

July 2016

**OA
TODAY**



St. Louis Bi-State
Area Intergroup

9907-E Gravois Road (rear)
Saint Louis MO 63123

314.638.6070 (telephone)

Email Contact for *OA Today* Newsletter:
azyika01@yahoo.com

www.stlouisoa.org (Local Website)
www.oaregion4.org (Region 4 Website)
www.aa.org (World Service Website)

Super Sunday!

Journey to Abstinence



LONG TERM ABSTINENCE RECOVERY FROM RELAPSE SMALL SLIP, COMING BACK TO ABSTINENCE DISCUSSION PANEL

HOSTED BY: SUNDAY 4PM ABSTINENCE FIRST MEETING

WHEN: SUNDAY, AUGUST 7, 2016

TIME: 2:00PM – 5:00PM

REGISTRATION BEGINS AT 1:30PM

PNC BANK BUILDING

333 S. KIRKWOOD ROAD

ENTER IN THE REAR, 3RD FLOOR (WHEEL CHAIR ACCESSIBLE)

SUGGESTED DONATION: \$6.00

STEP SEVEN

“Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.”

What Does This Step Mean?

For me, Step Seven is a step of surrender. First, I became entirely ready to have God remove my shortcomings (defects of character or defense mechanisms) in Step Six. Then, I came to this step, which recognizes that even though I was ready to live without these defects of character, I was powerless to remove them on my own. I need a Power greater than myself; I need to completely rely on this Power in the “removal process”.

Step Seven reminds me of Step Three (“*We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him*”). I need to place my character defects, wounds, and defense mechanisms into the care of God.

Some days, I find myself banging my head against the wall because I acted out a character defect for the hundredth time, when I had been trying **so hard** to “control” my behavior. This is when I know it is time to practice Step Seven. Often, I am frustrated because no matter how much I try to control my behavior and remove a character defect on my own, I can’t. *Sure*, I think, *God has removed the obsession and compulsion to binge, but it’s really up to me to become a better person. I should be able to control my own behavior by now. Look at how long I’ve been in program!* I function under this pride and ego for a while, until it becomes painfully clear that I am completely powerless to fix myself on my own.

The pain of my dysfunction brings me to my knees. I realize I need to stop playing God if I want to be healed. “The notion that we would still live our own lives, God helping a little now and then, began to evaporate. Refusing to place God first, we had deprived ourselves of His help. But now the words ‘Of myself I am nothing, the Father doeth the works’ began to carry bright promise and meaning.” (p. 75, AA 12&12)

When I can humbly recognize that God, not I, has the power to heal me and change me, my priorities shift from the obsession, trying to fix a certain character defect, to peace in seeking God’s will for me. I can then trust that everything else (including character defects) will be taken care of in God’s time, as long as I let Him.

Anonymous

How Does This Step Work?

If you’re like me, Step Seven may be one you dread. I remember when my sponsor asked me to sit for one hour and just pray and listen to HP about the removal of my defects. I was thinking, “Oh, boy...this is gonna be fun. I’m going to sit here and listen to HP run off a list a mile long of my character defects, which are many...and then some psychological surgery is going to commence. Ouch!”

Add to that, my actual defects, and then it really gets tough. Sitting quietly is hard for me. Shame around all of my life failures and character defects is hard for me. Total honesty and vulnerability are hard for me. Patience is a BIG challenge for me. No wonder I wasn’t too thrilled about Step Seven.

But, you want to hear the great thing? I was completely wrong about HP’s word for me. Completely. Wrong. As I sat quietly, and in surprising peace, HP gently reminded me that balance was lacking from my life. Balance. He reminded me that I go too fast, push too hard, strive too much...and that all He wanted for me was balance. The fact that HP told me what to think about and focus on, versus beating me over the head with what was wrong, was almost incomprehensible to me. Yet...as I sat there...I knew He was right.

If I just focus on what I can do...and let Him handle the rest...maybe it wouldn’t be so bad. And it hasn’t been so bad. Four years later, I have more balance in my life. Not perfect balance, mind you – not even close – but more balance...and peace...and patience...and honesty...and vulnerability. Am I perfect? Not even in the ballpark. But I am better - HP has gently made me better.

So cheer up if you’re facing Step Seven with some fear and trembling – it’ll be ok. You’ll be ok. And the answers you get when you ask HP to remove your shortcomings may be the best surprise so far.

Anonymous

A Note of Thanks:

Intergroup wants to thank all the groups and the one anonymous donor who contributed gift cards for what became four gift baskets for the Region 4 silent auction. The silent auction bought in almost \$1700 to benefit Region 4 (R4) and the Iowa Intergroup (which gave up having their own convention this year to host R4). The convention was wonderful. It was great for many of us to see old friends and for all of us to meet new friends. A lot of recovery was shared from all over our region.

TRADITION SEVEN

“Every OA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”

What Does This Tradition Mean?

Tradition Seven is the glue that holds me to my OA program and one that I have grown to love. The idea that every group ought to be fully self supporting enables our groups to be responsible for their own meeting and program. It helps us to develop a sense of responsibility for our program.

This sense of responsibility was foreign to me when I first joined program. I did not know it at the time, but I was a very irresponsible person. All I wanted was lose weight, while eating the same sugary things. I wanted to have some sort of magic pill and when no one offered it, I would blame.

