

FEBRUARY 2021 OA TODAY NEWSLETTER

St. Louis Bi-State Intergroup of OA
P.O. Box 28882, St. Louis, MO 63123
info@stlouisoa.org, www.stlouisoa.org
Phone: 314-638-6070

Hope



STEP TWO

Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.



“Could” was the pivotal word for me in taking Step Two. All the evidence in my life for years was that A-Power-Greater-Than-Ourselves was NOT going to restore me to a sane relationship with food. I weighed over 400 pounds. I was in constant pain, losing my mobility, and unable to find clothing that would fit me. Yet I matched the description near the middle of page 11 in the Second Edition of **The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous**:

The more we ate, the more we suffered, yet we continued to overeat. Our true insanity could be seen in the fact that we kept right on trying to find comfort in excess food long after it began to cause us misery.

In working with my sponsor on Step Two, I came to feel reassured that the word in Step Two was “could” instead of “would.” If I had to assert a certainty that I was going to stop eating compulsively, honesty would have prevented me from taking Step Two.

But the word was “could.” And my OA fellows shared their lives, week after week as I attended meetings, stories of their own crazy

actions related to food. Some had been restrictors. Some had binged and purged. Some had eaten everything except the kitchen sink (and had probably licked the sink at least once) - like me. Yet their lives were different now.

The story they were telling was a story of recovery – physical, spiritual, and emotional. A man in my Saturday morning meeting had lost more than 200 pounds, the kind of weight loss that I needed if I was truly going to reach a healthy body weight. I came to believe that a power that I did not understand had changed him, and slowly I felt the shift in me.

I inched from hopelessness to hope. The other folks in the meetings that I attended were not holding themselves out to be special cases, some kind of “rock stars.” They seemed to be “one among many.” This enabled me to begin to wonder: **Could that happen to me too? Why not me?** That tiny step forward was crucial to all that has followed – ten-plus years of abstinence, 150+ pounds of weight released so far, and a rich spirituality that has sustained me through the ups and downs of “life on life’s terms.”

If you have not yet dared to hope, **please keep coming back**. As you listen to OA members share their own experience, strength, and hope, you just might find a tiny speck of light breaking into the despair you feel about your relationship with food. Perhaps, as it was for me, the word “could” will be enough to propel you through Step Two into the compassionate care of Step Three.

Anonymous



Non-Believer Quiz: Which One Are (Were) You?

The **OA 12&12** and the “We Agnostics” chapter in the **Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous** name a number of kinds of “non-believers” who may have difficulty taking Step 2. It can be helpful to reflect on whether you now or ever fit these descriptions.

From Step 2 in the OA12&12 (Second Edition) –

“Some of us did not believe in God” (page 12)

“Sometimes when our groups or sponsors failed us in some way” (page 13) – those who lose their belief in the group or OA helpers as their Higher Power

“We believed in God’s existence, but we didn’t really believe God could and would deal with our compulsive eating” (page 14) – later on that page “We believed intellectually that God could do anything, but deep in our hearts we ‘knew’ God couldn’t help us with this area of our lives.”

From “We Agnostics” in the Big Book -

Atheists (page 43)

Agnostics (page 43)

The violently “anti-religious” (page 44)

Those who occasionally experience awe and wonder, but the feeling is fleeting and soon lost (page 46)

Those with a “perverse streak” (page 49) out to prove that “life originated out of nothing, means nothing, and proceeds nowhere”

Those “confused and baffled by the seeming futility of existence” (very end of page 50 to top of page 51)

“Biased and unreasonable” people regarding “the realm of the spirit” (page 51)

Those who believe “self-sufficiency would solve our problems” (bottom of page 52)

Those leaning “too heavily on Reason” (who see logic as “great stuff” – page 53)

Those rebellious after “an overdose of religious education” (page 56)

Find yourself on this page? You are in good company. Keep coming back! The only requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively. (Tradition Three) Non-believers are WELCOME!



TRADITION TWO

For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

On page 99 of the book, **The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition**, it states that the spiritual principle of Tradition Two is trust. Before OA, I didn't trust much. I felt that myself, others, and God had all failed me in one way or another. How could I trust if there was failure all around? I had so many problems, and I felt the solutions I could come up with were failing me.

