

# March 2026 OA TODAY NEWSLETTER

St. Louis Bi-State Intergroup of OA  
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## STEP THREE

**Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.**



As I became acquainted with the Steps, the more I began to feel anxious about Step 3. In some ways, Step 3 is the first Step to ask a commitment from me. What does it mean to give myself and my life over to the care of God? To me, it didn't really matter that it was a god of my understanding. The bottom line was I was pledging to leave the actions and decisions of my life to someone or something else. The lack of control – which as a child I experienced as painful and humiliating – was something I vowed never to endure again. Not in a job. Not in relationships. And so, I went about my merry way – only it wasn't too merry.

So, when I allowed myself to even contemplate the Third Step, the first image that came to me was of a mostly deflated balloon, with no direction. Without the helium of my personality, who would I be or become? I felt as if the Third Step was asking me to rid myself of everything I was or knew (as if that would even be possible!) and allow the program to brainwash

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## NEWCOMER'S CORNER: Waking Up

I walked into OA because all I could see before me was cycles and cycles of weight gain and loss, misery and short-lived false joy. I had to admit I did not want to live. I could not see the point of anything, and my only desire was to sleep or not be conscious because even excess sugar could not numb me.

In OA, I found fellows sharing feelings just like this and describing my life but referring to their own. It wasn't a mirror image, but pretty darn close....I notice no judging in the rooms, only accept-ance and a knowing look. There is love and understanding – I can literally feel it. We are all equal. Though we may be on different distances along our journeys, length of time abstinent is no protector. It's always just for today. The effect of a longer journey may be more visible, but the method is the same for everyone.

In OA, I have found a place to be me, to be honest. There would be no point in going if I could not be this way. I have started to feel good about myself at times. I have lost a little weight and look forward to meetings. At them, I can feel my Higher Power and the love in the room.

Today, I *want* to learn to help others and be like my abstinent fellows. I *want* to get up in the morning and call my sponsor, and I want to do my Step work....

M.S.  
Reprinted from [Lifeline](#)  
[March 1, 2020](#)

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me. Was it a cult, as I'd read online?

In time, I began to see that the Third Step was not the first step in becoming a humorless automaton but an invitation to become an active co-creator in my emotional and spiritual healing. What I was saying yes to was not deprivation and loss but real power to conduct the life I was meant to live – full of integrity, meaning, joy, sorrow, compassion, and love. I was agreeing to do the right thing, and I'd be given the necessary power if only I asked. My childish "wants," which were mercurial and unending, were put aside until it was clear whether they were important or just distractions or illusions. Nothing I needed was kept from me, but lots of things I thought I needed were examined.

I am slowly (and I mean *really* slowly) becoming disciplined. I can see that discipline equals freedom. Discipline with food, discipline around not acting out my mercurial feelings, discipline around fulfilling obligations to others and myself.

Step 3 is necessary to work the steps that follow. But I also see that I have step 3 work to do when I bristle at doing something I don't want to do or when I want to eat something I shouldn't. Yes, it is a step I take before I begin making my moral inventory, but it's also a step that I can take each and every day.

Reprinted from [Seacoast OA](#)  
[August 23, 2015](#)



### **STEP THREE: A Member's Experience, Strength, & Hope**

In my 75 years on this blue planet, I have made many decisions. I wish I could say they were all wise and well thought out, but that would not be my truth. Because I have a personality quirk that makes it difficult for me to face any controversy, I have made decisions based on what I thought other people expected or wanted. I have made decisions to ignore things that needed to be addressed, and I made those decisions to avoid disagreements. I often make snap decisions before I have thought about my options. Yet despite this breadth of decision-making experience, turning my life over to the care of God was not something that felt comfortable for me.

