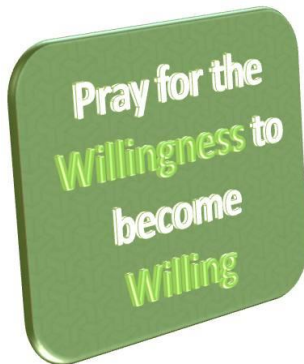


June 2021 OA TODAY NEWSLETTER

St. Louis Bi-State Intergroup of OA
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STEP SIX

Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Desperation Can Help Us Prepare Our Hearts for Change

Step 6 is preparing (willingness) for the action of asking required in Step 7. Defects are brought to light in Steps 4 and 5. My defects are behaviors, beliefs, and actions that cause me to be separated from God; removing my effectiveness to serve Him and others. By far, my most difficult defect to deal with and the longest hanger-oner is shame.

I struggled to understand the meaning of "Were entirely ready." However, looking back at powerlessness and unmanageability in Step 1, I found clarity. At Step 1, I was desperate to be relieved of my obsession with food. In comparison, at Step 6, I need the same desperation to be entirely ready to have defects removed. Desperation for me is

when I can no longer tolerate the pain; pain caused by physical, emotional or spiritual distress.

I became desperate again last weekend. Shame had once again imprisoned me to fear, self-pity, dramatization, and guilt. I prayed for relief. The more I prayed, the more shame exerted its power to alienate me from HP and OA. I was desperate to be nearer to God. Shame kept pushing me further away. Desperate words finally cried out from my heart. I admitted falling prey to shame again and again. I apologized for believing the lies of my disease, saying, "I'll never be good enough, I can't be healed." I asked to be given strength and courage to open my heart to The Truth when shame crept into the cracks of my sacred wounds.

I asked for wisdom to know the difference between my work and God's work. I admitted my belief God is responsible for the miraculous changes I've experienced in Program.

Surrender. Surrender helped me to let go and be assured God will indeed sustain me. The prison gate swung open, and I walked out in the sunlight of the Spirit.

It became clear my work in Step 6 was to prepare my heart for change. I asked for heart softening. I asked for courage to look into the darkest areas where I had blocked God from entering.

My heart preparation work:

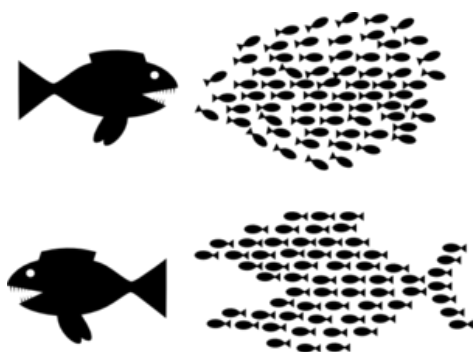
(continued on page 2)

- Place myself in a position to receive messages from HP by routinely attending spiritual services, going to OA meetings, and being involved in small groups to help me understand my disease and encourage growth in Spirituality.
- Listening to others walking the same path of spiritual enlightenment, recovery, and transformation.
- Sharing honestly with others about my struggles with food thoughts or behaviors in and outside of OA meetings. Sharing struggles with emotional garbage and the difficulty I have identifying emotions. Sharing my struggles with faith.

A wise 12-Step friend told me, "Recovery is a program of a million surrenders." Step 6 is no exception. Willingness for surrender to a Power greater than myself, again. And again, and again, and again. I choose to practice, again.

As much as miracles happen in OA, they aren't the result of magic. The miracles surface when the effort is applied. May I be of maximum service to God and my fellows.

Susan T, St. Louis



SOLIDARITY



TRADITION SIX

An OA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the OA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.



The principle of Tradition Six is **solidarity**. OA has only one purpose and that is to carry the message of the twelve steps and twelve traditions to help compulsive overeaters who suffer from our disease. Singleness of purpose prevents diluting the message that we have to share.

I remember receiving a phone call from another member who invited me to attend an outside function for the purpose of recruiting me for a sales position. I was taken by surprise because I did not know this person very well and I felt uncomfortable being put in a position of having to say I was not interested. When I shared what had happened with my sponsor, she told me about Tradition Six and how this person, however well intended, should not have asked me.

Another person, one I knew on a friendship level as well as through OA, sent out an email to a list of members inviting them to an event that involved a study group for a particular philosophy. Because we were friends, I didn't think about the message being a break of traditions. However, another member contacted my friend and explained that this was not the proper use of the group sign in sheet. My friend was unaware of Tradition Six and made amends and has honored our tradition thereafter.

