

# Society Pages

The Newsletter of  
Unity Intergroup January 2009

## Carrying the Message

### News from Unity Intergroup

#### Service Opportunities

Do you speak Spanish? Know ASL? OA is in need of your skills and talents (computer skills, website development/admin, writing, PR skills, speakers, etc.). You make a difference! Contact a board member or Unity Intergroup Rep for additional information.

#### Women's Expo

Are you looking to start your New Year off with service opportunity & carrying the message to the still suffering compulsive overeater? The Women's expo is looking for service volunteers to assist at the booth. Please contact Jenn K at 651.366.7032 or [roxyheart914@hotmail.com](mailto:roxyheart914@hotmail.com).

The Women's Expo  
Jan 16th - 18th  
Minneapolis Convention Center

Friday 16th 11-7pm  
Saturday 17th 9-5pm  
Sunday 18th 9-5pm (would need some extra help with take down of the booth)

#### Meeting move

The Tuesday 6:30p Wyoming meeting (HOW format) is moving to Chisago, starting on January 6. The new location is: Chisago Clinic (Fairview)  
11725 Stinson Ave  
Chisago MN 55013  
Marian N 651-257-6045  
Jessica S 651-245-9555

#### New Region delegates

We have 4 new Region delegates. They are Melanie C, Michele M, Jane S and Allison R.

#### OA podcast

Latest pod cast available for 20MP3 download on [http://www.oa.org/get\\_podcast.htm](http://www.oa.org/get_podcast.htm)



#### Gratitude for a job well done

I am writing to express my thanks to the intergroup for the work they have done on the language of unity. It has really transformed my thinking about the various formats of OA. I truly believe that 12 step work is divine work, and we each are responsible to find the tools that help us to connect with our higher power.

We are so blessed to be doing this work together, and taking our journeys on similar paths. Thank you to our intergroup for doing the hard work to help us recognize that we are on the same journey, rather than focusing on our different methods for getting there.

Blessings to all,

Allison

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

### Step One

It took a long time for me to surrender and admit absolute powerlessness over food. I first came to OA in 1989 and bounced in and out until 1992 when I came for good. By 1996, I had acquired even more excuses for compulsive eating – post partum depression, sleep deprivation, living in a very remote part of British Columbia, no face to face meetings, no Internet, nobody I knew of who was abstinent, family and friends 4000 miles away, a husband who went away every time I turned around. When we moved to Vancouver Island in 2000, I had a small face to face OA meeting (albeit a struggling one) and the Internet was available. I was being treated by an excellent psychiatrist and physician. Yet I could not stop eating. Drive thru’s were my higher power.

Hitting bottom for me looked like running a red light with my kids in the back seat as I balanced a large Skor Blizzard between my legs and ate it as fast as I could trying all the while not to let other drivers see me because someone might see that I wasn’t abstinent. It looked like getting pulled over by the cops for driving with expired insurance and being threatened with a \$500 fine. It looked like tossing mini donuts over my shoulder as I drove to keep my kids quiet as I inhaled large, cream filled donuts in the driver’s seat, trying to hide my stash from them so they wouldn’t bug me to share. It looked like me sprawled out on the sofa in a sugar stupor by noon with my little ones crawling over me and watching one video after another. It looked like me throwing large outdoor toys into the woods as I raged while my 2-year-old screamed for attention that I was incapable of giving. It looked like sneaking all of the gingerbread men off the Christmas tree and lying to my 4-year-old about how they disappeared.

What no one could see was the indescribable angst, pain, and confusion that consumed me. I was guilt-ridden, in a thick fog, and every single day was a marathon to endure. I hated who and what I had become. Was it because of the food or was it because I was mentally ill and therefore doomed to a crazy existence? I analyzed and intellectualized endlessly. I could NOT get out of my head and out of my own way.

In desperation, I decided to try OA/HOW one more time. This time, however, I knew it couldn’t be used as a “cleanse” which would catapult me into “normal” abstinence where I could just eat 3 moderate meals a day as I had many times between 1989 and 1999. My disease was progressing rapidly as evidenced by my mental and spiritual states. Diabetes was around the corner, nervous breakdown was around the corner, and heart disease was probable given my genetics and my long history of yo-yoing. My full button was broken now and it was probable that my weight would keep going up.

