Overeaters Anonymous Preamble

Overeaters Anonymous is a Fellowship of individuals who, through shared experience, strength and hope, are recovering from compulsive overeating. We welcome everyone who wants to stop eating compulsively. There are no dues or fees for members; we are self-supporting through our own contributions, neither soliciting nor accepting outside donations. OA is not affiliated with any public or private organization, political movement, ideology or religious doctrine; we take no position on outside issues. Our primary purpose is to abstain from compulsive eating and to carry the message of recovery through the Twelve Steps of OA to those who still suffer.
Independence Day

I attend a *Lifeline* meeting every week where we read and share on stories from *Lifeline*. On holidays, we read articles written about that particular holiday. I may be wrong, but I’ve never come across a *Lifeline* article about the Fourth of July (American Independence Day), so I thought I’d write one myself that people could use to help them through this American holiday.

I’ve lost 65 pounds (30 kg) and have been abstinent for eight and a half years. I look at the Fourth of July as a day representing my independence from food obsession. I choose to make this holiday about freedom from this disease instead of being a prisoner to the food. In order to enjoy the people I’m with and the fireworks display at the end of the evening, I must be abstinent with my foods. When I’m abstinent with my foods, I find that my behaviors remain clean too.

To accomplish this, I plan my menu the night before the holiday, writing down how much of each item I will eat. I also commit to someone in the Fellowship for the night before and the morning after by sharing with them what I am and am not going to eat on the holiday and the joy of how I kept my commitment. I look forward to being able to do this, which helps keep me on track should I be tempted to eat things not on my plan that so many other people are eating that day.

Doing all this the day before allows me to wake up in the morning and concentrate on preparing for the holiday and the arrival of my guests. All I have to do for each mealtime is look at my chart, weigh and measure exactly what it says,
and I’m set to go. This allows me to enjoy what I’m eating and not feel guilty about it. I also remind myself that certain foods other people eat are not my foods. I’m not a normal eater and have a disease; therefore, I cannot have these foods.

By the end of the day, I’m usually the only one in my household who doesn’t go to bed with a stomachache and wake up the next morning feeling physically sick with remorse and regret over what was consumed the day before. For me, abstinence feels better than any food ever tasted! This is real independence and what the Fourth of July is all about for me now. Thank you, God, for giving me this Fellowship and the tools of the OA program, which help me enjoy holidays now without them having to be about the food.

— Deborah, Bloomfield, New Jersey USA

Be Encouraged

By God’s grace, today marks 36 years of perfect and imperfect abstinence, using a plan of eating and action plan. I was 47 at the beginning, I didn’t know I had a disease, and I didn’t know the disease was not my fault.

As I worked the wonderful Twelve Steps in Overeaters Anonymous, I began to feel better about myself, and I knew I had to continue with the tools. I learned to do only one day at a time. “Now” in the program means “no opportunity wasted.”

When I went to meetings, other members always welcomed me with open arms. They accepted me as I was, and I began to accept myself as an imperfect person too. The Twelve Steps didn’t say I had to be perfect, and I didn’t have to measure up to anyone. I knew I was in the right place at the right time.

OA members loved me when I was not able to love myself. Now I love myself with abstinence, a plan of eating and an action plan. When I joined in 1977, I weighed 313 pounds (142 kg). Now I am 138 pounds (63 kg).

I enjoy a fearless abstinence. The pessimist curses the abstinence. The optimist hopes it will change. The realist adjusts the abstinence and stays flexible. As long as I stay abstinent, every day I enjoy a spiritual lottery.

I am old enough to remember that at one time we did not have fitted sheets for beds, only flat ones. I am old enough to remember when there were no televisions. We only listened to the radio. Now at age 83, I am old enough to know that abstinence is my nest to rest. Compulsive overeating is done, done, done; abstinence, a plan of eating and an action plan are done, done, done.

In OA I have learned to trust God and let him surprise me. We can be active in our healing, but we must trust the process and our Higher Power.

We can observe dignity in portion control of each and every meal. It makes me feel good to weigh and measure food because “enough is enough.” When I eat more than what is enough, I know I am eating food that belongs to someone else.

A lasting abstinence and plan of eating require extensive preparation. This is why we have the slogan “One day at a time.” I pray that you will be encouraged and uplifted with your abstinence and plan of eating.

— Mamie K., Monessen, Pennsylvania USA

Recovery Adventure

I have been contemplating the words “Each day that we live well, we are well” (The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, p. 106), and how this works in my life. I have noted that the fleeting moments of well-being, serenity and sanity give me the greatest joy and generate the most heartfelt gratitude to HP for the gift of life, this program and its members and yes, even for my disease of compulsive eating that has led me to this recovery adventure.

