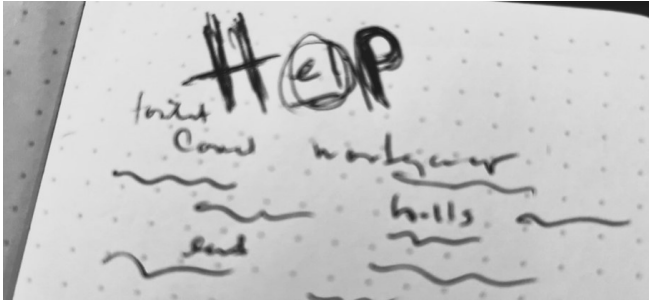


May 2022 OA TODAY NEWSLETTER

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STEP FIVE

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



It Was Right in Front of Me

My kid has COVID-19. Problem with the mortgage. Toilet overflowed. Haven't done dishes in three days. Been wearing the same clothes for four days. When was my last shower?

I wanna eat, I wanna eat, I wanna eat, I wanna eat, I wanna eat...

The drumbeat in my head was relentless. So much to do, so much to worry about. Where do I start? Around and around the thoughts fly. Meanwhile I sit, almost catatonic with worry, depressed, overwhelmed. Too overwhelmed to start, to move, to care for myself. I need help.

I sit in my chair. Making the list of things I need to take care of. My responsibilities. If I don't do these things no one will. It is entirely on my shoulders. At the top of the page, mindlessly, I

write **Help**. I trace it again and again. For no reason at all, I circle the "e".

Trace....circle....trace....circle.

In tears, I pray: *I need help. I don't know what to do.*

A nudge. A tug. Look up, the voice says. Look up.

I look up.

(continued on page 2)

SHAMESHAMESHAME

**Should
Have
Already
Mastered
Everything**

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."*

Do you feel like you've been living a double life? Does food have your tail kicked? Do you feel like a giant mess up, full of shame? One way to determine whether OA might be right for you is to take the [OA QUIZ](#).

If you decide that you may be one of us, please join us for [OA MEETINGS](#) and read our monthly [NEWSLETTER](#). You are not alone.

(5th Step article, continued from page 1)

There's my doodle. And my answer. H el P. **HP, Higher Power; el**, one of the most prolific symbols for G*d in many languages around the world. Right in front of me all the time. **I need HP.** I need a power greater than myself. My shoulders drop. I weep. I take a shaky breath. Then another, steadier. I call my sponsor. We talk. I get up and go talk with my partner. We find answers together. Nothing is mine alone. I do not control the world.

Out of nowhere I have taken the 5th step one more time. I have admitted to God, to myself, and to another human being the exact nature of my wrongs. My character defect of pride had once more taken the driver's seat. I couldn't admit that I was overwhelmed, that there were things I couldn't handle – why? Because then I wouldn't be perfect. I wouldn't be the one with it all together. Miss Fix It.

Pride walked right in without me even being aware of it. My food was fine. I went to meetings, did service, sponsored and was sponsored. Surely, I had it mastered. Slowly, insidiously, that defect had crept back into my head. Her voice saying, "You've got this", "When you do this, everything will be great", "everyone depends on you", "better work harder", "don't fail, too much is riding on this".

The pressure. The anxiety. The utterly unrealistic expectation that I could control my little corner of the world.

The relief. I am human. I am not alone. I am not solely responsible for everything. I am grateful daily that I can take these steps again and again....that they come to me now when I need them the most, almost subconsciously. Admit what you have done or haven't done; turn it over to HP; tell another human.

With my integrity and humanity restored, another 5th step taken on a journey 12 steps

long, repeated to infinity. I go and take a shower.

Anonymous

**Spiritual Principle - Integrity:
A Value We Can Shake On**



TRADITION FIVE

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



I didn't know that I didn't have purpose. I went out and lived my life, just like everyone else. Paid my bills, raised my kids, did things with friends, worked. Deep inside though I was empty. Empty at a level that is rather indescribable – except to another addict like me – but I didn't even know I WAS an addict.

The way I dealt with the empty was to eat. I ate from the time I got up to the time I went to bed. I had complex and bizarre rituals around food that I had to do every day or the anxiety would be too much, and then I would have to eat more.

