

November 2024 OA TODAY NEWSLETTER

St. Louis Bi-State Intergroup of OA
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STEP ELEVEN

Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

This step has a number of words and ideas to consider. I like the first word of this step—sought—and the clarity that we will continue to seek as we recover. While abusing my body with the food and the way I ate (or restricted), I sought comfort, escape, and numbness. Yet, through recovery (and well before the 11th step) I found so much more. I began to seek new things: belonging (the “we” in the first step), freedom from the insanity of obsession, relief through past mistakes faced and amended, self-reflection and correction when wrong. Step 11 offers even more: seeking a connection with the Healing Power I have come to know in the earlier steps and in our fellowship.

(continued on page 2)

Newcomer's Corner The Power of NOT Part 8

Editor's Note: For the next several issues, the newcomer's corner will include excerpts from a long article by a contributor who has lost several hundred pounds – and found a new way to live - since coming to OA.

Step 7 – Humility. Do **NOT** Judge. Now there is a tall order. I had a snarky opinion about everything and everybody. My head was a nasty seething pool of judgements. So, how do you NOT JUDGE?

Know your worth. In the rooms, we say we will love you until you can love yourself. I was such a puppy with big feet practicing this. I stumbled and embarrassed myself so many times.

Working the program gave me a moral center. I knew it when I found myself shaking but still standing up to a person who had social and economic power to wield against me. I knew that I was a human – and so was he. I was unafraid. I was not even judgmental. Given what I knew about his past, I did let him know I would not be party to anything dishonest.

That one taste of true humility – a moment when I knew I wasn't on a ladder of worth anymore - ***I wanted more of that.*** Before I had never felt good enough, and, at the same time, I felt better than everyone.

Now I move through the world with kindness, treating all beings with love and acceptance. Truly fear recedes when we know our worth.

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Conscious contact for me means there is a choice, a turning toward (the way we turn toward care in Step Three) whenever I want or need. I increasingly try to be conscious of this connection throughout the day.

The word “prayer” has religious overtones, yet I find it is so much more. My go-to “prayer” is (almost) daily writing in a journal about my feelings, events in my life, my fears, concerns and gratitude and joys. The word “meditation” scared me because I had the image of what it had to look like and I did not do that. Our current **12&12** provides lots of ideas about how to “meditate.” And I think of meditation as the various ways in which I can settle into the present moment. Breathing, sitting still, singing, walking outside, watching a sunset or a moonrise, paying attention to the sensations in my body, acknowledging something beautiful – these are all ways I “meditate” and connect with a Source/Spirit/Energy greater than me.

Since my best description of HP is love, praying for HP’s will for me is not restrictive. I think in terms of Healing Power’s dream for me—which of course includes recovery and so much more. When I first heard the promises read, I could see these would be part of what a Power greater than my disease would offer. And the last part of this step involves the power to carry out the next steps toward greater freedom, life, and love. Generally, the power I need is courage. So maybe the prayer for that is as simple as saying the Serenity Prayer.

We seek. More will be revealed. And it will likely be beyond our wildest dreams.

Julie J.



Love. Grow. Serve.



TRADITION ELEVEN

Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television and other public media of communication.



Tradition 11 has asked me to stretch and grow past two personal inclinations created by the religion of my childhood and by the conventional wisdom of my work settings:

- 1) I grew up in a community of faith that believed it was important to “witness” – to tell others about the stories our group considered sacred and how to get initiated into our religious group. I was very aggressive about this as a teenager and thought it was my duty.
- 2) For decades, I worked in not-for-profit professions in which staff members and volunteers – and sometimes paid consultants as well – spent considerable time trying to figure out how to get media attention. Over the past two decades, we have also had to factor “social media” into our media strategies.

So, when I encountered Tradition 11 – with its cautions to “attract” new members into OA instead of relying on promotion and to practice personal anonymity when it comes to all forms of media communication – I was puzzled. OA has done so much for me. Why not shout it from rooftops? Why not show before and after photos in TV commercials and purchase full-page ads in the newspaper?

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It turned out that these high visibility recruitment methods could be a danger to OA and harm our ability to embody our primary purpose (Tradition 5) – to carry the message to the still suffering compulsive overeater. If an OA spokesperson became a household name through an advertising campaign and then had a very public relapse – or a scandal of any kind, OA’s reputation could be harmed.

