

# May 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



## STEP FIVE

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

### We Are Only as Sick as Our Secrets

The AA Big Book tells us, on page 73, that, "More than most people, the alcoholic leads a double life. He is very much the actor. To the outer world he presents his stage character. This is the one he likes his fellows to see. He wants to enjoy a certain reputation, but knows in his heart he doesn't deserve it."

I was very much like this when I came into OA in 2010. I had a wide variety of personas that I would put on depending on any situation in which I found myself. I was not consciously aware of this, not until OA, but I played a part in every area of my life. I acted like what I thought a wife/sister/daughter/friend/employee/mom/lady in a minivan/

person at a fair/mom out shopping SHOULD be. I was never just me. Not anywhere in my life.

I had no idea who I was. I felt constant tension: would my worlds collide? Would someone catch me being some way they had never seen me before? My behavior out in the world consisted of being who I thought other people wanted me to be, so I made sure all encounters would be over quickly, so that I could isolate and eat. Because of this compartmentalization I always had too much to do (more pressure), impossible deadlines (loved the drama and the victim story), and was never, ever able to focus on myself (justification). And I ate. Step Two in the OA Twelve & Twelve addresses this on page 11, "Too much of the time we had lived in fear and anxiety. More comfortable with food than with people, we sometimes limited our social lives. We closed the curtains, stopped answering the phone, and hid in the house."

Then I found a sponsor and began working the steps. Took me a couple of times before I found someone with whom I was comfortable. Once I started, I did fine right up to Step Four. Then the real procrastination began. I couldn't answer all those questions! What would she think of me?? I wallowed in fear and anxiety. Then we set a date to meet for the 5<sup>th</sup> Step. OMG. I would actually have to do the 4<sup>th</sup> Step! I had put it off, and put it off, lying to my sponsor that I was doing it. She knew, she had to know, and with hindsight, I can now see that her gentle encouragement to find a date, get my train ticket, make hotel reservations, etc. was exactly what I needed.

(continued on page two)

I took the number of days until my trip, counted the questions, divided them up by the days left minus 1, and finally set to work. For three solid weeks all I did was answer questions and cry. I HAD to save face – my reputation was on the line...

On the day we were to meet in Kansas City, I went to the Kirkwood Train station, and boarded the train. I was sick with anxiety. What had I gotten myself into? Was I really going to read all the secrets, all the shame, all the guilt, all the trauma to another human being? Yes, I was.

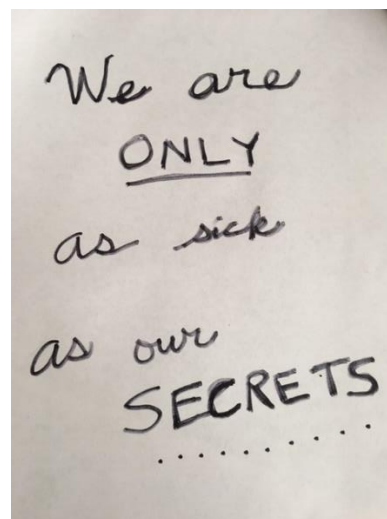
In this moment I found my fledgling integrity. The Oxford Dictionary says Integrity has two possible definitions: 1. The quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; moral uprightness; and 2. The state of being whole and undivided. For once I had finally given my word and I kept it. Nothing was left unanswered; nothing was left unfinished. I had been honest. Searching. Fearless – eh, probably still fearful, but with courage I truly didn't know I had, I had done it.

Over the many hours that I gave away that first 5<sup>th</sup> Step, my sponsor was unfailingly kind, exceedingly fair, and very gentle. She would suggest that in one area perhaps I was being too hard on myself and give me examples from her experience. In another area she would ask questions, help me see things in a different light. In giving my away my secrets to another human, and having that human reflect love, acceptance, and hope to me was life changing. I learned to separate what was my responsibility (my own actions only), and what was not (anyone else's behaviors, problems, drama, life).