My last binge was a box of Little Debbie’s cakes that tasted like sawdust. They did not even begin to scratch my insatiable itch. I ate more when I got home – hotdogs,

I think. I ate because I didn’t know what else to do. OA/HOW told me what to do and I needed (and wanted!) the crystal clear directions now because I knew I would manipulate and rationalize my way into a binge in a heartbeat if given any wiggle room. But I only became willing to follow those directions each day after I admitted **complete defeat**. I was beaten to a pulp by the day in, day out, year after year hell of being consumed by my 3-fold disease. I didn’t have a moral problem. I was an addict. I cried with relief when I finally understood and accepted that fact.

I need a lot of help to maintain my abstinence. I need all of the tools, all of the time. I stay connected to other members who work the program as though their lives depend on it thanks to the telephone, phone meetings, sponsorship, and the Internet. I am willing to do things to maintain abstinence that are inconvenient and sometimes cause people who don’t understand to frown at me. I always say, if I want convenience I can go back to the drive thru. I’ll take the inconvenience. It is a minute price to pay for the gifts I receive in recovery.

Compulsive eating devastated my integrity, my self-esteem, my security, my ambitions, my relationships, my spiritual well being, and my mental and physical health. The OA/HOW program has restored every one of those things and taken me to a place I never thought possible. I have peace and joy in my life. I have hope every single day. I am useful without being a martyr. I love being a mother and I know how to set healthy boundaries for my children. I am kind and loving without being a doormat. I am honest and open without being abrasive. I am of service without taking over and trying to run the whole show. I was able to travel 4000 miles to visit my family of origin 2 weeks ago and love and accept the people there and detach from their issues without withholding love from them. A 30 year cycle has thus been broken. This is one of many miracles of recovery. These things would be impossible without the complete defeat I experienced in Step One nearly 6 years ago. My greatest strength has been forged from my greatest weakness.

January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009, will mark my 5<sup>th</sup> year of back to back abstinence working a rigorous HOW program and I celebrate that anniversary with each and every one of you, my fellows from afar who have helped me so much just by doing what you do right where you are, day in and day out. I thank you for graciously receiving my phone calls when you’d never laid eyes on me, I thank you for your meetings, and I thank you for your convention. I pay that gratitude forward by being of service where I am at with the folks around me and with those who, like me, have no face to face OA meetings. I paid it forward as I travelled last week by giving out little thank you cards to stressed out airline workers, by bringing my guitar and singing for my parents instead of wishing they would get into recovery and make me feel better. I pay it forward by living life on life’s terms and looking for ways to spread a little light and a little joy to those around me. This little light is a HUGE miracle for me, a bottom dwelling, and critical level compulsive overeater. It just keeps getting better. Let’s keep on truckin’ together!

~Tara H.  
British Columbia, Canada  
Monday Night OA/HOW Telephone Meeting

## The letter

Dear Friend,

This letter has been a long-time in coming. I've known for years that our friendship had to end, but I wasn't willing to do the work required to end our relationship. You have been my best friend for as long as I can remember. In fact, you have been too good of a friend to me. So much so that it has resulted in me giving you all my power. At various times in my life, you have been my best friend, my enabler, my lover, my dealer and slowly but surely – My Killer. The list is endless. You were and are whatever I needed you to be in order to justify my dependence on you. But as much as our friendship has destroyed me, I was the one who encouraged and sustained it.

I have given you the love and attention that I should have given to myself. In doing this, I was able to be the victim in our relationship. This allowed me to put the blame on you, and as a result, I never had to take responsibility for my choices and actions.

You were always there for me in every thought that I had. When I was feeling fat, ugly, lonely, angry, misunderstood, hurt, rejected, sad, unappreciated, not validated, unloved. Whatever the difficult feeling, you were always there. Even in my good thoughts; happy, excited, appreciated, loved, you were there to celebrate these with me as well. For all these thoughts and emotions, you were always there to put your salty, greasy or sweet arms around me. You fed me and fed me, trying valiantly to fill the bottomless pit that my emotional soul had become.

