

**May 2016**

# OA TODAY



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## A Positive Characteristic of Recovery Is “HONESTY”

“Honesty is a key factor in our recovery from compulsive eating, and so we will want to develop this trait (OA’s “12&12,” p. 51).

I love reading and learning about the steps and traditions through our OA “12&12” literature. I am “brand new” (1/18/16) to any 12 step program. When I read Step Five for the first time, this sentence really stood out to me.

To understand that honesty is a key factor in recovery and something I need to develop, I need to look at my past and when I was and was not honest. I am amazed when I think about just how much I lied to myself, to my higher power, and to those around me.

For today, I am taking what past experiences I had in regards to honesty and learning how to react to current situations in a mature, honest way.

Self-honesty has opened a new door in my life. It has relieved many emotions of anger and resentment that were completely in my head.

At work, I would sometimes lie to a potential customer about why I did not finish his proposal, hoping he would relieve me of the trouble I would be in for being late. I then did it again...and again...and again. If I had just told him the truth about why I was late in getting him his proposal, he would have more respect for me and understand a little better.

I too then wouldn’t have the guilt and shame inside my head that then led me to binge...again...and again...and again. Let’s face it; addicts are the world’s best liars. We have been doing it for so long, we should be considered professionals.

Sure, I can be honest about what I

ate today, but to be completely honest in everything I do or say is a tad bit scary. I am not used to living this way. I do not even know how to do this...yet.

Honesty is a new experience I embrace with an open mind every day. I have found, since the beginning of OA, that the more I am honest with myself, my higher power, and others, the better I feel and happier I become.

It has been difficult at times to speak honestly, but the times I have spoken honestly have been extremely relieving. If I use the tools laid out for me, I can succeed. Keep coming back...it works, when you work it, and you are worth it.....so WORK IT!!!

John H.

## The Principle Behind Step Four Is “INTEGRITY”

For me, integrity *integrates* all areas of my life and makes them *consistent* with each other, so that I am whole. I am not one person in one situation and another person in another situation. When I first came to OA, I thought I was a person of honesty and integrity. What I learned is that I am not a person of integrity if I starve one day and binge the next day.

I am not person of integrity if I believe myself to be completely unworthy of a job one day, and too good for a job the next day. I am not a person of integrity if I say yes to something because I feel that I *should*, only to cancel last minute. I am not a person of integrity if I see myself as the exception to every rule. I am not a person of integrity if I am not open and honest with others and myself.

In OA, I have learned how to become a person of integrity, or at least how to practice being a person of integrity. I practice integrity when I follow a healthy food plan that I have committed to my Higher Power and my sponsor. I

practice integrity when I don’t hide what I eat, and when I am honest with myself and others about the foods and behaviors that work for me, and the foods and behaviors that don’t work for me. I practice integrity when I can “suit up and show up” at work, and do my best on good days and bad days. I practice integrity when I say yes to something because I feel it is right to do, and I show up for it. I practice integrity when I do not judge others or myself, but see all of us on equal ground, under the grace of a Higher Power. I practice integrity when I seek to be lovingly honest with myself and others.

Thank you, OA, for showing me by example, how I can be a person of integrity – not only in relation to food, but also in relation to myself, to God, and to other people. More is being revealed to me...more areas of my life are becoming *integrated* into a whole – the whole I was designed to be.

Anonymous

# STEP FIVE

“Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”

## What Does This Step Mean?

From the “OA 12 and 12” on Step Five, p. 51: *“Honesty is a key factor in our recovery from compulsive eating, and so we will want to develop this trait. The best way to do so is to continue working the twelve steps.”*

In my program of recovery, Step Five is all about honesty. Living with integrity. Being honest about who I was, who I am, who I am becoming.

For me, it is also about being honest about my food - to myself and to my sponsor on a daily basis. I can't hide or get away with anything related to food. I send my food plan to my sponsor on a daily basis. I send an updated account at the end of the day if any changes were made, so that I can be fully transparent regarding my food and my abstinence.

As a compulsive overeater, I've learned to hide and be sneaky about my food. I would hide how much, when and what I was eating from other people.

In recovery, I want to live an honest life, with integrity. It starts with food, but goes for every part of my life. I want to live with transparency. I don't want to be sneaky or dishonest in any part of my life.