Step 3 is more than a mouthful of a commitment to practices that reinforce the idea that there is a power greater than myself and that I have the choice to recognize that and to put myself in the stream with the God of my understanding. I think life had to beat me down before I could truly believe in a Higher Power. I'm not trying to be dramatic here, but there was a period in my life when I was in a pretty dark place. I felt completely alone and on my own as far as problem-solving and making my way through were involved. At that time, it felt to me that if there was a God, God was beyond my reach. A wise minister pointed out to me how God was surely at work in my life through the people that were standing by me at that difficult time.

My childhood home was an alcoholic one. My dad was the designated alcoholic and my mom started joining him as his disease progressed. As far as any spiritual foundation was concerned, there simply wasn't one.

In a way I am grateful for my God-less upbringing because it left room in my soul to  
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experience God at work in so many ways. I have felt God in the beauty of nature, in hours with good friends, in words of ministers and spiritual directors, in my vocational experiences, and in small everyday miracles.

The **Big Book** says our understanding of the spirit is broad and roomy. When I was finally convinced that OA 12 Step would be spiritually enriching, I was more than ready. I was familiar with the Steps, being a faithful attender of another fellowship's meetings for years. I must admit that Step Three was a little intimidating at first until I remembered that there are so many ways to reach for God and that it really is comforting to me to know that the Universe is run by the energy of God's love. Tapping into that power makes perfect sense to me.

Lately I have been hearing the message that, as an addict, it is important for me to do the first three steps on a daily basis. I know I am an addict. I am powerless over food. I need help from outside of myself to overcome this addiction.

I believe in a God that surrounds me and fills me with love. I believe that love powers the Universe(s) and makes creation possible. I am convinced that I will never completely understand the awesome workings of God's love because they are really beyond my comprehension. This is where my faith comes in, as I consider the eternity that God has made, and that it is made with care and compassion.

I believe these things. God is present in my life by surrounding me and by dwelling in my heart. I have a place within where I can go and seek the guidance that I need. I can listen carefully for that still, small voice that is always speaking to me.

This is where I can come when the food is calling me. All I have to do is take a deep, cleansing breath and literally move downward

from my head to my heart. The God of my understanding is there, waiting patiently for me to be willing and ask for the barriers that I often place between God and myself to be removed. These barriers are what is referred to as "self-will run riot," and they keep me in bondage to the food.

To be relieved of "the bondage of self" is one of these fellowship's greatest gifts. I am learning that I can ask for this daily and as many times as I need to ask. Just asking for this relief is an opportunity to thoroughly examine how my self-will knocks me off the path to recovery. To me, this is another brilliant way that one step prepares me for the next. By acknowledging how I can so quickly give in to wanting what I want when I want it, I am preparing to make that searching and fearless moral inventory that follows the Third Step.

Lynn M.



### TRADITION THREE

**The only requirement for OA membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively.**



The only requirement for membership in OA is a desire to stop eating compulsively, but how honest am I being with myself (much less with others) that I really want to stop eating this way?

When I continue to glorify food as a way to effectively meet my needs, am I being honest? When I continue to take that same route which drives me right by my favorite food-indulgent location, am I being honest? When I continue to have my red light foods in my home, am I being honest? When I continue to go to that fun activity that is sure to serve my binge

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foods, am I being honest? When I continue to eat in my most frequent binge location (i.e. my car), am I being honest? When I continue to begin that set-in-stone ritual that I absolutely know ends in uncontrolled binging, am I being honest?

When I continue to spend time with my non-recovering compulsive overeating friends, am I being honest? When I continue to give in without voicing clear sincere objection to people who push food on me, am I being honest? When I refuse to put one of my red light foods into my red light food category, am I being honest? When I quickly glance through the weekly grocery store flyers to lust over my favorite foods I no longer eat, am I being honest? When I object to the suggestions of my sponsor, am I being honest?

*Honesty*

When I demand that everyone around me be considerate of my addiction while I continue to dabble with justification in the food, am I being honest? When I continue to make it all about my weight and not my behaviors, am I being honest? When I continue to be on the debate team and when I focus on how I am different rather than the same, am I being honest? When I fail to go to meetings or use the other Tools, and/or when I fail to be willing to even begin to work the Steps, am I being honest?

