

# OA Desert Recovery

## November & December 2015

NEWSLETTER@OASOUTHERNAZ.ORG

## DEALING WITH EXCESS: CONCEPTS 11 & 12

These two concepts, more than any of the others, seem to be focused on dealing with excess. Concept 11 was written to encourage the trusted servants to seek the best possible resources, to not “make do” with what we have but to spend money on a professional's assistance and **avail ourselves of the best available resources**. From experience, I know that when I have tried to cut corners and save money, I have ended up spending more once I was humble enough to admit that I needed help. The spiritual principle of Concept 11 is humility.

Concept 12 continues dealing with excess when it limits the duration of time that any one person can serve, without a break. It also sets down guidelines for the amount of money needed to adequately fund all the business of the organization, and protects the whole group/organization from power/money struggles and attempts to control/manipulate the organization or its trusted servant. **When we treat others the way we want to be treated, with respectful and compassionate dialogue, and refuse to manipulate/control each other through pride and greed**, we are following all the spiritual principles of Concept 12. They are selflessness, realism, representation, dialogue, compassion and respect.

**Excess kills**, whether it is food or some other substance. **God helps** us individually and in the group conscience process to **keep us and OA in balance**.

Darlyn R.

O.A. RECOVERY RETREAT---

## USING THE TOOLS AS A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

The annual OA Retreat of Recovery was held Oct. 23-25 at the Holy Trinity Monastery in St. David, marking 10 years the event has been held there. About 30 members attended the weekend, with 16 more present for just the Saturday session. The theme this year was **“Recovery Frozen? Turn Up the Heat!”** and the keynote speaker/leader was Marla D. from Salt Lake City, UT. She focused her teaching on new ways to use the tools of the program. The main question Marla posed was how use of the tools could now become a daily spiritual practice in recovery.

Members were challenged to see that freedom from the urge to overeat is being free of the urge not to hurt themselves, and that the ultimate way to accomplish that is with the help of our Higher Power. Marla defined her Higher Power as God and summed up her spiritual practice of the tools with the acronym: **Grace, Order, Divine Delight.**

The highlight of the retreat’s fund-raising activities was the drawing of the **winning raffle ticket for a one-week condo vacation** in San Carlos, Mexico, donated by condo owner Rene T. **The winner was Suzanne F.** of Tucson. The raffle garnered over \$2,500 in sales, with Region 3 and

the World Service Organization (WSO) splitting it 50/50.

A silent auction was also held for the 18 “baskets” donated by various meetings, with proceeds from the auction and items sold by the Ways and Means Committee going to benefit our Intergroup. **The Retreat Committee** thanked all who helped in any way to make this year’s event a success, and **urged everyone to plan for next year’s retreat.**

Retreat Committee members were Mike A., Nancy K., Chris N., Deb B., Marti G. and Janis R.

Peggy P.

### ***I.D.E.A. Day***

*November 21, 2015  
9:30 a.m. registration,  
10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.  
Church of Christ  
815 El Camino Real,  
Sierra Vista, AZ*

### ***THANK-A-THON***

*November 26, 2015  
No registration needed  
9:00 a.m.-12 Noon  
St. James Methodist Church  
3255 N. Campbell Ave.  
Tucson, AZ*



## STEP 12---PAYING IT FORWARD

I am writing this article in memory of Ralph. When I called the phone number (remember those?) for OA, I was greeted by a friendly person named Ralph. He began to tell me his story and several minutes later I barely had time to eat my dinner because I wanted to get to the meeting on time (that meant 15 minutes early back then). **I will always be grateful to Ralph for practicing the 12<sup>th</sup> step on a daily basis.** Nobody came to a meeting unless you talked to Ralph, or if someone brought you.

I have had a spiritual awakening as a result of working all the steps the best that I could at the time. Thankfully, God does not expect perfection but I have to remember that first part of the first step daily, which states I am powerless over food.

My sponsor and others taught me, before I had a spiritual awakening, that **I needed to help pass the message to the still suffering compulsive eater.** At that time, the service I did was cleaning ashtrays (thank goodness we no longer smoke in meetings) and putting chairs away. After I finished working the steps, I was told by my sponsor to greet newcomers and introduce myself. Because of this service, I was beginning to think of others and not just what I would get out of it. Sponsors paid it forward to me and that is what I do for others. **Being abstinent is a gift that I cherish like a piece of fine porcelain.**

Rhonda S.

