



New Horizon

OA Manasota Intergroup Quarterly Newsletter – Winter, 2012

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NOTICE: We have need for an Intergroup Secretary and Public Information Chair. Contact Paula 487-8027 to fill Open positions. Email changes to OA meeting schedule to 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.

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Make Plans to Attend OA's 2013 World Service Convention

Come twist and shout and find some Rockin' Recovery at OA's Convention in Cleveland, Ohio USA. Join members for fun and fellowship at the Cleveland Medical Mart and Convention Center, August 29–September 1. Go to www.oa.org/world-service-events/world-service-convention/ for more information or join the Convention email list at conventioninfo@oa.org.

Unity Day: Feb 23, 2013 11:30 a.m. PST

Join hands with your fellow OA members to celebrate the unity with diversity that thrives in OA. At 11:30 a.m. PST, members around the world will pause for a moment of gratitude for that which binds us as one but enables us as many. The strength of OA is our Fellowship.

Happy Birthday, OA!!
On January 19, 2013, we're
53 years old.

Honesty, Open-mindedness and Willingness: The Thursday Night O.A./H.O.W. Meeting – by Jamie, Sarasota

These three qualities are the basis for the Thursday evening H.O.W. meeting. As the Big Book says on pages 549-550 in the 4th edition, "They said if you want to know *how* this program works, take the first word of your question – the "H" is for honesty, the "O" is for open-mindedness, and the "W" is for willingness; these our Big Book calls the essentials of recovery." This is a meeting that has helped me tremendously. It has given me hope and it has helped me to recover in my O.A. journey

I came into Overeaters Anonymous in the spring of 2010 and I loved the meetings I attended. I still do. In the summer of 2011, I started attending the Thursday evening meeting in Osprey. The Thursday meeting is very different from most other O.A. meetings but, as with the other O.A. meetings that I regularly attend, it also feels like home to me. I love the positive nature of the meeting and the amount of recovery that is represented there.

Although I was nervous to start working the H.O.W. format of the O.A. program, I found out two things rather quickly. The first is that the format works; it has helped me recover and I have seen the experience of many others who are (Cont'd p. 2)

Finally Understood: Not Alone and Hiding Anymore – by Patrice

I felt so lonely about my vicious cycle (VC) of overeating, oversleeping, excess TV and feeling depressed. "No one understands this mix of behaviors. Why can't I find anyone who can relate, who can understand, who does it too? I can't tell anyone because, what would they think of me (what a loser)?" I kept crying out, at times, "Why do I have to do this alone, be so unique?"

I didn't know there were 12-step face-to-face and phone meetings in OA where I could have been sharing this VC pattern and recovering. I did go to an OA meeting a few years back. It was mostly about a "food plan" and this wasn't the focus that felt right for my conditions. I thought, "There should be a Depression Anonymous group."

I was so good at hiding my VC pattern and isolating behind closed doors. On the outside, I wanted to keep up the façade of "looking good." I was doing all these things for healing, spiritual awareness and healthy living. I was in touch with my "purpose" in life and very excited about it (but often not taking the actions to live it). I had what seemed to be great relationship with my Higher Power. But there was this shameful part of me that was afraid to tell people my (Cont'd p. 3)

Honesty, Open-mindedness and Willingness: The Thursday Night O.A./H.O.W. Meeting – by Jamie, Sarasota (cont'd from p. 1)

being helped by the O.A./H.O.W. format. I have been able to achieve abstinence and have kept that abstinence for 16 months, something I'd never been able to accomplish before. The second thing I learned is just as important: you don't have to join the format to attend the meetings. Many people come to the Thursday night meeting without working the H.O.W. format.

Anyone can attend and anyone can share at a meeting. There are certain readings that only sponsors read, but this is because the meeting is formatted like a classroom. The idea is that the people who have experience in the H.O.W. format teach those who have less experience. This works out well, as newer people get to learn about the format from people who have been working the format for awhile and those of us working the H.O.W. format get to learn from the newcomers during the open sharing portion of the meeting.