How honest am I really being that I have a desire to stop eating compulsively when all I have is a desire but I do nothing differently in my life to support that desire? This program definitely only requires a desire to stop eating compulsively to be a member – no ifs, ands, or buts about that – but being a member is only the beginning. If I want change in my life, it's going to take some decisive sacrificial action.

Anonymous

## The Last 10 Pounds

Program has gifted me with many opportunities to grow and change. By doing work in the 12 Step way, I am now able to live a good life, relatively free of anxiety and worry. I also developed and now have a healthy eating plan that I follow daily. I set intentions for the day, dwell in gratitude, and recap each day to see if amends are needed.

Most folks would say the biggest change in me has been the 460 pounds I took off over the past 15 years, and yes, that has been a huge accomplishment. But, in my opinion, the biggest change that I have seen in myself by far has been my emotional and spiritual growth.

Having reached my weight-loss goal, I have now started to heal the damage I did through a series of surgeries. I had the first just before Halloween. To my surprise, I apparently had expectations regarding the outcome of the panniculectomy (lower abdominal skin and fat removal). Following the surgery, I frequently cried, and during the first month, I was incredibly weepy.

I expected to feel nothing much, like this was just another program day in a long, long series of days. Normally I plan a change, implement and practice it, fold it into my life, then I do it again. This time I knew a change was coming, but it still hit me like a freight train.

As I cried, I wondered where this was coming from, so I got out the **Big Book** and turned to page 417. As I meditated on what in my world was bringing on this out of sorts feeling, it finally occurred to me that I wasn't sad; I was amazed and happy. I didn't feel like I had "gotten rid of" my extra skin, I felt like I had regained an essential part of myself. As those last 10 pounds of belly skin were removed, it felt as if 50 years had rolled back, leaving me

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with a sense of how it felt to walk around in a right-sized body. I had uncovered the me who had been hiding behind fat for all those decades. Scary. Just me out in the wild with no giant belly to protect me.

I probed a little deeper, because I have not been a “normal weight” in a mostly regular-sized body since I was 16. I have been ashamed of my body since I was six. Yes, six.

What I realized that I felt was gratitude and awe. I never want to lose the absolute delight I feel because I fit in off-the-rack clothing and because I fit in an airplane seat – with only one belt – and I have to cinch the belt! I don’t worry about fitting in chairs. I no longer fret about whether there will be chairs available because I can now walk a long way, and I can stand for more than five minutes without it crippling me for several days afterwards.

Each time one of these little gifts comes along, I pause and bask in gratitude. I will endeavor to not take the promises that have come true for me for granted. In doing so, I will remain grounded in the principles that helped me grow up and take care of myself, inside and out.

Those last 10 pounds were astonishing to me. I did not expect that at all. I am incredibly grateful.

Melanie T



## Intergroup Chair’s Column

The 2026 World Service Business Conference, ***The Solution Is For Life***, is April 20-25. There are several motions and proposed amendments to our Bylaws that WSO has asked Intergroups (IGs) worldwide to discuss and weigh in on.

The St. Louis Bi-State Area IG Board categorized the motions to be evaluated as consent agendas, and these were sent to IG representatives in the week prior to our February meeting. The task was to vote that a motion/category be discussed at the WSBC in April or not be discussed. You may read the full list of motions at [THIS LINK](#).

These possible changes address a wide range of topics. Some are “housekeeping” changes, such as updating policy language so that prayers may be used at any time during a meeting or event, not just opening and closing. Others address the inclusion of a new A.A. approved book, the ***Plain Language Big Book*** as a literature option, adding the Serenity Statement as a secular option for meetings, and other policy and language adjustments.

If you’d like details on these potential new business motions and Bylaws changes, check with your IG representative or reach out to me directly.

The next Intergroup meeting is Sunday, March 8 at 1:30pm. Zoom ID: 940 5580 8391, Password: Serenity. You may also join by telephone. Dial-in: 312-626-6799, Meeting ID: 940 5580 8391, Password: 75183374. Visitors are welcome!