Just when I thought I was too old and defeated to embark on any new undertakings of great scope and magnitude, I came to these rooms and found a whole new world waiting to be explored. I have come to see my program as an adventure that causes changes in my heart, mind and spirit.

It is but a bit of psychic alteration in my thinking—due entirely to doing the footwork every day of connecting to HP, working the Twelve Steps and using the program tools—that has enabled me to start each day with the honest intention to actively seek out the positive in my life.

When I embody this new psychic attitude, I cannot fail to feel the joy and love available to me. I cannot help but feel gratitude to HP, this program and all who are in my life, even when life is challenging.

Every moment I enjoy life, both the mundane and the extraordinary, is a blessing and a gift. If I am happy, joyous and free, I can give that away in my program service to others.

Giving away what I have been graced with in program allows me to keep it and generates more joy and serenity in my
Say When

I consider myself a newbie in OA. I’ve been in and out of program since my early 20s and am approaching my 50th birthday. I have surrendered more than 100 pounds (45 kg) in OA and have been at or within a 5-pound (2-kg) range of my goal weight for more than a decade. As I’ve heard, it’s about the food until it’s not about the food.

“Not about the food” is a big, new continent I continue to explore. Learning what “enough” looks and feels like is one of the things I am most grateful to OA for. In the past year after much longing, prayer, shopping and research about adopting a dog to add to our current one-dog home, I felt led by HP not to adopt another dog. Program teaches me to consider all sides of things today. In this instance, I considered how much time my husband and I spend away from home, how we spend our free time and what financial resources we have for dog care.

Another HP decision came a few months ago when I decided not to buy a newer car even though I wanted one, had the financial resources and could justify the need. I realized how great my current car is, put together an action plan for its maintenance in the coming years and, with HP’s help, was able to put down my obsessive thoughts about replacing my current car. I have also learned to be content with my current job, title and status in my work-for-a-paycheck life and have learned to live within my financial means with that paycheck.

My husband and I have a modest camper for our vacations. It lacks some amenities, and we thought about upgrading it this year. When we decided not to upgrade, I found a new appreciation for the amenities our current camper has.

I was the person who believed happiness could only be found with a certain number for an annual salary—always a number higher than my current salary—or that happy could only be located 7 pounds (3 kg) below my current weight. “Happy” was an elusive, slippery destination for me, and I spent much energy trying to grab it by the neck and pin it to the ground. I never realized my greedy efforts in this area were driving me farther and farther from my happy destination.

I find today that my eating, spending and living patterns follow and flow together like dominos. Most of the time they are simple, basic and perhaps a bit dull to outsiders.

Do I still struggle? You bet! I struggle with taking my co-worker’s and my husband’s inventory almost every day. I struggle with wanting simplicity in my closet and wardrobe even though I sometimes shop for recreation. I feel frustrated by my slow growth in this area of my life. I know from experience that the best remedy for this is to keep talking about it and asking HP for help in deciphering the next right action.

It has been said that the hallmark of addiction is not knowing when enough is enough. In the old days before OA, I missed the runway of enough every single time. Today I see the runway of enough, and I practice the concept of enough.

For today, I know that with HP I am enough and I have enough.

— Susan H., Altamonte Springs, Florida USA
The woman who became my second sponsor was my mother’s age. Oh, no! How could she know what I was feeling or listen to me without judgment? She could and did because she had the same trouble with food, and she took me through the rest of the Steps.

My eating career is full of experiments with the latest fads, including two summers of fat camp that helped me lose weight. I regained that weight, plus more, rather quickly. I tried this diet and that remedy. Food is the substance I picked up first to help me face life or run from it.

Today my life is not orderly, and things can still get messy. I still don’t eat like other people, nor do I live my life like other people. How do other people live? Do they have to stop, think and pray when they hit a wall or are stumped? Do they go to meetings and talk with others when something’s pressing on their minds? What do normal people do?

While I can’t answer for others, I can share what I do: meetings, writing and sharing. When the going gets tough, I attend more meetings, make more phone calls and send more emails. I pray more and remember that food will change nothing.

Someone told me to PUSH—Pray Until Something Happens—and I do. God has given me so much for which to be grateful, and the promises have materialized in my life.

One woman in my meetings used to say she didn’t know if she had another recovery in her, and she didn’t want to find out. Neither do I.

— Janie, Westchester County, New York USA

Dear Old Me

“Old me, I love you. I don’t like everything you did, but I like what you are trying to become and what you are this very day” (Lifeline Sampler, p.61).

I’ve been watching you. I’ve seen your suffering, and you needn’t worry because I love you still. Do not be afraid of feeling emotions. They are but a passing storm; you’ll only get a little wet.

