

Society Pages

The Newsletter of
Unity Intergroup December, 2006

Carrying the Message

Links

List of Local Meetings www overeaters.org
Region 4 Web Site www.oaregion4.org
World Service Web Site www.oa.org

Receiving the Newsletter at Home

Society Pages is available via the Internet or e-mail. Go to www overeaters.org to download a copy of current or past newsletters. A hard copy of Society Pages is available by subscription for individuals outside the Unity Intergroup region.



PI/Outreach Committee

The Public Information Group and the Outreach Committee meet just before the Intergroup meetings at the same location from 11a.m.-12:15p.m. Join us and help find ways to reach others who suffer from food addiction

We Need You!

Contact Peg M. at 952-920-9496; Nea D. at 612-227-3854 or Robin H. at 612-724-5506 for more information.

Women's Expo

Minneapolis Convention Center, **January 26, 27, 28**. Contact Peg M. at 952-920-9496.

January Society Pages

The January Society Pages will feature Step One; "We admitted we were powerless over food, that our lives had become unmanageable." The Monday, 10:00a.m. Minnehaha Minneapolis group has volunteered to write for that issue. Articles on the Step or a personal story are still accepted from other OA members, however. Please send your contributions to ellen_oa@hotmail.com for publication in Society Pages.

The deadline for submission of articles is 12:00 noon on Sunday, December 24, 2006.



Step 11
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.

A Spiritual Habit

I came into these rooms desperate, so desperate that I was willing to beg a God that I wasn't sure existed to save me from myself. Though there may be a lot more detail to my story, the bottom line is that I was saved. Once I put down the food, the obsession was lifted and well over 100 pounds melted from my body. For me, the physical recovery from a lifetime of compulsive overeating required a willingness to use every one of the tools offered us in this program.

But there is not a tool for prayer and meditation. It's a step and it is all the way to 11. Those first ten can take a good chunk of time! At about three months of abstinence I was talking with a sponsor who had over 2 years. I made some reference to my difficulty with sitting still long enough to meditate. She quietly and firmly said, "I would no more leave my house in the morning without having had my time in prayer and meditation than I would leave without my lunch." I was shocked to think that I might need to adopt a spiritual habit as rigorous as my physical habits.

The development of this spiritual habit has been painstaking. At first, I had to set a timer so that I could sit for five minutes without looking at the clock every thirty seconds. After a while, I found I no longer needed the timer. Though I still have miles to go in my daily practice of making conscious contact with my Higher Power, I now look forward to the time. If I don't take it, I feel the loss. I am much more able to

handle my day when I find time in the morning to "ask God to direct my thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives." (BB. P. 86)
 ~Anonymous

Big Book Pages 86 and 87

I'm a compulsive overeater. I've been abstinent with weighed and measured meals for 18 months. I've maintained my weight for a year now. Daily life is a real challenge. My "To Do List" is always longer than my day. I feel pressured and unhappy at times. I am so grateful to have a program to work each day.

The Eleventh Step says: "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 it out." My sponsor has asked that I read pages 86 and 87 in the Big Book every day. I do that. Then I sit quietly for a few minutes and look out my back window at the woods. Next, I pray the Third Step Prayer, which reminds me that I have decided to turn my will and my life over to my Higher Power's care. I say the Seventh Step Prayer to acknowledge that my character defects will come up today and I will try to take that opportunity to let them go and live with new integrity. I finish with a prayer that I be granted abstinence today. As I go about the day, I can get rushed, overwhelmed, and irritated with other people. I need to stop and pray for God's will for me, and the power to carry that out. Sometimes I need to read OA literature that I carry with me. Sometimes I need to talk to someone on the phone before I can "let go" the trouble. It never fails to help me.

Putting my Higher Power in my life has changed things for me. I am not alone. My food obsession is gone. I see where I am getting in my own way much more often. I can't get through the days on my own unaided will power anymore. I am learning to be more reliant, more cooperative, and more grateful for life. This life is a gift, and I want to be present to enjoy it. Getting to know my Higher Power has made life easier. Happy Holidays!

~Judy M.

An Inventive HP

Since step 11 urges us to seek through prayer and meditation a better relationship with our HP, I thought I would share a story from my past and how my HP shows up at times in my life: One evening a few years ago I met with a sponsor for coffee. I was struggling with my belief in a power greater than myself, and she suggested that each morning, before I did anything else, that I say the serenity prayer. I reluctantly agreed, but being the resistant addict I am, I filed it away for later, shall we say. After meeting with her I felt a sort of "nudge" to go get some music from a shop across the street. Sinead O'Connor's CD was being displayed at the front of the store and since I had heard of her, but didn't know her music, I bought it. Then, I went to bed. In the morning I thought about saying the serenity prayer but thought I would put the CD on first instead. I cranked it up thinking rock and roll would come blasting out. Instead, in a big booming voice were these words: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference." I literally had to sit down. My whole body was tingling. Needless to say it was an extreme spiritual experience for me. And since that time many, many other similar experiences have come my way. I could call them "coincidences". But for me and only for me, I know when these things happen; I can feel it in my gut, that this is my HP just giving me a little "nudge". Just to let me know I'm on the path and that I'm not doing this alone. I am grateful today to have a higher power that is loving and forgiving and sometimes quite inventive... (wink wink)
~Karen N-P

Effort and Footwork

"we simply do not stop eating so long as we place dependence upon other people ahead of dependence on God."

