Fellowship Hall 5360 E. Pima (EAST)	Don B. 325-7053 IR: Bev C. 628-8580	Fragrance-free*
SATURDAY 9:00-10:00 AM	FAR EAST SATURDAY GROUP Varied Format #45696	Eastside Evangelical Covenant Church 551 N Camino Seco (FAR EAST) (North of Broadway)	IR: Deb B. 885-0249	WC
SATURDAY 9:00-10:15 AM	Saturday morning Study group #12117	St. James Methodist Church 3255 N Campbell (CENTRAL) (N of Ft. Lowell; W side of Campbell)	Chris B. 887-7188 IR: Deb E 444-9960	WC

IR=Intergroup Representative

WC=Wheel Chair Accessible

**No parking fees at UMC on Sundays

*In consideration of members who suffer from allergies, please refrain from wearing cologne or perfume. XX=no summer meetings

OUT OF TOWN OA MEETINGS					
DAY& TIME	GROUP NAME & UMBER	LOCATION		CONTACT & IR	NOTES
GREEN VALLEY					
TUESDAY 7:45-8:45 AM	Discussion #49982	St. Francis of the Valley Church 600 S. La Canada Dr	Library	Marj M. 248-9043 IR: Marj M. 248-9043	WC
WEDNESDAY 7:00-8:00 PM	Literature Study #37169	St. Francis of the Valley Church 600 S. La Canada Dr	Library	Marj M. 248-9043 IR: Marj M. 248-9043	WC
SATURDAY 9:00-10:15 AM	Step and Tradition Study #34898	St. Francis of the Valley Church 600 S. La Canada Dr	Library	Marj M. 248-9043 IR: Marj M. 248-9043	WC
SIERRA VISTA					
MONDAY 7:00-8:00 PM	Monday Night Miracles Literature study #17537	Church of Christ 815 El Camino Real	Room 3	Leslie 378-4238 IR: Jan F. 678-0369	WC
THURSDAY 6:30-7:30 PM	Newcomers #39367	Church of Christ 815 El Camino Real	Room 3	Marilyn 417-1645 IR:	WC
SATURDAY 11:00-12 Noon	Varied format #40592	Church of Christ 815 El Camino Real	Room 3	Jan F. 678-0369 IR: Nancy R. 227-3817	WC
PATAGONIA					
TUESDAY 6:30-7:30 PM	Patagonia Tues. OA Varied Format #50474	United Methodist Church 387 McKeown Ave		Michelle S. 520-604-6811 IR: Leanne F. 774-521-8932	
THURSDAY 6:30-7:30 PM	Patagonia OA Big Book Study #51744	United Methodist Church 387 McKeown Ave		Adrienne 520-404-3490 IR:	
NOGALES, AZ					
				Ros V. 520-668-5950 Spanish/English Speaking	
BENSON					
TUESDAY 4:00-5:00 PM	Rotating Format #47074	Sobriety House 225 E. 6 th Street		Peggy 520-456-1676 IR:	WC
YUMA					
MONDAY 1:00 – 2:00 PM	October thru April Only #47822	Gloria DeCristo Church 11273 E. 40th Street		Connie O. 928-305-0682 IR: Connie O.	XX
TUESDAY 6:30-7:30 PM	Just for Today Rotating Format #49443	Central Church of Christ 651 West 28th St.		Lorraine 928-782-1305 IR: Lynn C. 928-503-1229	WC
THURSDAY 12:00-1:00 PM		Central Church of Christ 651 West 28th St.		Lorraine 928-782-1305 IR:	

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MEETING LIST CHANGES: Please send corrections or changes to Kara S. kara.adams.snyder@gmail.com

OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS SOUTHEASTERN ARIZONA INTERGROUP #09078

P.O. Box 43221 Tucson, AZ 85733-3221 (520) 733-0880

SE AZ Intergroup meets the third Saturday of the month at 10:45AM, St. James United Methodist Church, 3255 N. Campbell Ave., Tucson

