



OA Desert Recovery

September
& October
2016

NEWSLETTER@OASOUTHERNAZ.ORG

IT IS AN H.P. PROCESS

When I learned A Plan of Action was being added as the newest tool in the OA program, I thought it was tailor-made for me. **I realized I had been utilizing an action plan since attending my first OA meeting**, where I felt acceptance with no judgment. I immediately began to plan into my schedule the two meetings held weekly in my area. I soon realized having a copy of the "12 X 12" would be convenient, so I planned how I could purchase literature within my budget.

Then after struggling a few months on my own in trying to control my eating, I decided to ask for help and got a sponsor. She immediately suggested making a Plan of Eating, writing it down, and calling her every day to tell her what I had eaten. **A long-time list maker, I knew I could do that.** I began to make notes on what I could eat for every meal for my grocery shopping list. I was in my planning element with few thoughts, other than weight loss, of what the OA program really means. I immediately grasped the physical aspect and was

beginning to understand the emotional aspect---that I ate over almost every emotion, good or bad---but I had no clue how spirituality applied to my eating.

This went on for a few years as I struggled with bingeing and volume eating. After each episode my sponsor would patiently help get me back on track to a better Plan of Eating, and each time I got a bit closer to achieving prolonged abstinence. I eventually found a new sponsor who seemed to understand my physical and emotional problems, but who also talked about her relationship with her Higher Power, her daily Bible reading and her regular church attendance. So I began another list---of prayers I could make to HP, of Bible verses my sponsor often found helpful, of area churches I might check out. **After nearly four years in program, I still didn't "get it"**---I was confusing and substituting religion for spirituality.

My sponsor knew exactly what I was doing and through writing assignments, Step Study sessions, completing the OA workbook and my Fourth Step Inventory, she helped me to understand the true meaning of spirituality. She didn't "make me"

read the Bible or write a list of verses, nor did she insist that I attend church, but she encouraged some or all of those things **if I was willing and truly sincere in doing so.** As a result of her suggestions of how to work the program and to find the path that best works for me, I realize my recovery has become "tailor-made" by me and my sponsor, but mostly by my Higher Power.

Today I have a new list and a new Plan of Action. I daily meditate/read program devotional books/literature. I write down/follow a daily meal plan. I daily email what I eat to my sponsor. Another sponsor who guides me emotionally/spiritually gives me weekly writing assignments. I also make/receive frequent outreach calls, sponsor OAs locally and through email, attend at least two meetings a week, am a group officer, and do service at the Intergroup level. It's quite a list and **I end it each night with a Tenth Step inventory**, thanking HP for guiding me through another day. Then I pray to HP for **His** Plan of Action tomorrow. It is always better than mine.

Peggy P.

LISTEN TO H.P. AND TO YOUR HEART

After doing the dreaded Fourth Step and feeling the wonderful release following Step 5, **I thought approaching those I had harmed might be easier. It was not.** I discussed this with both my sponsor and a counselor and listened to their wisdom, but ultimately decided to listen to my heart.

After about nine months in OA, I decided I was ready to do Step 9. I gathered my Fourth Step inventory, figured out my part in all the issues listed, and then I began to write. Methodically I listed a name and wrote my amends based on my contribution to the failure of that relationship, and without thoughts of how it might be received. **I had no expectations of forgiveness,** but long ago I had forgiven those whom I felt had harmed me.

My first amends, against my counselor's advice, was to my first husband, an alcoholic for most of our 20-year marriage. Without excusing his drinking, I made amends for my failures in our marriage. He received my amends just the day before he was diagnosed with terminal colon cancer. He died five months later—

my Higher Power was certainly working with me then, I felt.

Step 9—Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

In the months before he died, we had several very emotional telephone conversations, and I took my children and the grandchildren, whom he had never met, to see him. I later learned that after 40 years of drinking he had stopped, thinking it was causing the pain in his gut. Instead his drinking masked a more serious ailment. **I felt HP was working with him,** too.

