

What is Recovery?



OA Desert Recovery

January &
February
2017

NEWSLETTER@OASOUTHERNAZ.ORG

The Best of New Year Resolutions

A major portion of the American population seems to make at least one New Year's resolution, and I was no different until I had been in OA recovery a few years. I recently read the number one resolution is to lose weight, or to at least eat healthily and exercise more. I can identify with that because every year since I was a teen, I vowed to get my weight down beginning January 1st. Sometimes I stayed on a diet/exercise plan for a few months, but usually my good intentions began to fall apart in Week 2, 3, or 4. I always felt guilt and shame over my failure, and I usually ate over it, thus gaining back any weight I might have been able to lose. It was a vicious cycle for years, until I was

finally able to break it by working the OA program.

I came to OA in the summer, got a helpful sponsor quickly and by year's end, I was working a healthy meal plan and going to a daily exercise group. For the first time I felt hopeful about the New Year, but I still had fear about staying on track and made my usual resolution to lose weight.

Here's where statistics tell the true story. Of those trying to take off pounds, about 50% quit within four to six weeks. Another 30% are done by Easter (and its candy), 6% more give up during summer vacation, 7% more quit after Halloween or Thanksgiving overeating. So by New Year, only 7% have carried through with last year's resolution.

With my sponsor's help and doing a 4th Step Inventory, I was able to admit my history of bad eating behavior and figure

out what had caused a lot of it, then work out a plan that would help me from falling back into bad habits. I was sure that total success, and a major weight loss, were eminent. I'd like to say that was true, but I had yo-yo success and failure for a few years before I finally had a breakthrough. Diets, sponsors, program Tools all helped, but I had often neglected asking my Higher Power for His Plan for me. When I did that and then waited for spiritual guidance, my problems with food finally began to become manageable.

Since then I've had nearly 15 years of abstinence, not always perfect, but consistent. I still have to do OA program footwork like any newcomer because I still have a disease of overeating. But when New Year rolls around, the only resolution I make is to continue asking HP for help. That is a guarantee I'll be successful. Leigh

Step One: We admitted we were powerless over food---that our lives had become unmanageable.

LOVE AND SUPPORT IN EVERY STEP

When I came into OA a few years ago, I was fearful, bitter, angry, resentful and worried about everything. When the 12 Steps were read at my first meeting, I heard the first one and thought, "How could this group of people possibly know me?"

My life was unmanageable. I was on family leave to provide constant care to my husband. I was eating myself to death since I was bitter, angry and lonely---and any other excuse I could come up with to eat everything in sight. At the first meeting, I told the group I would stop bingeing, and with the help of my Higher Power, I have been able to keep that promise.

Our daughter, age 35, died from an accidental drug overdose three months before my husband passed away last year at the age of 70. The OA groups gave me support and love with no judgments, and I continue to feel support from them.

I work the 12 Steps every day. Sometimes honesty is hard to face, but I learn from each of the challenges that come my way. I

reach out to people in the OA groups to give them the same kind of support and love I have received.

I have come to recognize that one of my compulsive behaviors is wanting to be perfect in everything I do. I am learning this is a behavior I need to work on as I continue in the program. I keep telling myself that progress, not perfection, is the word of the day.

I am grateful to the OA program for the help, love and support it gives to each person who wants to recover from compulsive overeating. If you work the Steps and keep coming back, the program does work.

**Let go,
let God**

Yuma OA Outreach Day

Saturday, Feb. 04, 2017

Yuma Main Library

2951 W. 21st Lane

Yuma, AZ. 85364

1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Contact 928-782-2808

Unity Day

Saturday--Feb. 25, 2017

**St. Francis of the Valley
Church**

**600 S. La Canada
Green Valley, AZ.**

10:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m



Tradition One: Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon OA unity.

FOCUS ON PRINCIPLES AND NOT ON ALL THE DIFFERENCES

Today I picked up OA program literature to read because I needed help with a challenging situation at work. I know how well Tradition One works to keep meetings strong and united, and I needed help working as a team with a colleague. When a conflict or difference of opinion comes up, it is suggested “we give other people’s opinions a respectful hearing. We express our own opinions honestly without belittling those who may disagree,” and after discussion, “we resolve our differences of opinion by considering the welfare of the groups as a whole” (The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous of, p. 111).