SE Arizona Intergroup Board

Officers			Committee Chairs		
Chair:	Roni B.	269-1025	PIPO		
Vice Chair	Marilyn B.	417-1645	Meeting List Contact	Kara S.	971-9730
Secretary	Chris N.	721-1085/ 661-1991	Newsletter	Rae S.	239-784-9626
Treasurer:	Rhonda S.	370-5100	Special Events	Claudia P.	829-6968
Delegate (1):	Janis R.	325-4441	Tape Library/Lifeline	Pam T.	331-2107
Delegate (2):	Emily R.-S.	490-1409	IR Trainer	Jocelynn W.	982-0556
			Telephone	Susan C.	747-5018
			12 th Step Within	Wendy A.	955-0710
			Website	Nan B.	825-2892

WEBSITES: OA World Service: www.oa.org OA Region 3: www.oaregion3.org OA Southern AZ: www.oasouthernaz.org

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Soon that's what I was doing – living on my own, providing for my two young girls. One divorce and several years later, another marriage – and another divorce, this one even more quickly gotten. I had this boyfriend and that – never could be alone – but as soon as the “he” of the month was there, I wanted to be alone. Was I ever mixed up!

“Those at the meetings have become like family. They know what it's like. They know how it is. And knowing them keeps me from being who I was.”

I learned about Overeaters Anonymous and went to a few meetings. Not for me. Not yet. Twenty years later – and at least 40 pounds heavier – I came back – and this time I knew I was home. I didn't embrace the steps right away. I figured that I could do this in cafeteria style. A bit of this, and more of that. A weight coach I had through work told me that I should find a sponsor and really work through the steps. We weren't going to have that health benefit anymore, so no longer would she be calling me every month. I panicked! I had to have someone on my side. That's what made all the difference. I went to a Saturday meeting with the expressed purpose to find my sponsor. I listened as one person talked and then another. The clock was making its rounds, and still I hadn't found her. All of a sudden a woman spoke up – and I knew who she was. I asked her after the meeting, and when she said yes, that's when my life started changing for the better.

We worked through the steps – I gave up this and that – I resolved to eat only three meals a day. I read the literature. I made the calls. I got close to my Higher Power. It's been 19 months now of happy abstinence....I steer completely clear of those trigger foods of mine....and I've lost 80 pounds of myself. I feel so healthy and happy. The food I eat agrees with me, and I enjoy my meals. I can ride a stationary bike 12 miles in 30 minutes at the highest level of resistance. I've gotten rid of all of my old clothes, so that I can only wear my current size.

I can't imagine another way of life. Those at the meetings have become like family. They know what it's like. They know how it is. And knowing them keeps me from being who I was. I'm different now in so many ways, and I like it like that. I'd rather say yes to this new way of life than ever say yes to the way it used to be. No matter what.

Second Time Around

My story includes 22 years of sobriety in AA which started in 1989 and over a month of abstinence in OA. I was a periodic drinker until the early 80's and by 1982 I was drinking a bottle of wine a day, swiftly moving to martini's by Thanksgiving of that year. At the same time I quickly became obese and have stayed that way all through the 22 years of sobriety. All I can say is “it took what it took to find my bottom with food.” My only exception was a 6 month stint of being in the 190 pound range for my youngest daughter's wedding.

I would ask AA people about OA and they would tell me to ask God to help me lose weight. “You have a miracle (sobriety) under your belt so just “generalize the lesson.” The crux of the matter was that I could not comprehend being addicted to food and eating compulsively as a result. I was a grazer, could never be empty of food and at the same time, I looked for very strong tastes- sweet and sour, savory and sweet-combinations to relieve my boredom.

I noticed an inner panic when I looked at my face after losing some weight for my daughter's wedding in 2005. I was afraid of being thin but thought my fat was ugly. I had negative feelings toward people and decided, somewhere along the line, that I would just “fat” them instead of shoot them. It was legal and it answered a lot of my concerns about living.

