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OA TODAY



St. Louis Bi-State
Area Intergroup

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Do you want to be of service to the OA Program?

Write for our newsletter! As the newsletter lovers know, we focus on the steps, traditions, and principles of the OA Recovery Program. We would also love to hear your story. The act of writing not only helps us remember where we came from but also allows us to help other compulsive over and under eaters relate to our fellowship.

REMEMBER: If it is convenient, it is NOT SERVICE WORK! Send your editor an email today on what is needed in for next issue need!
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OA INTERGROUP APPEAL:

Most of our meetings are “fully self-supporting through our own contributions,” but other levels of OA are not. They need extra income to make ends meet. This fall, all three levels are asking for help:

October: This month, please consider donations to our OA Region, R4, a group of eight Midwestern states, two Canadian provinces and one territory. They are requesting an annual donation of \$5, to help them fund annual travel expenses for Region Reps or World Service Delegates from intergroups that could not afford to send anyone there. This helps give every group a voice at different OA levels. Donations can be given online at oaregion4.org, which also gives the mailing address.

Anything you can do to help will be very gratefully received!

STEP Ten

“Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.”

What Does This Step Mean and How Does it Work?

I used to believe that abusing food and the resulting obesity were my only true problems in life. My obsession with them blinded me to many other things that deserved my attention. I thought, if I lost the weight, and mastered the eating, all my difficulties would be over. Every one of the many times I lost weight, this was proved to be untrue. Still, I persisted in this false belief for over 60 years, failing to recognize the unmanageability of my thinking and my personal relationships, as well as my spiritual bankruptcy. Step 10 directs us to continue the work we did in Steps 1 through 9. As the Big Book, p. 84, says, “It should continue for our lifetime.” I know Step 10 goes a long way toward making my life more manageable. For me this step may be daily or even hourly. If I fail to include this personal inventory in my program, I am ensuring problems ahead.

The principle associated with this step is PERSERVERENCE. Merriam-Webster defines perseverance as the continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition. The 12 & 12, p. 83, goes on to clarify what is necessary – “If we are to experience permanent recovery from compulsive eating, we will have to repeat, day after day, the actions that have already brought us so much healing.” In my view, Step 10 includes the repetition of Steps 4 through 9 every day.

The Step 10 inventory should be just as “searching and fearless” as the Step 4 inventory. And, like Step 4, 10 directs us to look at “actions and events of a moral or ethical nature.” Of course a Step 10 inventory is not as far reaching as Step 4. It is far less likely to delve into the wreckage of our past. It is far more likely to relate to the events of one day, or even one moment of a day. It is situational. Wonderfully, it has the power to prevent new wreckage from occurring that would otherwise show up on some future 4th Step.

In Step 5, we admit our wrongs to God, ourselves and another human being. Long before amends are begun, we become aware, we accept, we discuss and we contemplate. Step 10 includes these same admissions. In Steps 6 and 7, we become willing for our Higher Power to remove our character defects and ask that power to take them from us. In the Step 10 discussion, the Big Book, p. 84, instructs us, “Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them.” Sometimes a wrong that occurs in my day may be provoked by one of my character defects. At other times, a defect is awakened as a result of a wrong. Step 10 promises me that when wrongs arise and are addressed promptly, they do not automatically have to lead to additional harm to others or to myself.

Steps 8 & 9 deal with a list of people and institutions we have harmed and the process of making amends to them. Step 10 covers these same topics. Has harm occurred? Are amends called for? To another? To ourselves? Here your sponsor can really help. So can HP. The 12 & 12 says that the Step 10 inventories help us to two ways. One is to “reveal difficulties in our daily lives and help us determine what we can do about them.” The other is as a “reminder of things that are going well for us and for which we might be grateful”

Whether a Step 10 inventory is done mentally in the moment, written on the fly, or more formally at day’s end, there are two things I must consider:

- 1.) Have I acted outside the decision I made in step 3?
- 2.) Have my character defects ended up calling the shots?

Step 10 is part of keeping in fit spiritual condition. Through it, I learn from my mistakes and build on successes. It is easier for me to be honest, and it is easier to not harm others or myself. The Big Book Step 10 prayer, p. 85, is direct reflection back to step 3 – “How can I best serve Thee – Thy will, not mine, be done.”

The OA 12 & 12, p. 90, sums it up neatly: “Reviewing our recent behavior, keeping our Higher Power in charge of our lives, asking for guidance, and promptly admitting our errors, becomes a sane and satisfying way of life – far better than nursing our fears or building a fresh set of resentments to harbor.”

-Anonymous

TRADITION TEN

“OA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the OA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.”

What Does This Tradition Mean?

According to this tradition, OA members as individuals are free to hold strong opinions on issues outside OA, to argue for their opinions outside OA, to actively work for a cause, or to do none of these. Within OA, we leave all this behind. We don't do anything which might seem to imply to members or outsiders that OA has a position on any outside issues. Inside OA, we do our very best to love and support fellow compulsive eaters even if we happen to find out that they hold opinions radically opposed to our most cherished and firmly-held beliefs.