Just recently, I had the honor of hearing a sponsee's 5<sup>th</sup> Step. Because I had been accepted, I was accepting. Because I had been shown kindness and understanding, I could be kind and understanding. Because I

had been guided to being able to see what was on my side of the street, I was able to guide another to do so as well. When we give away our secrets, we lose more than weight. We gain a clearer understanding of who we are. From this point we learn to make better choices, no longer weighed down with all our secrets.

Anonymous – St Louis



### TRADITION FIVE

**Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers.**



The principle of tradition five is purpose. We have only one purpose as members of the organization Overeaters Anonymous, to carry the message of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of OA.

When I first arrived in OA, I had a really busy life. I had a good job that got more challenging over the years. I had four teen-  
(continued on page three)

aged sons to keep track of. My in-laws lived nearby, and we spent time with them three evenings a week. I would have told you I already had a purpose in life: to be the best wife, mom, daughter-in-law, boss and employee that I could be.

The problem was, all those responsibilities were overwhelming, and I was using food to cope with the stress. There certainly didn't seem to be time in my life to fulfill any other obligations and responsibility was something I really wanted to escape.

Inside the rooms of OA, I learned to manage myself and my life in a more realistic way. By admitting that I couldn't take on everything that came my way, letting go of the idea of perfection, letting God be in charge of the outcome of many areas of my life, things got easier.

Time passed and life changed. I found, in time, that OA needed to be a major factor in my life rather than an hour a week. I needed to be involved in many ways, not just from the sidelines, if I truly wanted to keep my recovery.

It says in the **Big Book** that we will know a life of sane and useful purpose. Tradition Five reminds me of specific ways I fulfill that purpose:

- I have a responsibility to ensure that my meetings focus on the Steps and Traditions.
- I have a responsibility to reach out to newcomers and other members who still suffer from this disease.
- I have a responsibility to offer service, and one way is through sponsorship. *"The feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear."* That promise came true when I started working with sponsees.

I contribute both financially and through service, even beyond the group level, in order to carry the message. The interesting thing to me is how much fuller my life is when I give my time, financial resources, and energy to carrying the message.

It's said you have to give recovery away if you want to keep it. Tradition Five gives us guidance on the ways we can provide the hope to others. These days I consider responsibility a privilege, not a burden. It is truly a joy, and I always have time to give more, since I'm not bogged down with the repercussions of compulsive eating.

Anonymous



## Recovery During COVID-19: Report from April 25 Super Sunday

On April 25, the Sunday Abstinence First Meeting hosted a Super Sunday recovery event via Zoom called **Recovery During COVID: Physically Distant But Socially Connected**. Nearly 40 people attended.

Just as COVID-19 has been "random" (some get a little sick, some get very sick, some are briefly sick, some are "long haulers", some die), how compulsive eaters have reacted to the pandemic reveals quite a variety, according to the six speakers and the shares offered at this recovery event:

(continued on page four)

- Some found it easier to stay abstinent while sheltering at home and are at a healthy body weight for the first time.
- Some struggled with isolation and the lack of face-to-face meetings.
- Some have been excited to join meetings in other countries – and at any hour of the day or night that they needed one.
- Some went overboard with Zoom meetings and attended three or more (even 11 from multiple 12 Step groups according to one attendee) in a single day – and then had to have help cutting down to a healthy schedule with a balance for work, recreation, and rest.
- Some found it hard to be “trapped” in the house “near all that food” – instead of active in the outer world.

The good news was that speaker after speaker shared how they had learned lessons that enhanced their recovery. Even in a pandemic, it works when we work it!

Here is a report from an attendee followed by quotes collected by two people who were present.