My son asked me to arrange the funeral, causing me to do some serious soul searching. Even though I had been divorced from his father for 20 years and despite the co-dependency and pain of our marriage, I agreed. I did it for my children and for closure, and I wanted to give their father the dignity one should have at a time like that. I shopped for his funeral clothes, the flowers, the music, and

the funeral home. After the service, I provided a luncheon at my home. For that one afternoon, I was his widow and helped my children cope. Someone there told me that was my real amends, and I believe it was.

I made many other amends. Most went well, but one went painfully bad. I needed to detach, with love, from one who wanted to be a victim and harangue me about our childhood issues. I came to realize that Step 9 helps us take responsibility for our behavior and rid ourselves of the festering guilt we bury deep inside, which comes out in compulsive overeating. I have done this and have been abstinent for the second time since about nine years ago. **This program works if you work it** as if your life depends on it, because it does.

Butterflyer newsletter, Chicago Western Intergrroup



Annual OA Fall Retreat
October 28-30, 2016
Theme: "Alive In Recovery"
Holy Trinity Monastery,
St. David, AZ.

Pre-registration forms are now available at your local meetings or can be downloaded from the OA website: www.OAsouthernaz.org

**Gain Freedom
 by Making
 Amends**

SO SORRY

PARTICIPATION & BALANCE IN OUR O.A. PROGRAM

When I first joined OA, I avoided the Traditions. I thought they were boring and for the “higher ups.” When I started attending Intergroup and took a board position, my sponsor suggested I fully read the Traditions. More than ten years later, **I still practice and work through them because, like the Steps, they are a plan for living.** Also like the Steps, they build on each other to create a strong spiritual foundation. I learn something new every time I work them with sponsors and sponsees and in Tradition workshops.

Tradition 9 teaches me to trust HP and to focus on the Fellowship, rather than some organizational structure or outside power. The purpose of service boards, such as intergroups, is to help us reserve meeting time for the Steps and Traditions. Disseminating public information, maintaining an office, publishing newsletters and planning special events can be addressed during Intergroup, and **that leaves meeting times free for us to focus on fellowship and recovery.** However, since there is no organizational power structure,

RECOVERY
is a process
not an event



Tradition 9—OA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

The principle of Tradition 9 is Structure.

left to govern themselves so long as they do not affect other groups or OA as a whole.

To me, speaking up when a group member is ignoring the Traditions is scary—I want everyone to like me! It’s comforting to read in *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous* that “individuals who have a healthy respect for the group conscience will follow guidelines the group has decided upon.....When individuals are ignoring the group conscience, every member has a right and responsibility to speak out (p. 182).” This reminds me of Tradition 7. **We must be self-supporting because there are no “higher ups” who will come in and make sure everyone follows the group conscience.** When I see someone reading from outside literature, promoting outside issues or cross talking, it is my responsibility to speak up. The OA *Twelve and Twelve* reminds me that after I do so, I must accept the results. Sometimes that can mean criticism or a less than serene meeting, but after I’ve shared my truth, I can leave the results to HP!

There is so much balance in that. **I do not need to control the outcome, only to do my part.** I pray HP gives me the courage to do so, as the survival of OA depends on carrying the message contained in the Steps and Traditions.

Anonymous

GOD PLANS MY ACTION

The plan of action changes as you go and grow in recovery. After you attend your first meeting and learn a little about OA and the nine tools of recovery, you will need to take action. The first plan may be to get to your next meeting. For others, the first plan of action may well be to get a sponsor and develop a plan of eating.

My first plan or decision was to purchase the OA "12 & 12", so I could learn how to work the Steps. As I read the OA literature, I gained a better understanding of the 12 Steps and the 12 Traditions. I started writing in a journal and I latched onto the Serenity Prayer. When I recited it to myself, I seemed to gain a sense of peace where I was able to discern the things I could change. **It didn't take long for me to realize that the only person I could possibly change was myself.** But, I was powerless to do it alone, I needed a strength greater than my own.