## A DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH

My home meeting recently read **Tradition 12** and this sentence stayed in my mind: “Many an OAer has had the experience of hearing from the lips of fellow members whom we heartily disliked the words which saved us when we were floundering” (OA “Twelve and Twelve, page 203). I thought of a relationship I have now, which started out badly.

A woman regularly came to my home meeting when I started in OA. After listening to her shares a few times, **my heart sank whenever she walked into the room**. I thought she was opinionated and obnoxious in some of her comments. It was obvious she was hurting, but she alienated and insulted people with almost every share. I cringed when I noticed her talking to newcomers. Then I didn’t see her for a long time, and I felt relief she had stopped coming! But after a couple of years, she showed up again, and even asked me to sponsor her. I was glad I wasn’t available at the time. But she kept coming back and she again asked me to sponsor her. By then, I had more than three years in program and had long since learned **I don’t pick my sponsees—God does**. I wondered if I was crazy taking her on, but something (HP?) told me all would be well.

She has turned out to be one of the most rewarding sponsees with whom I’ve worked. She takes her recovery seriously and understands she has to move forward in this program or suffer a living death. She wants to heal the wounds of her past. She sincerely desires to have loving relationships and to stop driving people away with her character defects. She still has lots of “rough edges,” but don’t we all? However, she has made great progress. **I respect and value her commitment to recovery, her dedicated service to OA and her total desire to heal her life**.

I have learned so much about perseverance with recovery from this woman I initially scorned and wanted to avoid. I have learned to love and accept her just as she is---totally imperfect, just like me! **Thank you, God, for sending me this sponsee**. She has completed all 12 Steps and in a few days I will be “stepping her up” to become a sponsor herself. I feel very privileged to have her in my life.

Mary

## MEDITATION IS LISTENING

*Once again, I sat in a meeting listening to a frustrated member discuss her inability to meditate. It was clear she understood the word “meditation” in **Step 11** as it is understood in popular culture: trying to empty our minds and sit still, perhaps reciting a mantra. This is not surprising since even our program’s text book “Twelve Steps and Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous” describes this kind of meditation. **I am convinced it is not what the founders of AA intended.***

*In the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, certain meditation practices and techniques became common in the U.S., and this changed the meaning of the word “meditate.” But Alcoholics Anonymous published the Big Book and its “Twelve and Twelve” book decades earlier in 1939 and 1952.*

*To understand the meaning of **Step 11** when it was written, I looked at a dictionary published in 1948, which defines “meditate” as (1) “to contemplate; ponder; and (2) to intend; to plan, dwell in thought, to muse; reflect.” It defines “meditation” as the “act of meditating, thought; especially close or continued thought.”*

*This understanding is borne out by studying the AA literature. The AA “Twelve and Twelve” suggests relaxation techniques combined with pondering a prayer. What do the words convey? How do I internalize these lofty ideals? It is not a meditation of emptying the mind, but filling the character.*

*The Big Book describes meditation as reviewing our day in the evening, and it gives a number of Step 10-type questions (pg. 86-87). It also suggests that upon awakening, we include planning our relationship with God into our day. In today’s language, we might understand this as the part of our “quiet time” not spent in actual prayer, but may include reading our program literature, engaging in religious study or even meditating in the contemporary sense.*

*The best way I have come to understand Step 11 is that “prayer” is talking to my Higher Power, and “meditation” is “listening to my Higher Power through spiritual writings, journaling, talking to wise program friends, and sometimes just sitting still.*

*Edited and reprinted from Lifeline, 2009*

## WHAT? NO FILM AT 11?

My earliest memories are of playing in the mirror, pretending to be famous and answering questions from an invisible interviewer. I remember what fun it was, mimicking TV commercials, awards ceremonies and entertainment shows. Several years later I found myself in a public relations and marketing career, getting paid to promote, persuade and motivate.