### **Keep Calm & Carry On: Recovery During COVID-19**

On April 25th, the Sunday Abstinence First meeting hosted six speakers on the topic of **Recovery During COVID**. What quickly became clear, as our first speaker was in Germany where it was nearly bedtime, was how far we have come as a RESPONSE-ABLE\* organization and how much gratitude we all feel. (\*Editor’s Note: spelled this way to indicate “Able to respond to the needs of the

*pandemic, not just ‘responsible’ in as a character asset.)*

By now we may take for granted that an expatriot 3000 miles away can Zoom in. And so many stories I heard from the young’uns were about finding OA on Facebook or Google!! BUT it was still a program of sharing experience, strength and hope at a meeting, in person, making connections, and “keep coming back” literally, before COVID-19. What was new, for all of us **Everywhere**, was the sudden loss of **Everything** - like hugs, haircuts, church basements and **Everybody’s** home meeting.

What the speakers and attendees shared over these two hours, the saving sanity we all appreciated, was the consistency of having a simple, clear model for living. This model, which we call the Program, carried us like a bridge through the first weeks while phone calls, meetings and groceries got figured out. More than one person bought a computer or iPad just to Zoom. Many have discovered podcasts and over 400 meetings worldwide. The observation was made that THE SERENITY PRAYER still makes sense in a foreign language, and a food plan still works in isolation. I personally recall texting and group chat as the best we could do, and we stayed together....in many ways, we grew.

We remembered it was important not to stay in isolation, we took the time and changed our food plans, made checkup calls, remembered mantras like **NOTHING TASTES AS GOOD AS ABSTINENCE FEELS**. We did emotional balancing acts - remembering that this disease is mental and physical torture, and listened when desperation set in. The abrupt beginning of COVID-19 really brought us all so many issues, and staying present, honest and willing through it all is what we work, every day.

(continued on page five)

While the Abstinence First group did a seamless job of putting this all together, it's sobering to recall when Zoom was science-fiction. Then all across our community a few folks said "We can figure this out"...and they brought us all along. What a Miracle you are OA. God is truly doing for me what I cannot do for myself, and I thank you!!

Andrea V.



### Heard at the April Super Sunday

"I could be anonymous on Zoom, but chose not to!"

"I now have freedom from food and eat only for nourishment."

"God is doing for me, what I can't do for myself. I turn it all over! I'm getting busy living, instead of dying."

"There are 400 Zoom OA meetings listed on the OA website."

"When I got abstinent, I could see colors again."

"I write down the time that I eat, so if I find myself in the kitchen when it isn't time for a meal, I will be aware of it."

"My food addiction is like having this super, sneaky salesman living in my head, and he knows me really well and knows how to push all my buttons."

"I hear all the speakers sharing what it's like to be free of torture. That's the hope for all of us!"



### THE GAMES PADDIE PLAYS: "YOU'RE TIRED. SKIP THE MEETING." A Recovery Story featuring Paddie & Ria

Ann has been struggling. Her boss has been distant, her bank account is scraping the bottom, and she was just diagnosed with pre-diabetes. She has not been bingeing, but her food has not been clean. She has not been honest with her sponsor or doctor about this. Her home meeting meets on ZOOM in 15 minutes, and she is not sure she feels like attending.

Paddie (**Progressive and Deadly Disease**) is thrilled at the opportunity to jump in Ann's vulnerable state. "Just skip the meeting. You have a lot going on. You are tired and all alone. And really – what good does program do for you? If it worked so well, why are you struggling? Just give in and give up."



Fortunately, Ann also hears a second inner voice, Ria (**Recovery in Action, the quiet, calm voice of recovery**) - "The people in your home meeting have been with you for years. They care about you, and you care about them. Time spent with them is time well spent. Where else can you go and be so loved, accepted, and heard? Meeting makers make it. Just go."



(continued on page six)

Ann decides to focus on hope, instead of fear. She goes to the meeting. Only four people show up, including Ann. Her disease says, "See, I told you it wasn't worth going." But the readings from the Abstinence book are amazingly relevant, and the three other people attending have a lot of experience, strength, and hope to share.

One reading describes the practice of not just having a food plan, but also writing all the food one actually eats as a way to be honest. Ann notes the word honesty, something with which she has been struggling.

