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OA TODAY



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I AM POWERLESS OVER FOOD!

Honestly, I was a happy, lucky individual. Everything in my life was positive except for my weight. For me, I suppose my disease manifested itself after I got married. I was an RN and worked the 3-11 shift, full-time. My husband would be asleep when I came home from work. Now that I was married, I could buy as much snack food as I wanted – and in the quiet of the late hour, eat as many snacks as I wanted. I was a great grazer. Did I want salty or sweet, or both? I could sit in our living room and eat anything. And then I discovered Tupperware!! If I put the cookies in those containers, (not for keeping them fresh of course) my husband wouldn't know how many I ate. I could always go on my days off, or before I went to work, and buy another package to add to the container. Once I discovered that, I started doing that with all the other "goodies" I loved. Isn't that insanity? My husband didn't care if I ate these foods. To add to the insanity, I have spent thousand of dollars on various weight loss programs. Oh! I lost the weight, only to gain it back, and then some, every time. It has been this way my entire **adult** life, and I am 60!!

When I was going to be turning 34; I had pre-eclampsia with my first baby, and my ultimatum was to lose weight or no second baby. I lost the weight – to a weight I hadn't been since 1976. I gained 60 pounds in the pregnancy, and the up and down of weight loss/gain continued. One of my last bits of insanity was hiding my candies, cookies, etc. in my daughter's dresser drawers and our mud room. I would also hide my opened bags of cookies or candies that I started to consume on my way home from stores.

Several months back, I wanted to get the mud room organized. My husband and I were busy organizing..., and then we opened up cabinets and there, staring me in the face, was a bag of unopened chocolate chips. There was no hiding it quickly, I was so totally embarrassed and speechless. I didn't even remember when I hid that bag there. My husband never said a word; he just

pitched it. I don't know whom I thought I was fooling; surely he knew I was sneaking food. I am quite aware of the *mantra*: "What you eat in private, shows up in public." So it isn't so much being honest with others, but rather being honest with ourselves.

I walked through those OA doors for the first time on September 27, 2015. Two days before, I had been at the doctor's office, and my weight was up higher than my previous visit. My doctor was checking my A1C level. I knew things weren't going to be in a normal range. The doctor's office was in the process of relocating, so I was giving them ample time to call me with my lab results. Days turned into weeks, which turned into months. (I guess secretly I didn't want to know). January came and it was then that I learned that my A1C back in September was 6.7. I was told that this was a diabetic range, and I would be placed on Metformin if my level hadn't changed with my next visit. My next appointment was in February. By then (after getting abstinent), my weight was down 25 pounds and my doctor called me to tell me that my A1C was 5.8 – not diabetic! No medication needed. This was music to my ears.

I know I'm a compulsive over-eater/food addict because the weight loss programs were only a temporary fix. Turning my weaknesses over to a higher power is the only way. Support from others in the same insanity just **helps**. We are in it together. I am at a point now where abstinence has truly left me not wanting those snacks or sweets. It is liberating!!! I became abstinent on January 11, 2016. I still feel like a "newbie" in this program, and yet it has been six months. I am learning life is what you make it. You can choose to let situations "eat" at you (pardon the pun) or you can choose to not react to the situation that may cause you to overeat. That is when you use your tools: your Higher Power, your OA meetings, your literature, your sponsor, etc. I am Marilyn F. and I am powerless over food.

Powerless!

Marilyn F.

STEP EIGHT

“Made a list of those we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all. “

What Does This Step Mean?

There are two names on my list for today's example: My own name and the name of my child's other parent. Divorce is so common in recovery and part of my experience. We ex-problem addicts have years of wreckage left behind in our wake. Time to right my course.

It's time for a simple amend. It has taken time and work to get here. I am ready today. I have to use my tool of acting as if, in making this change. It's simple. Willingness, as I encounter the triggering interactions with the other parent, to be different. Not expecting to be treated differently myself. Changing my behavior and state of consciousness, from bitterness to the new, unknown experience. Treating my child's parent with respect and dignity.

Goodness, how far I've come from lawyers and custody fighting! Not easy. I can 'act as if,' get out of the way, and become different today; different right now.

I am not an X. My child's other parent is not an X. They are Father/Mother, or Mom/Dad, or Daddy/Mommy.

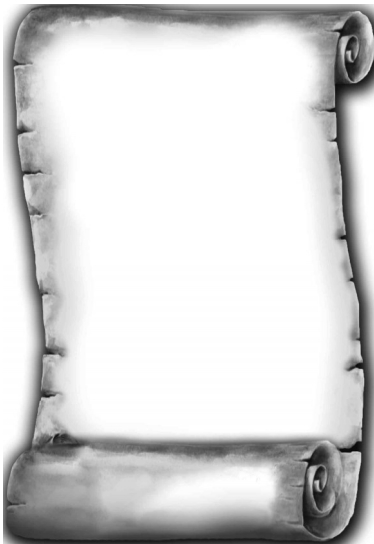
No longer will I refer to them as my X. I am not going to X out half of my child's parental relationship. I will help buy gifts when appropriate. I will suggest getting the card, when appropriate. I will do my best with a living amends for myself and the other parent.