In grateful service,  
Eileen M.  
314-570-9333

## Bondage of Self

Is my core problem bondage to food or bondage of self? When I first came into the program, I would have answered bondage to food. Food was my master, and I was its slave. Now, after 18 months in the program, I'm realizing that bondage of self is a far greater issue in my life than bondage to food ever was.

When I say in the third step prayer "relieve me of the bondage of self," of what is it that I am asking to be relieved?

Well, for starters, all experiences of dis-ease in my life are ultimately a result of this bondage. The restless, irritable, and discontented feelings which generate that dis-ease originate from within me. All my fear, anxiety, anger, rage, self-pity, and depression are all a result of me being focused on me. When I react by fighting, fleeing, or freezing, those reactions are all in response to my slavery to self.

All the "self" words – selfishness, self-absorption, self-centeredness, self-seeking, self-preoccupation, self-concern, self-obsession, self-preservation, self-gratification, self-indulgence, self-satisfaction, self-conceit, self-righteousness – all of these are me having me as the center of my life. All my character defects, which are ultimately my defense mechanisms to handle life, generate out of my desire to have my needs met. All the lies I believe that hold up my insane dysfunctional unmanageable life are there for the benefit of self.

When I treat people rudely, when I am unkind, defensive, rejecting, sarcastic, ruthlessly blunt, uncaring, inconsiderate, impolite, impatient, neglectful, controlling, critical, lazy, I am putting myself first. Shyness, having trouble speaking in public, blocking myself off from others to isolate, are all self-enslavement. Being prideful and arrogant, and at the same time being paralyzed by low self-esteem, has "self" written all over it.

Perfectionism is ultimately slavery to self-expectations and self-demands as is fear of making mistakes. Being so locked into a mindset that it comes before my respect of other human beings – for example, my religious beliefs, my political views, my verbal confrontation of societal injustices, taking offense for people or people groups I care about, (let's bring it home now). Then there's my food plan, my viewpoint of how the steps should be worked, me assigning myself to be the tradition's cop, me declaring my profession or the number of people I sponsor in a meeting (I could go on and on) is all evidence of this bondage.

Me repeatedly re-entering a situation to prove I am right, and me stating my suggestion over and over are definitely actions driven by self. My talking endlessly about myself with little ability to stop is bondage of self.

Codependency is ultimately bondage of self. Wow, I went around the mountain many times before I finally clearly saw that one!



Being miserly, covetous, greedy, possessive, jealous – is not all that slavery to self? Is not all shame ultimately a result of my own thinking and reaction to outward stimuli and thus a result of this self-bondage? After all, I don't get shamed by what I haven't already expected of and judged myself for. In fact, isn't it bondage of self that my mind is continuously judging everyone and everything, that I don't naturally live in acceptance and gratitude? How about being closed-minded, stubborn, insubordinate, rebellious, unwilling, unreasonable? And what about being ruthless, reckless, unlawful, self-destructive, and suicidal? I can get so enslaved to self that I am willing to literally sacrifice my  
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very life for self – fast death through suicide or slow death through restricting and compulsive overeating.

The program tells me I am to ask God to relieve me of this bondage of self. Just like I am powerless to fix my food addiction and character defects, so am I powerless to free myself from this. I can tell myself I need to work hard on overcoming this bondage, and I can scold myself all I want, but how can I possibly successfully use self to free myself of my bondage of self?!! And yet that's what I have been trying to do for most of my life.

How do I get the willingness, the humility, and the faith to depend on God to relieve me of this bondage of self? I humbly ask God for them (and everything else that is the opposite to what I have mentioned here). It is only God who can open these prison doors and let me out to live a life of freedom, the freedom to walk in God's will instead of the continuous unrelenting powerful never satisfied demands of self.

