

TODAY

VOLUME 16, ISSUE 4

April 2010

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RECOVERY OPPORTUNITIES



Intergroup: March 14 at 1:30 p.m. St. Louis Bi-State Intergroup at Missouri Baptist Hospital 3015 North Ballas Road. All are welcome to attend.



Convention: April 16-18 St. Louis Bi-State Area Annual OA Convention at the Holiday Inn Airport West, 3400 Rider Trail South, Earth City, MO. Go to www.stlouisoa.org for more information.



Super Saturday: Ask your group to schedule a Super Saturday. Contact Connie H. at conniehsl@aol.com or 314.291.7658 for details.

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STEP FOUR: MADE A FEARLESS AND MORAL INVENTORY OF OURSELVES.



I started working the steps back in 2002. I found that my stomach tensed up once I reached Step Four. I was afraid. I was afraid of what I would find. I was afraid of failing. I was afraid of sharing myself with someone, afraid to trust their confidentiality. This fear was the reason I forged ahead. I already knew how to live the disease. I wanted to live recovery.

Fear is a powerful emotion. It is strong enough to touch all areas of my life and eclipse my joy and serenity. The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous says that "a business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke...If the owner of the business is to be successful, he cannot fool himself about values." My experience has been that long-term abstinence is achieved from freely working the steps and living all 12 steps.

I have taken Step Four a few times over the years. I follow the approach set forth in the Big Book. I find it to be simple, and it gets right to the point. I know others have done Fourth Steps following other formats. What I noticed is that my first Fourth Step was much longer, the list of people much more extensive than any to follow. Also, time and again I found the relationship situations being repeated.

Especially in dating relationships...just insert a new name. Now, I don't see that person who used to be trapped in a stubborn, self-made prison. I am learning because I am willing to admit my faults, rather than place blame and act innocent!

Step Four puts on paper behaviors that are a result of thought patterns that we can now learn how to change. This program is about enhancing life skills. When I work my program and use all the other steps, I find I am not accumulating future Fourth Step material.

As with all the other steps, Step Four is about being willing to surrender to this program. This is a "We" program. If you are unsure how to progress with Step Four, I know from my experience that I could not have done it without my sponsor's insight. Simply make a beginning. My life is so awesome now that I am abstinent and living the steps. My whole life I have worked to be perfect, and to my surprise, I am finding that my humanity is quite lovable. God is generous with my recovery and life blessings. May you receive the strength to make your beginning and feel the support of your Higher Power at your side.

Ryan, A Grateful Recovering Bulimic

TRADITION FOUR: EACH GROUP SHOULD BE AUTONOMOUS EXCEPT IN MATTERS AFFECTING OTHER GROUPS OR OA AS A WHOLE.

Overeaters Anonymous allows a great deal of freedom to its groups and members. The only rules are that groups do not harm other groups or OA as a whole, and that they have no outside affiliations. Each group is free to determine its own time, place, format and other practices, such as requirements for offices, leading a meeting, sponsoring, etc. *Alcoholics Anonymous Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* says the group trusted the principle of trial and error to right any ineffective experiments, as long as those two rules were followed. In other words, groups have the right to be wrong.

Live and let live. This can be tough for us controllers to accept in our personal lives. We want our own autonomy, but we're not always as

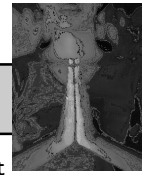
eager to extend that privilege to others. But as we grow, we learn to not only accept responsibility for ourselves, but also accept responsibility to one another. We learn to set boundaries, yet accept help. We learn to be responsible for ourselves and be helpful to others without being intrusive.

All we need to do to succeed as a group and as individuals is to share recovery from compulsive eating through the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of OA.

Mary S.
Kirkwood

TODAY

LIVING RECOVERY OUTSIDE THE ROOMS



OA meetings are a mainstay for fellow members to gather together to share our experience, strength, and hope. I doubt one of us would dispute the significance of this important tool. Meetings inform, enlighten, and provide a dynamic forum for members to bond with one another as we “trudge the road of happy destiny.” “The Tools of Recovery” pamphlet states: “Meetings give us an opportunity to identify and confirm our common problem and to share the gifts we receive through this program.”