I’m here to tell you that you are worthy of giving love and being loved. That some people have betrayed you is not a judgment on you. Your light is what makes you, and your higher self will not judge you.

Eat and enjoy food, but use it for joy, not sorrow. Food is not your true problem as you had thought. It’s your addiction to despair and isolation that ails you. Be not afraid of becoming the person you want to be, and be not afraid of whom that person might be.

Simply be honest and respectful of yourself, and your suffering will come to an end.

Love,
Your future self
P.S., you did well!
— Darren, California USA

Learning About Me

After more than eight years in OA, I can say I have learned a lot about the nature of my illness. I had never heard of a “binge food” or “trigger food.” In OA I learned the difference between the two items. I had never made a list of foods I cannot eat without craving more of that substance. I never dreamed I would give up my favorite binge food of all time. I used to eat this dessert for breakfast before I knew I had a problem with food. I have learned that I’m a compulsive overeater and food addict, and there is no relief other than maintaining my abstinence.
I was completely hopeless before OA, convinced I would always be obese. I tried many different diets and weight-loss organizations. These are expensive and give “guarantees” you will lose weight. Well, that never happened. I never learned anything about appropriate foods or portion sizes since those programs gave you packaged foods to eat.

I never knew I could devise a food plan with the help of my sponsor. I can use that plan and be happy with it all my life while maintaining my abstinence.

Yes, I know now I will never graduate from Overeaters Anonymous, and I will always need the support of my fellow problem eaters.

— Glenda T., Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio USA

Knowing Who I Am

The 100-pounder (45 kg) telephone meeting brought me out of a relapse I had thought would never end. During my relapse, my father committed suicide; I was in an abusive relationship for three years and I became disabled by chronic illness. But the phone meetings remind me my pain is not unique. I’ve lost 60 pounds (27 kg) so far, and my abstinence is better.

After years of struggling in program, albeit at a normal body weight, I found abstinence. I then moved across the country, began a rigorous graduate program and stopped attending meetings. Food crept back in, commencing the relapse that would bring me to nearly 300 pounds (136 kg). It began to feel almost laughable that I ever worried about losing 10 pounds (5 kg) in my thinner days of active OA membership.

Society’s hatred of fat people makes recovery at this size a unique challenge. Doctors shame us, blaming every problem on our weight and making it a moral issue. Finding clothes that fit and doing self-care like cutting toenails is difficult. And of course there is the pity, rejection and humiliation from friends and family who tsk-tsk us for gaining weight, their embarrassment and shame palpable.

I ate a lot more when I was at a normal weight than I did as an obese person, yet people didn’t seem to believe a thin person could be a real food addict. This fed my denial and sent me into the food even deeper.

Though being morbidly obese has been painful in every way imaginable, I have a sense of belonging in the 100-pounders (45 kg) telephone meeting like none I’ve ever felt. I have found my people, many who were once anorexic or bulimic too. I am not unique. It feels really good to know who I am.

— Anonymous

Pattern of Pain

I am allergic to certain foods such as sugar, caffeine, onions and corn. Even though these foods made me physically ill, I was unable to avoid them. My pattern was to begin a diet and, within a short period of time, be right back where I started. I realized I needed help.

I called OA, thinking perhaps it could help. “I am a sugar and caffeine addict,” I admitted to the woman on the phone. “Can OA help me?” She answered affirmatively. With hopeful enthusiasm, I attended meetings, picked a sponsor, settled on a food plan and began working the Steps. As a result of maintaining abstinence for one and a half years, my digestive problems have disappeared, I fall asleep easily, my memory has improved, I no longer feel lethargic and I have energy to do things I enjoy.

For my exercise program, I started walking each day for 20 or 30 minutes. In the fall, I purchased a bicycle and went on short one- to two-mile trips. Then, for some reason, I decided to take a seven-mile trip. Biking along the path, I felt great. During the last mile, I felt some discomfort in my calves but finished the trip.

Upon returning home, I was extremely fatigued and my calves were cramping. I sat on the couch and was hit with strong cravings for sugar, caffeine and chocolate. I did not act on the cravings, because with OA, I have made a commitment to myself to work my program rather than pick up these substances, no matter what.

My sponsor has taught me to ask myself “Where did these cravings come from? Why now? What is going on with me?” instead of focusing on the cravings. As I prayed for God to take away these cravings, the thought came that this is a lifelong pattern for me.

I exercise to excess. Endorphins release into my body, which gives me a feeling of euphoria and takes away the pain. Later, when I stop exerting myself and the endorphins cease, I experience extreme pain and fatigue. As a response, I look for caffeine and sugar to take away the fatigue, and I eat chocolates to release endorphins for the pain.