During group shares, Laura, a longtime member, says she relapsed last night and resonated with the reading that said that, if a person cannot be honest, abstinence is nearly impossible.

Ann thinks, "There is that word again – honesty."

After the meeting, Ann calls Laura. "What would you think of our writing and sending the food we eat every day and talking about that."

Laura says, 'I would love that. I can be honest with you.'

Ann feels a weight lifted from her shoulders. She knows she still needs to talk with her sponsor and her doctor. But she is so grateful she went to this meeting.



### Spotlight on the Tools: Anonymity

Most fellows in my home group have heard me pitch on utilizing the tool of Anonymity. I like to comment that I never would have participated if this Fellowship was named "Overeaters – and We're Going to Tell Everybody About You!". I came initially *because* it is called Overeaters Anonymous. I had a sneaking feeling that it would be a safe place for me to talk about my problems with overeating.

I have benefitted from the openness and willingness of others in the Fellowship to share their experience, strength, and hope. With anonymity, I have experienced Fellows' honest sharing about the disease of compulsive eating and the solution they have found. They feel safe sharing so honestly, I believe, because they know that who they see and what they say will stay in the rooms.

Without honest sharing, I would not have been able to hear the firsthand accounts of other Fellows, and maybe I never would have identified with the Fellowship at all. To me, anonymity defends our ability to be honest with one another.

I am so glad that Anonymity is such a key component of our Fellowship. It does not just protect my name and my story – it teaches me to respect the anonymity of others in the Fellowship as well. I never would have come to these rooms without anonymity, and I never would have stayed without it either. This program saves my life, one day at a time. Thank you, OA.

By Anonymous (of course – wink)

## MEETING NEWS FROM INTERGROUP

### **1. Your meeting place is covered by our insurance!**

Our intergroup has purchased liability insurance. It does not cover our members, but it **does cover** any damage we might do to the places where our groups hold their meetings! Sometimes a church or other facility where we meet requires proof of this coverage. Happily, we are now willing and able to supply a “certificate of coverage” that you can give the facility if they ask for it. To get a copy, just email [info@stlouisoa.org](mailto:info@stlouisoa.org).

### **2. Your meeting list is completely redone!**

We now have a **Where and When** with lots of information about a meeting, including whether they currently meet virtually, face-to-face, or both. Feedback is that people find it very useful.

There is now only one single version of the **Where and When**. Not one by day and time and another one by zip code. Not one for the website and another one for local distribution. Just one version.

Please proofread your meeting’s entry. If it needs to change, then please do these two things:

- A. Notify us locally by emailing [info@stlouisoa.org](mailto:info@stlouisoa.org) with your group number and the changes; and
- B. Update the wider OA community by going to [oa.org](http://oa.org) and using **Edit a Meeting**. Nearly all our meetings are listed there as face-to-face meetings, with any details about meeting virtually given in the “additional information” notes. (Each meeting is responsible for keeping its own [oa.org](http://oa.org) entry up to date, but if you need

help on a case-by-case basis, write [info@stlouisoa.org](mailto:info@stlouisoa.org), and we will help or do it for you.)

### **3. Wording for Open and Closed meetings – ideas wanted!**

In OA an “open” meeting is open to the general public, including student nurses, student social workers, family members, and so on. A “closed” meeting is not. It’s limited to people with problems with food. Newcomers are welcome at either one.

The new **Where and When** now says either “open” or “closed to the general public.” We are not happy about this wording, because potential newcomers might think that general public means them. People also sometimes think “closed” means that the meeting has folded.

**Here’s the “ideas wanted” part:** please submit your suggested wording to [info@stlouisoa.org](mailto:info@stlouisoa.org). It needs to be very brief, though, just a few words. Please give it your best shot!

Elizabeth C, Operations Administrator

**ARTICLES FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER ARE DUE BY MAY 20, 2021.** Please send your submissions to the **OA TODAY** editor and Newsletter Team at [newsletter@stlouisoa.org](mailto:newsletter@stlouisoa.org) or mail to St. Louis Bi-State Area Intergroup, PO Box 28882, St. Louis, 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.