How tiring our friendship has become for both of us. You constantly working to fill me up, to soothe me, but never making a difference, despite your best efforts. You must have been so hurt, wanting to make me feel better, hopeful as you lifted the food to my lips, but knowing the minute it passed my lips, it seemed to evaporate, leaving you to repeat your effort, over and over, until exhaustion was all you felt. I was as disappointed as you, hopeful that each bite, if not the last one then surely the next, would magically change me. Each bite, a chance for redemption, a chance to finally feel normal, and a chance to heal the wounds, to feed my soul... but it never happened. So, exhausted and broken, I continue, trying to find that one bite that will make me the person I long to be. You have always been there for as long as I can remember. From the time when I was a child, hurt, confused and shamed by a childhood trauma. Unable to articulate my feelings of shame, not because of a lack of want, but because of a lack of emotional maturity to deal with such an adult matter. So I turned to you to help soothe my confusion and pain. Even going to the length of stealing change from my grandma's coin purse, so I could buy your friendship and love at the local store. Then off to hide, to drown my shame and confusion in your arms, your comforting loving food arms.

Over the next 30 plus years, I looked for anytime I could find to be with you to soothe my pain. Whether it be from kids teasing me at school, feeling rejected by boys and later men, dealing with family deaths, feeling frustrated at a job, arguing with a loved one; any reason to continue and shove my shame further and further down. No matter the reason, the day, the time – you were always there. You never judged me, talked back to me or challenged my behavior. You just continued to try and fill my empty hole.

But no more. All the energy and love that I have put into our friendship has to change. I need to love myself the way I have loved you. I need to step up and take care of myself. All the unresolved hurts I have need to be exposed to the light of day, not buried with the darkness of your food. You loved me the best way you knew, but now I know a better way. A healthier, respectful, nurturing and loving way to take control of my life. I need to start living the life I deserve.

Our friendship led me away from those who know and love me. I've distanced myself from friends and family so I could spend as much time as possible with you. Almost always in secret, never wanting others to know how deep our relationship had become. I never allowed myself to show them the real me, preferring to put on the act of happiness. But I can't do that anymore, I need to open myself up, to expose my truth to the world. I can't continue to hide from life, because I need to continue our relationship.

You were there for me when I needed you, but now I need to be my own best friend. I must let you go. I know it will be really hard, it will be so easy to turn back to you, scared and longing for the comfort of your arms, but I must stand up and take care of me. I have new tools that I've found, tools to start my new journey. A discovery of my truth, my story, my life – One day at a time.

Goodbye my Friend Food – Goodbye!

~Amy B

## Safety in Numbers

I am regularly reminded how "safe" I am within the walls of an OA meeting. Our communal agreement of anonymity and the support we have for one another to recover in a healthy environment provides a safe haven I cannot find anywhere else. At work, with friends outside of program, and even within my family, I know that I am not communicating with groups that are all living using the same principals as those I meet at an OA gathering. It is reassuring to know such a place exists and that I am welcome to be genuinely who I am when present.

What's even more enjoyable than this support is taking the lessons learned in OA meetings and beginning to apply them to my life outside of the OA fellowship. I am more genuine in my daily activities with those outside of program than I was before. I am willing to share more of my true thoughts and feelings. I am able to be proud of the person I am and want to share myself with others. I consider this a great accomplishment, given the many years of pretending to be whoever I thought the "others" wanted me to be. It is from feeling safe amongst a group of virtual strangers in every OA meeting and baring my soul to people I really hardly know because of a set of principals we all follow and a common goal to be healthy that I have begun to trust the person who I am and to begin to share my genuine self with the world.

Thank you, fellow OA members. Your "safety in numbers" has helped me to realize I am loved and good enough to live just as I am in every aspect of my life. It is only through your willingness to share your genuine selves with me that I have found this courage. I know the only way to repay such a gift is to continue to pay it forward with my own willingness to live a genuine life.

~Kasey S.

## Out of Control

*"Unmanageable," said one of my fellow OAs, "doesn't mean my life is out of control – my life may actually be going pretty well. What it means is that I cannot be the manager, that I cannot be the one in control."*

That's the point – that I cannot be the one in control.

With food, that wasn't easy for me. I would diet – which seemed to put me in control. The more stringently I dieted and exercised the more control I thought I had. Slipping and going off the diet gave me opportunities for other kinds of control through resisting the diet, rebelling, fighting back – sometimes in a flat-out binge. After that I could have the feelings of control that came from being self-critical and blaming. And the feelings of control that I got from placating the angry, blaming side of myself. Usually, this was with something related to food: another diet, but more often "something nice" to make me feel better. These feelings of feeding as control also helped when someone or something else bigger, stronger, meaner, older, smarter, prettier, younger, richer, faster or more successful made me feel lessened by exercising control in and over my life – in the present or in memories from years ago. I would feel angry about this control, or memory of control, but I could almost always find "something nice" to make me feel better and placate my anger; which put me in control again.