(continued on page 3)

When I first joined OA, there was outside literature for sale at one of my meetings. Over time, with many quiet reminders, not only have there not been actual books on the tables, but members are aware that they are not to read from, or mention the titles or authors of non-OA literature during a meeting.

None of these instances are earth shattering and all can seem quite innocent, so why do we suggest that members not use our meetings or phone lists to promote outside enterprises and causes? They distract us from our primary message of recovery through the twelve steps. I need to spend my time in the meetings focused on that message. I need to feel safe that my decision to put my name on the sign-in sheet at a meeting won't lead to unwanted solicitations or put me in awkward situations.

It is my responsibility to ensure others are not placed in such a position either. In a group conscience, we might ask ourselves: *Does our group discourage members from plugging outside enterprises in OA meetings?*

One area where I've observed many of us are lax on Tradition Six is the mention of other 12 step groups when we share. Not only are we breaking our own anonymity, but we may confuse newcomers as to the main focus of our meeting. There are many members who have found recovery from other addictions who are also compulsive eaters. When we are in an OA meeting, however, we need to share our experience, strength and hope about our addiction to food and food behaviors. Otherwise, we end up sharing off topic, and that can be confusing.

As with all of our traditions they are there to guide us within our meetings, both our group and our business meetings. You can certainly share information about your outside interests and experiences with friends, some

of whom you have met in OA, once you have established a relationship with that person. However, during a meeting, or when calling a newcomer or someone you only know from the meetings, keep your discussions OA related. Keep it simple, and you can't go wrong.

Anonymous



How Can I Be Useful Today?



- Share something meaningful at my next meeting or phone call.
- Get my meeting's phone list.
- Call someone I haven't seen lately.

E.C.

Note: In the Ninth Step Promises section of **The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous**, on page 84, we read: *"No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear."*

Many of us are grateful for the recovery we have received in OA and want to be more useful to our OA fellows. We don't always know where to start though, so E.C. has offered to give us some simple and practical suggestions in a monthly series called **"How Can I Be Useful Today?"**



A CLOSER LOOK AT STUBBORNNESS & PERSEVERANCE

One morning I was stubbornly cleaning a flowerbed of a creeping invasive weed that persistently threatens to choke out both perennials and annuals. It's regular work, as I have to persevere through the whole growing season, or the beautiful flowers will become stunted or completely killed out. I can't afford to let up or it goes crazy. I just refuse to let the green-creepies win.

One such day, after doing my morning OA work, (texting my food plan to my sponsor, sending a list of gratitudes to my gratitude buddy and working a Voices of Recovery workbook question with a small text group of pals), it occurred to me that I work my OA program much like I weed my garden.

It's this same kind of every day persistence in OA work I give myself every morning, but being gentler, I'll call it persistent self-care. It is one day at a time perseverance. It's the antidote for the insidious (green-creepies) malady of compulsive overeating.

I've learned (and continue to learn), by following the guidance of three good sponsors over these twenty-five years in and out of program,

It's through willingness to keep reading, reaching out, by showing up at meetings, sending the daily food plan, chatting with my sponsor and implementing other good program practices that I'm able to persevere. It's by a daily surrender to my Higher Power, and using the persistent prayer, "more of Thee less of me" that helps me be centered and have balance and freedom from me me.

Working to maintain a healthy rhythm of physical, spiritual and mental wellness has a

quality that gives the gifts of humility, hope and a good measure of peace and joy. These pour into usefulness and an energy for service in program, family and among friends. It's a good life.

With this closer look, I realize that my stubborn nature is not so bad after all. With help of good others and my own willingness to persevere in the new healthy lifestyle I've chosen, I truly have hope of long-term recovery.

I just refuse to let the green-creepies win.

In it for the long run, MJ



World Service Convention 2021 - Walking in the Sunlight: One Day at a Time; Orlando, Florida; August 26 – 28

Come join OA members from around the world for the 2021 World Service Convention - <https://oa.org/world-service-convention/>

Convention 2021 registration and lodging are open! Early-bird registration is US \$119 until June 11, 2021, at 11:59 p.m. MDT. After that the registration fee increases to US \$150 until July 30, 2021, at 11:59 p.m. MDT. Daily registration fees will not be available.