Finally, one day about 12 years ago, I couldn't live like that anymore. I was depressed,

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physically ill, and just worn out. It was suggested that I go to OA. Well, I was **told** to go, but that is not this story, and so I did. And I fought it with everything in me. I didn't really want to change, I just wanted to weigh "the right weight" and go on living in the fog.

OA does not let you do that, not if you give it even a little bit of yourself, a little bit of effort, a little bit of hope, or at least that's my experience. Even with the tiniest of steps my life began to change, get clearer, brighter, and miracle of miracles – I NOTICED! And I liked it.

However, and you knew there was a however – didn't you? I did NOT want anyone to know that I was a compulsive overeater. Not my kids, not my friends, not my coworkers, not my family. So, naturally, that 12th step was out of the question. I wasn't about to "carry the message to other compulsive overeaters". I was going to get to my right size and say goodbye.

Can you guess the outcome? I am now a proud compulsive overeater, and a proud member of OA. I carry my emotional, spiritual, and physical recovery with me in all my affairs, and I am the better for it.

Our groups have this same responsibility. In fact, it is in our groups that we first get to practice carrying the message. We learn to say we are compulsive eaters and to be comfortable with that truth. We learn how to share our experience and hope with other members, and we begin the lifelong task of "being the message".

Tradition 5 reminds us that groups have a part to play in carrying the message as well. We must look beyond our own group and think about the compulsive eater who hasn't yet found us. In our groups we need to ask ourselves:

Do we focus on the 12 Steps and Traditions? Or are we catching up with friends and reliving our woes?

Do we reach out to newcomers when they come in? Make them feel welcome? Answer their questions?

Do we work with our Intergroup to help spread the message, volunteer for projects that will help the outside world learn about the wonderful solution that is to be found in our rooms?

Do we check on members who have stopped coming?

Do we have sponsors in our group, or have a resource for our members to find sponsors?

Our disease is one of isolation, our recovery is about connection: person to person, group to group, region to region. We all need to spread the message, if not us then who?

If your group is ready to carry the message, contact [your local Intergroup](#) for opportunities. Volunteers can find their purpose here. Having found a purpose myself, my life is much richer for it.

Anonymous



Spiritual Principle of Tradition 5: Purpose

Definition of Purpose: The reason for which something is done or created or for which something exists.

We have found a sane way of eating and living through the twelve steps and twelve traditions, and we share this free of charge because it was given to us freely without charge. We bring strength and hope to other compulsive overeaters. The principles rather than our problems should be the focus of every meeting.

Our newcomers are our lifeline to give back, and without them our meetings would die. We also notice our fellowlong timers and reach out to them when they are struggling.

The fifth tradition reminds us to keep it simple. To focus on the primary purpose is to carry the message of recovery. With the help of our Higher Power, we can see results we could never have dreamed.

Newcomers, old timers, abstinent or not - we can be there for each other always!

Anne H.



From Food Daydreams to the Abstinance Advantage: A Recovery Story Featuring Paddie & Ria

Mary was at her OA home meeting, which she had been attending on Tuesday evenings for years. As she waited for the meeting to start, Mary thought it was ironic to be here, as she was really struggling with wanting to eat.

After all, Mary read labels, weighed and measured, did not overeat, and did not eat

foods with sugar or too much salt. But lately, she often was daydreaming about being able to eat this one snack. "Maybe, when I am very old, very sick, or terminally ill, I can eat this because then abstinence would not matter anymore." Every time this thought came, Mary thought, "This is ridiculous."

She had talked this over with her sponsor Jenny and had told Jenny that she would not eat any foods on her do-not-eat list unless she contacted her first. Mary had not broken this accountability, but she was white knuckling more and more over this food. Jenny listened and told her to write. Mary had not gotten around to doing this.

Paddie (the voice of Mary's Progressive and Deadly Disease) was thrilled to

jump into Mary's vulnerability and procrastination.) "You don't have to write about this. You are doing all the other tools. You don't have time for this."



Ria (the calm, quiet, and loving voice of Recovery in Action) was also in Mary's head - "Trust your sponsor and do the writing. Let God show you what is going on."



As the meeting started, Mary was, as always, glad to see everyone. It was now a hybrid meeting and attendance between in-person and virtual was consistently between eight to thirteen people. About half were old-timers who were at nearly every meeting, either in-person or online. The other half were those who attended off and on locally and from out of state or the occasional newcomer.

