

JANUARY 2021 OA TODAY NEWSLETTER

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STEP ONE

We admitted we were powerless over food — that our lives had become unmanageable.

Getting Lost on the Way to Step One

Step 1 makes me think about my start in OA and makes me think about someone else's recovery and her commitment to Step 12. I had problems with weight my whole life and I tried many insane solutions to manage my body.

In college, those attempts to control my body got pretty scary. I was diagnosed with a health condition, and my well-meaning doctor told me that weight loss could help manage the symptoms. I incorrectly interpreted that recommendation to mean I should put myself through a self-designed unsafe daily workout routine.

Those years I tortured my body with extreme exercise, I lost a lot of weight. I remember my

classmate who worked at the gym cheering me on for coming in at 5:00 a.m. daily. Little did he know I didn't want to be seen by anyone, so I worked out as early as possible to avoid other students. I was afraid of everything, others seeing my body moving, looking foolish, and to be seen at all. While I was on the workout machines especially every thought in my head was hate. It was torture, self-hate, minimizing of any progress I made. I hated my body and I hated myself. It was very confusing to hate myself and receive constant praise from everyone for my weight loss. I was harming myself every day physically, spiritually, and emotionally, but it was my inner world that no one seemed to notice.

You might imagine what happened next. The insane exercise plan "worked" for a time - and then it didn't. Attempting to control my body seemed to work, but I was actually really harming myself. I don't know at what point it happened, but I gave up the self-made boot camp exercise routine. Similarly, to food addiction, my experience with exercise was black or white extremes. I used to work out several hours a day, injuring myself, exhausted, and emotionally defeated - or I would lay on the couch not working out for months.

The year after college was one of the hardest of my whole life. The point came when I abruptly stopped exercising, the job I was counting on after college fell through, I moved in with my sister, I was long distance with my partner, and life wasn't what I thought it would be.

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I knew my sister was in OA, and, being in my addiction, I only saw the weight loss and was jealous. For the first four months living with her I saw her weigh and measure food, go to meetings, talk with her sponsor on the phone. All of that time she never said to me, "You're fat. You have a problem with food. Why don't you go to a meeting already?" She strongly suspected I was also a compulsive eater, and she patiently kept working her program.

One day I wanted to see what these OA meetings were all about, but I couldn't humble myself to tell my sister. I looked up a meeting and drove across town, or so I thought I was driving to the meeting. I was new to the city, and I got so lost. I turned off the highway, turned into a neighborhood, turned, and then turned, and then I was turned around. It was an "ah-ha moment", and I was at Step Zero! I needed that moment of crisis to realize I couldn't do this on my own. I picked up my pride and called my sister. "I'm lost; can you help me get home?" Her: "Where were you headed? Why were you over there?" Me: "I was going to a meeting - an OA meeting. I didn't want to tell you." I cried, a lot. She helped me get home and took me to my first meeting.

I will not forget that first meeting and the warm welcome to the group. All the logical parts of my brain said I didn't belong there. I was the biggest person in the room, the youngest, I didn't believe in god, they couldn't possibly understand my issues with body image, food, and weight. I thought I was terminally unique, but I wasn't. I was at home with my OA fellows right away. I listened to what they said and kept coming back!

Hearing them talk, I immediately identified with the description of the compulsive eater. Thankfully I knew about 12 Step programs, so, without much consideration, I started to go to regular meetings, get a sponsor, plan food, and my healing began. I owe my life to

this program and so grateful for my sister just existing and working her program.

Getting lost on the way to a meeting is how I started my journey of admitting I am powerless over food and how my life was unmanageable. I have experienced so much healing and release in this program. Today I can earnestly say I am grateful to be a compulsive eater because that pain brought me to recovery, renewed relationships, a rich spiritual life. I am the person I want to be today through the grace of my higher power and my fellows. I love you all, and I love me!

Brigid W.



TRADITION ONE

Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon OA unity.



"If I could have done this on my own, I would have done this already." This is a thought I have considered many times over my time in OA. I have shared it often with sponsees as they have struggled to find their way in their first days and weeks in program. Before coming to OA, I tried every type of weight loss program and diet without success. I was very intimidated and discouraged by friends and family members who could lose weight as easily as if they were making out a grocery list or making plans for a trip. Resolutions made after a binge were broken before noon the next day. It was hopeless. After a point, I just gave up.

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A difficult family situation, along with worsening eating habits, drove me to OA in 2006. The OA members and principles were challenging, but I kept coming back. Standing and holding hands with strangers was strange, but going solo had not worked.

I put off the hardest part until the end - finding a sponsor. I found someone who had what I wanted, and she fortunately said yes. Even then, I was still looking for the softer, easier way. But through the tough love of my sponsor, I was able to finally stop eating the binge foods that had dogged my all my life. That was in October of 2007, and I have not looked back.