It's simple, not easy. I have spoken many times about practicing this change with my sponsor. Sometimes I measure up to a better ideal and other times, less so. I will continue the work.

It is in the pardoning that one is pardoned.

Anonymous

WHOM HAVE I HARMED?



How Does This Step Work?

On the day of my first OA meeting, I attended another 12 step group where the topic was Step Eight. For the first time, I really heard the word *willing*. We become willing to make amends, whether we want to or not.

My sponsor from my other program had asked me to put my name on my amends list when I told her about my struggles with food. However, she told me she couldn't help with my food issues because she didn't have eating problems. She said I'd need to come to OA, and work the OA program. I knew people that attended an OA meeting that evening, and I promised her I would go.

That is where, once again, I heard the word *willing* in the meeting. No, I did not want to change – I just wanted to lose weight and to stop stealing food. I also wanted to stop fantasizing about getting diabetes. I fantasized that if I got diabetes, I would be so miserable I would want to change my eating. But the meeting stressed that even though I may never want to change my eating habits, all I have to do is become willing. Somehow between that meeting and my first OA meeting later that evening, I became willing, one day at a time, to make amends to myself in the area of food.

I had first taken notice of the Eighth Step while I was working on my first Fourth Step. I heard a woman enthuse about how much freedom she had received by becoming willing to change and make amends. As I listened, I knew that my ex-husband would end up on my Eighth Step list, and I knew she was nuts if she thought I would ever make amends to him. As far as I was concerned, he deserved every thing I had ever done to him! I shared this with my sponsor and she said not to worry, I might change my mind once I got to Step Eight. I was able to become willing to make amends to others on my list, but not him!

It took more meetings, abstinence, and listening, and one day it clicked. I was at another Eighth Step meeting, and someone was talking about what they had done to someone. I heard them and knew that I too had done that, and how hurtful that was. In that moment, I was able to see my ex as another human being I had harmed, and to whom I owed amends. I was able to let go of my self righteousness and resentment, and became willing to see both my ex and I as fallible and worthy human beings.

I still struggle with willingness. I hate it when foods that used to work well, now don't! I still stomp my feet, swear, and say I don't want to! And after the temper tantrum, I can read Step Eight and know I never have to wait till I want to change, all I have to do is be willing to, just for today.

Anonymous



Jacqueline G (Jackie), an active OA member, passed away on May 8, 2016, in Naples, Florida. Our condolences to her family and friends.

TRADITION EIGHT

“OA should remain forever non-professional,
but our service centers may employ special workers.”

What Does This Tradition Mean?

To paraphrase an OA speaker, "I can't escape quicksand by pulling myself out by my hair." I need to grab on to OA's steps and tools to get out of the quicksand. I also need "special workers" who serve my recovery, but who are not of OA.

Three "special workers" outside of OA who have served my recovery include:

Professional therapists. OA fellows are not my therapists and OA meetings are not my group therapy. This holds true even when an OA fellow is a therapist outside of program. In program, all OAs are just fellow bozos on the bus. There was a time when I needed professional counseling to further my emotional health, and for that I employed a "special worker" - a licensed therapist.

Outside authors. There are many books that have helped shape my recovery path over the years. When I worked Steps 6 and 7 for the first time, two "special workers" had a profound influence on my progress. One book opened my eyes to a dance of behaviors that I had experienced directly and indirectly, but had never understood or had names for. So much that had been mysterious to me now made sense! After I identified fear as a major driver in how I lived my life, I sought out books about fear. An OA fellow recommended a book about fear that became my second "special worker". From the book's stories, I gained happy courage to take risks necessary to live a rich life.

Other fellowships. Although OA is my source program, I found it didn't meet the need I had to learn how to act sanely and serenely with troubled loved ones, or really, how to participate in a healthy relationship generally. For this, I needed another program as a "special worker" in my life.

Some OAs use other "special workers," such as:

- Dieticians;
- Prescribed medications or procedures which treat physical/mental conditions that influence physical and emotional recovery; or
- Particular religious practices or spiritual advisers

With OA's steps, tools, traditions - and my "special workers" - I have that Rule Book to Life I always wondered about.

Kerenssa

How Does This Tradition Work?

I am a professional person on a number of fronts. I have various public personae. I am a person of "wisdom" - knowing many facts about many things, like a trivia guru. I also have worn many masks.

None of this, however, serves my participation in and my appreciation for Overeaters Anonymous. In fact, more often than not, the "professional" or "public" side of my life can get in the way of my honesty and humility which is absolutely essential for my abstinence and recovery in OA.

For example: When I first came to OA, I thought it was so ignorant that people would say something like, "Fire your HP if it doesn't work for you, and hire another," because that was not an educated and rational way to deal with a "Higher Power." Also, I was very wary and cautious about people who were so friendly and open to me, without knowing me. Somehow, too, I figured my thought processes were better than the rest because I had more knowledge and experience.