A few years ago, a popular sandwich shop ran ads about a man who lost more than 200 pounds eating their product, and then he was convicted of some serious crimes, becoming a punch line in many late-night comedy routines. If he was a spokesperson for OA instead of sandwiches, some might decide OA was a failed program and refuse to visit a meeting. Isolation is deadly to addicts, so Tradition 11 protects us all.

OA invites me to consider that other compulsive eaters are being attracted to the program in the same way that my Higher Power coaxed me into the program. A person who cared about me invited me to come in a loving and gentle way. This reached me when a TV or radio ad program – or an aggressive “witness” - would not have done so.

At the same time, anonymity does not mean secrecy. It is important that OA use television, radio, newspapers, social media, health fairs, websites, and more to make our existence known. The lives of many depend upon it!

Anonymous

Intergroup Update: Chair’s Column

The Annual Bi-State Intergroup Business Conference is November 10 at 1:30 p.m. The Board of Trustees has reviewed our Bylaws and our Policies and Procedures Manual and has submitted motions for voting. We encourage everyone to attend and get active in service at Intergroup. We always welcome visitors. (See login info in Calendar of Events.)

Forms to use for bylaws changes and a variety of other Intergroup business needs may be found at https://stlouisoa.org/?page_id=344.

Your Intergroup (IG) Needs You – Our Board of Trustees Treasurer will be stepping down as of December 31. We are actively looking for a new Treasurer who will begin serving in January 2025. This position is critical to the operation of our IG. As always in OA, the incoming trusted servant is never alone; our outgoing Treasurer will be available to mentor. We also have two openings for Region Representatives and one for World Service Business Conference Delegate.

Nomination Forms are available at our IG website - www.stlouisoa.org. Click on the Member & Intergroup Information Box/Documents and Forms for details on these positions.

Public Information and Outreach – The OA World Service Public Awareness and Professional Tradeshows committee has announced the availability of a brand-new video targeting health care professionals called “Let OA Be Your Ally”. Check these out on the [Public Information page](#) at OA.org.

If you have any questions, please reach out to me at info@stlouisoa.org, or via text or call at 314-570-9333.

In grateful service,
Eileen M., Chair



“Are We NUTS?” 2024 Retreat Completed

The retreat for 2024, **“Are We NUTS? (Not Using the Slogans),”** was a resounding success. People from all over the Region attended, including two from Iowa who also attended last year.

The LaSalle Retreat Center offered a picturesque and peaceful setting to learn from each other about the slogans of OA and slogans borrowed from AA.

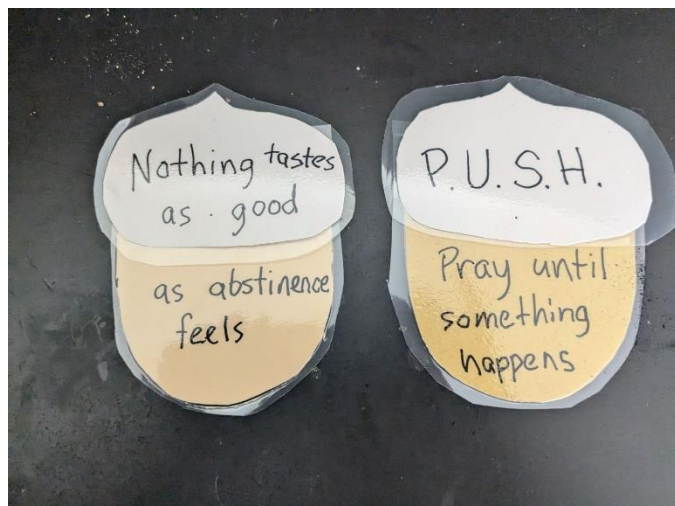
Sayings such as “Welcome Home” and “Cravings Are Not a Command” to “Easy Does It” and “One Day at a Time” were part of a lengthy list of slogans we have come to cherish as we adapt ourselves to abstinence. Our language can be difficult to understand for newcomers as we suggest “working a program” to them. People who have not heard this terminology often get confused. We discussed how to put slogans in terms anyone can understand.

Abstinence provides many challenges as we begin this way of life and question what changes are necessary. It is different, from person to person, and our understanding may change as we continue to deepen our honesty.

The bonfire offered us a chance to let go of troubling situations by sharing about them and making a personal gesture to throw into a fire. It felt deeply spiritual to me as I was able to release circumstances that often interfere with my peace of mind.