SHARE THE GOOD NEWS: OA CHANGES LIVES!

Lifelong Body Image Issues Transform to Acceptance, Gratefulness

Hello, my name is Amy, and I am a compulsive overeater. I have been in the program since January, 2007, and have been abstinent since that time, only by the Grace of God. My abstinence is refraining from my trigger foods and free from bingeing and purging, excessive exercising and freedom from the scale. While the food is under control, my body image is a constant struggle.

My vision of my body has been distorted for as long as I can remember. Being skinny as a child, I was praised and applauded. It was my identity. In my late teens and early 20's, the fear set in - fear of getting fat. I will be worthless if I get fat, I thought, so the infatuation with being thin began. That led to constant restriction, followed by bingeing, and then ultimately purging. Well, this worked, and I was praised for being thin and often asked, "How do you do it? Even after having children?".

My identity was back, but that was not enough. If I could lose just one more pound, go down one more size, my life would be perfect. I was always pinching, poking my body, squeezing my "fat". I hated myself because my stomach was not concave enough, when actually my clothes were hanging off me. The constant comparison to other women, models etc. consumed me. I was never able to accept my body. At my lowest point, contemplating if my life was worth living, fainting at a party because my body was so weak, I entered these rooms. My life has never been the same since that day 14 years ago.

I have come so far in my recovery, but I have more work to do. I am no longer abusing my body physically. However, the mental obsession is slow to go. I can look at my body and love it, admire my strength and beauty. But fear and doubt slip in almost unnoticed, and I am back to negative self-talk and mourning my skinny body. I sometimes find myself getting into the comparison game, or contemplating trying the new fad to keep weight down. I still relish when someone gives me a compliment, but sometimes rather than accept it I interpret it as "oh, they must think I put on a little weight," and I look "healthy". Healthy to me meant fat, not thin.

I have to make a conscious effort to turn it over to my HP. I often have to remind myself of a comment someone in the program told me after I shared the horrible news that I saw a glimpse of my weight when at the doctor's office. "Your weight is none of your business; it is God's business." When negative self-talk and stinking thinking about my body swirls in my head, and I am aware of it, I do not need to act on it. It is this awareness that is recovery. Then I ask myself, "What are you going to do about it? Turn it over, call my sponsor, write about it, and pray."

The image of my body is shifting to one of acceptance and gratefulness. The only explanation for this shift is this program. That is why I keep coming back.

Eternally grateful,
Amy A



UNPACKING THE OA PICNIC BASKET: A Recovery Story featuring Paddie & Ria

Summer was here and Marie was dreading going to a family barbecue picnic this month. It is a special family tradition, and she looks forward to seeing everyone. Yet, every year she leaves the barbecue smiling and saying goodbye to everyone, but, as she drives home, she hates herself because she is almost sick from overeating.

Marie has been going to Overeaters Anonymous for the past several months and has been doing well with her abstinence. But social functions have been few and far between during this past year due to COVID-19. Her eating is always worse at social functions.



Paddie (the voice of Marie's **P**rogressive and Deadly **D**isease) is thrilled to jump into Marie's vulnerable state. *"Don't be so silly. It is just a picnic.*

Just promise yourself, as you do every year to only have a spoonful of a few dishes. But be sure to eat some of what your mother and aunts bring. It always makes them feel so good when you compliment them on how good their dishes taste. And be sure to bring that dessert that you bring every year. People would be disappointed if you didn't, even though you ate most of it before you brought it to the last picnic."



Ria (The quiet, calm, loving voice of **R**ecovery **i**n **A**ction) *"Marie, ask for help. You don't have to do this alone. Remember what others have said at your home meeting about how they handled family food functions. Share about*

this at your next meeting. Talk to your sponsor. You don't have to face this alone."

Marie pauses. *"Ask for help. They said that all the time at my meeting. I could share about this at the next meeting. I could talk to my sponsor. I wonder what they would say? They care about me. I am tired of overeating and feeling like a bloated failure. I am going to ask."*

Much to Marie's surprise and relief, she was surrounded with understanding and practical advice by her fellow OAs when she shared at her meeting. Members had lots of experience, strength, and hope to share. *"Oh, boy. We know how hard family food functions can be - so much guilt about not eating Mom's dessert. I don't bring food I can't eat. I eat before the party. I never say I am on a diet; I explain I am bringing my own food because I have a health issue. I stay OUT of the kitchen."* Marie was amazed - what great ideas!

