

April 2023 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 FOUR

Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

“How we chose to look at and deal with our lives and the world lies at the core of the disease.”

pg. 25 - **The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous**
Second Edition

Before I entered OA, my constant, searching, and baffling questions about myself were:

- Why am I like this?
- Why can't I stay stopped from binge eating?

“Our Invitation to You” tells me the reasons for my illness are unimportant; however, Step 4 holds the key to unlocking the stranglehold food has over me. Through the process of my written inventory, I've

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Is a Problem with Food Or Body Image Causing You Anxiety?

At one time or another, my parents, brothers, and I have all been more than 100 pounds (45 kg) overweight and preoccupied with food and snacking, with the latest diet always posted on our refrigerator.

In my teen years, I could lose 10 or 20 pounds (5 or 9 kg) fairly easily. In my senior year of college, I lost 50 pounds (23 kg). But after that, I found that I could not stick to a diet and seemed to have lost all willpower. I came to OA at age 25, more than 100 pounds (45 kg) overweight. I left my first meeting feeling that I couldn't identify, because the mention of a Higher Power or God was too religious for me.

A year later, I was more desperate and returned to OA. Nothing else I tried had worked. This time, I did identify with the speaker and those who shared. I recognized myself in the First Step: I was powerless over food and my life had become unmanageable.

From **[“Last House on the Block”](#)** – at OA.org (where you can read the rest of the story)

If you see yourself in this story, OA may be for you. Find a list of meetings in the St. Louis Bi-State area at **[THIS LINK](#)**.



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found many explanations for the chaos that always resulted in seeking comfort in food. The daunting task of writing my inventory was intimidating because I'd never looked inward before coming to OA. I'd gotten a glimpse of myself that looked weak, dishonest to myself and others, and non-resolute. The mere glance at these imperfections was enough to install permanent blinders regarding myself. Acknowledgement of them led me directly to shame for a life poorly managed.

Who needs more shame in their life, right? That's as far as I could ever get until OA started working in me. Through working with a sponsor, I was able to see this writing was only for me. It was a tool to discover beliefs about myself, the world, and others. The writing was merely acting as a springboard for Steps 5-9. Sharing the inventory would be at my discretion. The important thing was to start looking inward and listing everything I was aware of at that time. I knew I needed to and more importantly that I wanted to change from the sugar-crazed, self-centered addict I'd become. But this, of course, came after I admitted my life was unmanageable. I needed restored to sanity, and I needed a Power greater than me.

My first inventory was as honest as I could be at that time. I wrote about my large, looming issues of dishonesty, self-centeredness, resentment, and guilt and shame all centered around my eating disorder. Lying about how much food I ate, denying care of my family to satiate incessant cravings, how much I hated eating yet couldn't stop, and the deeply engrained shame of hiding my disease from myself and the world. This inventory proved monumental in my physical recovery.

As years of abstinence moved forward, I was able to delve deeper into myself admitting dishonesty, resentment, and guilt regarding reliance on self. Admitting self-will continued

to undermine faith in God and my program of recovery. Admitting the resentment that I couldn't remove shortcomings by just saying so and even desiring them to be removed. Admitting the guilt, I carried about living in self-will while trying to recover spiritually. The door opened to spiritual recovery in my honesty of this.

Finally, the admission of my harbored anger has brought me where I am today. Through admitting I really, really have anger - a lot of anger - I was able to start releasing it. Finding a safe person and place to vent has been long coming. It has taken me years to feel safe in my environment and in recovery to release this powerful emotion. At times, the anger is controlled and other times, it's completely beyond my control and I act out with bursts of language or physical action, but until I admitted I had anger, I had no way to release it. This has been instrumental in my emotional recovery.

“We must change if we are to recover. Change begins with honesty.”

pg. 26 - **The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous**
Second Edition

I came in OA to be different. I actually wanted to be a different person. I was willing to be anyone but me. However, working Step 4 has taught me I can be different, yet me. I was created to live in freedom from food obsession and freedom from an unmanageable life. I was created to act sanely in the world I live in. I was created to rely on a Power greater than myself for the actualization of these promises.

