



# ***New Horizon***

## **OA Manasota Intergroup Quarterly Newsletter – Spring, 2013**

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**NOTICE:** We have need to fill following positions: **Intergroup Literature; Public Information Chair; and Vice Chair.** Contact Paula 487-8027 to fill open positions. Email changes to OA meeting schedule to [patenergy@yahoo.com](mailto:patenergy@yahoo.com).

**Editorial Policy:** Opinions expressed here are solely of the writer and not OA as a whole or necessarily those of the editors. Articles are edited for style but not content.

ADDRESSES FOR 7<sup>th</sup> TRADITION CONTRIBUTIONS – Make check payable to Manasota Intergroup

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**Be who you are and say what  
you feel because those who  
mind don't matter and those  
who matter don't mind.**

Dr. Suess or unknown

### **Not About Size or Weight – by Margaret**

I have suffered from compulsive overeating for close to thirty years. I never sought help, because I remained what society would call a "normal" weight. I was told by a therapist that my compulsive eating was not a problem, as it helped me deal with my issues, and, since I was not overweight, it was a fine compulsion to have. My compulsive overeating was my "dirty little secret." I did not tell my family or friends that I struggled with this. Overeating in secret made me feel dirty and ashamed. I saw a movie one time in which a character had shoeboxes of candy, and she would revert to eating from the boxes when she was feeling stressed and out of control. Hollywood made the compulsive overeating and bingeing look funny, but my experience has been that it's not funny!  
(Cont'd p. 2)

### **About Hope – by Joan**

In Step Two we are awakened to the hope that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. I hate to think that I am insane, but what else can I think when I overeat to the point of being so stuffed that I can't go to sleep at night. Or when I buy Christmas, Easter, or Halloween treats for the kids, but get into them myself before the holiday comes, and I have to go back to the store and buy more. I often make it thru the day until after the supper dishes are done, and then I break down and eat again. Then I ask myself if my Higher Power can restore me to sanity, or if not that, than restore me to complete mental and spiritual health.

Some of us in OA did not have much training in spiritual things before coming into OA, and others of us have always been spiritually-minded. So this will be different for each of us. First we must humble ourselves and reach out for help from our Higher Power, whatever we may choose that to be. At first we may have been filled with doubts or fears. Some of us may have been cynical. But we have kept coming to meetings, and here we have heard men and women honestly describe what their lives ave been like, what happened to change them, and what it is like to live in recovery  
(Cont'd p. 3)

### **SEVENTH TRADITION Statement from OA:**

"According to our Seventh Tradition, we are self-supporting through our own contributions. Expenses are \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_. We send monthly contributions to our intergroup or service board, World Service Office and region to help carry the message to other compulsive overeaters. Give as if your life depends on it! We encourage OA members to give as much as they are able, to help our group be self-supporting. The suggested donation is \$3.00 or more."

### **I'm Addicted to Food – by Lynn**

My name is Lynn. I'm addicted to food. I'm here from Maine, staying for 4 months.

I want to thank Diane for bringing me to this meeting. I have gone to other 12-step programs but never O.A.

I didn't think I had a problem with food that I didn't think I couldn't handle or fix on my own. Then, I realized as people started sharing their stories, the stories all sounded like mine. I thank everyone for sharing and I thank God for opening my eyes. I just hope that when I get home I will be able to find great O.A. meetings like I have found here. Thank you all again.

The Manasota Intergroup approved final revisions to our By Laws at the March Intergroup meeting. If anyone wants a copy, go to [www.oamanasota.org](http://www.oamanasota.org).

– by Margaret (cont'd from p. 1)

Finally, due to age, inactivity, medication, or whatever, my compulsive overeating and bingeing caught up with me, and I gained fifty pounds in about a year and a half. My doctor never said a word to me until I brought it to his attention. During that year and a half, I increased by four sizes, and I now have four sizes of clothes in my wardrobe. I wanted to go on a diet, but how? And what? My diet was to eat all day every day. The food I overate didn't even have to taste good. It just had to be available. In fact, most of the food I was overeating was healthy, if eaten in moderation. Occasionally, I would buy a binge food and eat all of it, hiding the wrappers from family members.

At one point, I felt so embarrassed and forlorn that I explained to my husband and siblings the problem I had. All of my family members were supportive, although, if you're not a compulsive overeater or binger, you might be tempted to say, "Well, just stop!" There is no "just stopping."