Now, it’s all well and good to get revved up about program when I sit within the confines of stimulating, inspiring, safe, and supportive environs. But how successful and/or comfortable am I functioning in the world “out there”?

As I reflect on this, I instinctively (as I do with almost everything pertaining to my 14 years of abstinent recovery) recollect what my first sponsor taught me. Maintain your abstinence without exception and give back the gift you’ve been given. Consistent meeting attendance gives me the insight and energy to do just that. That’s where I get the impetus to go about my day-to-day life functioning as a recovering food addict. What I wanted to consider here is how do I live my life once I walk out the meeting room door? The AA Big Book tells us “We feel that elimination of our drinking (compulsive overeating) is but a beginning. A much more important demonstration of our principles lies before us in our respective homes, occupations, and affairs.”

Whatever is on my week’s agenda – planned events and commitments, celebrations, dates with family and friends – I feel meeting-fortified to handle. Keeping in close contact with my sponsor and sponsees, making and receiving outreach calls, and volunteering at the OA office helps insure I maintain my Twelve Step spirit as I carry out life’s business.

Besides keeping these and my other OA tools “sharpened,” I have cultivated some new habits to replace my old survival skills. I no longer need to call in my food to my sponsor. I do, however, remain vigilant in my food choices. Though the compulsion has been lifted as promised, I respect the fact I am still only one compulsive bite away from a binge. The miracle is that I am now able to enjoy food, not use it. No “white-knuckling” at holidays either – just pleasure in being present and participating.

Early morning prayer and meditation are a daily ritual and a few years into program I expanded this to attending daily 8 a.m. mass. Prior to coming into OA, I felt my religion left a void in my life. As I was

encouraged to get into “fit spiritual condition,” God reconnected me to my faith. Another spiritual aid is a weekly moms’ prayer group I started in my neighborhood. We’ve been meeting on a regular basis for about eight years now. Though none of these women are in Twelve Step programs, they are very supportive. I bring my OA experience, strength, and hope to our gatherings, and they benefit greatly. It’s as important to me as my weekly OA meeting because it affords me the opportunity to increase my conscious contact with God on a regular basis.

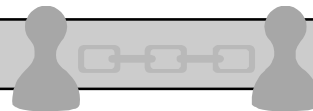
My relationships are definitely new and improved since I found abstinent recovery. However, those I am particularly close to provide an ongoing challenge. My husband and I are empty-nesters now, and though our bond and commitment are close, I find myself, at times, snapping at him as if I were coming off a binge. When that happens, I don’t know who’s more surprised (and disappointed), he or I? I’m usually able to declare a H.A.L.T. (hungry, angry, lonely, tired) and make amends fairly quickly. The one thing I always do is refuse to go into the food. As a matter of fact, whenever life (or someone) disappoints, hurts, or angers me, it no longer occurs to me to turn to the food. I remember those wise words I learned early on in program. “If I have a problem, and I eat over it, I now have two problems.” And I have said many times: one problem at a time is all God and I can handle. If I avoid using food as my drug during a crisis, trauma, or a plain ol’ simple challenge, I have a much easier shot at maintaining my discernment, my peace, and/or my sanity.

So I try to get up every morning with a spirit of gratitude. I find if I am grateful, I tend to be more hopeful. If I allow diseased thoughts to overwhelm me, then hope becomes an elusive commodity. And as an addict living in recovery, I need to have hope – hope I will keep the food god at bay another day, hope I will be still and listen to God’s plans for me that day, and hope this recovering addict will actually follow through with those divine directions.

Amazing, incredible, miraculous – these are just a few of the superlatives used to describe our Twelve Step recovery. I’d like to add “doable.” Though daunting at first, I’ve grown to find our OA program is absolutely “user-friendly.” Whether benefiting from the close camaraderie of a meeting or functioning on my own in the real world, our program affords me both limitless opportunities and possibilities, as I greet each new day. I remind myself to keep the drama to a minimum – whatever confronts me, I know “this too shall pass.” And, tomorrow is always another day.

Peggy E.

CONSCIOUS CONTACT



The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous makes some “definite and valuable suggestions” on how to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand Him (pages 85-88). I like to read these pages often for inspiration and direction. We are encouraged to “pause, whenever agitated or doubtful” and turn to our HP for help.