Before OA I didn't practice solving problems the way Tradition Two describes. In the very first paragraph of the Tradition Two chapter, it says ask for God's guidance when faced with a problem. We discuss the matter carefully, vote on alternatives, and then trust the decision we reach together is our Higher Power's will. The text then describes how OA groups give all viewpoints a full hearing, and that anyone who considers themselves a member is welcome to speak and/or vote. The only requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively (Tradition Three).

In the rooms of OA, I get to practice giving other viewpoints a full hearing. Before OA, I often felt attacked if someone else's viewpoint was different than mine. In my diseased mind, listening to other viewpoints was ridiculous because they obviously were not right! I even wanted to "govern" others. I felt that I was "100% correct" and that others needed to do what I told them. Recovery in

OA has taught me this is one of my character defects. I sought perfection in myself and others. Thanks to my recovery in OA, I have more practice now with letting go of perfection. Before OA, I also had a lot of problems that I felt couldn't be solved. Now I listen more openly to other viewpoints. These outside perspectives now give me more potential solutions, and sometimes more effective ones. But what if the solution chosen doesn't work?

The chapter describes how not every group decision will be practical and wise, but that our Higher Power often leads us through blunders and that we all will win when God's will is done. To me this feels like a gift of forgiveness and an opportunity for progress that both OA and God have given me. I now believe I'm allowed to make mistakes and not consider myself a mistake. I can extend the gift of forgiveness to others, and OA gives me a safe space to practice doing so. When I forgive myself, others, and God for "failing" me, I open myself up to more spiritual recovery. I have more trust in myself, others, and God now. I see it as a direct result of working OA's recovery program. Thank God, and I hope to keep coming back.

Anonymous





SHARE THE GOOD NEWS: OA CHANGES LIVES!

Do you have a love-hate relationship with that holiday in the middle of February? Has your heart been broken? Has the sweet stuff in the heart-shaped box kicked your tail year after year? There's good news, my friends. OA changes lives.

What does Valentine's Day mean to you?

For me, it's changed a lot over the years. When I was a child, I was always so excited about any holiday. Valentine's Day was no exception and a really big deal. In my grade-school, every child got a Valentine from each person in the class. It was fun.

I'm not sure when the expectations came into play, probably around the same time the coveted red, flat, heart-shaped boxes came on the scene. Everyone wanted one, as it meant someone cared enough to send the very best.

Using food as a comforter had also come into play, so imperceptibly that it took years for

me to understand that I had an addiction, a disease.

A friend told me once to love and care for myself like I would my very best friend. It was a novel idea that I learned to adopt over time.

My usual way had been to not feel good enough and to throttle myself with guilt and shame. Untangling that, was also a really big deal. I've generally been a very loving, good and faithful friend to others. Learning to be that to myself has taken time and I've needed help from the beloved "others".

The advent of OA into my life stepped up the process of healing, acceptance and self-love. Guess what.....When you seek healing, you are being healed. When you love and care for yourself, you love others in a more accepting way, without expectations. Wow. Better any day than the stuff of red, flat, heart-shaped boxes.

What does Valentine's Day mean to me today?

This year it's a Sunday. It's an abstinent day when I will love myself by being well, bright eyed, smiling and hopeful. It's a day like all the others; opportunities to love and laugh, pray, heal and do the next right thing. A day to surrender once again to my Higher Power. A day to be food neutral, as I heard in a meeting this morning. A day to be good news. A day to stay the course.

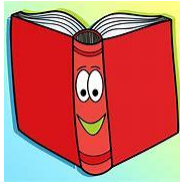
I pray I may. I pray you may.

Oh, one more thing. I've replaced the red, flat, heart-shaped box with a loaded OA tool kit. Works when you work it.

Wink, grin & hug.

MaryJane D

Book Review



I recently finished reading the new OA book called **Body Image, Relationships and Sexuality: Personal Journeys to Recovery**. According to the foreword of the book, everyone “experiences challenges in these areas; we wouldn’t be human if we didn’t.” As compulsive eaters we may “experience challenges more often and in more troubling ways than others”, but we have a way of addressing these difficulties through the Twelve Steps of OA. This collection of stories shares the experience, strength, and hope of a wide variety of members in these three areas.