At wit's end, I found Overeater's Anonymous (OA) online. I read about the program online, and I ventured out to attend a meeting. The individual members of OA don't fit any stereotypes: there are overweight people, average weight people, people of all shapes and sizes. Each individual combined his/her love and talents to support the meeting attendees. Immediately, as was read in the OA preamble, I was home, and I was welcome.

I did not know a lot about the twelve steps, so I purchased some literature and the workbook, attended several meetings a week, and away I went! Finding people that accepted me without my mask was so freeing, and it helped my self-esteem while also getting over my arrogance. Working the twelve steps helped me deal with my issues and is bringing me humility.

During my working the steps, I have had many "aha!" moments. One such moment came when I was working on Step Six. To me, Step Six, "Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character," seemed unnecessary. Hello! Of course I want God to remove my defects of character. Then I realized that a worldview I had embraced was actually a defect of character: I always assumed I should be the first in line, the person who got the deepest discounts at the store, the main speaker, the one who gets the best customer service, the first in everything (the head and not the tail, as my mother told me). I believe God revealed to me that my worldview was a defect of mine, a crutch. I was the squeaky wheel, just making sure I was treated fairly! How could this worldview, and it's corresponding behavior be a defect? Because that's not what God wants for me; He wants me to trust Him to give me the position He wants me to be in. He wants me to yield, to surrender. I don't need to use my own strength to get to where God wants me to be. I can "be still and know He is God." I can be at peace and at rest, not wrestling with the world and putting all in their places.

So, now I say, "God, I don't need a mask or façade to prove I'm worth something. I don't need to shove anyone out of my way! Please help me be humble, knowing that I am worth something because you made me, not because I get all the attention. Let the artifices that have been erected to make me feel important fall down, and let me smile, knowing that I don't have to do things on my own anymore."

#### Here are some recent OA statistics you might find interesting from Region 8:

1. As of January, 2013, cumulative contributions to OA, Inc are 22.5 % higher than this same time last year. So we are off to a good start!
2. OA Literature sales are down 8% from last year. Maybe #3 will help-see below.
3. *Abstinence: 2nd Edition* is expected to be delivered to WSO by the time we arrive in Memphis. Perhaps we might even have some to sell!
4. As of January 2, 2013 OA had a total of 6,868 meetings, including 5,590 affiliated and 1,278 unaffiliated. Region 8's IGOR Committee continues to work on contacting the unaffiliated groups in Region 8 to see if they might like to join an Intergroup and come to our Assemblies.
5. As of January 2, 2013 OA had 310 Intergrups, 19 Service Boards and 10 region offices for a total of 339 Services Bodies.

### OA Book *Abstinence* Offers Great Insights

OA is patterned after Alcoholics Anonymous because many parallels exist between our similar addictions to two totally different substances. But one OA/AA comparison has inspired many conversations: human beings need food to survive, but they do not need alcohol.

So what is abstinence in OA? The simple answer is our official definition adopted at the 2011 World Service Business Conference (WSBC): "Abstinence in Overeaters Anonymous is the action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight." These words capture the essence of abstinence.

The WSBC has amended this definition several times. If it is now correctly worded, which words should one cling to when arising from bed and approaching the day?

Therein lies the problem. Our new definition is excellent, but when it comes to daily application, it can seem a little abstract. It is not a plan for living. The Twelve-Step program of OA is a plan for living. So how

does one make the connection between abstinence and our Steps, sponsor, Higher Power, tools and program?

Because a concrete concept of abstinence is so illusive and often puzzling, not only to the newcomer, but also to the still-suffering compulsive eater, many have written about it. One of the most in-depth pieces of literature we have on abstinence is our OA book titled *Abstinence\**. The preface states, "This book is a collection of stories and essays on the topic of abstinence. All [more than 90 articles] were written by members of the Overeaters Anonymous Fellowship and were published between 1989 and 1993 in *Lifeline*, OA's monthly magazine." The first story, written by OA's founder, describes how the concept of abstinence came to OA in 1962 (*Abstinence*, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, p. 2).

Newcomers and members struggling with abstinence and relapse may find encouragement, help and direction in this book.

— Joe L., General Service Trustee, Treasurer (reprinted from *A Step Ahead*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter, 2012)

\* *Abstinence*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, with updated stories will be available late 2012—early 2013

## Tools of Recovery

In OA, the Statement on Abstinence and Recovery is "Abstinence is the action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight. Spiritual, emotional and physical recovery is the result of living the OA Twelve-Step program." Many of us have found we cannot abstain from compulsive eating unless we use some or all of OA's nine tools of recovery to help us practice the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.