Step 4 Promise: Moving beyond the food and the emotional havoc, to a fuller living experience and to know Peace. I am convinced beyond doubt the peace I have today could not be possible while eating compulsively. It is through abstinence I have

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been able to see myself more clearly. The food kept me in emotional and spiritual darkness. Today, abstinence is the most important aspect of my life. Without abstinence, I cannot discern right from wrong thinking, leading to poor decisions and actions. I guard it wholeheartedly.

Be courageous and start your self-inventory today.

Susan T.



TRADITION FOUR

Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole.



When I came to OA, I initially focused on the Steps. Considerable time passed before I involved myself in service and looked at the Traditions, and even more time before I considered the application of the Traditions to my recovery.

Members suggested I go to meetings, get a sponsor, work the Steps, give up the food, get a food plan, find a God of my understanding, try and help others, and much more. They emphasized I didn't have to do any of this, but if I wanted to get well, I would be wise to do certain things. In other words, I was autonomous within OA, free to do whatever I liked, make whatever mistakes I liked, but I might want to consider the wisdom in doing what others had done. In time I came to understand my responsibility to behave like a person in recovery and carry the message to others; compulsive eaters and others would judge Overeaters Anonymous by how members conducted themselves and how they reflected the program in action.

A healthy OA group, like a healthy OA member, is one that knows it has the freedom to do whatever it likes. Yet, the group understands its very survival depends on following certain principles, making an effort to study and apply these principles, and being a living example of them in all its affairs. And a healthy longtime member, like a well-established group, knows that sometimes we need to go out there and learn from life's experiences. We must be there for those compulsive eaters who come stumbling back after faltering along the way. The long-timer also understands that while we do our research, OA will not collapse, be it at the individual or group level.

At every service level, the key to Tradition Four is autonomy with responsibility—and Patience....

....AA's cofounder, Bill Wilson, wrote in **AA Comes of Age** (p. 105) that Tradition Four means "alcoholics could try for sobriety in any way they liked. *They could disagree with any or all of A.A.'s principles and still call themselves an A.A. group . . . If . . . they found something better than A.A., or if they were able to improve on our methods, then in all probability we would adopt what they discovered for general use everywhere*" (italics added).

Do we live by this belief in OA? Are we willing to allow groups to disagree with all of our principles and still call themselves an OA group? If a group were to find a way that worked better than what we are doing, would we embrace this new way, knowing it may help someone? Or do we in OA micromanage and overregulate, as some suggest? Have we lost sight of the fundamental faith that AA's early members had, that such liberty would have little risk because our disease itself would ensure that we would conform, or perish? Are we willing to look and see if some of those "mistakes"

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might even be right, be something we could learn from? Are we ready to welcome, even encourage, new ideas and ways of working the program, knowing they may benefit some; and if they don't, they will not last? Are we ready to believe the Fellowship is strong enough to take the risk?

Member of the Board of Trustees

Excerpted from **The Balanced Application of Tradition Four Throughout OA**, published in **A Step Ahead**, Second Quarter, 2006



Overeaters Anonymous Turns 50 in St. Louis!

What a celebration!

On Saturday, March 18, 2023, over 100 compulsive eaters gathered at the Maryland Heights Community Center to celebrate OA turning 50 in St. Louis. It may have been cold and windy outside, but it was nothing but warm and cozy inside – a reunion of friends in recovery, both past and present.

The day began with a wonderful speaker, Gary from Florida. (I'm not sure he was thrilled with the chilly temperature, but he didn't show it.) Gary spoke throughout the day, sharing his story of recovery and what keeps him coming back.

We had many speakers covering the 12 Steps, all sharing their own experience, strength and hope. We heard shares from members of the fellowship who had been in the rooms for 40 years, while others were new to the program.

We shared abstinent meals, stories about Marianne, the founder of OA in St. Louis (and Buster – Marianne's nickname for her eating disorder). We also shared many, many hugs.

We admired a beautiful memorial quilt made by the New Me Tuesday 1pm meeting, and goody bags for everyone in attendance added to the celebratory tone.

The day ended with dinner, dancing, and a true feeling of gratitude for physically being together. For many of us, it was way overdue. (Did I mention that we shared many, many hugs?)