Sunday offered more insights into slogans and carrying the message to others. The closing brought a connection to all as we looked at the person next to us stating “I put my hand in yours...” around the circle before reciting the OA promise. Some of us came together as strangers, but left as friends.

Bill T.



Grateful OA Member Shares Her Retreat Experience

I went to the **“Are We NUTS?” Retreat** October 11-13. NUTS stand for Not Using the Slogans. I always look forward to the OA retreat each year. It is a more intimate setting. I cannot tell a lie - I needed a boost to my program with the slogans.

We picked up packets of information on Friday night. Each had half of an acorn laminated with half of a slogan. We were asked to find the person with the other half of the acorn to complete the slogan. Once you found your partner, together we answered a series of questions related to our slogan. The complete slogan was tacked on a tree on a poster board.

We had four sessions:

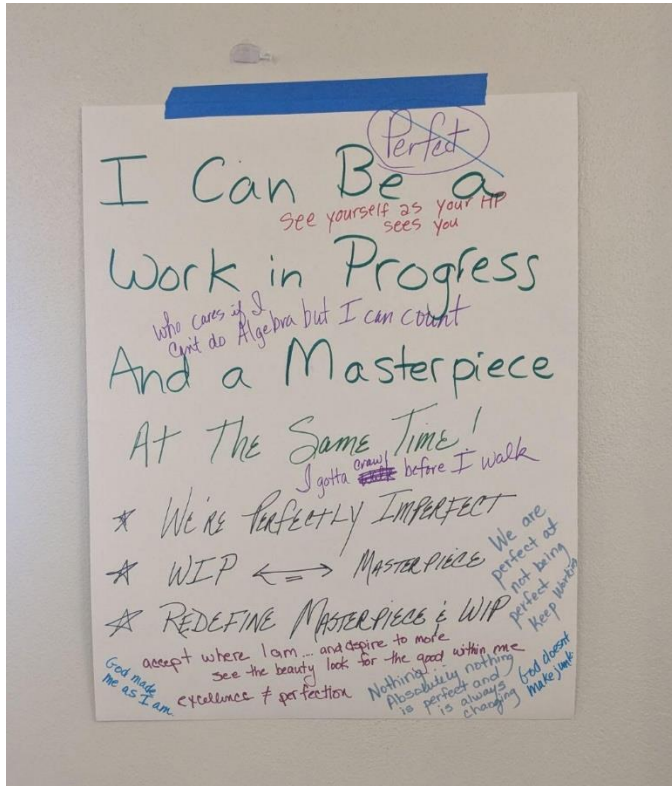
1. Welcome Home
2. Abstinence
3. Working the Program
4. Carrying the Message

During each session, a half sheet of paper was handed out that listed the slogans for that session. In the session “Working the Program” each table worked as a group and wrote their thoughts on a slogan with a large piece of paper.

(continued on page 5)

(continued from page 4)

Each group was given an opportunity to write down their thoughts on 7-8 different slogans. The large pieces of paper were taped on the wall for everyone to see. (A photo of one is below.)



The “Not My Food” slogan came into play the following Wednesday after the Retreat. Part of our office shares space with another office. The other office had a potluck that day. It was a total nightmare. Food galore. Every time I went into the conference room, I kept repeating “Not My Food.” I needed to say that three days in a row. I am so grateful for that slogan - and all the others.

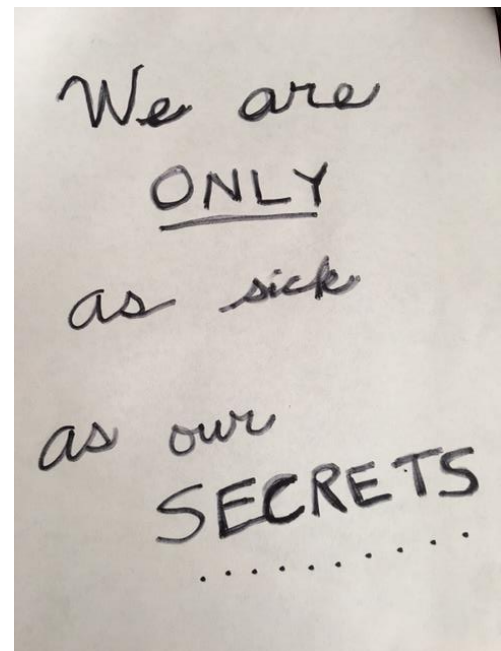
On Saturday night, a bonfire was set in a pit on the retreat grounds. Just about everyone symbolically tossed a piece of paper into the bonfire - to let go of the food, resentments, and character defects. It was very powerful.