So my life was not quite that of my fellow OA's above – some areas were going pretty well, but some were not. I knew I was powerless over coast-to-coast blizzards that kept me from traveling to be with people I love, powerless over layoffs, powerless over people I love finding lumps in their breasts, being in auto accidents through no fault of their own, developing Alzheimer's, having heart attacks and premature babies. I could accept that I was not in control of these – even though my powerlessness was also frightening. But powerlessness over food, over my daily food, just didn't make sense: how could I not control what my hand put into my mouth? It was too frightening.

Then one night I stopped for gas after work a few blocks from my house, and found myself pulling in at home fifteen minutes later with an empty bag of cookies on the seat beside me – cookies I don't remember buying, much less eating. And, of course, I don't remember the emotions I had been feeling when I "filled up" either. For me, that was even more frightening – real "powerless over food." And by grace (Step Two), I went online the next morning and found an OA meeting that very day.

This is where I started to step out of "control." I admitted to myself and to my fellow OAs that I was powerless over food, a compulsive overeater. It wasn't a clean break – I still slip from time to time, foods and diets call to me from time to time, but I've been graced with ten months of back-to-back abstinence, seven solid months. And I admit my powerlessness over food several times a week, daily, sometimes more often than that. I have a new story about myself – and I tell it, I admit it. I am not in control.

But Step One doesn't stop, or even really start there. The grace that made me aware of my powerless over food led me to a program that begins with "we." Our OA groups gathered together, my sponsor and I, my phone

companions and I, the writers of whatever literature I may be reading and I . . . the tools for healing my disease, our disease, keep bringing all of us back to "we." "We" are the ones right here and now who help us stay in balance, which help us beyond our individual powerlessness, our fellow sufferers to whom we choose to be accountable – not in any controlling way, but through our sustaining love and support. "We" are the ones who work from Step One through Twelve, again and again – the ones for whom I remain uncontrollably grateful.

~Kate B.

## Powerless Path to Peace

Step one. Admitted we were powerless over food. This was not a hard sell for me once I hit bottom a few times. Like most OAs, I had tried every diet on the plant and didn't care a lick what I might be doing to my body, let alone my spirit. Having my hip bones appear like sharp razor blades in my fashionable jeans was the epitome of winning in the dieting game and I pounded my stomach to signal the war was on.

I was out for a run one gorgeous summer day and blacked out for lack of food. As I picked myself up off the side of the road some unknown time after the fall, I remember connecting with the gravity of this dangerous situation for at least a few seconds. Soon, however, I was off running again as I announced to my body that it had nothing over my sheer will and I was not letting up on my get-thin-plan. Untold years and several similar incidents later I sat in a therapy session searching for some reason to explain my unhappiness despite all my accomplishments in most areas of my life. When my therapist extracted some truths about my eating and purging, she demanded I get to an OA group and buy a daily reading book. I did so with fear mixed with relief. Finally, something to explain this shameful relationship with food and my growing legacy of misery. Finally, a context to understand the power and arrogance of a disease that would put my life in jeopardy and do so with unabashed impunity. Finally, a community that would absolutely get my private body war and utter self-loathing.

It is now several years later and I have enjoyed abstinence for close to eight years. I mean I have REALLY enjoyed abstinence for close to eight years! I have a certain peace about my eating and have come to terms with my food obsessions. My rule of thumb is if I cannot keep my mind and hands off my food "lover," regardless of its liquid, solid, frozen, gelatinous or powdery state, then it is not welcome in my home. I have had some "flings" with my aforementioned lovers, but within hours, the obsession returned. Alas, such beauty at the moment but the morning after only brought age-old discomfort and self-disgust. So, I release my lovers and remember, I am more in love with peace and the path for me is to admit I am powerless.

Today, I willingly step into the prospect of a more manageable life—one that emphasizes greater intimacy with myself, those I love, and, my God. Thank you OA and all my brothers and sisters who exude their brand of peace. I have a life full of possibility and presence because of you.

~Barb T.