You know, all of that was a ruse, a mask, a cover-up! It was my fortification mentality to keep me from admitting my powerlessness over my disease, my inability to control my life, and my lack of willingness to surrender to a power outside of, and bigger than me myself.

It was not until I could say to myself, "Mr. Self, knock down that wall!" that my fortified wall all around me could begin to crumble.

Yes, I've lost way over 40 lbs. in OA, but more importantly, I have broken through a self-decreed importance that defined and colored my world for so many years and kept me distant from so many people. Because I was so distant, I was removed from their love and concern, their support, and their help. Because I was not connected, I was unaware of the power of feelings, the strength of dialogue, and the worth of sharing. Because I became so isolated, I had no hope of healing.

Imagine: if an individual in OA can gain so much by becoming "non-professional," how much more can the whole organization of Overeaters Anonymous be when it is person-centered, recovery-minded, and non-professional-oriented.

Anonymous

OA FOR THE FUN OF IT!

Two people are talking; one is a NORMAL eater and one is a COMPULSIVE overeater. The Normal eater says to the Compulsive overeater, "Which came first...the chicken or the egg?" The Compulsive overeater said, "Who cares! They both taste good!"

Word Scramble:

LILWB
LVETWEEPETSS
EFORMED

Answers:
Bill W
Twelve Steps
Freedom

Step Principle and Recovery Characteristic Together:

Abstinence or Food Plan?

Many people have a difficult time understanding the difference between abstinence and food plan. The Sunday afternoon Abstinence First/Newcomers meeting focused on this topic. Members wrote how they defined abstinence and how they defined their food plan.

Abstinence

Abstinence is what I experience through practicing powerlessness, surrendering to a Higher Power, and strengthening that spiritual connection by surrendering to a food plan.

I consider myself abstinent if I am refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors.

Compulsive eating is eating more than what I said I would eat on my food plan or eating between meals. Compulsive food behaviors are eating when emotional.

Abstinence is a new experience that materializes as I practice the food plan. Abstinence will relieve me from phenomena of craving.

No sugar, eating only foods on my food plan, no eating off my kids' plates

Freedom from obsessing over food, no sugar, making a plan, calling my sponsor regularly, no eating between meals, going to meetings, exercise regularly

Abstinence, to me, is about refraining from compulsivity and generally what behaviors I will engage in to maintain health and recover.

No trigger foods, no compulsive eating, no bingeing, no purging

Staying in the rooms! As long as I'm here, I have a fighting chance. No "drive-thru"s. Once I cross that line, I'm screwed.

Staying away from specific trigger foods that harm my well being and health. Examples: donuts, soda, candy bars. Anything high in sugar and zero health benefits.

As a newcomer, no sugar, weigh and measure meals, daily reporting and approval from my sponsor with emphasis on steps, tools, and service. Over the last several years, no sugar, evolution of food plan to healthy choices, no longer weighing and measuring, no longer reporting food to sponsor. The biggest thing is steps, tools, and service.

No trigger foods, no diet pills/fad diets as they cause me to obsess.

Same as OA's first sentence of the Abstinence definition.

Abstinence is refraining from compulsive overeating and binge foods.

Food Plan

I can not make sane, reasonable, or rational choices about food. I created a plan that defines what I eat, how much (quantity) and the times that I eat. Power and sanity are built into this practice of powerlessness.

3 meals per day, nothing in between, 1 day at a time, no sugar, I have to weigh/measure some things like nuts, and I send my food to my sponsor

Food plan is the what, when, and how much. A warehouse clerk fills order. My food plan is the order.

3 meals, 2 snacks, only foods that are green light foods, no sugar, no soda, portion sizes

3 meals/1-2 snacks, protein/veggies/carb, none of my trigger foods like sugar (added), cookies, deserts

Specifically, my plan for what I am going to eat today. Food plan is a tool to achieve and maintain abstinence. It is one tool among many. 3 meals a day, nothing in between, 1 day at a time.

No caffeine, processed sugar, bacon, deep fried foods. Goal is fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and healthy meats. I'm working toward it.

Adapted from HOW plan to meet my needs, 3 meals and 2 snacks, framework of approximately 1400 calories per day, times for meals with 8 am breakfast, noon lunch, 6 pm dinner, and 9 pm snack. I usually have just 1 snack.

3 meals, 2 snacks, no pizza, no sweets! Simple!

Do not give in when others invite me to eat food that is not on my food plan. Look but do not partake. Jet fuel vs. Dirt.

3 meals per day and 2 snacks all texted to my sponsor, any changes are texted to my sponsor, but emotional changes require a call to my sponsor. Prayer about what I should eat and when I'm feeling full.

The plan of eating is the specific way refraining from compulsive overeating and binge foods looks like day to day on a 3 meals, 2 planned snacks "menu of sorts."

Diabetic food plan, counting starches, fruits, meats, carbs