Tradition One teaches me to focus on Principles rather than differences. When I turn inward, my HP tells me that I am safe even if things don’t look the way I think they should. Just like there is more than one approach to recovery, there is more than one approach to doing things at work. For today, for unity to exist at work, I need to refrain from focusing on and discussing differences. I learned how to do this in OA group conscience meetings. After I share my opinion and the group decides to do something different, I support it because the unity of the group depends upon it, and my recovery depends on the unity of the group.

I want unity at work, in my marriage, and in my relationships, and Tradition One tells me how to achieve it---listen with an open heart, share my truth, come to a decision of what is best for all, and commit myself to following the group conscience. This takes a good deal of letting go for this recovering control freak, but my sanity, abstinence and recovery are worth it!

Anonymous

Edited and reprinted from Lifeline, January/20115

PERSONAL CHOICES IMPACT MANY OTHERS, ALSO THE GROUP

My home meeting is small and struggling. A number of members with good recovery have transferred to other groups. Some came for a few visits then did not continue. Of the regulars, one member has six years of abstinence. I was the next-most-abstinent member with over one year of successful recovery, and I held a service position that required three-months abstinence. One evening I went home and indulged in a minor binge. I was angry with a friend who had withdrawn from OA because she had too many problems in her life. I did not think of anyone else during that one-hour binge. I chose not to use any program tools and did not consider the consequences.

The next morning I had to face what I had done. Over the next few days, I realized I had been trying to control my friend. Much as I wished for her to make sane choices, I had to leave her free to live her own life, to bless her and hand her to God, who alone changes any of us. But even more, I had to face the way my break in abstinence had impacted our group. The only one eligible for the service position from which I had to resign was our one longtimer, but she was already the backbone of the group and could take on no more service.

I am learning, in an embarrassing and painful way, just how much my break in abstinence and with Tradition One, applies to not just me but everyone else in my group. All I can do now is stay abstinent for three months when I can assume the duties again. Then I will function well in it until someone else has both enough abstinence and willingness to take on this service position.

In the meantime, I have been amazed at the kindness of my fellow OAs, none of whom berated me; all encouraged me as I began again. Also, other group members have been willing to serve in whatever ways they can to keep our group running. Everyone has realized that our personal recovery depends on OA unity.

Margie, Melbourne, Australia
Lifeline, January/2013

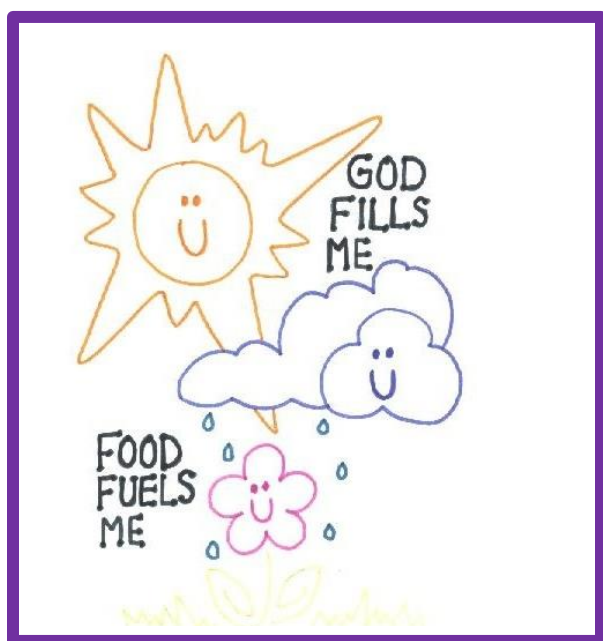
ASTOUNDED AND AMAZED WITH STEP TWO

I believe a power greater than myself can restore me to sanity because it has been proven to me over and over in so many situations. I especially believe it because I never could stick with any plan of eating when I was relying on my own power. Even when I lost weight three years ago, the compulsive patterns eventually returned, my compulsive overeating resumed, and the weight came back.

Now it's going on three months since I took a compulsive bite, and I am astounded and amazed at what has happened to me. I no longer have to abuse myself with food. I don't crave anymore. Somehow I don't obsess about food anymore. Somehow I don't eat when I'm not hungry. I have been restored to sanity, and I believe this is a miracle that could only have been granted by my Higher Power.