Of the three areas, I think body image has been the most difficult for me. I really don’t know what I look like. Upon seeing myself in a mirror, I often do a double take because I’m not sure if that is really me. Of course, I look at myself every day in the mirror but I don’t really see. On the other hand, I have compared my body to others, usually ending in despair and self-hate. I have sat in meetings looking at the thighs of the people around me, trying to decide if my thighs were bigger or smaller. If my thighs were not the largest, that must mean that I was “not as bad” as everyone else.

Slowly, as I work and rework the Steps, this mental obsession with body image is being lifted. On page 17 of the digital edition, the writer says, “One of the most surprising lessons I have learned is that how I feel about my body and what I’m telling myself when I look in the mirror has far more to do with my emotional and spiritual state than my actual physical data.” Working on spiritual recovery has enabled me to see that the

scale and the mirror give me information, not affirmation.

As I continue to lose weight, I sometimes struggle with what to say when someone notices the change in my body. I’ve learned that the best thing I can say is “thank you” and stop there. I don’t need to justify or explain my weight loss. I just need to thank my Higher Power and turn it over.

The section on relationships was extremely powerful and moving. My character defects in this area are people-pleasing and dishonesty which come from fear of not being loved or lovable. Today, I am able to practice true intimacy in my primary relationship because OA has taught me how to be honest and vulnerable. In this section, one of my favorite quotes said, “There is something profoundly transformative about being honest with yourself, about yourself, and then sharing that honesty with someone else.” (page 90 digital edition) Working Steps 4 and 5 teach me how to be fearlessly honest.

The last section on sexuality struck me as profoundly honest as well as diverse. My biggest take away from the stories was to be honest, admit my Higher Power-given desires, and to find a loving balance in my sexuality. As one writer said, “food never gave me any true comfort, and neither did romantic relationships. Only my Higher Power, the God who made my heart, can heal it.” (page 100 digital edition) When I truly surrender to my Higher Power, my Healing Power, I feel an inner peace that no amount of food can bring. I am able to better love myself and others.

I’m grateful for the honesty of our members and to our World Service for putting together this book. Literature has always been one of my favorite tools and I thank the St. Louis Bi-State Intergroup for letting me share about it.

Intergroup (IG) News: Chair's Column

Dear Fellow OAs,

Let me begin with a few takeaways from the January Intergroup meeting: **VOLUNTEERS ARE THE BACKBONE OF AN ACTIVE INTERGROUP, AND SERVICE IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF RECOVERY.**

- 1) Our Public Information Chair, Melanie T, and the Social Media Team will be reaching out to attend meetings to help members understand and use the **SOCIAL MEDIA** (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram). These help us create awareness of OA and allow us to read and share ongoing recovery messages. Also, **volunteers** will be needed, starting in February, to begin outreach to healthcare providers.
- 2) We have a service volunteer to answer our **OA PHONE** for the next three months; but please consider putting your name on the list for this vital **volunteer** service position. Contact Elizabeth C at info@stlouisoa.org.
- 3) We have a fabulous new billboard!
(See it along Interstate 44.)



In conjunction with our billboard, we'd like to expand the use of the Temporary Sponsor – Newcomer's First 12 Days resource. We're starting a list of members who took the November training to **volunteer** to

speak at meetings and help meetings incorporate this great tool into their welcome of **NEWCOMERS**. Please contact me at chair@stlouisoa.org to get on the list and/or request a speaker.

- 4) We are gearing up for 2021 **RECOVERY EVENTS**. Now is the time for groups to sign up to host Super Sat/Sun/Evening events, The Early Birds (MWF) are hosting Unity Day on Feb 28, the remaining months are available. Contact our Vice-Chair Christina D at vicechair@stlouisoa.org

Also, we need members feedback about the **2021 Annual Retreat**, would you attend an in-person event at a retreat center (we would need to make a firm reservation), or should we stay virtual? Let your IG Rep know, as we will be voting about this at the February IG meeting.

If our Intergroup wants an **Annual Spring Convention** and **Annual Fall Retreat**, we need Chairs and committees for both. Now is the time to **volunteer!** Contact me at chair@stlouisoa.org.