So, St. Louis OA...Happy 50th! Best wishes, and here's to many, many more!

L.S.



Heard at the Celebration:

“Suddenly I had a thought....all problems begin with a thought.”

“My sponsor said: ‘You might not have had the happiest childhood, but you’ve had one of the longest.’”

“Acceptance is the answer, but it doesn't stand alone. You can't jump from resentment to acceptance.”

“Keep your antenna up and look for evidence of God.”

“It's a spiritual axiom: Mind your own business.”

“It won't work unless I work it.”

OA Shares Recent Journey From Isolation to Awareness

I recently found myself in the throes of isolation. I was being pulled ever so slowly into the darkness and I didn't feel I had the energy to turn away, even though I wasn't where I wanted to be.

Last week I was sitting in an OA meeting and the story we read spoke to me, wakening me to my self-imposed isolation. In the past whenever I isolated, it was because I wanted to get into the food. In this instance, I wanted to isolate so I didn't have to feel my feelings. I didn't want to talk to God, my sponsor, share at meetings, send outreach texts, talk to my husband, or my family. I do believe - had I continued any longer - food would have been involved based on my past history.

I'm grateful to my HP for giving me the awareness of what I was doing to myself.

I have been dealing with emotional issues that have caused me great fear, worry, angst, and they became overwhelming. Instead of going to God and my sponsor, I resorted to my childlike thinking. I kept pushing the feelings down, denying that my life wasn't OK at the moment. I just didn't want to feel anything. I was exhausted and wanted a vacation from my overwhelming feelings. Surely, I knew best what I needed. In doing this I was also taking a break from my recovery which is dangerous territory for me.

My feelings are not my reality. I can burn up a lot of energy on resentments and fears. Thank goodness for my sponsor who helped me recognize what was happening. I do need to honor my feelings. My feelings need time to let me sit with them, to let them wash through me, and sort out the next steps.

My self-will is always going to be my

stumbling block. When I try to take control and push my HP to the sidelines, life is never going to work out to my advantage. I'm grateful my HP encouraged me to open up and share honestly with my sponsor about wanting to isolate. If I'm not being truthful, it's impossible for my sponsor and me to have a healthy relationship.

I can't do this alone. My HP's way is smooth and uncluttered. I'm not saying it's easy, but it's simple program. I'm grateful for my fellow OA members. We share a common problem. Through my listening to others like me and giving of myself I find my HP and my recovery.

The day after my I came clean with my HP and sponsor, I had the most amazing day! My HP embraced me with loving arms of protection and gave me one blessing after another. It was mind boggling! I had numerous gratitudes on my list that night. There was no denying my HP is always hard at work in my life. I pray I am willing to go to any length. I will continue this journey wrapped in the love of my HP.

"Together we do what we could never do alone."

Sue S.



Intergroup (IG) News: Chair's Column

The Region 4 Trustee, Meg M., and Chairperson, Annette R. visited our Intergroup's March meeting and shared news from our Region with us. Meg discussed how OA as a whole is still discovering a new "normal" and experiencing growth in the Virtual Region and the Middle East. Many meetings are transitioning to face-to-face meetings and/or hybrid meetings, while others are choosing to remain on Zoom, but still affiliate with their local intergroup. The OA Bookstore has a new offering, **The Twelve Traditions Workbook**, which focuses on the spiritual principles of the Traditions.

She also told us about a new type of Zoom bomber – a "deep fake." The bomber may use the Zoom picture of a known member or even visually appear to be that known member. They may ask to be made a co-host and then take over. The best solution is for the Zoom Host to ask anyone asking for co-host privileges a personal question that requires more than a yes or no answer. If that person cannot answer correctly, they should be put in the waiting room.

At OA.org there is a step-by-step guideline available - [Videoconference Meeting Training and Security/Preventive Measure](#). Please encourage your meeting's Zoom volunteers to read this document. In addition, each Zoom meeting should discuss at their group conscious meeting whether or not to change their password and whether or not to publish it or require new attendees to have to call a contact person for this information.