I remember a time when I was full of envy that others seemed to have better-deeper-stronger friendships than I had with my friends. I also remember the moment it dawned on me that the quality of my friendships was in direct

proportion to the time, energy, feeling, thoughtful gestures, responsiveness, and caring that I invested into those relationships. It wasn't magic or luck or greener pastures somewhere else. What made the difference were effort or footwork.

If I want to stay away from the food, I have to learn to depend on God in much the same way that I learned to deepen my relationships with friends. I have to do the footwork of taking time for meditation every day; opening up the yearnings of my heart; saying "no" to the wandering monkey mind; being receptive to how God is calling me in the moment to trust and receive the Divine Presence. I can't control God or his timing in the same way I can't control the food obsession or my friends. I just do the footwork-show up and suit up on the meditation cushion and allow God to be God.

My first meditation teacher was hip to my grandiosity when he reminded me that it wasn't the spiritual experience of the lightening bolt on the cushion that mattered. What was way more important was the faithfulness of the footwork; showing up on the cushion day-after-day, no matter what I was feeling. The fruits of the meditation come not during the 20-minute sit, but in the equanimity, love and service that happens during the rest of the day.

~Barb A.

Ought-to, Have-to, Need-to

It isn't so much an "ought-to" or even a "have-to." Really, it is nothing less than a "Need to." When I first learned that our program "suggests" that I seek to improve my conscious contact with God, as I understand God, through prayer and meditation, my first thought was, "Who has time for that?" As I struggled to fit prayer into my already-over-booked daily routine, I found myself trapped on "ought-to" or "have-to" thinking and my prayer time was often brief and perfunctory. Even so I experienced a bit more serenity through the course of my running around.

But at some point in my journey of recovery, I had the realization that I truly needed this time alone with God. It wasn't intellectual—a sudden "Aha! I need to pray!" kind of thing. It was visceral, spiritual, and yet so strong it felt

almost physical. When I took adequate time to sit still and silent, when I calmly reached out for God, I was drenched in His presence. Like one of the neglected, half-withered petunias on my deck this past summer, a downpour of exactly what I needed restored me. Water is often a symbol for a Higher Power—all life ultimately comes from it and depends upon it.

The metaphor is fairly apt when applied to prayer. There are times our answers from God come as a hardly-noticeable drizzle, a steady rain, a strong downpour, or even a frightening storm. But at no time are we left parched if we approach God in humble prayer. I suppose that is where the metaphor falls short, for one cannot ask the clouds for water and anticipate a response, whereas God will always send what we need if we ask Him for it. (Notice I said “need, “not“ want.” Important distinction?) Nourish the roots and be awed by the resulting bloom.

~Anonymous

Step 12
Having had a spiritual
awakening as the result of
these Steps, we tried to carry
this message to compulsive
overeaters and to practice
these principles in all our
affairs.

Song In My Heart

In 2001, a recovering compulsive overeater brought an OA HOW meeting to the Twin Cities. I like to think she brought it here especially for me because God knew it was the only answer for me. In fact, she brought it with her to the Twin Cities when she moved here to save her own life. Thank God she needed to bring this style of recovery with her, because I needed it in order to survive.

God puts in our hearts to carry the message to the still suffering compulsive overeater. We know it's the only way to ensure our own recovery. Every time we share the message of our recovery, of our own experience, strength and hope, we ask God to continue to help us grow spiritually which deepens our recovery.

Once I opened up my heart to God in recovery, He has continued to fill my heart with many blessings. He has restored to me passions that food had stolen from me years ago. One of the many gifts I gratefully accept from God is the return of my passion for music. God has put a new song in my heart and it fills me with joy. God also put a new song in my mouth. I've learned to connect in positive ways with people in my life.

I thank God each day for 24 hours of freedom from addiction; freedom to follow His will for me and for the joy of carrying the message.

~Stacie

My Spirit is Waking Up

The December 1st reading in “Voices of Recovery” talks about the 12th step. To paraphrase, it notes that the wording of Step 12 says that having a spiritual awakening is THE result, not A result, or working these steps. Many people misstate this when saying the steps, by saying that the spiritual awakening is A result of working the steps.

The author of the reading believes that all of the “little” things that change for us are part of a spiritual awakening. There have been many things that have resulted from my working all 12 steps of the program. One of them is sustained 22 months of abstinence – anything but a “little” thing, but not what I would define, in and of itself, as a spiritual awakening. Another is a real desire to communicate with my Higher Power on a daily basis. Others include the calmness and serenity that dominate my life these days and the acceptance that certain things are beyond my control. My willingness to do the footwork required by the steps is also part of this result.