As I continued to attend OA meetings and reading the literature, I saw the importance of each of the tools. I realized I had to put energy into recovery. I needed to change what I was currently doing. I got a sponsor to help guide me in my recovery. Together with God and my sponsor, I developed a plan of eating. God guides me daily, when I am willing to ask for His help. Gradually, I started praying over every decision I had to make, from what to eat to what to wear. When I was willing to fully take Step 3, on a daily basis, **making the decision to trust and obey God's directions to me and submitting to God's will for me**, my life began to change.

I have not been able to maintain my resolve perfectly. I have gotten sidetracked by my fears. I hate to admit it but I would start acting like it was up to me to maintain the changes, to make decisions about my future. I have taken over.

the plan of action, trying to decide what to do and accomplish recovery on my own. As soon as I 'forgot' what I really needed to do, I would start to have problems. When I stopped going to God and asking Him to do for me what I cannot do for myself, I also started thinking about food and being obsessed with the compulsion.

I can't stop compulsively eating, but **I can turn my will and my life, one moment at a time, over to the care of God**, as I understand Him. When I do that, I experience a peace that surpasses all understanding. I still have problems to deal with and difficult people in my life but when I remember to stop and ask for God's help, I am able to figure out things which used to baffle me. One day at a time is all each of us has to deal with on a daily basis. As long as I stay in today, living in the moment and I forget the successes of yesterday and the problems of tomorrow, God can and will guide me through my day, one decision at a time.

Therefore, my main plan of action is to stay connected to God. When I do that, He helps me to use the other tools of the program. If I need to rest, God helps me to go lay down. If I feel like I need to get some exercise, God helps me to accomplish it. He has guided me to other people who would do water aerobics with me or take a walk. **The plan of action is more than a "to do" list.** It can be an exercise program, but it is more than that. I have come to see that what the plan is, is not as important as conscious contact with God. He knows me better than I know myself and desires for me to prosper. The only way I can do that is to follow in the way that God would have me go, doing what He would have me do. **When I surrender to God, I don't have to surrender to the food.**

Darlyn

Serenity Prayer

God, grant me the Serenity
to accept the things I cannot change.
The courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time,
enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;
Taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is;
Not as I would have it;
Trusting that You will make all things right
if I surrender to Your will;

So that I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely
happy with You forever in the next.

AMEN

courageouschristianfather.com

Reinhold Niebuhr



SEEING THE PATTERNS

Since starting to write a regular Tenth Step inventory, I'm becoming aware of two broad patterns. Recognizing this has been a breakthrough for me. The first is that I am supersensitive. I become easily hurt or angered—justifiably so, I feel. With a daily inventory, I'm now beginning to see that sometimes life just doles out hard blows, hard situations and rude, self-absorbed, insensitive people. I need to accept this fact and move on, without a heavy emotional investment. **Getting unnecessarily bogged down in negative emotions is time-consuming, counter-productive, and deceptive** because it prevents me from dealing with emotions generated by genuinely serious events.

The second pattern is when I respond to a person with an immediate, extreme emotion, **that person is often displaying one of my character defects**. At first this realization was most unsettling. Later, when I started examining some of my negative emotions toward people, I found even more of my own character defects. Having discovered this, how should I use this new information?

Recognizing that I share a defect with another now makes it easier to forgive. I try to practice tolerance and understanding. Even if I dislike the other person, I try to be just and courteous. When doing that, I am not judging the other person harshly. Without harsh judgment, I may be open to the prospect of better understanding the other person. I may even get to the point where I can treat myself with justice and courtesy. What a concept! With justice, **I would treat myself with more honesty and fairness**, with an impartial look at my thoughts and actions. With courtesy, I would treat myself with kindness and respect. I don't do any of these things well.