Another effective way to be freed from this bondage of self is by working the steps. In fact, everything in the program counteracts bondage of self. That's why it goes against my very nature to do this program, and why this program is for those who want it, not those who need it! Only those who are willing to go to any length obtain this freedom. I've found this freedom is only provided as “a daily reprieve contingent upon the maintenance of my spiritual program,” never permanently. (**Big Book**, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., page 85)

Anonymous



## Fall Retreat Offers Opportunities To Strengthen Recovery

I'm a compulsive overeater, food restrictor, and addict. On the surface I look pretty good, and, if you listen, I sound pretty good, too. That's how I get into trouble – which is why I volunteer for retreats.

I never ever EVER again want to feel the feelings of loneliness and uselessness that I lived with in the past. I have had the experience of thinking I could do it on my own. We can all recall someone who stopped showing up and relapsed. That's why I work on retreats.

If I have a garden or a tree, in March I wait for the buds and blossoms. It's cold and grey and everything looks bad, but I have FAITH in spring. I don't fear for the plants because I know the roots are waiting underground. Just as I have faith that my Higher Power is working magic deep inside me, so I remember that my garden needs my attention during the growing season. You are ALL in my garden. That's why I'll be looking for you at this fall retreat!

In OA, we state that we are ready to move beyond the food into a fuller living experience. We are moving beyond appearances and filling that empty place in our being with fellowship. A retreat gives everyone a neutral space. A retreat is anti-isolation. A retreat is a team! A fall retreat breeds compassion and feeds your roots for the winter that lies just ahead. That's why I am excitedly preparing now for the 2026 Fall Retreat!

The 2026 Bi-State Intergroup **Fall Retreat** is scheduled for September 25-27 at the Toddhall Retreat Center in Columbia, IL, less than 20 minutes from St. Louis City. See page 9 for a Save the Date flyer to share with others.

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Opportunities for service are now available. Contact Mary C., the retreat chair, at 913-406-5010 or [marymwc@icloud.com](mailto:marymwc@icloud.com).

Andrea V.



**March 6 and 7** – Region 5 Spring Assembly; virtual and no cost – find details [HERE](#); visitors are welcome both days; this is a great way to learn about service at the Region level

**March 8** – 1:30 p.m. – Intergroup meeting\*\*

**March 14** – Fall Retreat Planning Committee; see details in the next column

**April 20-25** – World Service Business Conference; in-person attendance only; see details at [THIS LINK](#)

**May 3** – 1:30 p.m. – Intergroup meeting\*\*

**June 7** – 1:30 p.m. – Intergroup meeting\*\*

**July 12** – 1:30 p.m. – Intergroup meeting\*\*

**September 13** – 1:30 p.m. – Intergroup meeting\*\*

**September 25-27** – Fall Retreat – “**Rooted in Spiritual Principles**” – located at Toddhall Retreat Center, Columbia, IL – see Save the Date flyer on page nine

**October 11** – 1:30 p.m. – Intergroup meeting\*\*

**November 8** – 1:30 p.m. – Intergroup meeting and Annual Business Conference\*\*

**\*\*Note:** Each Intergroup Meeting is 1:30-3:00 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 are welcome.

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



## Fall Retreat Committee Invites Your Participation

You're invited to join us in a Fall Retreat planning session:

- When? Saturday: March 14, 2026
- Time? After the 10 a.m. in-person Step & Tradition Study meeting in Webster Groves
- Location? We will enjoy lunch together while discussing sub-committee roles

This March let's spring forward in our retreat planning with loving and co-creative actions. To join us or learn more contact:

Mary C 913-406-5010  
Retreat Chair

**ARTICLES FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER ARE DUE BY MARCH 20, 2026.** Please send your submissions to the **OA TODAY** editor and Newsletter Team at [info@stlouisoa.org](mailto:info@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.

# *Rooted in Spiritual Principles*

SAVE THE DATE



St. Louis Area Bi-State Intergroup of  
Overeaters Anonymous

Fall Retreat - Toddhall, Columbia IL

Sept 25 4pm to Sept 27 11am

For more info contact Mary C 913-406-5010