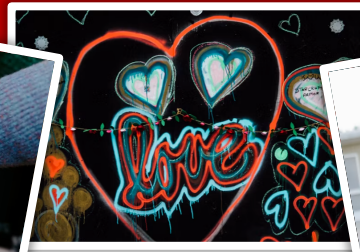


OA Desert Recovery

Tool: ANONYMITY
August 2024 | Issue 8



By Lauren M

Many years ago, a newcomer came to an OA Tucson meeting. I greeted her and said that I would be happy to talk to her about the program. She called me and posed this question: Do we guarantee anonymity, if she shared at a meeting? She said that she was well-known in Tucson in her profession. She was concerned that someone might recognize her at a meeting and spread information about her in their professional circle. I responded that while Anonymity is an important tool in our 12-step program, I could not guarantee that every single person at the meeting would protect her anonymity. I told her that each of us is responsible for our own actions, but we are not responsible for the actions of others. She never came back.

Whom we see at meetings, what we hear at meetings, when we leave our meetings, let it stay there.



By Jodi M

Tradition 12: "Anonymity is the Spiritual Foundation of all these traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities." I love this as it empowers me to choose to focus on the good, have opinions, and take what I need and leave the rest. Let Go and Let God ODAAT.

While personally, I choose not to be anonymous about my program or recovery, I have no right to break anyone else's Anonymity EVER. Some people are not proud or relieved to come to OA as they see it as a sign of one more failure at living life on "life's terms" and not being able to "get it together" in the sane-eating department. However, that's where hope comes in! Acceptance of my powerlessness over my addiction, surrender to a Power Greater than me (whom I choose to call God) freed me of the bondage of self, gave me a fellowship, tools to use every day, and the miracle of abstinence daily. Incomprehensible demoralization over sugar is what brought me to this program. Becoming happy, joyous, and free from my disease is what keeps me here...and I don't care who knows it! My life is the only Big Book or OA literature that some will ever read, and I carry the message of hope and recovery: If I can do it, they can too! Yay! Thank you, God, Amen!

By Becki B

Anonymity protects us from being pointed out in public as a member, and possibly insulted or ridiculed. It protects the program, lest someone publicly claims to be in OA, then slips, resulting in the public thinking OA failed. Anonymity also protects us from ourselves.

Anonymity, in practice, is humility. The opposite of anonymity could be described as self-aggrandizement. There are several possible incidences of this in the program.

The spirit of rotation emphasizes anonymity. A service position requires some sacrifice, where we are anonymous servants. However, without the proper attitude, the position becomes one of ruling rather than service. Rotation removes this ownership, returning to the spirit of anonymity.

To prevent harm to both the follower and the followed, we do not deify sponsors, leaders, speakers. They have a first name, a story, a seat in the room. Then, there is personal anonymity versus personal acclaim. When I enter the door of an OA meeting, I leave what I am at the door. That includes titles, awards, status markers. We are all just another 'Joe on the bus.'

With anonymity, all opinions are heard and respected. In my disease, I had to be right. If anybody disagreed, they became the problem. I blamed them, resentment grew, and I handled resentment by eating. So, it is better to accept all opinions, and let the group decide their validity.

Anonymity is indeed the spiritual base of the traditions.

By Michelle S

Anonymity has been a cornerstone of my journey in Overeaters Anonymous, offering a safe and non-judgmental space where I can share my experiences, struggles, and successes without fear of social stigma or professional repercussions. Knowing that my privacy is protected has encouraged me to be open and honest, which has been vital for my personal growth and healing.

This vital principle also levels the playing field, ensuring that no one in the group is seen as more important or influential than anyone else. This sense of equality and unity has been essential for my recovery, as it reminds me that we are all in this together. Additionally, maintaining anonymity reinforces the idea that OA is about the group and the principles of recovery, rather than any individual personality. It keeps the focus on our shared journey towards healthier relationships with food and self.

By Judy G

I love the idea of being “just another bozo on the bus”. That concept is promoted, in many ways, because of the tool of anonymity...the spiritual foundation of our Traditions. I am neither better nor worse than any other compulsive overeater. I do not need to use a “title” which could tend to set me apart. We leave titles at the door! We OA members share a kinship that is, in many ways, closer than that of family ties. In fact, we are indeed “family”...chosen by the heart rather than by bloodlines. This “bozo” will be eternally grateful to be a member of the Anonymous healing fellowship.



By Joy V'M

It's such a cruel betrayal to discover that a “secret” shared with only one person, supposedly someone I could trust, had been passed on! That many-layered hurt took a long while to heal. I must admit, though, at times, I had committed the same offense, and I learned regretfully that there was no way I could retrieve what I had spoken out of turn.

Before OA, I'd never been a part of an organization which asked its members to uphold the Zipped Lips tradition. During my first few minutes, I heard this repeated, and I relaxed into a sense of safety and security. These folks would listen when I spoke from the heart, and then they'd keep it to themselves. That allowed my nervousness to settle, so that I could speak from the heart and let people get to know me from the inside-out. I remember oh too well the sting of betrayal, so I treasure this tradition and solemnly uphold it.

Editor's Note: The focus for the September newsletter will be SERVICE. Your submissions will be gratefully received when you send an email by September 15th to newsletter@oasouthernaz.org. ~Judy