Marie's sponsor said "silly family picnics" are a big deal to compulsive overeaters. Her sponsor listened and helped Marie make a plan before, during, and after the picnic. Marie also learned the stress of some unspoken family conflicts were causing her to unknowingly eat more. Her sponsor had Marie write and share about these family issues.

Marie decided to eat before the picnic, pack a healthy snack for the midafternoon, and to leave by a certain time. The family picnic came and Marie enjoyed herself. She called her sponsor before and after the picnic.

Driving home, Marie was almost in tears with joy. She had stuck to her food plan and her action plan - a miracle. *"I feel good and safe. Not like before. Just one day at a time. I can do this. Thanks, OA."*

Slogan Highlight: Came for the Vanity, Stayed for the Sanity

I walked into the rooms of OA 15 years ago because I was unhappy with my body size and miserable with myself. I thought that if I could get to a body size that was satisfactory to me, all my problems would magically disappear. I believed that my shape and size was the source of my miserable attitude about myself and life. I am so glad that I was incorrect in that thinking. It was stinking thinking!

After several months of meetings, I started to realize that, no matter what my body shape and size were, I would still be living life with all its challenges and victories. My weight is but a miniscule factor in my overall satisfaction with life. What kept me coming back to meetings and what keeps me coming back is listening to other fellows share their experience, strength, and hope.

I need the experience of other fellows who have the same historical stinking thinking as I do to know what options are out there for me. To know what it was like, what happened, and what it is like now for them is always a healthy shot in my arm. My compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors take me down a road of self-destruction that is severe in its pain and consequences.

The sanity that I find in every meeting of OA helps me to keep my heart, mind, and spirit focused on God's will for me, just for today. When I'm in recovery, I can do for one day or one moment the very things that I thought I could never do - and the things that I know that I can't possibly do for a lifetime.

Today I can choose to trudge the road of happy destiny in recovery - or to fall down the slippery road of diseased thinking. Just for

today, I choose to stay in sanity and trudge that happy road of recovery. Thank you for being one of my fellows and thank God for Overeaters Anonymous.

Anonymous



Intergroup Calendar of Events

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
– see details on page 4

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 – This is the meeting where elections are held for service positions. See page 8 for openings.

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.*

WHAT'S GOING ON IN IG: Intergroup Chair's Column

On May 15 we had a terrific 2021 Annual St. Louis Bi-State Convention. Everyone at our IG meeting the next day was abuzz about the parts they enjoyed most. All the Convention Committee members were acknowledged and thanked for their outstanding service.

Our World Service delegates attended the World Service Business Conference the third week of April on Zoom. Over 20 countries were represented! Our delegates submitted a written report available to all. Highlights include:

- ***The definition of recovery has been revised again. The new statement reads: Abstinence in Overeaters Anonymous is the action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight. Spiritual, emotional and physical recovery is the result of working and living the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve Step program on a daily basis.*** Please update this definition on your meeting formats.
- Lifeline 2.0 will be digital and coming soon. New/updated literature coming soon – Tools of Recovery, A New Plan of Eating: A Physical Emotional and Spiritual Journey and Voices of Recovery.
- Christina D will be working on the Conference Approved Literature Committee specifically addressing Sponsorship Literature, and Cyndy L will be Co-Chair of the Bylaws Committee.

The WSO Convention is happening THIS AUGUST 26-28. See page four for details.

Please ask your meeting's Intergroup Representative to forward the email for any reports submitted to IG, if you would like to read them. These include the agenda and minutes (also available on the webpage), Vice Chair events info/calendar, Operations, Treasure/financials, Public Information, Literature, Webmaster, WSO Delegates, Region 4 Reps, plus any special committees.

It's not too early to start thinking about how **you can join our Intergroup service team.** We all are responsible to carry the message, service helps us bring the Twelfth Step into action. Plus, we have fun and enrich our fellowship experience and expand our RECOVERY working together!

- **We will be accepting nomination forms for service board positions – chairperson, secretary, and operations administrator.** Familiarity with Intergroup and one year of abstinence is required.
- **Region 4 reps** - we are allowed five spots. Requirement is one year in Overeaters Anonymous and six months of current abstinence.
- **WSBC delegates** - we are allowed three spots, and two are open for nominations this year. The requirements are at least two years of service beyond the group level and active at the group and Intergroup service levels for the preceding year, plus at least one year of current abstinence.
- Please feel free to email me at chair@stlouisoa.org with any questions or for more detailed information.