As always, **Our Invitation to You** was read at the meeting, "Once we become abstinent,

(continued on page 5

the preoccupation with food diminishes and, in many cases, leaves us entirely."

"That 'preoccupation' has not left me entirely. I feel like I am in a straitjacket," Mary thought ruefully.

Paddie: *"Well, you are in a straitjacket. But no more salt or sugar at all? That's just crazy. Get and eat the low fat, low sugar, whole grain version. Like your mother said - you don't eat enough and a couple bites won't hurt you. You need some variety in your diet."*

Ria reminded Mary: *"You've been through this before. Be wary of self-pity and excuses. Abstinence is the most important thing without exception. Don't take that first compulsive bite."*

Paddie: *"Yeah, yeah, yeah - whatever. But you know you will eventually."*

Ria: *"Nothing is worth losing your serenity. Feel it and let it pass."*

Rose, the meeting leader, said the program for the meeting would be a reading from the OA **Abstinence** book. "We will read 'The Abstinence Advantage'. It is on page 81 in the second edition and page 77 in the first edition."

Mary listened as the group took turns reading aloud.

"Recently, once again, I was humbled by my addiction to food."

"When I'm overeating, food is my god. I worship it and trust it to make things better."

"Sometimes, however, I still forget why it is so important to abstain..."

"Over and over...when I eat sweets, my obsession with food returns and my compulsion takes over my whole life."

"...where food is concerned, I am not sane."

"I forget the pain and misery ...abstinence suddenly seems very silly, or impossible, or overrated... (and once again) I have paid the price for giving in to my disease."

Ria: *"Listen - I am in this part of the reading." - "But somewhere inside me a tiny, soft spoken voice (the sane part of me) assures me that remaining abstinent is the most important thing I can do today. I must listen to this voice of sanity."*

Rose opened the floor for sharing.

Debbie, a longtime member of the meeting and the funniest person in the room, laughed. "That story is great. It is just so crazy to think of food as a god. I am picturing an altar with sweets, snacks, and super-sized drinks and binge foods - and I am bowing in front of it. 'Oh, great one. I adore you and all the binge foods on this most sacred altar!' As Debbie said this, she mimicked some mini-bows at the table with both her hands beside her head, going back and forth. The group could not help but start laughing. It was so absurd, and yet, so sadly true at the same time.

Then Jasmine shared, "Like the story said, food was my god. I hate to say that. I had to learn the hard way, over and over and over. With some addictions, the high lasts for a few hours. With food highs, how long does the taste of a bite last - maybe four seconds? When I was in my disease, to keep my addict satisfied, I had to keep eating item after item until I was ready to explode. It was so crazy and gross. I don't do that anymore. Thanks, God and OA."

Susannah shared virtually. She came infrequently, was always struggling with food, and came to meetings usually after a binge. It was always great to see her, but Mary ached to
(continued on page 6)

hear Susannah say once again, " I binged last night and feel terrible. I don't know why I do this when I know how bad I feel every time." This time she added, "My doctor says my pre-diabetes is now full-blown diabetes." Everyone heard her despair.

Rick, a first-time newcomer, shared, "I am here because I saw your meeting online. The OA website said something about 'recovering from unhealthy relationships with food and body image.' To say I have an unhealthy relationship with food is an understatement of the year. I hope this can help me."

Mary was awed and grateful. She shared, "I cannot believe how much this meeting is helping me. I have been in program and abstinent for years, but I have been struggling. I have been literally fantasizing about eating a certain food. Rose, thanks so much for leading the meeting and picking this story. And thanks everyone for sharing your experience, strength, and hope. As the story said, I can really see that I cannot eat this food unless I want to invite this compulsion back in to take over my life - again. I have to say this out loud rather than keeping it a secret. I have to recoil from this temptation every time, as though it is hot flame, just like it says in the **Big Book** (page 84)."

After the meeting, Mary did her writing and called Jenny, her sponsor, to read what she wrote and told her about the meeting. Jenny listened. "I have been through this myself," and then added, "Those crazy food thoughts may come back again. Just remember the solution is in the Steps, the Tools, and doing whatever it takes to make abstinence the most important thing in your life."

At the end of the day, Mary wasn't thinking about food. She thought about the way the fellowship surrounded her with care and was grateful.

