

Society Pages

The Newsletter of
Unity Intergroup January 2008

Carrying the Message

News from Unity Intergroup

Sponsorship Workshop: Demystifying Sponsorship will be held on Saturday, March 29 from 1:00 - 4:00 pm at Sumner Library in Minneapolis. This half-day workshop is a great way to get your questions about sponsorship answered. All meeting formats will be addressed. Topics will include clarifying the roles & relationship of sponsors and sponsees, sponsorship tools, "getting started," and sponsorship red flags. Watch for more details in next month's Society Pages.

Contribution: Unity Intergroup contributed \$600 in seed money to OA World Service to help create an OA national media campaign to carry the message of recovery!

Abstinence Definition: Unity Intergroup has approved a proposal to submit an updated definition for "Abstinence" at the World Service Business Conference (WSBC) in May, 2008. Final language of the definition that will be submitted reads: "Abstinence in Overeaters Anonymous is the action of refraining from compulsive eating by following a plan of eating that reverses the damaging consequences of food obsession. The result of Abstinence and living the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve-Step program is spiritual, emotional and physical recovery." Catherine W, Unity Intergroup delegate to the WSBC will submit the proposal.

Service opportunities exist for Unity Intergroup reps, Outreach committee members, State OA Convention co-chair and other miscellaneous tasks through which you can share your special skills and talents (computer skills, website development/admin, writing, PR skills, speakers, etc.). We need you! Help your program by helping others. Contact a board member or Unity Intergroup Rep for additional information. If you are interested in serving as co-chair for 2008 OA MN State Convention, contact Linda N. (507-282-9331 or lindanelson@gmail.com) for more details. We need your talent and enthusiasm!



Service Means "I Count!"

In this program I have found that I don't have to move mountains to count. I can do the littlest thing and it is appreciated and accepted. Most surprising is that the more service I do, the stronger my program gets. When I think about it, it makes sense; if my disease continues to get stronger and stronger even while I'm in recovery, the only way to counterbalance it is to make sure my program continues to grow in strength. The longer I'm abstinent the more service I must do to keep up my defenses.

Just last night I called a struggling OA to see how she was doing. She reacted with such surprise that I had called her. Why not call her? When she proclaimed that she was not abstaining and was just praying for the willingness, I asked her what she would be willing to do, just for one day. Five days later she is still calling me with her food and daily inventory and has expressed a readiness to find a permanent sponsor to work with. I will help her find one. It was such a small effort on my part, but it can have such positive consequences. I am so grateful for what I have learned about service in this program.

I can easily say that I get back as much as I give when it comes to service. Admittedly, it sounds a bit selfish. However, I don't consciously say: "I want a reward for myself, so I think I'll make a call to a fellow OA." No, I make the call because I want to and I need to. The gifts I receive as a result are just a side effect of this effort.

~Deb

Step One: “We admitted we were powerless over food, that our lives had become unmanageable.”

Unmanageable? YES!

I didn't want to admit that I was powerless over food. I held iron-fist control over many areas of my life, some of which were going pretty well. Denial ruled me for many years. The fact that my compulsive overeating had brought me to double my ideal weight was too painful to confront. So the denial conveniently shielded me. Even a diagnosis of adult-onset diabetes, hyper-tension, and unsafe levels of cholesterol were not enough to get me to admit my powerlessness over food.

Oh, was I powerless over food! I spent about 30 years trying to prove I was NOT powerless over food. I tried it all—hypnosis, Weight Watchers, Ayds suppressants (yum!), liver once a week, the oh-so-very-gaseous cabbage-soup-diet, vegetarianism, exercise, over-the-counter diet pills, speed, etc. You name it, I tried it. If a weight-loss method made the cover of a ladies magazine, I was right there trying it. When the diet inevitably didn't work, I tried the fabulous chocolate cake recipe featured on the same cover!

In the last ten years of my compulsive-over eating career I had given up dieting. I was at least honest enough with myself to know my efforts were fruitless.