I continue this pattern for a couple of days. These foods are high in calories, so I neglect nutritious meals because I am looking for relief. By the third day of this pattern, I am physically sick from eating massive amounts of junk food while neglecting valuable nutrition. I spend a day in bed, and the next day I feel well again. This cycle goes on and on.

With new awareness, I have now surrendered to a sensible exercise plan. Goodbye to the slogan “Go for the burn.” Hello to the slogan “Easy does it.”

— Darlene H., Tampa, Florida USA

Planned Slips

“We plan our slips.” I heard this during a recent OA meeting. The statement broke through one of my ingrained self-deceptions. As a diabetic, I had “planned” my slips for years. Through long experience, I knew if I increased my insulin dose a bit here and a little there, I could eat whatever I wanted and still keep my blood sugars within an acceptable range—a well-known and dangerous game that many diabetics play. I had even “subconsciously” given myself too much...
I was so deep into the disease and self-delusion, I even convinced myself that if my blood sugars were fine, then my food plan must be right on track, and it certainly followed that I would soon find myself at my goal weight. But in truth, both remained elusive. Go figure.

The day I heard the “slip” comment, the comment came during our meeting’s break period, it showed me once more that meetings are always worth the time, no matter what. It was the beginning of the end. Although I was a recovery overeater, I was so deep into the disease and my defects glared because I needed to be right. Thank God that only lasted for nine months and 68 pounds (31 kg) were gone. Then the work began.

I got a sponsor, bought some of those books, called in my food and wrote. The miracle happened. Today I am somewhat sane and happy, and I’m grateful. Everything I refused to do, I now do. When I heard, “get down on your knees,” I just got down on one. Now I get down on both. I’ve read over and over that resentments and anger will get you back in your disease. When I went into the hospital with a blockage, I said some bad things to many people, but I have now made amends.

Since February 1, 1997, I’ve written down my food. I went into the hospital with normal blood pressure and my weight was 171 pounds (78 kg). I thought I would lose a lot of weight since I was on liquids. When I came out my weight was 178 pounds (81 kg). So I spoke with a food sponsor, and now I’m back in a range of 170 to 174 pounds (77 to 79 kg). My top known weight was at least 281 pounds (128 kg). The miracle is that I was mad at everyone except God—doctors, family and OA. I’ve heard the road gets narrower and believe that 100 percent today.

— John F., Olympia, Washington USA
Dieting No More

It was 1980, and my weight had climbed to 160 pounds (73 kg). I could not stop gaining weight and was looking for an easy dieting solution to regain my perfect size. OA seemed to be the answer, with no dues or fees, weighing in requirements or fees, weighing in requirements or fees, weighing in requirements or fees, weighing in requirements or fees, weighing in requirements or fees, weighing in requirements or fees, weighing in requirements or fees.

When I walked into the meeting rooms 25 years ago and saw the gray sheet with various food plans, I was relieved. All I needed was to pick a food plan and follow it; I knew how to diet. So I made my choice and let my willpower kick into high gear. I cut out sugar and ate three times a day with nothing in between for four years. I dropped 40 pounds (18 kg) and looked marvelous.

Not surprisingly, my pink-cloud abstinence did not last; I relapsed. I thought I could handle my compulsive eating by myself. All I needed was to persist in curtailing my food intake. This approach met with limited success. The next 10 years my weight yo-yoed. I would lose weight only to gain back more. In 1995 I reached a new top weight of 185 pounds (84 kg).

Mortified by the possibility of weighing 200 pounds (91 kg), I conceded I could not be my own Higher Power. OA had worked for an easy dieting solution to regain my perfect size. Nevertheless, I was desperate, so I followed her advice.

Going to the nutritionist helped me gain clarity. When the food fog cleared, I knew my compulsive overeating was at a critical level. Years of failed experimentation with controlled eating had left me demoralized. I could no longer have a say in what I ate. In the spring of 1998 I started working a more structured and disciplined OA program.

For the last six years, I have enjoyed the longest continuous abstinence in my life. I have recovery because I do what my nutritionist and OA tell me to do. I now eat six times a day. In addition to not eating sugar, I have also eliminated caffeine and binge foods from my food plan. I use OA tools daily. I write, read, pray, turn over my food, sponsor and call my sponsor and three other people in program. I weigh and measure my food, attend at least one meeting a week and do service. I admit my powerlessness.

Every morning I begin the 24-hour ritual of putting one foot in front of the other as often as needed. I ask for the willingness to accept my imperfections and follow God’s will.

After years of believing dieting was the only solution to my compulsive overeating, I am now able to accept a spiritual solution.

— Nancy P., Midlothian, Virginia USA
2015 Lifeline Topics

January (Deadline: 9/15/14)
Using the Action Plan Instead of New Year’s Resolutions

How is the action plan tool more useful to you than New Year’s resolutions? How do you set goals and make life changes now that you started working the OA program of recovery?