When I think back, I still cringe when I think about my Nana and Pop-pop saying, “What a big boned child you are.” It felt like being sentenced to a circus act. I overreacted to growing up and living which I still do today but without these self-destructive behaviors. I was jealous a lot and tried to act as old as my sisters (6 and 7 years older) by experimenting with sex early and doing things I couldn't comprehend or emotionally deal with at the time.

I had periodically binged on alcohol from about 7th grade on but never had a weight problem till after having 3 children and daily alcoholic drinking. My youngest had finally weaned and I was free to drink as much as I wanted after the kids were in bed.

My history in OA began in the late 90's. I came to a couple OA meetings, but never felt it was something I could do. They were HOW meetings that was not for me. It also felt more like an exclusive club than AA did at the time. Then in the spring of 2011, I was living in San Antonio, TX. My other daughter had a beautiful wedding and I was unable to lose any of the weight I had regained. When the wedding photo's went online I was humiliated. I wrote an email talking about my fat and the ugliness and accidentally sent it to all the wedding attendees. The bride was embarrassed for me and herself, so I wrote an email of

****Joy**

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apology. Thoroughly demoralized I began going to a wonderful OA meeting.

When I heard “An Invitation to You,” my head did a 180, and I could not believe how it seemed to echo the bits and pieces I was trying to put together in my mind about my eating habits or choices. I had done some deprivation and would lose a few pounds only to have a moment of weakness and restart my grazing. I thought I would stop the compulsive eating the very next day, but I could not do it. Like alcohol, the first dip into contraband (booze or food) was impossible to nip in the bud with my own will.

So I would keep right on grazing until the immediate memory of the last resignation of my need to a diet faded away. This was a hopeless cycle of misery. Hearing the solution that first OA meeting, I was ready to come back for another meeting.

I moved from Texas to Tucson, and within the 1st week I found a wonderful group and soon after a sponsor that seemed to understand me right from the start. When she told her story I felt the same shame she talked about even though I don’t think the word “shame,” was ever mentioned. I then added two of her meetings to my schedule.

One night a woman there, whom I had emailed back and forth with, suggested I should try 3-0-1 abstinence. I wondered if I was ready, afraid of failing once again. She said I should just try it. So I have 47 days today and have lost weight. I eat 3 meals a day and eat no sugar. I have begun to understand the emptiness I tried to fill was a part of my life, not my appetite for food. I had about 3 weeks of what we call in AA, the “pink cloud,” where the obsession is removed. Since then I have had some hungry moments, but have not given up my abstinence because of the strength of a power greater than myself that hangs out in the meetings I go to 3 or 4 times a week.

I can see from the food I eat that there are things I can change to facilitate a healthier weight, and am looking

at options. I work with my sponsor and know that I need the right attitude about my weight and my worth in order to be successful. I am so grateful my 2nd 12th step program has provided the still mysterious miracle that led to my getting sober 22 years ago. OA is a chance to fulfill the promises I first heard about in AA but could not grasp in practical application.

****Ellie**

A New Way to Live

I never fit in anywhere from the moment I was born and have spent my life being painfully aware that the more I awkwardly tried to fit in, the more uncomfortable I felt in my own skin. I tried everything, but no program, no diet, no religion could ever fix me. Never did I have enough of what I thought I wanted. Food, money, love, approval – nothing ever completed me. Nothing external filled that void in me, so I tried to fill in with food.

I remember turning to food at age five when I was told I made it impossible for people to love me. I ate until I felt a little better. Almost every childhood memory I have that isn’t about the abuse I suffered is about food. Such as the time I showed up at Grandma’s with a black eye and she made me a sundae with a full half gallon of ice cream. I have always believed that message and felt unlovable. I try so hard to not be difficult, to not stand out, and to not cause a problem to others. I feel I can not be honest with people or they no longer want me around. In relationships I keep so much inside because I fear the day that the person looks at me and just says “you are too much trouble to be worth it.” I always compared myself to others. I was not enough – not smart enough, not pretty enough, not talented enough, not funny enough.