In that stage I tried believing in the growing "Fat is Beautiful" movement, but I just couldn't overcome my deep disgust at my near-300 pound body.

So, "powerless over food?" Yes, I'd say so! Powerless is knowing that with every bite I was slowly but surely committing suicide. My weight-related medical conditions would certainly lead me to an early death. And though I didn't want to die early, I was simply powerless over the food.

Had my life really "become unmanageable?" Well, as far as "physically unmanageable," I'd long since given up my life-long love of swimming; I would not be seen in a swimsuit. Romantic relationships were out of the question, again, the self-loathing I felt for my body precluded that. I'd push away any man who ever became interested in me. Flying in planes had become torturous and humiliating, as had most theatre seats. Sitting in any chair caused me great stress at the very real possibility that it might crumble under my weight at any time. The state of my body due to weight-related illnesses prohibited me from my deepest dream of having a baby. Unmanageable? Again: I say yes!

And how about emotionally unmanageable? Well, mishandling my character defects led me to over-eat. Only by numbing those feelings that I didn't know how to handle with food could I survive.

Those close to me knew me as moody and unpredictable. If I'd just gotten a "fix," I was probably in a decent, mellow mood. But if I was being kept from my food, I would be mean, harsh, and judgmental. I'd often get so angry at someone that I wouldn't talk to them for days. I would offer no explanation, and certainly NEVER apologized later.

I spent many hours a day tormented with judgmental thoughts, resentment, jealousy, pettiness and spitefulness. Unmanageable? Again: I say yes! How about my spiritual life? Was that too unmanageable? Well, I had no spiritual life. I did not believe in a higher power. As this has changed over my years in recovery, I see what my lack of belief meant on a daily basis. It caused me to rely only on myself, which meant I felt like I was in charge of the entire Universe. Getting a whole universe to do my bidding ALL THE TIME took a lot of energy! Needless to say, I was frustrated and angry most of the time! To calm and numb those feelings, I compulsively overate. Unmanageable? Again: I say yes!

It wasn't a happy or fulfilling life. Then I started working a strong 12-step program. I put down the food. I admitted I was powerless and that my life had become unmanageable. And from that one decision, my life has become a miracle. I am 120 pounds down from my high weight. I no longer take medication for diabetes, high blood pressure or elevated cholesterol. I was able to conceive and deliver a beautiful baby. I am still a work in progress, but I now admit when I'm wrong, and apologize for my behavior if necessary. I have come to believe a Power greater than me can restore me to sanity. Today, I look for guidance from outside myself in all of life's decisions. My disease is powerful, cunning, and baffling. For today, I have found a solution!

~ Ann

Links

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

“I Don’t Know” Is A Valid Answer!

When I was a child I never knew what to say when people asked questions. I never wanted to seem like I didn’t know. I was raised with the idea that not knowing was detrimental to survival - people would not trust you, not count on you, you would lose a job, or people would think you were just plain dumb. Knowing the answer was crucial. Pretending like you knew was important and was equally good. I grew up with this fear and would cry or hide when I didn’t know something.

It wasn’t until college that I realized that “to not know” was also a noteworthy position to be in. I remember a very outgoing professor I had for an English course in my sophomore year. He was knowledgeable, very enthusiastic about the material, and confident. I remember the most striking thing I learned came one afternoon in his class as he called on one of the students to answer a question about the assigned reading. The young man was trying desperately to hide in his coat since he either didn’t read the material or honestly did not know the answer. When called upon, he sheepishly answered in a muffled voice, “I don’t know.”

Our professor quickly sprang into action! He addressed the student and clearly and firmly said, “Young man, from the diaphragm!” We were all shocked and amazed at the force with which the statement was made. A very puzzled “Huh?” came from the young man. Our professor proceeded to say, “‘I don’t know’ is a valid answer. Therefore, you must speak clearly, bringing air up from the diaphragm, giving your answer confidently!” Again, there was shock and a few giggles around the room, but from then on many of us, including myself, would stand and respond, “I don’t know” in our English class. Since then I’ve tried not to be afraid to speak from the diaphragm because after all, “I don’t know” is a valid answer!