What I love most about the Thursday night H.O.W. meeting is the hope it can give to newcomers and the high level of support that it provides. If you come to a meeting some Thursday evening, you will find yourself welcomed by all attending. If you put your phone number in the "We Care" book, you will probably get at least one call from regular attendees. If you need a sponsor, someone will help you find one. And if you want a structured way of working the O.A. program, in which you will have lots of support from lots of great people living in recovery, you've come to the right place.

Did you know OA WSO publishes a quarterly newsletter that's free online?

A Step Ahead is a free quarterly newsletter for OA members, groups and service bodies. It provides information about issues important to the Fellowship, including descriptions of new and approved literature and specialty items, news from the WSO, and helpful information such as the *Lifeline* Monthly Topics. **A Step Ahead** appears online every quarter, usually in January, April, July and October. Check it out at http://www.oa.org/pdfs/asa_q1_2013.pdf

**The Year of Abstinence Awareness – by Teresa K,
Chair of the OA WSO Board of Trustees**

At a recent Board of Trustees (BOT) meeting, the board voted to declare 2013 The Year of Abstinence Awareness. This means OA will make a special focus on abstinence during the next year. In some ways, that seems odd to me. As far as I know, the emphasis on abstinence in OA goes back to our earliest days. According to *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams*, the first written reference to abstinence was in a list of working tools compiled in August 1961 for the original West Los Angeles OA group. It became more widely known in May 1962 with the publication of the first issue of *OA Bulletin* (the forerunner to today's *Lifeline*).

Our founder originally defined abstinence as "three moderate meals a day with absolutely nothing in between" and "total abstinence from compulsive eating" (*Beyond Our Wildest Dreams*, p. 137). In 1988, delegates to the World Service Business Conference (WSBC) adopted our current policy statement on abstinence and recovery, amending it in 2002, 2009 and 2011. It states, "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. Spiritual, emotional and physical recovery is the result of living the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve-Step program." Even earlier, our Preamble, adopted in 1984 and amended in 1990, states "Our primary purpose is to abstain from compulsive overeating and to carry this message of recovery to those who still suffer."

For years I have heard OA members declare that abstinence is the most important thing in their lives without exception. Others say that the relationship with their Higher Power is the most important. I see no real distinction between the two, because for me they are inseparable. Without a Higher Power, I cannot get or remain abstinent; and without abstinence, I am unable to sustain a relationship with any Power or person.

So why the special emphasis on abstinence now? I don't believe OA has ever not emphasized abstinence or failed to carry that message. But in our planning, it must always take precedence. In my life, I commit to abstinence every day and plan the actions necessary to remain abstinent: working the Steps and using the tools to do so. As a Fellowship, we must do the same.

OA's current Strategic Plan has four main goals: strong meetings, public and professional awareness, committed service bodies and financial health. Abstinent members are both a prerequisite for and a result of these four goals. All of our actions, whether one-time or ongoing, are targeted toward the primary goal that every OA member will become and remain abstinent from compulsive eating and carry the message of recovery to those who still suffer. Just as I as an individual must never forget the imperative that I stay abstinent, neither must we as a Fellowship ever forget our emphasis on abstinence.

Over the next year, we all must remain focused on what we can do to support our personal and collective abstinence from compulsive eating. Over the next year, I imagine that service bodies will plan many OA events highlighting the importance of abstinence, and the act of doing so will ensure that the focus will continue far beyond the end of the year. As everyone who is abstinent and recovering knows, the incredible rewards of sustained abstinence perpetuate yet more abstinence. OA has survived for the last 53 years because of our focus on abstinence and recovery, and we will assure our future because of the same. **NOTE: This article reprinted from A Step Ahead, OA Newsletter, First Quarter 2013, Volume 17, Number 1.**

Our book, *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, is scheduled for possible updates in 2015. The WSO board is seeking broader input from the Fellowship to determine what changes, if any, need to be made. For details and to apply, please use the form at www.oa.org/pdfs/12&12_committee_application_final.pdf.