So I went to an all black faze all through high school, trying to be invisible. I began to restrict food intake

and exercise like crazy, but I craved the food. So I learned to binge in secret and purge. I used to binge and tried to vomit; eventually I took laxatives. Because I couldn’t control all that was around me, I focused on the food – was I going to eat? How much? When? Would I be able to stop eating this time? How would I get rid of it? Those thoughts constantly swirled in my head.

Before a binge I would tell myself – “Okay, this is the last time, and then I would eat until I literally made myself sick.” Lying on the bathroom floor I would swear I would not do this again, but the next day I would start all over again. Restrict, restrict, restrict, shame self, something sets me off to an emotion (ANY emotion) and binge, binge, binge, purge. The sense of always being on the outside, disconnected from people, left deep scars I hope will heal in time.

So I ate more, asking myself while eating, “Why can’t you stop?” I had secret binges, I snuck food, I ate in my car, when I went away on a vacation or a business trip, it was a free-for-all of eating. Every trip I have ever taken, I could describe for you in great detail the food I had, but not the people and places. Now it’s different.

I was desperate when I walked in the doors to OA. Surrender is the acting of letting go and that was tough for me. To give up my personal rigidities, to relax and admit I was powerless took a lot of courage. But I am an addict. I am a compulsive overeater. My life was unmanageable, my relationships were dishonest, and my life was unfulfilling. I needed to reduce my ego, admit I needed help, and accept a power greater than myself.

OA has given me a new way to live, although I am not perfect at. I no longer isolate and hide from people, but I do still keep back large parts of myself from everyone, still afraid of rejection. Practicing the principles has given me a lot of freedom. Freedom

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from the insanity and desperation I felt daily, freedom from the obsession of food, and freedom from the hopelessness. Living abstinently, I have a life now.

Abstinence means I can live in the world and not be trapped in the chaos of my disease. A life, that for the most part, is sane and fulfilling. I love and am loved. I accept and am accepted. I am as strong and flexible as my acceptance. And that is truly the miracle of OA and this fellowship.

****Anonymous**

OA Brings Power - Higher Power

The first time I can remember thinking something was wrong with the way I looked was after my mom died. I was nine years old and I was sent to live with my mother's sister. My aunt put me on my first diet, took me to a doctor who tried to hypnotize me, and monitored all that I ate. Of course, being the addict I was, I found ways to eat sugar and other foods I loved and craved.

At thirteen, I was sent to live with my father I weighed 205 lbs. During summer vacation my step-mother introduced me to Jack LaLane and I was put on a diet that included a large decrease in calories and lots of exercise. I lost 65lbs in three months. I got my first boyfriend, learned how to french kiss, and made lots of friends. Most of who were nether do wells just like myself. I started skipping school, lying (I already knew how to do that real well), stealing, smoking cigarettes, and basically anything that I could get away with. I was a handful to say the least.

In fact, they decided to send me away because I was too much for them to deal with. I'm sure they felt I would see the err of my ways and change. Quite the contrary, as I lived with girls much more streetwise and knowledgeable than me I began my education in the ways of the world. It was here that my food addiction became second to my other addictions. I ran away from this school and made my way across country where I chose to live life the way I wanted. I got into a life of crime and became a full-fledged alcoholic, but my food obsession never left me. The only time I can remember feeling good about how I looked was when I was on heroin and skin and bones. Of course, I thought I looked good. Many years later friends told me I was sick looking, and not in a good way.

There was a period of time when I was homeless (my choice) because it was better than the alternative. I got the opportunity to move to Cleveland Ohio and live with this family for awhile. I gained 100 lbs that first year. I had been literally starving while on the streets and being around good food was like turning loose a wild animal. I didn't know I was powerless over food. I didn't know I was an addict. I believed I could end up homeless again so I ate as much as I could whenever I could. Of course, I also drank and did



Image: Chaiwat / FreeDigitalPhotos.net

drugs too. All those years in the streets I believed that the life style I was living was my problem. All I needed to do was find my family, get a job and all would be well with the world and me. Also, I thought, if I could lose some weight that would be great too.