What I realized after college was how much I still didn’t know and wanted to learn. I had always heard, “there is no such thing as a dumb question.” But no one ever said, “I don’t know is a valid answer.” That changed my life. I started to admit the things I honestly didn’t know. So I did a lot of growing up and a lot more learning at that point. Now I’m proud to say I’m a lifelong learner.

In this program, not knowing is a great position to be in. It is through humility that we are able to learn more because we are willing. The steps, the traditions, the tools of our program are all new to us. Starting with a fresh willingness to learn is only to our advantage. So celebrate not knowing! Spend the rest of the year learning something new about yourself, your program, and your Higher Power!

~Anonymous

Step One is Simple!

People make a big deal out of step one, but for me it is quite simple. I take the first step every time I walk into an OA meeting, admit that I am a compulsive overeater aloud and stay for the meeting to find out how others manage life abstinently. Sometimes we forget how absolutely humiliating and difficult it is to drag ourselves to our first OA meeting. Hopefully, though, there is a kind soul who remembers being a newcomer, getting out of treatment, or coming back from a relapse. They greet us, take us under their wing and welcome us home. This is the essence of the first step. “We perceive that only through utter defeat are we able to take our first steps towards liberation and strength.” Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 21.

I still remember the kind soul who sought me out and chatted with me while getting a cup of tea. It had been twelve years since my last OA meeting and over two decades since I’d first taken step one in college. All this time away, I tried again to control my eating with the commercial weight loss programs, home exercise equipment, elaborate promises to myself that this time I would lose the weight and keep it off. So that summer evening, eighteen months ago, I again admitted to myself, my family and to a room full of strangers that I was powerless over food by attending an OA meeting. When I listened to that fellow OA member and they listened to me over a cup of tea, hope sprang up inside of me that my life might one day become manageable once again.

Every morning I repeat step one by getting out of bed, thanking H.P. for another day of abstinence, calling my sponsor, committing my food, and working the tools of the program. Then I start my day afresh, knowing that I’ve taken the first step in the direction that my Higher Power wants me to go. Does this keep me off the trail of compulsive eating and thinking? No. Step one only starts me out on the path of “daily reprieve” that the Big Books promises and for that I am grateful.

~ Michelle P.D.

February Society Pages

The February Society Pages will focus on Step 2: "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity" and will be sponsored by the Saturday Eden Prairie OA HOW Meeting. Although one meeting generally sponsors each newsletter, we welcome articles from anyone. Please indicate if it is OK to print your name with your article and e-mail your contributions to ellen_oa@ hotmail.com with the subject "Society Pages" by noon on Tuesday, January 22nd.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Saturday, January 12	Intergroup Meeting **BOARD ELECTIONS!**
	Outreach/PI Meeting
Saturday, January 19	Newcomer Meeting
Tuesday, January 22	Articles due for February Society Pages
Saturday, February 9	Intergroup Meeting
	Outreach/PI Meeting
Friday – Sunday, February 15 - 17	OA Big Book Study Weekend (see enclosed flyer)
Saturday, February 16	Newcomer Meeting
Wednesday, February 20	Articles due for March Society Pages
Saturday, March 29	Workshop: Demystifying Sponsorship
Friday – Sunday, April 4, 5 & 6	Buffalo Retreat
Friday – Sunday, September 19 - 21	Frontenac Retreat
Friday – Sunday, November 14 - 16 (NOTE: 3rd week- end in November)	2008 MN OA State Convention

Intergroup Board

Becky T., Chair	952-423-1527
Joan S., Vice-Chair	507-280-8685
Amy D., Treasurer	952-270-0098
Janelle N., Secretary	763-780-2794

beckytio@frontiernet.net
Joansilker2@msn.com
amydunker@yahoo.com
janelnelson1@mac.com