I frequently find myself in a mass of doubtful agitation. When I pause, I can sometimes feel as though a “reset” button has been hit, and I’m brought into the present moment. It seems that more and more of my

HP’s will for me is to simply be in the present, not regretting the past, fearing the future, or figuring out or trying to understand, but just being *conscious*, so *contact* can be made.

Recently I was on my way to a meeting, getting agitated over being late, scolding myself and worrying. I had the intuition to know this was probably *not* my HP’s will for me and got an inspiration to look around

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at the beautiful fall foliage and sunshine and to thank my HP. Agitation was instantly replaced with serenity.



As part of a rehabilitation program, I water walk in a local pool several times a week. This is proving very helpful in my rehab, but I can get bored and feel “put upon.” I was walking and repeating some short prayers one day when I had the intuition that my mind could be better occupied. I asked for and was given the inspiration to feel the water on my body and to be aware of my body moving through the

water...to be truly present to where I was and what I was doing. Drudgery became joy.

Another drudgery in my life is folding laundry. Very often, I would let my mind wander and end up in a “minefield,” leaving me agitated and doubtful. I’ve come to use the time to have some conscious contact, especially to do some gratitude prayers, thanking my HP for the clothes to fold and whatever else I can think of. The time passes quickly and serenity is the payoff. For me, the real power is in the pause. That’s where I find my Higher Power.

Mary B

WILLING TO GO TO ANY LENGTHS

I can’t recall ever needing a meeting as badly as I did a few days ago. I’m sure there were other times I needed a meeting but wasn’t aware of it. That evening, I was acutely aware of it. The only one I could find, location and time wise, was a different Twelve Step program open meeting. I walked into the room, immediately felt at peace until my eyes fell upon a big box of my drug of choice. Then there was another container with a half a sheet of my drug of choice! And then there was a big bowl with a bunch of small, individually wrapped pieces of my drug of choice.

And I froze. No, no, no, no, no.

And all these kind people didn’t know what my addiction is, so actually eating these things would not have raised an eyebrow. In fact, they kept saying, “Help yourself!”

But I heard a very clear voice in my head.

“WHY are you here? You came for recovery so go get some!”

And it was true. Granted, we don’t hold our meetings in bakeries and grocery stores for a reason, but that night, the food was a symbol of every piece of crap I had to get around in order to stay present in my own recovery. That regardless of what was going on, regardless of the 10 pounds of sugar in front of me, I was there for recovery, and that was it. I won’t say I didn’t eyeball the table more than once. That would be dishonest. I won’t say I didn’t wonder what kind of filling was lurking within the confines of the box because I’m human, and I’m an addict. But, I didn’t eat any of it. And I didn’t let it drive me into stopping later. Was it a test? I’ll never know. But I went there for recovery, and that’s what I got. I left with my opinion that God has a sense of humor very much intact. I left abstinent.

Shannon G.

**THINGS HEARD AT OA’S BIRTHDAY SUPER SATURDAY**

- “Where’s the law that says I must buy Halloween candy?”
- Think outside the box.
- Newcomers in OA who sit and nod are the ones to worry about – the defiant ones, the ones who question, are the ones who have a chance.
- I gave up the whips and chains and don’t beat myself.
- If I try to tell people what to do, they naturally rebel.
- Think about what I am willing to do for my recovery, NOT about all the things I am NOT willing to do.
- Along the way, sponsees can end up teaching sponsors too.
- Don’t give suggestions unless asked.
- Giving myself permission to do certain things can help get rid of the unwritten “rules” in my head.
- If a food “owns” me, I should consider removing it from my food plan.
- If I hear voices in my head and am unsure of whether it is God, remember that God doesn’t say mean things.

- I don’t know to what or whom I pray, but I pray. If I pray to nothing, then nothing is doing a better job than I am.
- This disease can either take me down OR take me to better places.
- People who don’t go to meetings don’t find out what happens to people who don’t go to meetings.
- Sit quietly and listen for God.
- The first step and last step are about food – the 10 steps in between are about *me*.
- Ask “What am I *willing* to do today?” instead of “What *should* I do today?”
- People who keep coming back do better than those who don’t.
- Under stress, we regress.
- It is healthy for me to stay away from situations and people that are toxic to me – still recognizing that most people are doing the best that they can.

Chris. A

HAVE YOU USED THE TOOL OF WRITING LATELY? CONSIDER GIVING SERVICE BY WRITING AN ARTICLE FOR TODAY!