### 1. A Plan of Eating

As a tool, a plan of eating helps us abstain from compulsive eating, guides us in our dietary decisions, and defines what, when, how, where and why we eat.

There are no specific requirements for a plan of eating; OA does not endorse or recommend any specific plan of eating, nor does it exclude the personal use of one. (See the pamphlets [Dignity of Choice](#) and [A Plan of Eating](#) for more information.) For specific dietary or nutritional guidance, OA suggests consulting a qualified health care professional, such as a physician or dietitian. Each of us develops a personal plan of eating based on an honest appraisal of his or her past experience. Many of us find it essential to take guidance from our sponsors to develop a plan of eating that reflects an honest desire to achieve and maintain abstinence.

Although individual plans of eating are as varied as our members, most OA members agree that some plan—no matter how flexible or structured—is necessary.

This tool helps us deal with the physical aspects of our disease and achieve physical recovery. From this vantage point, we can more effectively follow OA's Twelve-Step program of recovery and move beyond the food to a happier, healthier and more spiritual life.

### Daily Review (as suggested in AA Big Book)

When we retire at night, we constructively review our day:

- Were we resentful? Selfish? Dishonest? Afraid?
- Do we owe an apology?
- Have we kept something to ourselves which should be discussed with another person at once?
- Were we kind and loving toward all?
- What could we have done better?
- Were we thinking of ourselves most of the time? Were we thinking of what we could do for others, of what we could pack into the stream of life?
- But we must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflection, for that would diminish our usefulness to others. Did I drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflection?
- After making our review, we ask for God's forgiveness . . . and inquire what corrective measures should be taken.

### OA Publications:

**A Step Ahead** ((Quarterly OA World Service Newsletter):  
[www.oa.org/membersgroups/a-step-ahead-newsletter/](http://www.oa.org/membersgroups/a-step-ahead-newsletter/)

**Lifeline Magazine:** [www.oa.org/lifeline-magazine](http://www.oa.org/lifeline-magazine)

### About Hope – by Joan (cont'd from p. 1)

from addiction. We see that many of the people in OA had once felt as helpless as we feel. Now we see them smiling, laughing, praying, writing in journals, and reading scriptures or uplifting OA literature. Gradually these principles will start to help us. Keep coming back!! It works if you work it!!

In this atmosphere we can find hope. We begin to believe that our Higher Power can deliver us from the bondage of addiction. It is worth every effort. This program is spiritual, and it is a program of action. We learn to be kinder to ourselves, and eventually we learn to love ourselves. We will start making better decisions as we call on our Higher Power for assistance.

One of the best things that has happened for me is gaining a whole new outlook about not only food, but also about all the relationship issues that come up in my life. I can let go of resentments from the past. My sponsor has taught me to put myself first, caring for my own NEEDS, not wants but needs. And then tell myself, "Easy does it." One of my biggest problems has been being a "people pleaser." It almost seems counter to all I believe in to refuse help to anyone. Now I am much more careful in weighing my decisions to help others. There are still a lot of things I CAN do as service for others, but I have to be more sensible about it so that I do not hurt myself or my program.

The people I call "civilians" (people not in program) just cannot understand why I shy away from the celebratory occasions where I know that food will be a problem for me. In some cases I can bring my own food, but most of the time I have been learning to find artful excuses. If it is an important family occasion, I may have to accept the invitation and just keep busy talking and moving around with a glass of water in my hand. Think of talking as being more fun than eating at social occasions.

There is so much love and understanding in OA. It has been the beginning of a healing process for me. Even though I introduce myself as "Joan, a compulsive overeater," I only say that because it would be so easy to slip backwards in my program. I have to always remember that I can become a compulsive overeater again any minute. Right now I am enjoying a feeling of freedom from the compulsion to overeat, and I have much hope for the future. I know that with the help of my Higher Power I can become a mentally healthy and happy person.

### Voice America Series Ends – Audio Files Available for Free Download

The internet radio series, "Sound Bites from Overeaters Anonymous – A 12-Step Solution to Compulsive Eating," ended on January 9, 2013. You can still listen to and download all 13 episodes at [www.oa.org](http://www.oa.org). You are welcome to burn the files onto CDs for your own use, for public information, or to distribute to newcomers.