**Discovering Tradition 11** (and all the Steps and Traditions) **was like encountering a foreign language**. No promotion? No celebrity endorsements? No film at 11? At first I rationalized Tradition 11's anonymity principle: we in OA have a disease we should be ashamed of—so, keep it secret. As I continued to bring my sick body and mind to meetings, I heard concepts such as, “We are as sick as our secrets.” I figured it was important to share honestly at meetings, but nowhere else. **OA meetings were havens of safety and respite**, like a special island for lepers.

Higher Power has given me many opportunities to understand this tradition in the spirit in which it was written. In recovery, we in OA are not ashamed of our illness. **We want to carry the message to those who still suffer**. But the vehicles we choose to carry the message are not promotion-based, rather they are attraction-based. What does this mean? In my career and my childhood fantasies, to attract always meant aggressive and competitive promotion.

Today, I understand that promoting OA with spokespersons or advertising rollouts would harm individual members and the recovery community. Our “advertising” has a different look and feel. In the quiet of a newcomer's abstinence, I feel hope. In the humility of a relapsing long-timer, I experience gratitude. In the perseverance of members in pain, I know recovery. **In giving anonymous service, I feel rewarded**. I am moved and attracted by these authentic experiences.

I still like to watch makeover shows that transform individuals in 30 minutes or less, but I don't trust them as real. I do trust OA because over the years I have learned that slow recovery is real, **humility is the best public relations policy** and love, rather than ego, can lead the way to carrying the message.  
*Today newsletter, St. Louis Bi-State Area Intergroup*



## WORKING EVERY SINGLE STEP

*Two attitudes drive conflict in OA. One is a long history of being **judged unworthy in appearance** and the other is the importance our culture puts on slimness. This has battered some people, many of whom may be **hardest on themselves**. They may expect that OA's loving acceptance within meeting rooms will relieve them of dismissive, negative scrutiny. That expectation may hinder recognition of their resentful attitudes and prevent honest, beneficial actions.*

*Our society's preoccupation with being thin has driven many of us into OA and contributes to widespread dissatisfaction with the lack of physical recovery seen in OA meetings, especially at regional assemblies and the World Service Business Conference (WSO). The resulting “fat serenity” is contrary to finding the desired haven from criticism.*

*To recover, I must get over our culture's obsession with slimness, no matter what my personal history may be---from unhappy, perhaps defiant eating, or judgmental perfectionism, or both. Otherwise, I rob myself of the contentment, not obtained with food, that I crave.*

**Continued on Pg. 5**

## P. R. O. G. R. E. S. S.

**P**ray; for **G**ood **O**rdery **D**irection, support, and willingness plus **P**erseverance

**R**esponsibility to self; no one can do it for me and I can't do it by myself, but with program and **G**OD, all things are possible

**O**A; keep my butt in the chair no matter how my outside looks or insides feel; "where two or more are gathered"

**G**OD trust-love people; sideline judgment, criticism, and expectations and accept people where they are, including me

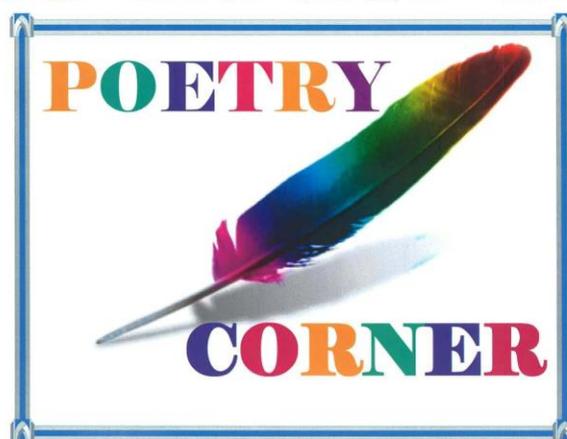
**R**ead literature daily to return my chatty brain to a clear focus of doing the next right thing

**E**at healthy / **E**xercise: care for my body with self-love thru an action plan

**S**tudy Steps and Big Book: work continually toward understanding myself, my character challenges, my self-talk that battles within daily (like Gollum in Lord of the Rings)

**S**ervice: sponsor, share my gifts of time and talent, work towards serenity, become sensible, seek sanity

Chris N.