OA CONVENTION APRIL 16-18

During these dog days of winter, even program can seem to be like trudging the happy road. What we need is a great boost, a booster shot of program. The perfect place will be at the OA Convention, if we will just hold out until April. We know what we were like and don't want to go back to our pre-program days, so sign up now for convention and give yourself something great to look forward to.

SIGN UP NOW- Convention is just around the corner. Budget tight? That's okay, send in your registration form now with at least half the payment. You can send in the rest when you can or pay at the door, just include a note with your form!! We Care funds are also available. Call Jennifer (314.607.8232) to arrange it!

The convention committee is asking for your help. So far we haven't found anyone willing to coordinate the ways and means. Unless someone volunteers, we will only have a silent auction. We are still **requesting groups to donate items that can be used for the silent auction**, just as we have done in prior years. Please let us know the value so we can determine the minimum bid.

Please announce at your meetings that we're asking each group to sign up for a time slot to staff the literature table. Your group can decide the coordination of that hour.

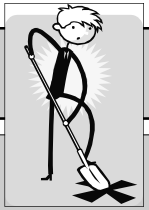
Also consider helping next year on this committee, since it is so much easier to have the convention you want when you get involved. Go to www.stlouisoa.org for more information.

Thanks, Convention Committee

Announcements

- We have a new men's meeting starting up in our Intergroup. It will be on Monday evenings at 6 p.m. at the "4522 Club" at 4522 Lindell Boulevard. The first meeting will be March 5, 2010. Please announce this information at your meetings, and if there are any men who are interested in a men's meeting, they can call Bill T. at 636.795.634 for more information.
- Save trees and money! Read *Today* online at www.stlouisoa.org
- For guidelines or to schedule a Super Saturday, contact Connie H. at conniehl@aol.com or 314.291.7658 for details.
- World Service has a new podcast posted on the web site: *To the Man Who Wants to Stop Compulsive Overeating, Welcome*. You can listen at <http://www.oa.org/podcast/>.
- Order your OA Convention Shirt. \$25 If you are going to Convention and would like to have a shirt, send your order and payment to Barb Massey, 12 Valley Rd, St Charles, Mo, 63303. Make sure you specify what size you need and write your check to OA Convention. For more information, contact Barb at 636.724.2419 or bmassey0631@sbcglobal.net
- The St Louis Bi-State Intergroup has a lending media library with over a thousand tapes/CDs that are available to members in our intergroup. The CDs can be checked out and returned to the OA office, Intergroup meetings, and/or Super Saturdays. An Intergroup representative can also bring CDs to you and your group. Just ask! The cassettes are now limited since the recordings in the last few years are now on CDs. In 1984, during Twelve Step Day, which is now convention, OA began recording members' shares. The latest recording is from the Super Saturday, December, 2009. There are recordings from World Service conventions, conferences, Region conventions, St Louis conventions, and Super Saturdays. Please consider borrowing a CD for your group to listen to at a meeting. If you are interested in helping with the conversion of cassettes to CDs contact Connie at 314.291.7658 or conniehl@aol.com.

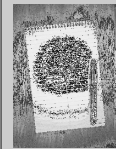
STEP FOUR



It all begins with a problem:
You know—a problem that plants itself
Overtaking all thoughts
Like a thick, permeating ivy
That the sun won't shine through.

Until you uncover the cause of the problem:
The person, place or thing
A statement, a behavior,
An institution's policies or procedures
A resentment relived.

Whatever the cause,
You dig until you discover how you are affected
Battered self-worth
Emotional and physical security
Rocked.



Writing is the tool
That chips away at denial
So that we see our part--
Our part in the problems,
Our part in the causes.

Underneath the problem
And the cause
And our part in it
Lie those character defects
Defenses built up in a lifetime.

Perfectionism and procrastination,
Denial and avoidance,
Pessimism and judgmentalism
People pleasing and self-centeredness
A moral inventory

Taken in Step 4
Because we have taken Step 3
And are willing to do what we need to do
To uncover, discover
And recover.

~Anonymous

The opinions expressed in *Today* represent individual members' hope, strength and experience and do not necessarily represent OA as a whole. Take what you like and leave the rest. The editor reserves the right to revise submissions.

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