I was a firm believer that my life was unfair and that was why I was fat. Then, if anyone questioned my stance, I would have proof of past programs or diets I had tried. “Nothing worked,” I would say; and then I would gain some pity. Playing the victim was a comfortable place for me to be.

Even when I started program, I didn’t want to fully invest myself because I still wanted recovery to be given to me, and not have to do any work. However, once I finally surrendered and became abstinent, I began to see the benefits of honoring the Seventh Tradition.

The things in my life that I invest in or work hard for are the things that I cherish most. My program is important to me, and I am responsible for carrying the message to still suffering compulsive overeater. I am capable and now invest in my program.

Stacey Z.



How Does This Tradition Work?

When I first heard this tradition, I automatically interpreted it in the context of financial support. It goes without saying that passing the basket keeps our groups afloat and enables us to support our Intergroup, World Service, and Region. And it is important to our recovery that we do not rely on outside donors, taking full responsibility for ourselves and honoring one another’s anonymity.

But it was not until my home group’s survival was endangered by declining attendance that I fully appreciated this tradition to the fullest, learning that the concept of self-support applies to service as well as finances.

When I started attending my home meeting five years ago, it was a boisterous, thriving body of 40-plus members. A couple of years ago, our numbers dropped precipitously. Sometimes only a handful of people would appear. We analyzed this drop in membership, and several theories of why, why, why this was happening were offered in our group conscience.

A conversation with my sponsor directed me toward program, toward the solution and away from the problem. My part was to support the meeting in whatever way I could by attending, being abstinent, honoring the Seventh Tradition financially by putting what I could in the basket, accepting a service position, sponsoring, and turning the rest over to HP.

Each and every week, I made it a point to get to that meeting, no matter what, because it needed my support and I needed it.

Today, this meeting that once appeared to be on life support is thriving again. This happened because a few people did what they could, when they could, and gave back to others what they had been given. Newcomers trickled in, and many of them liked what we had and stayed to give of themselves in myriad ways, faithfully practicing the indispensable Tradition Seven.

Jane C.

The Principle for Step Seven Is ...

PERSEVERANCE

I dabbled in OA briefly in 2012, but left quickly. I felt utterly powerless over food and often overate with such quantities that I'd go to bed with chest pain. The idea of abstinence didn't strike me as helpful. I would have to figure this out on my own. The food got worse.

When I returned in 2013, I was struck abstinent and shed weight quickly, but I failed to grow spiritually. I thought I knew everything about the steps. I repeatedly ignored requests to do writing exercises and develop a prayer life. I thought I just needed a food plan and group support. If my sponsor, at the time, challenged one of my ideas or food choices, I would just brush it off.

Eventually, I began to keep more and more of my pain to myself. I began to hide compulsive food decisions. I went full-blown into relapse. This time, it was worse than ever because I knew what I needed to do. I just couldn't find the willingness to do it.

Coming back to program was hard but I was given a lot of love and acceptance. I got a new sponsor who pushed me into the Big Book immediately. I wrote my inventory and shared it with complete honesty. It was painful, but I was free from food obsession. I eventually became accustomed to dealing with my anxieties without resorting to compulsive eating.

I knew I needed to be rigorously honest. If I made a poor food choice, I would bring it to my sponsor instead of letting the guilt fester into shame. I had to push through and work my food plan as best I could even during stressful times.

The peace of mind I've experienced has been incredible. It starts with admitting I'm not perfect. I've got plenty of shortcomings. This was readily apparent to me now that I wasn't drunk on food all the time. Coming back from relapse, I realized that recovery was a full-time job and lifelong affair. I couldn't fake it.

While relapse was painful, I think it strengthened my relationship with God. I still have challenges. Luckily, the answers will never change. I have a simple program to practice. Applying the steps to whatever predicament I find myself in gives me faith that I can get through any challenge without going back to the food.

Armed with this trust, I can let my experience speak for itself. I can encourage the newcomer to practice our program in earnest. I am not a guru.

These are not my ideas. I must remember that carrying this message is a privilege. It is the result of a spiritual experience that I did not earn on my own accord. It was pure grace.

Left to my own devices, I very well might eat myself to death. Even though I've lost over a hundred pounds, I need to remember I'm an addict. I wake up to this reality every day. I must be humble enough to acknowledge my need for divine help and to be open to wherever life takes me. Ironically, perseverance through the pain of my eating disorder nudged me towards this very insight. I couldn't escape this powerful truth even if I wanted to!

Adam S.



A Characteristic of Recovery Is ...

HUMILITY

I heard someone say once that OA is not about self-help, but the removal of self.

How many years of my life had I only thought about myself and felt so self-important that I expected others to be lenient and accommodating to my faults and to my needs?

Humility is a hard discipline to learn and it absolutely does not come naturally.

Since beginning my journey in OA, I have gradually learned that I could not trust my own instincts. I was willing to follow directions and willing to learn, but it took some time to be humbled by the idea that I really shouldn't be in control anymore.

OA has allowed me to practice humility. I am learning to accept this gift daily and to be open to do the will of my HP instead of my own.

I am still nervous about it because I fear being put in uncomfortable situations, but I am at least willing to accept that discomfort opens the door to growth.

Humility, removal of self, allows my HP to work through me and to change me.

Coly W.