Step Five is a way to help me in my recovery and growth. I have been through the Steps several times now in my four years of recovery. The first time was definitely the hardest. I sat down with my sponsor and for several hours went through my Step Four inventory - my complete life story. I was very honest about every aspect of my life and it felt very free and liberating to share it all with her, not holding anything back. I prayed before I began, asking God to help me, to give me the courage to say all that I needed to say to do; a thorough and complete Step Five.

Now, I continue to work the Steps in my recovery. Sometimes, I focus on a particular area of my life; sometimes on a particular problem. Each time I get to Step Five, I am reminded of how important it is for me to be open and honest about whatever I am facing. Honest with myself, with my sponsor, and with my Higher Power.

Anonymous

## How Does This Step Work?

An example of how we honestly admit the exact nature of our wrongs or the precise characteristics of our disease is to develop a workable plan of eating.

In OA we talk about “clean food.” The food we consume is “clean” when it meets two criteria:

1) it is not a “trigger food” which I would readily eat whenever I would see it; and

2) the food is not a triggering situation, for example, bingeing or over-portioning or hiding the food. This second layer is more insidious than the first.

Certain foods can readily be placed on the abstinence list of the plan of eating (like refined sugar, white flour, ice cream), but oftentimes (at least for me) it is not the food itself that triggers but the thought-feeling complex that activates the addictive, compulsive behavior almost regardless of what the actual food is.

Case in point: OA abstinence sometimes took on the character of white-knuckling before I really came clean on my image-building - to myself and to others. The image-building was the outward manifestation of my inner narcissism which was my protection strategy against isolation and alienation, on the one hand, and fear and anger and depression on the other. In fact, since I can no longer smell or taste food, when I have a food craving I know it is an urge or compulsion to cover over or provide comfort for a negative thought/feeling situation. It is true all the more now that “nothing tastes as good as recovery-sobriety-abstinence feels.”

When I consciously work at turning over to my HP, my tendencies toward negative self-thought, self-criticism, and when I conscientiously let go of my attempted control of almost all aspects of life that impact upon me and thereby diffuse my anger, I am able to come to self-love and self-acceptance - and that's so very fulfilling and rewarding.

“Perfect abstinence” is a myth. I maintain a “practical abstinence” because of the plan of eating I have in conjunction with my nutritionist. My abstinence includes the choice of avoiding three behaviors (bingeing, eating more than one portion, and sneaking food) and comprises three lists or circle of foods: the “no” list, the “maybe” list, and the “yes” list.

The “YES” or GREEN list consists of lean meats or fish (4-6oz per serving), green leafy vegetables, fresh fruit, pastas or baked good with whole wheat flour, olive oil, oatmeal and other whole grain cereals, low-fat milk and cheese and yogurt.

(continued ➡)

## FIFTH STEP PRAYER:

*Higher Power, my inventory has shown me who I am, yet I ask for your help in admitting my wrongs to another person and to You. Assure me and be with me in this step, for without this step I cannot progress in my recovery. With Your help, I can do this, and I will do it.*

# TRADITION FIVE

“Each group has one primary purpose — to carry the message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers.”

## What Does This Tradition Mean?

When I first came to OA, I knew nothing about the traditions, but I knew that it was different than every other “diet” I tried.

The people in OA really wanted to help me. They really wanted me to call them and discuss how food and life were going.

I visited OA many times before coming to stay. When I stayed, I learned in general about the traditions, but the primary purpose of helping each other was firmly spoken in every meeting I attended.

In a recent tradition study, one of the questions asked, “How do you personally support that purpose?” I carry the message by staying abstinent, attending meetings, leading meetings, making phone calls, service, sponsoring, telling others about the 12 Steps, step studies, and speaking at meetings outside of my own.

Tradition Five keeps me abstinent because talking to newcomers reminds me of how sick I was. It reminds me that I don’t want to go back to the food.

Working Tradition Five keeps me working a consistent program. When I give back, I receive so much. I am not a normal eater, and I never will be. Each of our stories are different and yet the same.

When we share our stories, we can reach people who still suffer, and that is the essence of Tradition Five.