Annette told us about the Community Conversation meeting on the third Sunday of each month at 5:00 pm Central. Many members IG service boards in Region 4 meet to share their experience, strength and hope

about successes and challenges their IGs face. Everyone is welcome to attend. In March the discussion centered around Public Information and Professional Outreach (PIPO), and April will be Newcomer Welcoming Tips. Please contact me at chair@stlouisoa.org for meeting ID and password.

A committee was formed to move forward with a plan and process to eliminate the need for a storage space rental for unused IG materials and find a "home" for the few needed records and memorabilia.

Service Opportunities: Where could your unique abilities, interests and talents help our recovery community? My experience has taught me that people feel most comfortable giving service in areas that interest them or that match their work or leisure experiences. Are you experienced in using spreadsheets? Do you like working on Word Press websites? Is social media an interest for you, or how about public service announcements? Do you love to go to recovery workshops? Were you inspired by our 50th Birthday Celebration and want to learn more about how to put on an event? Do you just like to learn new skills? I would be happy to share current service opportunities with you and answer any questions you may have.

With Gratitude for Service
Dianne S., Intergroup Chairperson
chair@stlouisoa.org; 314-238-4052



Ch- Ch- Ch- Changes

Nothing brings to mind changes like the move toward Spring for me. The waking up of the world after a season of sleep is so beautiful. This program is full of changes, and full of choices. We are all free to choose how the Steps allow us to learn to change and grow despite fear.

When I first came to program, I was isolated. My life was carefully compartmentalized. And I was at the center of everything.

I preferred to be alone. I had so very many ready-made excuses for NOT doing any given thing. The biggest reason was, quite literally, me. A truth that came to me during my work around Step 4 was that I had eaten myself into a perfect excuse. Most of the world was impossible for me. I was just too big. Well over 600 pounds when I came into the rooms, it was a miracle I was even there, that I could still walk, or drive. I had to stop twice walking to my car to get into it to go anywhere. It was 30 feet from door to car, and I had to stop twice because I was out of breath. I had to acknowledge that my weight was a passive/aggressive way of getting out of things I didn't want to do. It worked. It was OBVIOUS to anyone who looked at me. There were things I could not do.

My first transition, my first deliberate choice to change, was to walk in the doors of our rooms. I was told to go, and I was afraid not to. I was at bottom. I knew I needed therapy; I didn't know yet that I needed the 12 Steps as well. I was finally more scared of what my life was spiraling down to than I was scared to change. And with that little step, I moved from isolation to a safe space.

I stayed there for many years, a decade. I embraced the program, made friends, found abstinence, discovered promises kept, and I was very comfortable. I am not at my goal

weight; however, every pound I have taken off is a victory, and I have had 375 bits of success.

I sponsor; people actually saw something in my recovery journey and asked me to help. It is still the best part of program to me, the joy of reaching out a hand to someone just starting and saying, " Yes, I will walk with you and help you find your path". It would be very easy to stay in that place. I had good abstinence, I am useful, grateful, joyful.

There was one more transition to make though. The rooms are nice and safe, but I knew there was more. I needed to choose life.

A recognition grew in me that I couldn't stay immersed in program to the exclusion of a wider world. I chose to start being in the world again. I did some volunteering, I joined political causes that meant something to me, made new friends, tried Improv (and loved it!). I went camping, hiking, swimming, bike riding; all the things I ate myself out of, my recovering-self rediscovered and relished them all the more.

Still there was one more area I was afraid of: work. I had been such a workaholic, took so much of my self-esteem from being the go-to-gal for solving all kinds of problems, I lost myself in work in the same way I lost myself in food.

Life happens though. My dad is older and needed to be living with family members, and that led to needing a bigger house, which led to needing more money.

This transition was scary. I felt unsure that I had anything to offer after 12 years out of the workforce. Unsure that anyone would hire an almost 60-year-old with a decade long gap in her resume. I was unsure if anyone would even consider me. I am still not an ideal body
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weight. I have arthritis in my knees and walk with a cane. I get tired.