This tradition is important, in my opinion, because it directly affects whether people come to OA or stay in OA. It can save lives. The first question on page 189 of the book *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous* lists many things OA has no opinion about. One is food plans. I know some potential newcomers who rejected the program because they were told they absolutely had to follow a specific food plan right from the start. Another is sugar. This was a surprise to me when I first saw it. But come to think about it, I know several newcomers who did not join the program because they were told OA is against eating any sugar. I also know many people who did give up sugar when they were ready, sometimes after years of success in the program. And I personally know people with 3-fold recovery who differ widely on the question of sugar, some who:

- Eliminate any trace of sugar
- Eliminate nearly all sugar
- Stay away only from “sweets” or “recreational sugar”
- Give up only their specific sugary trigger foods and are able to eat others in moderation. I don't know many people in this category, but I do know some.

Another very important area is religion. I myself left program for a while when both meetings I was attending were actively promoting a specific religion. As an atheist, I was offended and repelled by that. On the other hand, I have a good friend who left the program permanently when she felt her church was directly attacked by an OA speaker. The speaker did not name the religion, but described it in such minute detail that it was totally obvious which one she was so against.

Since compulsive eating is a deadly disease, and since our 12-step program offers recovery from it, it seems urgent to me not to do or say things that will unnecessarily turn people away. That to me is the reason Tradition Ten is so important.

Elizabeth

How Does This Tradition Work?

This tradition could not be more timely than right now. Can you imagine, with a presidential election just next month, what the conversations (read controversy) could look like around our OA tables right now? Where would our recovery be? How would we feel leaving the meetings? Would we have shared and received “experience, strength and hope” or frustration, fear, even anger? Would we leave with a new resolve for recovery and abstinence, or would we want to forget and dismiss what we so earnestly desire?

Would we want to stop at the nearest fast food place to binge out of negative emotions, or leave with a renewed sense of hope and commitment to our recovery?

Tradition 10 ensures that we have every chance at recovery from compulsive overeating. OA as an organization, and all of us that are a part of OA, are there for one sole purpose: to help the compulsive eater who still suffers. Can you imagine if OA was connected to a particular political party or opinion? So many of us would be turned off and never come into the rooms. OA is about recovery and we are about getting and staying in that recovery. Period.

-Anonymous



Step Principle & Recovery

Characteristic:

Positive Characteristic of Step 10: Spiritual Growth

One of my BEST character defects is my perfectionism. I have always had the mentality that everything I do needs to be done right and, then, my life had to be correct. If I messed up, I was a failure. This is old thinking and very harsh. I would never berate a good friend the way I can nit-pick at myself. Further, this thinking keeps me trapped and can sabotage my development and new life experiences.

I find myself working on my perfectionism in all aspects of my life. Just this week, my sponsor reminded me to reel back the 'crazy addict' thinking. I told her that I was in 'limbo' with my job and with my new relationship. I told her that I was feeling jealous because I met with a friend who, on the outside, seemed to have it all. And there it is again. The perfectionism.

My sponsor, gently, reminded me that I am EXACTLY where I need to be. That my God brought me to this point in my life for a reason. She pointed out the reality of my situation:

1. I am employed and enjoy what I do.
2. I have an exciting new relationship
3. I have good friends who help me to be a better person.

After this conversation, back in reality, I could breathe again. My critical thinking was off to the races, but I have a defensive tactic these days: program tools. I reached out and was honest. This is something I would NEVER do before program. My God speaks to me through people, places, and things. My growth in this program has allowed me to look at my life differently and apply those tools so I can stay out of my head. What a more peaceful place my head is now!

Just for today, I will stay away from my 'crazy addict' thinking.

Anonymous

Principle of Step 10: Perseverance

At the most basic level, I think we practice the principle of perseverance at the end of each meeting when we encourage each other to keep coming back. No matter where we are in our recovery, if we each keep coming back, we recover! My home group is the Saturday morning group in Webster and it was started in 1981 with six members. This meeting is still active and strong today because people kept coming back.

In the past, I have tried to complicate perseverance into something that I couldn't (wouldn't) do. It just sounded too hard, too much of a commitment, too long term, as I was just trying to stay out of the food for this day. Then I read this page (194) in *Voices of Recovery*: ...And then I heard "Keep Coming Back" one day, and I made a decision to do just that. If I slipped away from my abstinence, I was determined to "Keep Coming Back" to it...

After that reading, I knew wherever I was with the food or my life, I could pause, breathe and come back to recovery, sanity, and abstinence. And I could do it without judgment. All I needed to do to persevere was to keep coming back to where recovery was; where help was; where my spiritual source was. I began to see that if I kept coming back, I too would get the miracle others before me had received.

For me, keep coming back is a part of my 3rd step practice in the mornings. I ask what in my life do I need to turn over to care today, and what that might look like. Then, I ask for the willingness to keep coming back to care throughout my day--care of self--of others and community. In the evening, I review my day to see both where I have been caring and where I have fallen short. Once more I get to come back to care of self, and others. As I do this daily, I develop perseverance.

In closing, I'd like to say, "Keep Coming Back-it works, if you work it, and you are worth it!"

Anonymous

OA MEETING CHANGES:

1. CORRECT TIME: SL437, the Friday evening meeting in the West County Club meets at 7pm, not 7am

2. TIME CHANGE: SL180, the Wednesday meeting that was at noon. It has changed to 11 am instead.

3. DATE UPDATE: SL033, the Tuesday 6 pm meeting in Ferguson, is not meeting on election night, November 8.

4. CLOSED: SL430, the Sunday 6 pm meeting in St. Charles has closed.