Anonymous

## How Does This Tradition Work?

I can’t say I have a specific Tradition Five story. My experience is that I believe carrying the message is sharing with others what OA is about and how it has helped me gain freedom and sanity around food. I have shared this message with my family, my coworkers, and my friends.

Most of the time people just want to tell me how they are planning their next diet or weight loss scheme. I listen to them; and, if they are interested, I share what has worked for me. I’ve taken a few of them to a meeting when they expressed interest, but for the most part, I’ve received a “thanks, but that’s not what I need” sort of replay. This doesn’t matter. It’s my job to continue to carry the message.

I stay in the relationship with OA and my fellows because it has benefited me in so many ways. I give lots of service, so my part of carrying the message involves setting up the meeting room, leading or speaking at the meeting, serving on a committee, participating in whatever way my Higher Power directs me to serve.

My recovery is strong because I am willing to do what I’m asked in every way possible. If I am hesitant because of my fear, I then work the steps on that fear.

Tradition Five isn’t there just for a few of us to follow; it is a way for all of us to strengthen our commitment to ourselves and to teach us ways to reach out to others. That’s what I’ve learned over the years.

By carrying the message I’ve learned to speak in front of others. To not be ashamed of having my own thoughts and opinions. To offer help to others. To experience the joy of seeing another person recover from this disease because I asked for their help as well.

I carry this message daily when I follow my Higher Power’s guidance and continue to refrain from compulsive eating.

Anonymous

## Carry the Message !

### Working Step Five, continued

The “MAYBE” or YELLOW list are those food which I could have on occasion, but – if their consumption becomes compulsive – they go onto the “no” list; on this list are starches (white potatoes, sweet potatoes, corn, peas, other

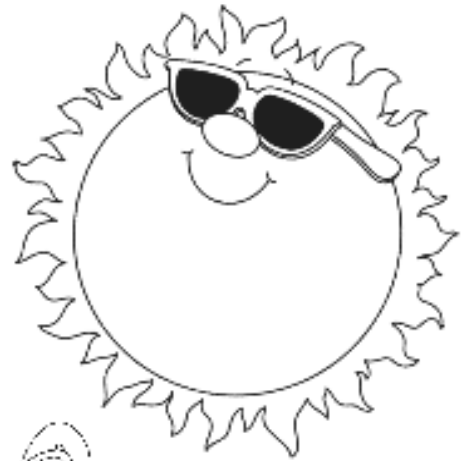
legumes, carrots, popcorn, crackers, and “white” pasta), nuts, diet soda, corn bread, tomatoes, butter, vegetable oil.

The “NO” or RED list is made up of avoided foods: refined sugars, candies especially chocolates, baked goods, cookies, white bread, trans-fats, ice cream, chips.

Anonymous

**Carry the Message !**  
**Carry the Message !**  
**Carry the Message !**

# We're Entirely Ready...



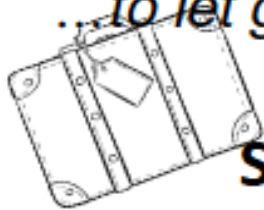
*...to live well!*

*...to take certain steps!*

*...to be happy, joyous and free!*

*...to stay cool when things get hot!*

*...to let go of baggage!*



*St. Louis Bi-State Intergroup Overeaters Anonymous*

## **Super Saturday ■ June 18, 2016**

*Hosted by the Saturday Morning Step Study Group*

**Webster Groves Christian Church**

**1320 W. Lockwood Avenue ■ St. Louis, MO 63122**

*(Entrance off rear parking lot • Handicap accessible)*

**Registration: 9:00am**

**Morning Program: 9:30 to 11:30am**

**Lunch Break: 11:30am to 1:00pm.**

**Afternoon Program: 1:00 to 3:30pm**

**Suggested donation \$6**

*Please, never stay away from a recovery event for financial reasons.*

**Directions:** From St. Louis, take I-44 west. Use the Berry Road exit, turn right at the bottom of the ramp, travel north on Berry to Lockwood, turn left on Lockwood to the church (which will be on your left bordered by a golf course).

If you take I-270, go east on I-44 to the Big Bend exit. Take Big Bend east to Berry Rd. Turn left onto Berry, travel north on Berry to Lockwood, turn left on Lockwood to the church (which will be on your left bordered by a golf course).

Contact: LaNae S. 1.618.420.8586