Our common welfare should come first... As diverse as our members are, we are united because of a struggle against a compulsion that is killing us. Over the years, I have learned how important it is to lay aside differences so that we can learn - together - how to trust, grow, and recover. "In OA, we learn we can disagree...and still be supportive friends. p. 95. OA 12&12, 2nd ed. Our fellowship grows every time we remember that we are in this together and show this by connecting - be it by a phone call, a share, an email, a meeting, Super Saturday, a convention...

...personal recovery depends upon OA unity. So Tradition One is very personal for me. I now have a healthier, happier, and calmer life, along with a normal body weight. So it is important I do my part for OA and Tradition One by giving service, taking time to study the 12 Traditions, and, once COVID-19 is over, holding hands after a meeting and saying the Unity Prayer, which is all about Tradition One.

The Unity Prayer: I put my hand in yours, and together we can do what we could never do alone. No longer is there a sense of hopelessness, no longer must we each depend upon our own unsteady willpower.

We are all together now, reaching out our hands for power and strength greater than ours, and as we join hands, we find love and understanding beyond our wildest dreams.

St. Louis OA Member



SHARE THE GOOD NEWS: OA CHANGES LIVES!

Today I remembered what a friend wrote to me about choosing joy.

Listening, Awareness, Noticing Are a Daily Spiritual Practice

I take mail down the hill to the post box and trudge back up the hill to sit on my old swing, a daily practice. I talk on the walk and listen in the swing. My prayer and meditation.

I sat very still in my swing, thinking I could hear a lot of joy, a beagle barking, a rooster crowing, birds singing, wind swishing overhead and through my hair. I thought, well, this is joyful. I was listening and aware. Noticing.

I'm getting better at noticing the extraordinary in the ordinary, taking what I call "the holy pause", being still where there is sacred in the simple if I simply take the time to see and hear and feel.

I love the silent joy of seeing Goat the goat, Donkey the donkey, Fancy the horse, and Peanut the pony grazing in the lower pasture. Serene joy, when a song overcomes my heart.

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The small boy calamity joy of our little great grandsons. (We must relish this joy, as they grow up fast.) One day it will be quiet joy. But not quite yet.

My sponsor has helped me recognize that these times are my way of prayer and meditation.

These are different times we are living in. More than ever, I need my quiet times where I can release fear and stress, gather up my happies, reach for calm and peace, choose joy, let go and let God.

It's in these soft, gentle moments that Higher Power restores, and I feel a long sigh and a slow grin.

I get up and go on into a busy day.

Mary Jane D



News from Your Intergroup

Dear Fellow OAs,

Wishing the best for all as we continue our Recovery Journey in 2021. Our next Intergroup Meeting is January 10, 2021, at 1:30 p.m. The meeting ID is 940 5580 8391; password is Serenity. All are welcome.

Our Board of Trustees, business manager (bookkeeper) and two interested members met on December 10 to develop a 2021 budget. Highlights include:

- revenues of \$17,200 - with group donations of \$12,900 and recovery events of \$4,300; and
- operating expenses of \$17,200 – with twelfth step expenses (primarily Public Information campaigns) of \$7,831; professional fees of \$4,185; other operating expenses of \$2,684; and Region 4 & World Service commitments of \$2,060.

We will strive to use all Intergroup financial resources as budgeted and in the most responsible and transparent way. Copies of the year-end financials and budget will be emailed to all group Intergroup Reps before our next meeting.

****LETS GET EXCITED ABOUT 2021 EVENTS ****

In January, our Intergroup will be planning for 2021 Recovery Events. Initially, they will be virtual Zoom events, but we still are hopeful for a transition to face-to-face by summer.

So SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES are available!!! We need groups to sponsor Super Sat/Sun/Weeknight Events. February usually has a **Unity Day** event. Our Vice Chair, Christina D, is ready to help a group get this event ready to go!

We need a Chairperson and Committee to get working on a late Spring St. Louis Bi-State Annual Convention. Zoom simplifies this for us. We just need a date, flyer, program, keynote speaker and lots of willing helpers. Say yes to service; we need you.

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** WEBSITE RESOURCES **

Check out our new webpage at www.stlouisoa.org.

A dedicated volunteer, Cyndy L, has updated and revised this key element of communication for prospective and existing members.

Also checkout Region 4's webpage - www.oaregion4.org - to learn about events and meetings throughout our Region.

With gratitude for service,
Dianne S
IG Chairperson



OA Is A “We Program”: Our Tools Keep Us Connected

The “we” nature of the program is reinforced by the language that we hear in every meeting. Our invitation to you (“our”, not “my”) begins with “We of Overeaters Anonymous have made a discovery.” Each of the Steps is framed in language that includes “we,” “our”, or “us.” Each of the Traditions uses “our” language, or the word “groups” and refers back to “OA as a whole,” reminding us that we have responsibilities to and for each other.

The Tools of the program almost all involve working with others – and all can!