How OA Changed My Life

Describe your physical, emotional and/or spiritual life before and after being in OA.

February (Deadline: 10/15/14)
Carrying the OA Message to Diverse Groups

What is your experience with carrying the OA message to people of a different age, gender, race or culture than yours? How did you overcome any reluctance, fear or shame? How did discovering your common bond impact you? How do the concepts “We are the message” and “Attraction, not promotion” fit into carrying the message to diverse groups?

Unity Day

February 28 is Unity Day, when OA members pause to reaffirm the strength inherent in OA’s unity. What does being part of the worldwide Fellowship of OA mean to you and your recovery? Unity is the spiritual principle of Tradition One. Share your experience, strength and hope as it relates to Tradition One.

Lifeline: An OA Service

What is the role of Lifeline magazine in your recovery? How has giving service by writing for Lifeline helped you? Describe a time when someone else’s Lifeline story helped you.

March (Deadline: 11/15/14)
Sponsorship: Having a Sponsor, Being a Sponsor

What did having a sponsor do for your recovery? What did becoming a sponsor do? What are your responsibilities as a sponsee? As a sponsor? How have your responsibilities as a sponsor guided you?

April (Deadline: 12/15/14)
The Steps Made Simple

What strategies did you use to make working all Twelve Steps manageable? How did you break down the large task of working all Twelve Steps into smaller pieces? How did you “Keep it simple” while working the Twelve Steps? What is the importance of working all Twelve Steps? What role does working the Twelve Steps more than once play?

Step Principles

How did you learn about the Step Principles? How do you practice the Step Principles? How have the Step Principles helped your recovery?

May/June (Deadline: 1/15/15)
Lessons From Relapse

What led to relapse for you? What did your experience of relapse teach you about the disease of compulsive eating? How did OA’s membership requirement, “a desire to stop eating compulsively” as stated in Tradition Three, help you come out of relapse?

Twelfth Step Within

Describe your experience giving Twelfth-Step-Within service by encouraging existing OA members to become or remain abstinent, work the Twelve Steps and give service to the best of their ability. How did you find the willingness to give this important service? What did you do to be available and to support OA members in relapse? Twelfth-Step-Within Day is December 12. Share your ideas for events OA groups can start working on now to be ready.

June (Deadline: 3/15/15)
Generally Speaking

Write on any topic that is meaningful to you.

August (Deadline: 4/15/15)
My First OA Meeting

What finally got you to your first OA meeting? What do you remember most about your first OA meeting?

Strong, Healthy Meetings

What are the hallmarks of a strong, healthy meeting? What practices and principles can members encourage in their meetings to strengthen them?

Meeting Inspiration

Share your favorite meeting moments and best ideas for meetings full of fun, love and recovery.

September (Deadline: 5/15/15)
Changing Relationships: the “New Normal”

How have your relationships changed in recovery? What role did accepting your addiction for yourself play? What helped your family and friends accept it for themselves? What is your “new normal”?

Setting Healthy Boundaries

How do you set healthy boundaries in your relationships with loved ones and friends? How do you set healthy boundaries at work and at home? Share your experience, strength and hope for establishing healthy boundaries.

October (Deadline: 6/15/15)
Character Defects: An Examined Life

How did you break through denial and fear to face and acknowledge your character defects? What character defect has been the most troublesome and caused the greatest threat to your recovery? What role has the tool of writing played in coming to terms with character defects?

November (Deadline: 7/15/15)
Great Big Gratitude List

It’s time to count our blessings together! Describe the gifts of the program you have received and share your gratitude for these gifts.

Giving Thanks

What role does gratitude play in your recovery? How did gratitude open your eyes to the gifts of the program? What has been your experience with keeping a gratitude list?

IDEA Day

International Day Experiencing Abstinence is November 21, encouraging OA members worldwide to begin or reaffirm their abstinence from compulsive eating. Share your experience, strength and hope related to starting and maintaining abstinence.

Celebrate the Season

How do you maintain abstinence during holidays and celebrations? Share your strategies for shifting the focus away from food, dealing with triggers and joining in the fun.

Holiday Magic

How are holidays in OA different? Share your stories, inspiration and reflections on living the Twelve Steps in times of celebration.

Beginning in 2015, the combined issues of Lifeline magazine will be the May/June and November/December issues. Note the new deadlines and send us your stories!
LIVING TRADITIONS

Tradition 7

Every OA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

Insufficient Funds

Recently, the men’s OA phone meeting I attend voted to change the meeting format’s Seventh Tradition text. Instead of suggesting attendees toss extra money in the basket of face-to-face meetings, we now suggest they go online to oa.org, donate money directly and attribute it to our specific meeting.