Compulsive overeating has caused a lot of pain and hardship in my life. Stuffing down my feelings with food rather than feeling them caused negative emotions to get bottled up inside and never allowed me to release them. Now that my food is clean, I don't have the blood sugar spikes or emotional swings I used to feel daily. I don't have added guilt and self-hate for abusing my body and being overweight. As the weight comes off, so does the emotional burden I've been carrying. Plus, I feel good about myself for being kind to myself. I'm kind to myself by going to exercise class twice a week now, which I never used to do. I'm kind to myself by donating the clothes that are too big for me now. And I am kind to myself every time I keep coming back to OA.

I know this transformation could not have come about without the help and strength I have received from my Higher Power. I know I can't do it on my own because any time in my life I tried, I always went back to my old ways of compulsive overeating. This new reliance on HP makes me feel completely different because, for the most part, I've lost my cravings for bad food. For about five minutes earlier this week, I had cravings for the wrong things. I asked my Higher Power to take away my cravings and within moments they were gone.



I especially know I can't do this on my own because my own willpower has failed me every time---consistently and predictably. And just as consistently and predictably, I know that my Higher Power has already restored me to sanity and will continue to as long as I am willing to seek help and follow the OA Steps.

Rachel D., Delray Beach, FL.

Edited and reprinted from *Lifeline*,
February/2015

Tradition 2: For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority---a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

FINDING SOME SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT WITHIN THE GROUP CONSCIENCE

I'm a grateful compulsive overeater who has been in OA for 10 years. By the grace of a loving Higher Power and the Fellowship, I've been blessed with more than nine years of abstinence. I've lost over 35 pounds and have kept it off for over six years. My home group alternates between studying a Step and a Tradition each month. I learn much from Tradition meetings. Tradition 2 reminds me that a loving God, as expressed through the conscience, is in charge of our OA groups. When I try to control how the meeting is run, my self-will is operating and not the group conscience. It's important for me to remember that I may voice my opinion about a topic but must also listen to others express their opinions.

What is a group conscience? According to the Twelve and Twelve manual, "the group conscience is not the same as majority rule. This conscience is an expression of the group unity spoken of in the First Tradition, a common bond which grows among us as we each let go of self-will" (p.120). To have a true group conscience, I think it's critical to let everyone in the group be heard in a group discussion, even if one or two people have unpopular opinions. I need to let go of self-will so I can hear what other members have to say. I grow a little when I can do this.

I find spiritual nourishment in giving back to OA. However, I think rotation of leadership is important because it keeps me humble, and I need to let a service position go at some point. It keeps me from thinking that everyone in OA depends on me, and I'm the only



one who knows how to do it right. Rotation of leadership means that I let go of a position after a designated amount of time, so someone else can give service.

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The Second Tradition tells me we all have a chance to participate in this Fellowship and to express our opinions. When we all have a chance to express our views, then a fair group conscience can be formed. Most of the time the group's Higher Power, as expressed through the group conscience, includes loving consideration of every group member.

I am grateful to OA and give thanks to everyone in it. The life-transforming principles in the Steps and Traditions have given me a life beyond my wildest dreams.

Reprinted from Lifeline, February/2009

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 March/April edition, we will feature: Sponsorship. The co-chairs meet weekly to edit items received and need submissions to be as early as possible.**

Newsletter@OASouthernAZ.org

(Continued from Page 1)

My O.A. Fate Depends On It

destructive food behaviors. In order to heal and grow, I was going to have to find a way to better my relationships with those around me. Not only was I learning not to eat under stress and conflict, but it became clear I also needed to learn how to reduce my contributions to the stress and conflict that arose in my relationships.

For years I tried self-help methods; books, courses, talk therapy. Relying solely on self-will felt exciting, inspiring and powerful at first, but unwittingly I cut myself off from others. Today, I know when I think something is missing in my life, God has simply created an opening for me to let others in. The voids in my life are simply opportunities for God to connect me with others, and with joy. Because I was using food as joy for so long, I just didn't know any better. Back then, my own story was somehow always more important. It was all I thought about, like a hum in the back of my mind, all the time.