Because God has always had my back, I finally found my family in Tucson, AZ, and I felt I was safe at last. I got a job, started paying taxes, drank, did drugs and ate. I think the drugs and alcohol masked my food addiction. What I know today is I am a real compulsive overeater who became an alcoholic, but it took me many years to find that out.

I have lost and gained many pounds throughout my life. Each time I lost the weight I said, "This is it. I will never gain it back." Always it came back...and more. I came into OA this time in 2004. It has been the hardest and the best thing I've ever done. I found the part of the puzzle, of my life, that was missing.

All the years in AA I felt incomplete. I know now it was because I was practicing my food addiction all the while thinking I was sober. I could never be truly clean because food was my God.

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Today I am grateful for OA. Today I am grateful for the people who came before me and kept the doors open. The steps of AA/OA have changed my life.

I found out what my problem was and still is lack of power. Through the steps, traditions, meetings, sponsorship (both ways), prayer, service, fellowship, and unconditional love I am healing, and I have found a source of power much greater than me that keeps me sober, abstinent.

This power, God has been merciful to me and continues to grace me with recovery, great friends, and a loving family. I will always be a compulsive overeater but I can truly say that today I am recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. God sent me here, God keeps me here, I only need to keep trudging the road of Happy Destiny. I feel it today when they say, "Welcome to Overeaters Anonymous. Welcome home."

****Sally H.**

Something Bad: The Cake

It used to be that I ate sugar
And now I don't
Because once I start, I can't stop.
My family was once away, arriving back the next day
I baked them a cake
My specialty – white cake with chocolate fudge frosting
I ate frosting before the cake was done
A spoon here, a lick, a taste, another spoon...
Soon half was gone so I made more
When the cake was done,
I had a huge slice
Then another
Later I decided to have a huge piece
instead of dinner
Then another.
But it looked messy
So I trimmed it up
Of course, eating what I trimmed.
When I awoke, my first thought
was cake for breakfast
And another for mid-morning snack
More than half of the cake was gone.
I was so ashamed I threw it out
and made a new cake for my family.
I never told anyone, until now.

****Anonymous**



A road well worth traveling: OA Retreat 2011

Here I am back from my 8th annual OA weekend at the St David Monastery. The grounds are still natural: peacocks roaming around, fish swimming in a pond, pecan trees growing healthily. My socks and shoes picked up more prickly hitchhikers this time, though.

I was apprehensive because, as far as I knew, it was a brand new retreat committee with no one experienced. I was wrong about that, plus new and different are becoming more attractive to me. Predicting (and controlling) are symptoms of my disease. I am learning to let go of my old ideas and behaviors.

Friday afternoon's discussion group started with a phrase from the Big Book: "no human power could have relieved my addiction". God may talk through humans but there is not human power. And that includes commercial weight loss powers as well.

Friday evening Rae led us with his story and small group exercises which helped us get to know one another, share our experiences with emotional sobriety, and read pages from For Today for literature support on the topic. We wrote love notes to one another then and throughout the weekend. I felt satisfied with that love and didn't feel like decorating a bag to receive any more love notes. One loving member wrote my name on a bag and other people left me notes. This exercised my guilt recovery as I did not give back.

I think hometown leadership last year and the planned times this year contributed to a sense of ownership for the weekend experience. Symbolic of that was how many participants chipped in to fold, pack, and carry all the leftovers from the clothing exchange to the thrift store. We did not leave it all to the designated event leader. To me the food was excellent. I know what to expect now--predictability again.

Saturday morning we met our retreat speaker and heard his story. I found it difficult, emotionally and physically, to hear. It was his truth, his facts, though. More people stayed through all his presentations than I have witnessed in previous years. I heard people call him a dynamic speaker. I was impressed with his humanness and humility. He took us through the steps in the Big Book which he believes God wrote and gives us all the direction we need to take the steps with our sponsor. If anyone wants to hear my notes, I would be happy to share. I was surprised by new points of view, even though I had attended OA and AA Big Book workshops this summer.

All in all, I am grateful Higher Power provided this weekend experience for me to attend this year.

****Judith H.**