In 2013 virtual services contributed close to $7,500 to the Fellowship. As of July 2013, the World Service Office had 356 virtual meetings registered. We now have a virtual services trustee. There are real expenses for that trustee: travel, lodging, phone, incidentals, etc. The virtual community pushed, lobbied and finally got a virtual trustee. Four or five years from now, I do not want to see a motion presented at the World Service Business Conference to eliminate the virtual services trustee position because the virtual community does not pay its fair share.

So, if you use phone or online meetings, please consider changing the Seventh Tradition portion of the meeting format and follow the men’s meeting suggestion. Donate directly to OA and attribute it to your specific virtual meeting.

— Reese T., Glenview, Illinois USA

Editor’s note: Meeting numbers can be found online at www.oa.org/membersgroups/find-a-meeting/.

Save the Date!

World Service Convention 2016

“Recovery: The Trail to Freedom!”

Boston Marriott Copley Place
Boston, Massachusetts USA
September 1–4, 2016

Lodging reservations will open in September 2015.

Registration will open January 2016.

Top 10…

Things I have received through the use of my OA program

1. Quiet mind: the committee in my head is on break
2. Increased self-confidence
3. Good body image, more realistic body image
4. Humility, on equal footing with peers
5. Returning sense of humor
6. Returning love for self
7. Better relationships with family and friends
8. Better quality time with family
9. Ability to give back to family, friends and OA members
10. Ability to thrive in life with God’s help

— Anonymous

Article Alert

• Service: Raise Your Hand; Raise Your Recovery How has service aided your progress to recovery? How has it helped you maintain your recovery? Which service position has been the most challenging, how did you meet the challenges, and what did you learn?
  Deadline: 8/15/14

• Abstinent Sponsors How has being abstinent helped you to be a better sponsor? How does not being abstinent impede your ability to sponsor? As a sponsee who has experienced both an abstinent and nonabstinent sponsor, how would you describe the impact of an abstinent versus a nonabstinent sponsor?
  Deadline: 8/15/14

• The Concepts of Service: How They Helped Me and Improved My Program What are the Concepts of Service, and how have they helped you live? How have they furthered your program? Which Concept has had the greatest impact?
  Deadline: 8/15/14

• Top-10 List Things that helped your recovery most, such as an action, Step, piece of OA literature, Tradition, service, etc.
  Deadline: ongoing
Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

With Humility

Toward the end of June last year, I came through the OA doors with some skepticism and resistance, but it melted as I started working the Steps. I identified early on with the words “Welcome to Overeaters Anonymous. Welcome home.” I’m currently working on Step Seven, humbly asking my Higher Power to remove my shortcomings. So much comes into the journey. So much is important. And it all seems to be connected.

There are four attitudes or qualities that make a big difference when I can tune into them: gratitude, willingness, acceptance and humility.

For me, Step Seven involves exploring humility, the quality of being humble, and learning to surrender to a Higher Power. Humility doesn’t come easily for me and often is absent, but when it’s present, it’s a source of spiritual strength. It seems to be accessible when I feel gratitude, willingness and acceptance.

When I’m feeling humble, I don’t feel unlovable, unworthy, ugly or not good enough. I don’t feel self-centered, self-absorbed, selfish or superior. My ego isn’t running the show. In other words, I’m no longer the star in my own drama. It’s not all about me.

With humility I can say, “I need help. Please help me.” I can reach out to people and to my Higher Power. When I’m being humble, I can listen to other people and hear what they say. There is connection. I don’t take myself so seriously, thank goodness!

With humility, I don’t try to carry the load by myself. I don’t feel like I need to control things. I can admit my mistakes and admit to being wrong. What a relief. I let go of judgment and criticism about others and myself.

When I’m humble, I don’t think I know what’s best for someone else. With humility, I can let go of resistance and release the struggle: “Let go; let God.”

When I find humility, I have more patience with people, situations and myself. I have room for curiosity and learning. I have space in my heart for love and compassion.

— Janis C., Canada

WSBC Service Vignette:

It is an absolute gift to be at WSBC, to be around so many other people who are serious about their recovery. Yes, it is thrilling to think that I get the opportunity to be “in” on the upper-level, decision-making process for OA as a whole, but the personal growth opportunities are perhaps an even greater pay off. For example, I’m an introvert and WSBC gives me a chance to practice balancing self-care and duties to my intergroup. I need time alone to recharge my batteries, so I get to choose when I need to “check-out” of social stuff that goes on after business meetings. I gain self-esteem and self-confidence by prioritizing my service obligations and my personal needs according to integrity, which was a personal principle I struggled with while in my addiction.