## Intergroup Calendar of Events

**May 15 – Intergroup Annual Convention**, see flyer on page nine

**May 16 – Intergroup Meeting** (a week later than usual due to a holiday on May 9)

**June 13 – Intergroup Meeting**

**July 11 – Intergroup Meeting**

**August 21 – Sponsorship Day** (No home meeting has volunteered to host a recovery event on this theme as we go to print)

**August 26-28 – World Service Convention**

**September 12 – Intergroup Meeting**

**September or October – Will there be a Fall Retreat?** If you would like to be considered for service as Retreat Chair, complete the form at this [LINK](#).

**October 10 – Intergroup Meeting**

**November 14 – Intergroup Meeting**

**November 20-21 – IDEA Day** (International Day of Experiencing Abstinence; no home meeting has volunteered to host a recovery date on this theme as we go to print)

**Note:** *Each Intergroup Meeting is 1:30-3 p.m. via Zoom. The meeting number is 940 5580 8391. The password is: Serenity. Those in elected service positions and Intergroup Representatives are expected to attend. All other fellows are welcome.*



## Spread the Good News: OA Changes Lives HP Takes Nothing Good Away

As a person who has worked hard to own my own power as part of my healing process, I find that admitting I am “powerlessness” about ANYTHING, including food, does not come easily. So, I appreciate this thought from the April 29 **For Today** writer:

“Am I not the [captain of my soul](#), the master of my fate? Yes, certainly; that is one view of it. I ‘captained’ myself right into an obsession with food that wrecked most of my hopes and plans.....God’s will frees me from my self-destructive willfulness. **IT TAKES NOTHING GOOD AWAY FROM ME.**”

That is why Steps 2 and 3 were so very important for me. Before these Steps, I did not trust that my Higher Power would take nothing good away from me. I thought that following a food plan was about reaching food perfection and losing freedom. I already was convinced that I was not good enough so needed no new opportunities to fail at rules I could not keep.

When my sponsor suggested that I fire my Higher Power and write a want ad for one that could help me with my food addiction, I was shocked and terrified. I thought that I had to take God as God comes, and her words were blasphemy, pure and simple. But I was willing to try because I had the “gift of desperation.”

Amazingly, I found that, if I start by assuming that God actually cares about whether I am eating myself to death and wants to help me, then I may be able to trust the HP of my understanding to actually do so. It turned out that help was as simple as reaching out to the long list of people who have volunteered – out of love, not status or the chance for personal profit - to put their hand in mine. Bless you for saving my life!  
(Anonymous)



Overeaters Anonymous • St. Louis Bi-State Intergroup

# Annual Convention

## zooming into recovery

**Saturday  
May 15, 2021**



**9 am - 5:30 pm**  
Virtual on Zoom

Three Keynote Speakers

Two Break-out Rooms: Special Topics plus Step Study Featuring  
Six Speakers Each & Sharing During Each Session

ADVANCE REGISTRATION REQUIRED

**\$25 registration**

**Register online at:**

[stlouisoa.org](http://stlouisoa.org)

▪ **Registration deadline: Midnight Thur. May 13**

▪ Meeting number, password and final information will be emailed during the week before the event

▪ No refunds will be available

**General Questions? Call Debbie K. 636-634-6201 or email: [info@stlouisoa.org](mailto:info@stlouisoa.org)**

**To register by check, complete and mail this form to:**

**Marina Fruth,**  
14644 N. Court #6, Effingham, IL 62401  
*(make check payable to St. Louis Bi-State Intergroup)*

Please never stay away from an OA event for financial reasons.

**We Care Funds** are available to help with all or part of fee. To arrange for anonymous assistance, please call **Marina F. 815-343-6412**

-----  
First name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

**In US:** City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

**Outside US:** Country \_\_\_\_\_ City/Province \_\_\_\_\_

**ENCLOSED** Registration: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ We Care Donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ **TOTAL** Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_