OA Publications:

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

Lifeline Magazine: www.oa.org/lifeline-magazine

Practice the *Lifeline* Three Rs

- **Renew...your *Lifeline* subscription**
 - **Remove...*Lifeline's* deficit**
- **Rejoice...a self-supporting *Lifeline!***

Renew between January 1 and April 30, 2013, to become eligible for a drawing to receive one of three great prizes:

- Grand Prize: \$100 credit for a group or service-body literature order
- Second Prize: 10 copies of the new *Abstinence*, 2nd Edition book for the winner's group or service body
- Third Prize: \$25 credit for a group or service-body literature order

To renew, go to www.oa.org/lifeline-magazine/ or call the WSO at 505-891-2664

Finally Understood: Not Alone and Hiding Anymore – by Patrice (cont'd from p. 1)

secret of the VC pattern because then I would be seen as a fraud – “I’m supposed to have healed these addictive patterns, have transformed my ego stuff, etc.” I became a master at “looking good” amongst friends and family.

Meanwhile, I was hiding this VC from the people I was closest to for several years. I would abstain sometimes by simply not having my trigger foods in the house. But, when cravings were strong, I’d go out at night and buy the foods I wanted. It felt good while in pursuit and while eating but then I’d face critical feelings of guilt and shame afterwards. The next day, I would carry on this supposedly looking good, spiritual life, talk to my friends about our spiritual progress and stuff but not admit my addictions. I was living a big lie!!

Then, I moved to Sarasota in the fall of 2010. I was so excited about my new living arrangement, being back in a warm climate after years in Michigan and Boston. I had no desire to participate in the VC. I was abstinent from it for 5-6 months. I thought I was finally “healed.” I had some miraculous things happen—one of which was attracting this beautiful, perfect home for me where I now live alone.

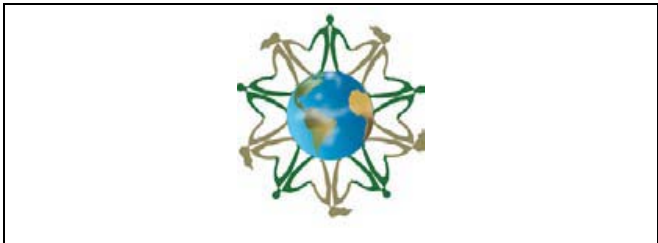
But after the honeymoon phase of getting acclimated to the new house and living alone again, I started crashing. I was like, “OMG, I haven’t done this for several months.” I felt ashamed and embarrassed that the addictive behaviors were back. I justified it, “Well, this is just one of my side distractions but it’s not that damaging.” But when 3 - 5 day binges of the VC occurred a few times in January, 2012, I kept thinking, “I can’t trust myself on my own. Something’s wrong with me. Why am I doing this? Why is this happening?”

So that’s what got me into OA in February almost a year ago. I’m very excited to be in OA and another 12-step program for emotional

sobriety. It’s so welcoming to join my fellows and to hear the stories that are just like mine. I’m like, “OMG, they’re talking about my life. This is so amazing.” I feel understood. I’m not alone anymore. I’m out of the closet. And it’s so liberating to be able to just be honest and say these things and not have to be ashamed and hide them. I’ve felt welcomed and unconditionally loved. It feels great.

So, I’m just very excited that the “story” I believed for so long that my situation was unique has been blown to shreds. Ego is so cunning. I can get so enamored in its spell. Even in my healing and studies for 15 years, which has been all about bringing our secrets to Higher Power and trusting and choosing Its strength to undo ego, I still didn’t see the control my addictive personality had over me. With the close relationship I felt with my Higher Power, I feel I was guided to OA to uncover how my addictive “disease” was blocking me from progress/realization spiritually. I guess I just wasn’t ready and willing to turn it all over to the God of my understanding. Now, little by little, I’m ready and actually turning it all over, one day at a time.

Don’t Forget . . . Unity Day: Feb 23 11:30 a.m. (see P. 1 for details)



**OA Proudly Presents:
The 23rd Annual Florida State Convention:
“Together We Can Be Serene in Twenty-Thirteen!”**

February 22-24, 2013
Cocoa Beach Hilton Oceanfront
1550 N. Atlantic Ave.
Cocoa Beach, FL 32931
1-800-580-7402 (Reservations)
www.flconvention2013.eventbrite.com

**The Greater Memphis Area Intergroup Presents:
“GAS UP in Memphis SOAR 8 Recovery Convention
& Business Assembly”**

March 15 to 17, 2013
Hilton Memphis
939 Ridge Lake Blvd
Memphis, TN 38120
www.gasupinmemphis.eventbrite.com