— Barry, Winston-Salem, North Carolina USA

Where has your Recovery Adventure taken you? As you explore a new world of recovery, what changes do you see in your mind, body and spirit? What footwork enables your recovery adventure to unfold? For fun, try drawing a map of your recovery.

For Discussion... AND JOURNALING

I do intergroup service for several reasons. First, my home group did not have an active intergroup representative when I first came to OA. The group asked for a volunteer, and no hands went up, so I volunteered. In my professional life, I am always the one asking for volunteers. Volunteers are indispensable in organizations trying to do worthwhile things. So with very little experience in OA but knowing that volunteering “lubricates the world’s soul,” I agreed.

Another reason I serve as an intergroup representative is so I can learn OA’s big picture. Working with like-minded people from other groups who love to serve and are struggling to recover from compulsive overeating, I have learned more about the actual structure of OA than I ever would have by simply reading or picking up bits and pieces of information in my home group.

I want to help my home group make a big contribution, not only to our own members but also to those who still suffer in and out of our rooms. As I learn how it all fits together, I can motivate others to reach beyond our walls.

Finally, I know those who serve grow spiritually and emotionally in an exponential way because I believe that is how my Higher Power designed the inner workings of the universe. I want as much recovery and abstinence as time will allow, and serving others through my home group and intergroup makes it likely my desire to help other sufferers will be successful!

— Barry, Winston-Salem, North Carolina USA
Meals as Prayer

My meal is a prayer. Meals are no longer a weapon I use to abuse and punish others and myself. Most often I plan my own meals, and from the time I start to choose what I will prepare, the loving thoughts start to form in my mind.

Once I have the concept and message of my prayer, which is always love and health, then the program, experience and God help me know what portions and foods compliment my body and soul. I make wise and affectionate choices. As I sit down and gaze at the food that will soon nourish my beautiful body, I remember the journey and the gifts OA has given me.

Each bite is like a verse to my prayer, every morsel a word. Chewing slowly, the prayer unfolds from thought and action to body and soul. I sit in comfort as I convey the message of health and love to my spirit just as I would if I were writing the words down on paper.

I marvel as my mouth starts to digest the food while I chew each bite with purpose and love. I can almost feel the miracle occurring as the food releases into my body nutrients that keep me alive and well. I think of God while I eat. I give thanks for every bite, knowing how fortunate I am to have all I need in life and much more.

I delight in the tastes that burst in my mouth. Contentment and satisfaction fill my consciousness. When my mind starts to wander away from my prayer, as it sometimes does, with love I bring it back to my spiritual communion with Higher Power. The connection between food, God and me is powerful. My meal is a prayer.

— S.H., Tucson, Arizona USA

Setting Limits

I have been in the OA program four months, with three months of abstinence. My self-defined abstinence is three moderate meals a day, one snack if I am hungry and no sugar. One miracle that occurred as a result of not eating sugar was my “fall” from perfection.

I had gone out of town with my partner. While she participated in an OA assembly, I enjoyed a break from life. Then life happened: income taxes, property taxes and the need to shuffle money around to cover them. Those were already there when I agreed to go out of town; I just didn’t think about them. In addition, two tenants had given notice for that same month. Still, I gave no thought to handling all this while I was out of town taking a break from life.

At the hotel, I purchased a device and service to connect to the Internet. I thought I could take a break from life and continue my work at the same time. But I could not send email, print or look at faxes that were coming in at home. And I had filled my schedule for Monday with showing the house and getting bids from lawn and construction workers.

Usually in these situations, I would buy a large bag of sweet stuff and push through what I thought I needed to handle while stuffing sugar in my mouth and body. The rush would give me an invincible feeling, a driven energy. My body would run at full throttle with no driver.

But there was no sugar in the hotel room, and a miracle occurred. I paused, I thought, I reflected. I realized I couldn’t do everything at once. I have limits. Sitting in a hotel room was not serving me. I had put everything in motion, and I needed to change it.

I decided to go home to work. I told my partner when I saw her that I needed to go. Once home, I called and canceled the appointments I had made to show the house on Monday and heard disappointment in people’s voices. I received feedback from the reality of disappointing others, of changing their schedules and possibilities. I sat with my participation in reality, hoping to do better next time.

Wonderful, life-giving breath returned. The next morning life seemed lighter. My actions the day before had put me at the same level that I put everyone else on my priority list. I realize I can’t do it all. I can set limits on what I accept and learn to be mindful of what I set up for myself. I am now more gentle and accepting of myself and others. Life is good. Life is actually sweet most of the time.

— Beth M.
At our January OA meeting, a member read from another Twelve-Step program’s daily reader. Another member felt, although the information was pertinent for our discussion, it was inappropriate to use literature other than OA-approved material. We took a group conscience but couldn’t decide what the suggested guidelines are for literature at our meetings. Some felt all AA literature should be included; others felt only those specific to OA were allowed. Please explain what the guidelines are and why.