This could be **part of my amends to myself**, and I could put it into action daily when doing my Tenth Step Inventory. I have come to realize how wonderfully the OA program works if I work it, and I am worth it! **Gia**

Step 10—Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

CHANGE BEYOND THE FOOD

For me, the Step with the greatest ongoing effect is Step Ten. Yes, all the other steps are powerful, and I could not be here without all of them. **But this step is the one that continues to change my life** far beyond food; my relationships, work, family, and every other aspect of it.

"Continued to take personal inventory" means several things to me. First, it means my nightly Tenth Step when I write a letter to God about what I'm sorry and grateful for in my day. Writing prayers helps me reframe my day---the stresses, hurts and surprises---and look at it the way God looks at it. I see where God was working when I didn't notice at the time. Maybe He gave me grace to deal with someone who was upset, or delivered something pleasant, or just carried me through to the end of a tough day. **Once I notice those things, I can be grateful for them. And that puts me in the right relationship with God**, remembering He's in charge and always gives me what I need, even when I'm hurting.

Second, I take personal inventory throughout the day. I check myself when I'm feeling resentment. I stop and find out what's going on, what's my part, and whether I need to make amends. **Or if I'm feeling judged or criticized, I take inventory to understand what's my fault**, what I need to fix, and what is just someone else's opinion, which is an outside issue (Tradition 10), so I need to let it go. That keeps me away from doing my people-pleasing, approval-seeking addiction.

I also use Step 10 to check my thoughts, feelings, and actions against what OA has taught me and what I think God wants for me. I compare my present state to the humility and gratitude the Fellowship has shown me works best, and I take actions to remove barriers to that.

Continued on Page 6

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. The November/December edition, **the last prepared by the current newsletter committee**, we will feature the tools: Service and Anonymity. The co-chairs meet weekly to edit items received and need submissions to be as early as possible. **Newsletter@OASouthernAZ.org**

Tradition 10—OA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the OA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

FOCUSING ON RECOVERY

To me, Tradition 10 is a simple, yet powerful, statement. When I am dealing in OA matters, my opinion about what is going on nearby, or anywhere in the world, doesn't matter! Being somewhat opinionated, this has often been a problem. But the program has taught me it also is really a blessing.

When I participate in or represent OA on a global level, my opinion on the price of rice in China or who will win the World Series or the war on terror **does not hold water**. Furthermore, it does not matter what others think about those things because we are not here to solve any problems or mysteries, save one—compulsive overeating.

Conceivably, then, two or more people who are completely at odds with each other could be in a room together, and if they observed Tradition 10 perfectly, they would never have any controversy. The only important thing would be that I am a compulsive overeater, searching for freedom from my disease, and you are searching for the same thing. Together we might find a solution.

I no longer need worry about my opinions of others. More importantly, I do not have to be concerned about your opinions of me. It is none of my business anyway. We are free to not care about opinions at all!! I am free to concentrate on my disease and find effective ways to keep it at bay. I am also free to allow you to pursue effective ways of dealing with your disease. The only thing that matters is that we are compulsive overeaters and have come together to work on our mutual problem.

Soaring newsletter, Utah

Food---Haiku Style

Abstinence witnessed
True appetite - head hunger?
Easy does it now!
Cravings can be failure too
Flexibility
God, joy, love, motivation
Nourishment is true
Satisfaction is real
Feed my spirit now!
Truth speaking through my body
I value myself
Willingness is the key to ME!
I say Yes! Jody

Continued from Page 5: Change Beyond the Food

Finally, for me, this step means applying program Principles in all my affairs. For example, it has helped me stop arguing with my husband when I realize I have been defending myself by trying to prove him wrong. **It has helped me own my "stuff"** and speak my truth with others, no longer just saying what I think they want to hear, which is how I was raised. Step 10 has also helped me with my kids. **I confess when I don't know or when I have done something wrong, and I make amends.** They see me being humble and making changes, not pretending to have all the answers, and not judging them by an impossible standard. It has a huge effect on them. Now grown, they say that seeing me work Step 10 has been the single best thing I have done for them as a parent.

Joan P.