But I stepped into the process the way the program taught me to: with faith, hope, courage and HP in my pocket. I never had such a good lesson on surrendering as I did during the months that I was job hunting. Every rejection led to ED (what I call my eating disorder) being able to speak louder than he had in years. Oh, I wanted to eat, to not feel the fear, the rejection, the old tropes of “not good enough” pounding in my head. I did not eat. Instead, I surrendered. Every resume I sent went with a prayer, “If it is your will HP....if not I will keep looking and know that you have the right place waiting for me.”

I never thought that the perfect job would fall in my lap. That is not what my HP promises. HP promises that if I do the legwork, keep putting myself out there, not forcing anything, just letting life come to me, then the right thing will show up. And it did. It took a while, months of interviews, but it found me. I am busy and useful. My skills are used and appreciated. I am in the world. The final transition.

Program took me from the smallest possible bubble that held me away from the world all the way to living my life on life’s terms. A life renewed – much like the coming of Spring.

Anonymous



May 7 – 1:30 p.m. - Intergroup meeting**

June 11 – 1:30 p.m. - Intergroup meeting**

July 9 – 1:30 p.m. - Intergroup meeting**

September 10 – 1:30 p.m. - Intergroup meeting**

October 8 – 1:30 p.m. - Intergroup meeting**

October 27-29 – Fall Retreat -
Toddhall Retreat Center, Columbia, IL (see flyer on page 10)

November 12 – 1:30 p.m. - Intergroup meeting**

****Note:** *Each Intergroup Meeting is 1:30-3 p.m. via Zoom. **The meeting number is 940 5580 8391. The password is: Serenity.** It’s also possible to join by telephone: Dial-in: 312-626-6799, meeting ID 940 5580 8391, and password 75183374. Those in elected service positions and Intergroup Representatives are expected to attend. All other fellows are welcome.*

For more **events** happening throughout the worldwide Fellowship, click [HERE](#).

ARTICLES FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER ARE DUE BY April 20, 2023. 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.

Will My Meeting Happen On April 9 (Easter)?

(For more meeting details, see the [Where and When](https://stlouisoa.org): stlouisoa.org, Events, Meeting Info.)

YES

11 am **St Mary's Sunday Morning**,
Zoom.

- 264 689 861, 066708.

3 pm **Columbia MO**, HYBRID.

- Phone: 971 224 6611, 982571
- St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, room 107, 914 West Blvd S, Columbia MO 65203.

4 pm **Abstinence First/Newcomers**,
HYBRID.

- Zoom 711 8462 9168, 094928
- In person: Office of Let's Build Hope, 75 W. Lockwood, Suite 203, Webster Groves, MO 63119 (entrance is on Gore)

5 pm **Recovery From Relapse**, In
Person.

- Gethsemane Lutheran Church, 3600 Hampton Ave, St. Louis, MO 63109 (2nd floor conference room)

NO

4 pm Jefferson City.

NOT SURE

10:30 am Affton



Region 4 Report on Spring Assembly in Des Moines, IA

Region 4 gathered for the Spring Assembly in Des Moines, IA, March 24 & 25, 2023. Here are the highlights:

- We have an Assembly Planning Coordinator
- We had two new representatives
- Seven Intergroups were represented
- We had fun with the Intergroup fellows at a game/icebreaker on Friday evening.
- At the business meeting, we passed five motions – more details to follow
- We broke out into our three committees – Convention 2024 (MN), Fundraising (our journals are doing great), and Outreach in the near future, some exciting things coming your way)
- Region 4 Fall Assembly will be online. Friday evening and Saturday, September 29-30 – We welcome guests!

R4 Community Conversations: April 16th Topic Is Newcomers

Share your awesome Newcomer welcoming tips. These one-hour informal discussions are open to anyone. We love meeting OA fellows from all around the region.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/91896335029?pwd=anM0WHQ4aDFhMGxjUnBHemFodU5tZz09>

Meeting ID: 918 9633 5029

Passcode: 182172

Save the Date
October 27-29, 2023

EMBRACE THE
"SPIRIT OF RECOVERY"
FALL RETREAT

TODDHALL RETREAT CENTER
COLUMBIA, ILLINOIS

MORE INFORMATION TO FOLLOW
WWW.STLOUISOA.ORG



**St. Louis Bi-State
Area Intergroup**