The following OA policies are found in the Business Conference Policy Manual, which is given to each World Service Business Conference Delegate and posted on oa.org. The policies listed below address the issue of outside literature.

- “It is the group conscience of the 1993 World Service Business Conference that sale or display of literature other than OA-approved literature and AA conference-approved literature (as described in WSBC Policy 2010a) is an implied endorsement of outside enterprise and therefore in violation with Tradition Six” [1993b (amended 2010)].
- “Statement on Approved Literature: In accordance with our Traditions, we suggest that OA groups maintain unity and honor our Traditions by using, selling and displaying only approved books and pamphlets at their meetings. This includes OA Conference- and board-approved literature; AA Conference-approved books, booklets, and all future editions thereof, with original edition copyright 2010 or earlier; and locally produced OA literature. Locally produced literature must be developed according to the OA Guidelines for Locally Produced Literature, and should be used with the greatest discretion. Local literature should be considered temporary and discontinued when OA literature approved for general use is available to cover the topic” [2010a (amended 2012)].

Also see page 154 in The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous: “In the past, some OA groups have given away or sold a wide variety of non-OA-approved literature, pamphlets, and books published by outside enterprises. As OA has matured, however, more and more groups have decided to distribute only OA-approved literature at meetings. Whenever an OA meeting displays or sells non-OA-approved literature it implies that OA endorses the philosophy of whoever wrote that piece. OA-approved literature reflects the experience of many members of the Fellowship whose recovery is strongly rooted in the twelve steps and twelve traditions.” You can find the complete list of OA-approved literature, including the AA literature that is OA-approved, at this link: www.oa.org/pdfs/oa approved literature list.pdf.

— Members of the Board of Trustees provide answers to these questions
Help Us Get to 10,000 Subscriptions in 2014!

Subscribe or renew and be entered into a drawing for a free, one-year *Lifeline* subscription to donate or to add-on to your paid subscription.

**Drawing Deadlines**
- September 30
- December 31

Each drawing is open only to subscribers within that quarter.

Congratulations to first-quarter winner Phyllis T., Hebron, Connecticut USA

Subscribe or renew at www.oa.org/lifeline-magazine/
Find subscription forms in *Lifeline* and *A Step Ahead*, ask your *Lifeline* rep or call 505-891-2664.

---

**Rozanne S. Shares OA’s History**

In memory of OA’s founder, Rozanne S., the WSO is offering three commemorative items. OA members can purchase each item separately, or obtain a discount by purchasing a package of items.

To order: bookstore.oa.org or call 505-891-2664

**Reflections: A Visit with OA’s Founder**

Rozanne S. describes the birth of OA in this 45-minute interview. For use only within OA by OA members, groups and service bodies.

**DVD #670 $10**

**And Now a Word from Our Founder . . .**

**Five WSBC Speeches by Rozanne S.**


**Beyond Our Wildest Dreams**

How did OA begin? When was abstinence introduced? Discover answers to these questions and more in this book of OA’s history. Softcover; 220 pages; indexed.

**Book #998 $13.50; Box of 25, #999 $303.75**

---

**SPECIAL SAVINGS ON PACKAGES**

Audiovisual Package: #682 DVD and CD, $15 ($5 savings)
All Three Items: #683 DVD, CD and book, $25 ($8.50 savings)

*US Shipping: $5 for orders up to $24.99; 20% of orders $25 to $59.99; 17% of orders $60 to $99.99; 12% of orders $100 and up. Expedited orders can only be placed by phone; call 505-891-2664. Email info@oa.org for shipping charges outside the U.S.*

---

Congratulations to first-quarter winner Phyllis T., Hebron, Connecticut USA
Support *Lifeline*

**Lifeline is a meeting on the go. Give service to this meeting by subscribing. Thank you!**

Subscribe for yourself, a friend, a newcomer, a library or a doctor’s office.

Your personal *Lifeline* is your best friend.

---

**The Twelve Steps**

1. We admitted we were powerless over food—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to compulsive overeaters and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

---

**The Twelve Traditions**

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon OA unity.
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.
3. The only requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers.
6. An OA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the OA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every OA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Overeaters Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. OA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Overeaters Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the OA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television and other public media of communication.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all these Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

---

*Save Online!* Save $10 by subscribing to *e-Lifeline* magazine. Instead of paying $23 to receive *Lifeline* by mail, pay $13 to view it online. *E-Lifeline* has everything found in the print version plus a one-page *Lifeline* Weekly delivered via email, and 10 months of archives online. Subscribe at [www.oa.org](http://www.oa.org)
God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.