- 5) February is the month that our Intergroup considers the motions submitted to World Service by members, groups, intergroups, regions and trustees. Our task is to vote on whether we think a motion should be discussed at the WSBC (World Service Business Conference) in April. Since there are numerous motions our WSO Delegates, Christina D, Pat M and Cyndy L, have reviewed all motions and are recommending several (housekeeping type motions) be placed on consent agendas.

(continued on page 7)

On the consent agenda, we would vote yes – to discuss at WSBC, or no - do not discuss at WSBC. Other more complex motions will also be discussed by our IG, following our usual Roberts Rules of Order, with a chance for speakers to offer pro or con statements. All IG Reps will receive these motions and Delegate recommendations prior to our February IG meeting. Please contact your IG Rep for information or input prior to IG meeting.

Our February IG meeting is on **Sunday, February 14**, at 1:30 pm via Zoom/Phone. Everyone is welcome. **Zoom ID 940 5580 8391, password Serenity or Phone 312-626-6799, password 75183374.**

With Gratitude for Service,
Dianne S.
Chairperson St. Louis Bi-State Intergroup

RECOVERY EVENTS!

It is a goal of the St. Louis Bi-State Intergroup to hold recovery events every month. These can be on Saturday, Sunday, or even a weekday evening.

Might your home meeting be interested? It can be a great service project that promotes recovery in your meeting and in the wider Intergroup! Here are some beginning thoughts, and you may find more guidance on our Intergroup website [HERE](#):

The hosting group chooses the date taking into consideration other scheduled OA events (*i.e.*, convention, retreat, Region 4 functions, WSO functions, and IG business meeting weekends). Please consult the Vice Chair before you set the date to avoid conflicts with an event scheduled by another group. That's

Christina D, at this email address: vicechair@stlouisoa.org.

Some months have designated OA themes or anniversaries, and a group choosing one of those months may wish to coordinate their recovery event around those themes: They are:

- January - OA Birthday (since 1960) – third weekend in January
- February - Unity Day - the last Saturday in February in even years and the last Sunday in February in odd years at 11:30 a.m. [local time around the world] – **see page 8**
- August – Sponsorship Day – 3rd weekend in August
- November - IDEA Day - 3rd weekend in November (International Day Experiencing Abstinence)
- December - Holiday Booster

Don't forget that the Intergroup has a Zoom account that may be used to support special recovery events, and technical assistance is also available. Recovery events are one way we live out the OA Responsibility Pledge: ***Always to extend the hand and heart of OA to all who share my compulsion; for this I am responsible.***

ARTICLES FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER ARE DUE BY February 20, 2021. Please send your submissions to the OA TODAY Editorial Staff newsletter@stlouisoa.org or mail to St. Louis Bi-State Area Intergroup, PO Box 28882, STL, MO 63123-0082. Personal stories express the experience, strength, and hope of individual members and not of OA as a whole. Other OA groups and service boards may reprint articles from this newsletter without requesting permission.

Overeaters Anonymous Unity Day 2021

“Unity in Diversity”

**Hosted by M/W/F “Early Bird” Groups of St. Louis Bi-State Intergroup
Sunday, February 28th from 9:30a-12:30p CST
Zoom ID: 940 5580 8391 Password: Serenity**

One OA perspective: “No matter how separate I feel, no matter that I think no one will really understand my special circumstances. I'm too young, too old, too straight, complicated, smart, shy, foreign, or just a guy... It's this very variety of our membership which enriches us all. Just as it is weakness, not strength, which binds us together, so it is diversity, not uniformity, which expands our understanding and compassion for everyone in the rooms of OA. I thank my Higher Power that this is so, or I might not find the courage to share and to reach out to newcomers. Listening is a skill I have not perfected, and so the opportunity to listen across a wide range of perspectives offers just the practice I might need.”



Suggested Donation: \$6, but no one should stay away for financial reasons. All are welcome. If donating at [the website](#), specify group #52794. Mail-in info through Eileen M. at (314) 570-9333.

Hungry for another point of view? All around the World of OA, we are yearning for and being uplifted by the wide spectrum of Experience, Strength, and Hope we all share. See you there!