

# OA Desert Recovery

**Promise: We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness**

When I first began my journey in OA, the promise of “a new freedom and a new happiness” was impossible to imagine. I was carrying an extra 180 pounds on my body, but my heart and soul were weighed down even more by guilt, shame, and the inability to see a way out. As I worked through the Twelve Steps—starting with surrender—I began to experience a profound shift. Freedom was not just about breaking free from the bondage of food but also about releasing the emotional burdens that had kept me trapped for so long. Each Step brought me closer to peace and self-acceptance.

Today, I truly know the freedom and happiness promised in the Big Book. Freedom is living authentically, without shame or secrets, and happiness comes from a sense of gratitude and purpose. It is not about perfection or the absence of struggles, but the ability to face life with clarity and strength. I am no longer a prisoner of my past, and each day brings opportunities to grow, connect, and help others on their journeys. This transformation has been the greatest gift of recovery, one I cherish by staying committed to the Program’s principles, and how I have stayed abstinent for over 16 years, one day at a time.

*Michelle S*



My food compulsion had me chained. To dishonesty. To pain and shame. To isolation. I had spent most of my life in secret, not letting anyone know what was slowly driving me into the dark inner parts of me. Perhaps my big-eater friends suspected ... but we all pretended we didn’t know about each other – or even about ourselves. This program has used 12-blade wire-cutters on those chains. I’m free! I don’t have to hide anymore – inside my home or inside my body. I’ll never be normal – in any sense of the word! – but I look more normal than I ever have ... and since I no longer need to hide, I’m out there in the Wide Open World saying WOW! The first promise has come true – I now know a new freedom and a new happiness!

*Joy V’Marie*

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When the Promises are read at my home meeting each week, the first promise always makes me smile. Why? Because I didn't believe any of the Promises when I joined OA five years ago. I just didn't realize how enmeshed I was in emotional chains. I was so used to my own aura that I could not fathom knowing a new freedom, much less a new happiness. Impossible.

Fast forward to five years of attending meetings, amazing sponsors and working the steps to the best of my ability. I try to do that "best" part as much as I can, and I have learned that something is always better than nothing. The sayings of "One Day at a Time," or "Easy Does It," or "HP, stay close," keep me focused. Listening to my fellows and dropping my pride to really absorb what is being said has profoundly changed me.

These are the things that have given me new happiness and freedom in my life. Freedom to speak honestly but lovingly. A deep inner happiness that has opened my mind to learning and practicing human kindness. A Higher Power that I now look forward to being with me. The relief of being able to say anything to my fellow members and knowing that they will understand.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not! Keep working the program, it works if we work it.

*Brenda W*

When my husband, Frank, passed, I thought I would never feel happiness again. I knew I was at the jumping off point of eat, die, or do something. Going back to three hundred pounds terrified me. I got a step workbook, a new sponsor, added meetings, re-charged my daily action plan. Each day, I read the meditation, wrote a response, and sent it to my sponsor. I began texting family, and program friends. I began to feel freedom from my self-condemnation, from constant inner rage of blame and shame.

Happiness came slowly, in the form of peaceful serenity while doing morning reading, writing, and quiet time with my Higher Power. I had expected happiness to be glee or exhilaration. But, instead the feeling was an inner gentleness. I consider this one of the miracles of the program.

*Rebecca B*

What can this possibly mean? I got my abstinence and then I had the freedom of not always thinking about food. This was a miracle. Then I got the freedom through step 4 of getting the emotional recovery by looking at my defects of character and sharing it with a sponsor. I was beginning to feel happy. I never felt that even as a kid. I was liking myself and not saying "what an idiot" when I did a mistake. Freedom also came when I made amends. I was not carrying the guilt and shame any longer. This did not come quickly but I am grateful that I am in this space right now. Recovery is a true GIFT!!

*Rhonda S*