### **Continued from Pg. 4, WORKING EVERY SINGLE STEP**

*Something is effective against both conflicting attitudes--working the Steps! Doing this in my life puts the slow dance of Steps 1, 2, and 3 into practice. Step 4 uncovers both the resentment harbored from being judged and my prejudicial attitudes. Step 5 furthers the unity of the human race, making it painful to hold things against others.*

*Steps 6 and 7 serve notice that the negative attitudes I hold not only hurt me, but hinder me. Steps 8 and 9 challenge me to get tough on myself and CHANGE! Steps 10 and 11 work together to awaken appropriate self-discomfort and apply appropriate acceptance of others and myself. Using Steps 2 and 3 in this process helps me become the person I would like to be.*

*Hearing the Steps read and discussed in meetings and examining myself by their light help me understand Step 12. I see it more as sharing how I have handled what life has thrown at me and less about getting overweight people to come to OA. I am hoping the result will be that people who need a 12-Step program will find OA more attractive than they might have otherwise, and that those who come to OA will be ready to stay and use these 12 Steps. Mission accomplished!*

*Most importantly, I cannot carry a message I do not have.*

**Anonymous**

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. In 2016, we would like to focus on the tools of recovery. For the Jan/Feb edition, we will feature: meetings and telephone. The co-chairs meet weekly to edit items received and need submissions to be as early as possible.

[Newsletter@OASouthernAZ.org](mailto:Newsletter@OASouthernAZ.org)

## SUGAR SEASON: NOT REALLY SWEET

The holidays should be happy times revolving around family, friends and observing or celebrating the practices of various religions, but they can also trigger high emotions that cause problems with abstinence and issues with food. The holidays also shove us into the middle of Sugar Season.

I define Sugar Season as the period that begins with the display and sale of Halloween candy, which flows to Christmas candy, which flows to Valentine candy, which flows to Easter candy. That means there will be **no relief from the constant physical presence of holiday sugar until the last weekend of March next year**. And if you count after-holiday sales, it could go on through April or longer.

Sometimes sales of candy from two seasons will overlap and makes it seem as though Sugar Season begins earlier and lasts longer each year. In August I saw the first bags of Halloween candy displayed beside the Back-to-School supplies. At first I was surprised, then dismayed and disgusted, but most of all I was afraid. Sugar was always the first ingredient in the items I binged with, relapsed with, and to this day can still crave....so I have good reason to be afraid.

To me, that seven to eight months of Sugar Season can be one long period of temptation if I am not strong in practice of my recovery program. **I got through** Halloween without too much struggle **by using the tools of the program**, but these next months I must practice them even more vigilantly so Demon Sugar cannot perch on my shoulder and whisper temptations and encouragements such as, "just one piece," in my ear.

I must attend as many meetings as possible to hear positive recovery, read program literature, journal about any struggles but especially those dealing with sugar, talk frequently and honestly to my sponsor, and reach out by phone/email to other OA members for support and advice. I must also continue to make daily meal plans I can stick to, and regular contact with others I sponsor can bolster my program if I am willing to do the same things I have asked them to tackle. But above all, I must ask my Higher Power for direction and the strength to carry out His Plans. I always try to **remember the slogan, "I can't, God can."**

So, armed with all the "ammunition" of this program, I am now feeling less afraid of Sugar Season. I think I will give it another name. How about Footwork, Perseverance and Triumph Season? It doesn't sound as catchy, but if I can control or even **vanquish Demon Sugar**, in April **my success will taste sweeter than any piece of candy**.  
Peggy P.

### NEW REGION 3 ADDRESS FOR GROUP DONATIONS

A new Region 3 Treasurer was elected at the recent Fall Region 3 Assembly in Albuquerque, NM. This is to notify our groups that future donations to our Region may be sent to: OA Region 3 Treasurer, Elaine Lang, P. O. Box 310290, New Braunfels, TX 78131-0290.

Updated forms for group donations are available at <http://www.oaregion3.org/7th-tradition>. If you have any questions, please email: [r3treasurer@oaregion3.org](mailto:r3treasurer@oaregion3.org) or call Elaine at 210.332.0551.