Without even realizing it, I used to manipulate or mow over people, places and things in order to ensure my own desires were sated, my own beliefs upheld. I did not trust my needs could be met in any other way, on any other timeline - least of all in God's time. Today, this gives greater meaning to "Thy will be done, not mine".

Living in Tradition One today reminds me to treat myself and others as spiritual equals. My genuine needs are neither more nor less important than others. That parking spot belongs to them as much as me. Things that are insignificant to me may be quite pertinent to my boss or my coworker. I no longer judge or discount another's opinion just because it is different than mine. My spouse may feel just as strongly about something as I do, yet his version of events is the opposite of mine. Today I know his voice is just as valid to the conversation as mine - regardless of how I feel about it.

I've come to learn that feelings are not facts. I enjoy the old adage "Feelings are like children. We don't want to stuff them in the trunk but we don't want them in the driver seat either". To me, living in Tradition One also means that while we may not be at the same place in life at the same time, we do all have the same spiritual potential. God does not make junk: this applies to me *and* to others. I have just as much to learn from a newcomer as an old-timer, if I make room for God in the relationship.

I have learned the difference between dependence and healthy interdependence. I have a new, healthy family in OA based on the spiritual principle of Unity that helps me practice living in the present. I am not a child now, and the situations that gave bloom to my compulsive overeating and compulsive food behaviors have long since passed. These simple things that most people do without a second thought are carefully executed, every-day acts of healing and self-love for me. An inconsistent ability to access food no longer drives my compulsive eating disease today. It is the myriad of compulsive eating behaviors that arose out of trying to manage my life in an unmanageable environment. Today, when my life becomes unmanageable, I can turn to a Power above the access to food and above my old self-reliance. This power can do for me that which I cannot do for myself. Getting right-sized on the inside using Tradition One has somehow effortlessly caused me to become right-sized on the outside. My angst and frustration, my fear and self-loathing about who I am and who I want to be is what truly drives my compulsive overeating behaviors today.

Getting out of my own will and away from my self-interests frees me from this vicious cycle. There are numerous right ways to run a meeting, be in a relationship, earn a living, make friends, recover and maintain abstinence. My old ideas of right and wrong have been smashed and replaced by a new-found freedom, and interdependence on the program, fellowship and respect for every compulsive overeater I meet. If I don't set aside my differences and let it begin with me, how can I expect others to when it matters most? If I don't put the greater good of my home group first, how can I expect it to be there for me when my disease has got me firmly in its grips?

By allowing God to heal these isolated places in me, I not only get to take my true place in life as an everyday woman, He also takes the fuel out of my disease. He is literally doing for me what I cannot do for myself. When I don't have to have all the answers, my anxiety is reduced and along with it my cravings and mental obsession. My spiritual malady gets a momentary reprieve. I am free.

In my Fourth Step I was surprised to learn that I have limits. I need other people and relationships. I need to feel "part of", to be loved and to give love. I learned in Steps Five and Six that I need a certain amount of rest, work, nutrition, fun and physical activity in order to be balanced or present for all my relationships---with myself, God and other human beings. What I know today is that being aware of my limits, respecting them, and acknowledging my basic needs allows me to more graciously do the same with others. It allows me to see that other people have their own needs that are just as important as mine, even if I don't agree with or understand them. And this is where I find the freedom I've been seeking all my life; acceptance is the answer to all my problems today.

This quiet acceptance of that which I have fiercely railed against and ravaged my body over for years is also the very thing that allows me to be more happy, joyous and free. Funny how that works...the handle was on the inside all these years but I didn't know how to open the door on my own. I had to ask for help. Today I know my OA recovery depends on an environment of mutual need and trust; be it in the meetings, the workplace, or my intimate relationships. When I am part of these unified 'groups', I thrive. When I am not unified, no matter if I am different, right or wrong, I simply do not thrive---nor do others around me.

By considering others, I become a humble part of the human race – instead of a superpower capable of changing myself and others through my own self will. It puts the importance of my relationships with others into even greater perspective. It also places the continuity of the power to live so freely squarely into my own hands.

This morning, I am meditating on the questions "How will I honor and enact this freedom in my own life today? If I am with my family, my co-workers or my spouse, how will I strive for Unity, knowing my own fate depends on it?" I pray for God to place before me the opportunities to know the difference.

Melissa