I want to thank the committee that put on the Fall Retreat. It was beyond my wildest dreams. It gave me the boost I needed to get out of my isolation and start working the program again. I got a sponsor and send her my food. I joined a 12-step workshop working through OA and AA literature. It works when you work it and you are worth it. So, work it!

Grateful OA Member
Ellen

The two slogans that I want to focus on are “Cravings are not Commands” and “Not My Food.” I let my cravings command me to get my fix two weeks prior to coming to the retreat. On a number of occasions, cravings have been commands for me. My fix or binge is not going to solve my problem. However, I do it anyway. The reason is that I have the disease of compulsively overeating.

The retreat gave me the opportunity to talk with two program members about what I was doing with food the last two weeks. I knew that I had to get a sponsor and work the steps of the program. One of them was gracious enough to give me someone’s name who is a sponsor.



November Story from a Member: That Dessert and Me

Abstinence 2nd ed, p. 23 tells us that "Abstinence is the foundation of our program," and p. 75 says "... abstinence must become the most important thing in my life."

For many of us, staying abstinent is easier said than done during the holidays. Sweets are all around us - no matter where we turn. Here is the story of my latest encounter with a seriously delicious sweet right in my own home.

I baked my husband a dessert the day that I wrote this article. This was a first since joining OA 56 days ago. I actually did not eat one drop of the batter! I quickly cleaned out the bowl with a spatula, filled the bowl with water, and dropped the spatula into the cloudy water.

When the dessert was baked, the smell filled the kitchen. Quite soon thereafter, my husband came in for just a moment, breathed in a whiff of that heavenly aroma, cut himself a serving, took a bite, said the dessert was good, and walked out the door with the remainder of the piece. What?! Leaving with such a fabulous dessert in the house? Is he nuts?!!! No! He's just a "normie."

If I were in relapse rather than abstinence, definitely with him out the door, I would start by eating one serving. *Hey, that's normal! After all, that's what he did.* Then, I would get some milk and eat a second serving. *Come on. People who really like this dessert have a second serving, and I really like it.* Then, I would spend the next hour or two, depending on how long he was still outside, taking one tiny sliver after another from the pan to convince myself I wasn't actually eating any more. *Ah, getting on the edge now.*

Then, because I'm suspecting he's going to walk in the door at any moment and notice the

pan is definitely no longer full - of course, with his one serving gone - I would cut the rest of the dessert that is still left in the pan into pieces, way smaller than I cut them for myself, and put them into an airtight container so that my husband wouldn't figure out how much of the dessert I had already eaten while he was outside not even thinking about it (he later confirmed this to be true).

Yes, now I'm definitely into insanity. And when he finally would come into the house, at that point, because I would be feeling so "poison" loaded, guilty, and nervous about how much weight I had gained, I would adamantly command him in a desperately intense voice with immense child-like anguish to hide the dessert away from me so that he would be my power greater than me that would protect me from eating any more.

Thank goodness, because of OA, I no longer have to live this way! It really **IS** insanity. And the biggest laugh is, before OA, I just thought doing a dessert this way was normal, and my husband was the insane one.

Our disease might cause us to laugh at ourselves sometimes, but this disease is no joke. The holidays are so hard for me. Being single-minded, having increased intentional awareness, working a tight program one day at a time, and maintaining humility to depend upon a power greater than ourselves is a strong **plan of action** for me. **I put my hand in yours**, remembering that abstinence must come first as I go through the 2024 holiday season.

Anonymous



A Holiday Season Full of Blessings Instead of Binge Eating

This October and November, I am grateful that I will have weekends off to spend with family and friends. The last time I remember having weekends off was ten years ago, before I became a full-time grad school student and worked weekends to support myself. It's been a big change for me. Instead of always being absent from events and quality time with family and friends, I'll be able to do my part and make living amends by giving and receiving from the most loving and supportive relationships that I am privy to.

Working a rigorous program of OA with honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness means being transparent with my loved one:

- when I have to go to meetings
- take a phone call
- eat according to the food plan developed by my nutritionist
- report the food I've eaten to my sponsor
- and make a timely amends for the harm that I caused someone or some situation.