- A **Plan of Eating** is an individual choice usually – sometimes received

from a sponsor, but not for most of us. Yet many of us choose to ask for help from OA friends or from health care professionals in selecting our plan of eating. Many of us also choose to report food to our sponsor because it makes us more aware of what we are eating or creates a bond of accountability.

- **Sponsorship** is definitely a “we” thing. My sponsor gave me the image of myself safely cuddled between her and my sponsees in the OA boat, and I do turn to that for comfort some days!
- **Meetings** are the ultimate “we” activity for OA members. It’s a place where we are encouraged to put our hand into the hand of another (if properly washed and sanitized and maybe wearing a glove these days!).
- **Telephone**, whether audio-calls, video calls, texts, or emailing, is a way to connect to friends in OA who can help us get past a craving or process a strong emotion. A sponsee reached out to me by text recently about her unhealthy choices at breakfast. Her honesty about this is progress and is a way to take Step One, the foundation for everything the program can give us.
- **Literature** may look like it is not a “we” activity, but it is! None of our literature is published without a committee process. Literature also is made available through persons doing service at times.
- **Action Plan** can be a solitary activity, but I have a sponsee who commits his action plan to me by text daily.

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An action plan also can be something we talk through with our sponsor – like when we are trying to develop a survival plan for a family holiday or birthday party.

- **Anonymity** is a responsibility that we have to others in program. Who we see and a meeting and what they say is for them to share, not us. We also are reminded to put principles before personalities by anonymity which can help us stay out of a lot of co-dependent snarls with others.
- **Service** is a way to pay it forward for all the support we receive with our chronic and progressive eating disorder. Service can be as simple as unlocking a door, setting up chairs, or putting out signs. It can be as complicated as chairing a World Service Business Conference or placing public service announcements on a local media outlet. Connection to others is the crux of service. When we carry the message, we are the message.
- **Writing** is the oddball in a way. Many practice writing as a solitary activity, but it doesn't have to be. We use writing at recovery events as a way to get down thoughts to share with another. Writing out our fearless and searching moral inventory in Step 4 turns into sharing the exact nature of our wrongs with another human being in Step 5. And I find great strength from spiritual reflection time each morning that concludes with writing a response to what I read and noticed in reflection time and then emailing that to 20-plus friends, mostly people in program.

Anonymous

Invitation from the Tuesday 6 p.m. Ferguson Meeting in STL County

Please come to the 6:00 p.m. Tuesday Ferguson meeting. It's the only evening meeting in North St. Louis County so it's important to keep it alive. As with most meetings right now, we are gathering virtually. Here is the Zoom information: ID number is 283 866 3732, Passcode is 877611. For more information, contact Kelley at (314) 591-4696



REPEAT ANNOUNCEMENT: WE NEED RECOVERY EVENTS!

Our Intergroup hosted several successful Zoom recovery events during 2020: e.g., Zoom retreat in September, Super Saturdays in October, temporary sponsor training in November, 47 at the 9 a.m. Thanksgiving Gratitude Meeting! - and the Holiday Booster on December 5.

The 2021 Calendar is mostly OPEN at this time. Please talk with your group(s), and let's get this calendar filled up with Recovery! IG has the Zoom account available and technical assistance is also available. For info or to list your event, please contact our Vice Chair, Christina D, at: vicechair@stlouisoa.org.

ARTICLES FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER ARE DUE BY January 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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM REGION 4

Intergroup Renewal Event On Saturday, February 6

Mark your calendars & spread the word to attend "**Intergroup Renewal**" from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, February 6. This interactive workshop is great - whether you're an Intergroup chair or board member, region rep or world delegate or just want to more effectively spread recovery in your area. Come join us! Registration will be at [THIS LINK](#).

Walk away with great ideas, opportunities to enhance your creativity when strengthening your Intergroup community and as you get the word out to the suffering compulsive eater.

Meet with other Region 4 members and revitalize your intergroup with tips & instruction on:

- Leadership
- Communication
- Strategic and operating planning
- Targeted recruiting
- Member surveys
- Focused meetings
- The renewal process



Small Meetings: Big Support

The rolling prairies of the U.S. and Canada offer fabulous experience, strength, and hope to the suffering compulsive eater. We also have a fair number of small meetings (five or less attendees), who would benefit from our Region 4 support.

Region 4 will be posting a meeting list on the website of those small meetings that are meeting virtually so that our current fellows can attend and continue to build Region 4 community.

Please send the following information to Bob S at bonasachs@gmail.com:

- Meeting day, time
- Contact information: name, email and/or phone number
- Virtual meeting type: Zoom, WebEx, Go To Meeting, etc.
- Virtual connection information (only if you want that information published. Otherwise, the person can reach out to the meeting contact)



Events Link

Check out all the events happening throughout our region and world at <https://oaregion4.org/>. Click on R4 Events tab for happenings in our area and click on Events (coming real soon!) for recovery events throughout the country & world.