(continued on page 9)

We had a productive brainstorming work session at our May Intergroup meeting about:

- (1) how our Intergroup can carry the message more effectively,
- (2) how plans and ideas can be communicated to meetings and members more effectively, and
- (3) how we can get more members/meetings involved in carrying the message to members still suffering from our disease.

Summary of a few ideas from May:

- Refresh meeting formats. There are ideas at oa.org. How about a Question and Answer meeting or Ask it Basket? Members like the opportunity to have their questions answered.
- Recovery from Relapse meetings are needed; people in relapse need that personal touch.
- Have another ongoing [Been Slipping and Sliding](#) study group.
- Host a Sponsorship Workshop. Materials are available at the OA website, and the Intergroup has people available to lead or speak.
- There is a [Where Do I Start](#) brochure for newcomers and [Temporary Sponsors: Newcomers First Twelve Days](#) guide. Ask IG to speak/give a mini-workshop about these at your meeting.
- Reach out to small groups. Ask them to join your group's Zoom or telephone meeting and/or get volunteers from your group to go to their meeting.

- There is a “receive a call/speaker/sponsor list” called the **Hand in Hand Directory** available. Is anyone using it? If not, why not? Our phone volunteer has a copy and occasionally will get a phone call from someone wanting this information, but otherwise, we have no idea if this resource is being used or helpful. We need members’ feedback. Several reps requested a copy via email following this discussion.
- Reproduce sections of Twelfth Step Within Workbook in the Newsletter. (We would need permission from WSO to do this.)

We still need a Chairperson and Committee for a Virtual Fall Retreat.

Please consider getting involved; reach out to your OA buddies to make this event happen. Time is getting short!

Remember we are a bottom-up organization, meetings exist to help members recover and carry the message, intergroups exist to help members and meetings, and regions and world exist to support all of the above. It all starts with you! We will be continuing brainstorming next month at the IG meeting, please come and share your ideas – **Sunday June 13, 1:30 pm Zoom ID 940 5580 8391, password Serenity.**

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



A Few More Highlights From May's IG Meeting

St. Louis OA Intergroup met on Sunday, May 16, 2021, at 1:30 p.m. and was attended by 18 participants.

The 2021 IG Spring Convention was a resounding success. The theme was **Zooming into Recovery**, and 67 participants from 12 states attended this one-day virtual event. Some quotes follow this column.

FINANCES - Income January through April 2021 from group donations, Intergroup donations and newsletter sales equaled \$4,702.04. Event contributions: Convention, We Care Scholarship, Super Saturdays and 2020 convention tote bag sales totaled \$997.00. We have sufficient funds to cover our operating expenses. However, Seventh Tradition donations continue to be down, and members and meetings are encouraged to [donate](#), even if meeting virtually.

WEBSITE - Our website has been updated. Online traffic in April for stlouisoa.org from April 10 - May 9, 2021 included 384 sessions and 1093 page views. The average session duration: 2 minutes, 12 seconds. New vs. returning visitors: 67% new, 33% returning.

LITERATURE SALES - In April, \$228.75 in literature was sold.

Quotes from the May 15 Intergroup Spring Convention

I wasn't an alcoholic so I thought the **Big Book** was beneath me, so I put it away. They gave me a sheet with a food plan, and I was there to lose weight, so I focused there, not on developing a spiritual life. My food plan was my religion, and, abstinence was my god, but they were nowhere to be found when I relapsed on

my honeymoon. That led to years of painful struggling.

When I got on a plane, people would look down, and I could tell that they were thinking, "Please don't let her sit next to me." I didn't blame them. If I could choose not to sit next to me, I would choose that too!

The Doctor's Opinion is the foundation for recovery in OA. Foundations are usually below ground. If they are not strong, the building will fall.

Someone once asked me how we accept things that are not acceptable. Acceptance does not imply endorsement. When I accept that what is IS, I can then figure out what I'm going to do about it.

It's taken me so long to recognize that I am no better than anyone else, but also no worse!

We are MIP's – Miracles in Progress!

Your abstinence becomes part of your DNA. I no longer want to eat any other way.

Keep coming back. This is where the miracles are. This is where the good life is, and you never know what is coming around the corner.

ARTICLES FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER ARE DUE BY JUNE 20, 2021.

Please send your submissions to the **OA TODAY** editor and Newsletter Team at 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