## I am truly powerless

I am truly powerless over food. I've been fighting this everyday during this holiday season. Maybe I could try the sugarless chocolates? I pre-arranged the experiment with my sponsor, no secrets here. Low and behold, I can binge on them too. I have a temper tantrum. Why can't I eat like normal people? So I tried the sugar-free hard candies the next day. Oops, the whole bag is gone. I am angry and feeling sorry for myself. It's not fair that I can't have just one chocolate goodie. I was doing pretty well. Having coming to believe that a power greater than myself could restore me to sanity, I was contemplating what it would look like to really turn my will and life over to the care of god, as I understand god, whom I don't understand. (I give credit for that last phrase to the angel with skin on that led me to OA...Thank you) I am very hard on myself, my sponsor tells me. "Be gentle with you," she says. But I am not sure I know how to do that. I know how to work very hard to overcome hurdles and have successfully overcome many of them. It is hard not to feel like I have to work hard in OA. Being gentle with me feels like I am not working hard enough. That is the point though, isn't it? To stop working so hard, release all of that desire to control, overcome, and fight. To let go of my will-power, accept that I am powerless, to become willing. Perhaps someday I could even be grateful for my powerlessness. For today, I surrender. I am truly powerless.

~Cathy C.



**Language of Unity.** In January 2007, a motion was considered and passed by Unity Intergroup supporting our belief while meeting formats may differ, there is but one Overeaters Anonymous. We have included the original published explanation and language that first appeared in the February 2007 Society Pages with these Talking Points. Please take a moment to review this commitment with members at your meetings.

### **The Language of Unity (originally published in Society Pages, February, 2007)**

Over the last few months, Unity Intergroup has been discussing "The Language of Unity". We agreed that what we call ourselves and each other can serve to unite or divide us.

One of OA's strongest assets is that there is not just one way or one right way to work the program. What works for one person may not work for another. As a result, there is a need for (and room for) many different meeting formats under the OA umbrella. We are all part of OA, joined by the desires to stop eating compulsively and to carry the message of recovery to the still-suffering compulsive overeater. Meeting formats and the ways people work their programs may change. The steps, tool, traditions, and concepts of OA, however, do not change.

Unity Intergroup wants to make sure that it sends the message clearly – **we are all part of Overeaters Anonymous, and none of us is modifying OA.** Sending this message is especially important in our publications and communications. We may attend meetings with different formats, agreed upon by the individual groups' conscience. We do not, however, belong to different types of OA, nor do we wish to or need to. The framework of OA is broad enough for us all. Therefore, in our language we do not want to directly or inadvertently give the impression that any of us are modifying OA.

It is with this intent that the following motion was considered and passed at the January 2007 Unity Intergroup meeting:

**"There are not different kinds of OA. There are, however, different meeting formats such as HOW meetings, Step meetings, BB Study meetings, Traditions meetings and Literature Discussion meetings. In Unity Intergroup publications and communications, OA will always be referred to as OA. If distinctions are wanted or needed they should refer to meeting descriptors or meeting formats. Meetings descriptors would be the day, time, location or group name. For example, a meeting could be referred to as the Tuesday morning HOW format meeting, or the Tuesday Minneapolis Meeting."**

This motion was passed in order to provide guidelines for OA's to differentiate groups within our fellowship, should the need or want arise. The template is very simple – day of week, time of day, location, meeting format. (For example, the Thursday 7:30pm Minnetonka Big Book Study meeting or the Tuesday 9:30am Minneapolis HOW meeting (using the word format is not essential).) This motion's goal is to provide a framework so that we do not end up implying, by using terms such as Traditional OA, OA-HOW, and the Regular OA in Unity Intergroup publications and communications, that we modify OA. After all, "our...personal recovery depends upon OA unity." (Tradition One, OA 1 Steps and 12 Traditions.)

## 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 Highland Park Monday 7pm group. 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 Amanda at [corter\\_0506@hotmail.com](mailto:corter_0506@hotmail.com) with the subject "Society Pages" by noon on Wednesday January 28<sup>th</sup>.

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Saturday, January 17	Newcomer Meeting
Saturday, February 14	Intergroup Meeting
Saturday, February 21	Newcomer Meeting
Friday-Sunday, March 6-8	Big Book Study
Friday-Sunday April 3-5	Buffalo Retreat



### Intergroup Board

Becky T., Chair	952-423-1527
Jane S., Vice-Chair	612-483-6335
Amy D., Treasurer	952-270-0098
Sheri O., Secretary	651-437-2052

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