Those are all things we have heard about at meetings. I've been interested in making a list of “AHA” moments in my recovery. These, I believe, are all part of my spirit waking up.

When I was in a food-fog, I wasn't aware of some things that I now see as obvious. Like understanding that no matter how much work I do and how much time I put into my job, there would always be more for me to do. Using this knowledge to work toward a more balanced life is one of the "little" things that are part of my waking up to reality.

So, there are many things that have resulted from this incredible life experience that I have been engaged in for the last 3 years. They are all aspects of my spirit awakening from the drugged, sugar-fogged state I lived in my whole adult life. So, I don't think it really matters whether I say "as THE result" or "as A result", as long as I acknowledge that all the smaller changes that occur are part of a larger whole called a spiritual awakening... Thank you HP for letting my spirit wake up and for allowing me to be of "sane and happy usefulness" to other OAs and everyone I interact with each day.

~Anonymous

Personal Stories

Today I Played Big Book Roulette

I read an excerpt from a story about a guy doing service. He said that he does service for the betterment of AA. I thought about that in my discussions about my program. What am I doing for the betterment of OA? What can I do with my life in my present circumstances to make OA better?

One thing I thought about is helping to unify us. While we continually say that all is fine between OA and OA-HOW, I think deep in our hearts we know that not to be true. I think we should be working for unity. We could stand to be more flexible and tolerant with each other. The "perfect" OA group lies somewhere between the two groups. I think it should be a goal of all of us to find that place. Remember: The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively.

~Anonymous

November and December

I have a hard time with the "To Do List" in my head - especially in November and December. How can I take time away from my busy life to practice the program of OA? I need the connection that the program gives me. The tools give me that connection. *Plan of eating* allows me to quit debating endlessly with myself about what I "need" and just surrender to what I have planned, committed, weighed, and measured each meal. Once each day I *read program literature and write* something about my experience with that in my life. I send holiday cards every year. I send this "letter" to myself each day. When I feel lonely, or start to brood over something that feels challenging in my life, that's a good time to make *phone calls* or go to a *meeting*. The AA 12 and 12 says, "every meeting is an assurance that we can be restored to sanity". I sure need that this time of year! During the holidays I can get too busy with everything. My *sponsor* reminds me to keep it simple. I have a simple program if I remember to do it every day. I talk to my *sponsor* each day, and that connection is such a lifeline for me. Because of *anonymity*, I am safe. I know my friends will keep my confidence, and I will keep theirs. That makes for real Peace on Earth this time of year. Finally, I do *service* - because passing on the message and helping keep the home and meeting going keep me sober one more day. I wish you a sober and peaceful year-end for 2006. Thank you for being there for me when I need you!

~Anonymous

Angry

I never knew I was angry. I mean, after all, everybody else was failing me; it was their fault, not mine. Lord knows I was trying. Outwardly, I was controlled, calm and in command. Inwardly, the growing anger was eating me up and I was trying to stop it with food.

I have accumulated this anger over the years. Angry that my Mom died when I was so young.

Angry that I have to deal with weight and can't be – never was – one of those people who could eat anything, angry that people made jokes or snickered or judgments about me and my weight, angry I couldn't just be a normal size. Angry that my husband had such a severe stroke and I was denied his love, our life we had planned, a happy, joyous birth of our 2nd child. I felt cheated and angry. So, each time I would console myself with food – more and more – and people would say, "Don't eat so much." or "Are you even tasting that?" It felt like I was indulging in the forbidden. If life or others failed me, then I would just have to do it for myself, take it and be aggressive – assert myself. Isn't that self-care? I felt it was my due and I thought I was pulling a fast one on everybody who didn't cooperate with me. All this anger building up and it had to be stored somewhere. Then having to divorce – my ex failed me. Dating - my dates failed me. No one could see that I was loving and smart and could be fun – no one took the time to explore that and then stay with me. Then too I believed, who would want to be with me; my life was too complicated, messy and I had nothing tangible to offer, so more anger and bitterness. All this stored in belly fat.

But OA takes the emphasis off of food and puts it on people. Learning to live life on life's terms. Let go of anger and see that it is just my perception. Ask God to do for me what I could not do for myself. Dear God, take the anger and hurt, take the weight and help me to live in the now – each moment and in today.

~Anonymous



Acts of Kindness

In my place of employment, a morale building exercise for the month of November has been to put little paper bags outside our office doors for anyone to donate an act of kindness. It can be anything. Most of the time, it is food. Occasionally, it is a little quote or wishes for better things in the future. My first reaction to the bags was, "shouldn't every day be a day in which we do random acts of kindness?" My next reaction was to move my bag inside my office and turn it upside down because the majority of things put in it aren't in my daily plan for living. Extreme? I'm an addict! Then, I thought, "who am I to be so judgmental and difficult?" The bag is back where it was placed and I graciously thank those who stop by with food or notes. Later, I empty the bag and donate the treats elsewhere. My daily gratitude list includes being thankful that people outside the program are thinking of me.

~Anonymous

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