In recovery, I no longer seek my thrills from the holiday goodies or "free food" leftovers that used to tempt me during these times. Going into my thirteenth month of recovery in October is spooky enough to scare my disease. Instead of wearing my shame (I think of a toilet-papered tree in the rain) or feeling despair like a broken pumpkin in the street, I feel abundance, like a thoughtfully arranged cornucopia of blessings.

In fact, my financially conscious sponsor is helping me overcome my miserly money attitude and scarcity mentality. Instead of late-night binges in the dark with my hands quietly burglarizing the refrigerator, this holiday season, I plan to abstainingly host feasts of joy

and celebration to share my blessings with my family and friends.

Wishing my fellow travelers many abstinent and intuitive 24 hours ahead.

Jacki, Connecticut USA

[\(Reprinted from Lifeline, October 23, 2024\)](#)



November 10 – 1:30 p.m. - IG meeting**

November 28 – find Thanksgiving Day meetings at [THIS LINK](#) or on page 8 and a flyer for the special Gratitude event on page 9

****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 IG Representatives are expected to attend. All are welcome!

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

ARTICLES FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER ARE DUE BY NOVEMBER 20, 2024. Please send your submissions to the **OA TODAY** editor and Newsletter Team at newsletter@stlouisoa.org or mail them 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.

2024 Holiday Schedule – Thanksgiving

St. Louis Bi-State Area Intergroup



We have three meetings that WILL be held on Thanksgiving. Times are CST.

- 7:00 a.m.** Zoom, ID **641 012 022**, pw **084147**, “Any Lengths Big Book Study” 801486
- 9:00 a.m.** Zoom, ID **538 040 418**, pw **002478**, Special “Gratitude” by the Early Bird groups
- 7:00 p.m.** Phone, dial **605-562-8401**, access code **9649048#** “Recovery Book Worms” 45964

** Note: To dial in to the Zoom meetings by phone, call 312-626-6799. Use the same meeting ID and password.*



We have two meetings that will NOT be held on Thanksgiving. Times are CST.

- 10:00 a.m.** in person, “New Day,” St. Peter’s Church, Stein Rd, **Ferguson MO**, group 21534
- 6:00 p.m.** in person, H.O.P.E.” Heart of the Apostles, **Herculaneum MO**, group 56420



For OA meetings from all around the world, visit OA.org, Find a Meeting, online tab.

(However, the ones based in the U.S. may or may not be held on Thanksgiving.)



Overeaters Anonymous

THANKSGIVING DAY
gratitude meeting

NOV 28, 2024


ZOOM ID: 538 040 418
PASSWORD: 002478

9:00-10:00 AM CST

Contact: Debbie K. 636-634-6201



\$5 suggested donation
to www.stlouisoa.org

 No one should stay away
for financial reasons.





Call for Abstinence Stories

Overeaters Anonymous is seeking new stories/creative works of personal experiences with abstinence. Submit your story to our *Lifeline: Stories of Recovery* blog. Submissions published on *Lifeline* may be chosen for publication in a new book. Your experience, strength, and hope can help others as they walk the path to recovery!

OA Abstinence and Recovery Statement

Abstinence 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 living and working the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve Step program on a daily basis.

Share your experience...

1. What were your early days of abstinence like? What else changed besides the food?
2. When you let go of the food, what did that make room for in your life?
3. How do you get through difficult times without turning to food?
4. How do you encourage and support others who are new or struggling with abstinence?
5. How has OA service supported your abstinence?
6. Has your abstinence changed over time?
7. If so, how is your abstinence different now compared to when you first started in OA?
8. How have you maintained your abstinence around those who don't understand your commitment?
9. Has your cultural/racial/religious background had an impact on your abstinence?
10. If you have experienced relapse, what helped you regain your abstinence?
11. I'm grateful for my abstinence because...

To submit your story/creative work, go to lifeline.oa.org and click on "Lifeline Submission Form" by **January 1, 2025.**

IMPORTANT RULES:

- Submissions are assumed intended for publication, are subject to editing, and become the property of OA, Inc.
- Submissions are not returned.
- All submissions must contain the author's full name and address, but you may request anonymity with publication. Your state, province, or country may remain anonymous if you so indicate.
- Submissions of approximately 1,500 words or less are preferred.
- All languages welcome!



Save the Date!
OA World Service
Convention 2025

Let's get together in Orlando,
Florida, USA from August 21-23,
2025 at the Renaissance Orlando
at SeaWorld®.

Sign up at
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