Meeting Spotlight: Sunday-10:45 a.m.

This active and energetic meeting has an alternating format: On the first, third and fifth Sundays of the month, speakers tell their recovery stories. On the second and fourth Sundays we read stories from **Taste of Lifeline**, stopping to share after each story. Currently we meet by Zoom, averaging fourteen people who live/used to live in our area and four people coming in from other areas.

Four things make this meeting special:

1. **Focusing on sharing.** When we read literature, we are not so much studying the text as seeing how a story relates to our lives and sharing that insight with the group.
2. **Welcoming newcomers.** When there is a newcomer, three of us tell our recovery stories in a couple of minutes each. We find that newcomers appreciate hearing people's stories more than hearing information about the program.
3. **Lively group conscience meetings.** They are monthly, lasting 20 minutes or less. Many people stay and take part. Since the first of the year, we have made several changes. We changed from our being a step study meeting which we had done for four years to our present format of speakers and stories. We created the position of security monitor to keep the meeting safe by letting people in from the waiting room and putting any troublemakers right back there. Toward the summer, we will start planning the Super Saturday the group will put on. There's always something interesting to do.

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4. **Active participation in service.** We send a representative to Intergroup meetings. Some members serve on intergroup committees or on the Board of Trustees. Some of us are active in our OA Region and in World Service. We are invested in the present and future of OA. The rewards of service are amazing!

The group is currently meeting by Zoom, and the meeting number is 264 689 861. The passcode is 066708. You are most welcome.

Elizabeth C.



WSO - NEW Frequently Asked Questions about OA Bylaws

A new publication is now posted online and is available for free download. Find it on oa.org [HERE](#).

Frequently Asked Questions about OA Bylaws broadly answers the most common queries the WSO receives about forming an OA service body. If you've wondered, "What is a service body, and what are bylaws?" "How and when should my service body change its bylaws?" or "What if my service body wants to change its officially registered name?," wonder no more!

This long-awaited document brings clarity to the process of registering a service body and maintaining that service body with the WSO. Find this FAQ sheet in the Document Library under "Bylaws" and on oa.org/faqs or at the link above. Print and share it with your group!



May 15 – Intergroup Meeting**

June 12 – Intergroup Meeting**

July 15-17 - Region 4 2022 Convention: in Omaha, NE – Registration is now live!
<https://oaregion4.org/product/convention-registration/>

****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.

ARTICLES FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER ARE DUE BY MAY 20, 2022. 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 permission.



STEPS AND PRINCIPLES

N O I T O V E D C A C C E P T A N C E W Y
S C R A Z R E G N A H C K Y O D E I R U A
O I S H T I A F U S E F U L N E S S F K J
N L V T H L F U U K E S R E Z D C T M H P
S Y T I L I B A E G A N A M G I O S A O R
H E I O P T E X X T E E A S W C R I P P W
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R F B L R G D J M L U F N L Y T E W I B E
T I A E C I V R E S U N I T Y I C Q E P K
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M H T M N O I T A T I D E M C A N P K R D
O I Y H U A N P Z H C E T S A E O N M Y S

ACCEPTANCE
AMENDS
CHANGE
CORRECTION
COURAGE
DEDICATION
DEFENSES

DEVOTION
FAITH
HONESTY
HOPE
INVENTORY
LISTS
MANAGEABILITY

MEDITATION
OPEN MIND
RECOVERY
RESPONSIBILITY
SERENITY
SERVICE
SHORTCOMING

TRADITIONS
TURNOVER
UNITY
USEFULNESS
WILLINGNESS

What can we learn from the steps and principles ?

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

Admitted

acknowledged	agreed	allowed	conceded
confessed	fessed (up)	granted	owned (up to)
unburdened	unloaded	affirmed	avowed
confirmed	professed	accepted	recognized
yielded	announced	broadcast	communicated
declared	disclosed	divulged	imparted
proclaimed	revealed	told	unveiled

to God,

divine being	supreme being	deity	divinity
spirit	almighty	idol	universal life force
supernatural	creator	icon	maker
absolute being	infinite spirit		

to ourselves,

Me	Myself	I	Our own selves
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and to another

someone else	a different person		
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human being the exact

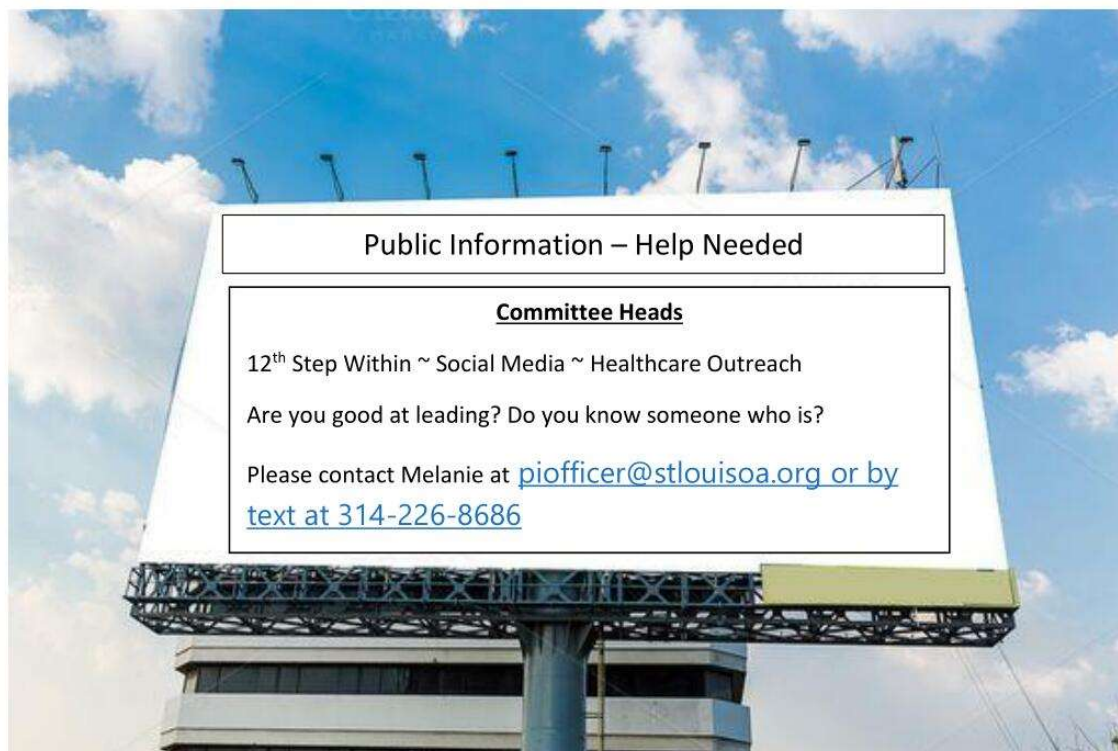
accurate	specific	precise	proper
spot-on	true	explicit	clear
distinct	particular		

nature

character	complexion	constitution	personality
self	tone	description	essence
mood	quality	type	traits
features	temperament	makeup	

of our wrongs.

discourtesies	insults	inhumanities	outrages
slights	slanders	spites	harms
abuses	cruelties	damages	hurts
venalities	trespasses	sins	mistakes
injuries	inequities	immoralities	guilts
falsities	blunders	indecencies	unfits
rebuts	provokes	offends	maltreats



Let's Keep OA Healthy and Growing!

12th Step Within

This is a committee dedicated to maintaining and enhancing the groups within our Intergroup, making sure that the Strong Meeting checklist is being followed, looking for groups that are struggling, and building a stronger intergroup with members from all our area groups. We would like to make this a permanent sub-committee.

Social Media Committee

We need to expand the committee by a few people to implement our new Social Media strategy. This service will involve phone work, an occasional committee meeting, and an interest in carrying the message!

Healthcare Outreach

Call for a committee to begin building a list of doctors, hospitals, and medical associations that we can contact and talk to about this program and how it can benefit their patients.

Have a small committee working on part of this! Thank you for volunteering!!

Standard Media Outreach – We have a database of newspapers, radio stations and tv stations and contacts just waiting to be explored. Need a committee to begin contacting people and working on getting the word out in various forms. This would include requesting to air PSA's.

Hand in Hand Directory Update **POSITIONS FILLED!!! Thank you to our new committee!**

We need a committee of 2-3 people to update our Hand in Hand directory. This service will involve phone work and entering data into a spreadsheet.