

# *Expressions of Unity*

The Newsletter of Unity Intergroup

[www.overeaters.org](http://www.overeaters.org)

**STEP ONE: "We admitted we were powerless over food-  
that our lives had become unmanageable."**

## A New Game Plan

### Elections!

**Join us on  
January 12th  
for the 2019  
elections and  
help guide the  
direction of  
Unity  
Intergroup!**

### HOT LINE

**Call our  
24/7 hotline at  
612-377-1600  
and one of our  
volunteers will  
return your call.**

I am not sure why my heart and mind can so easily settle into a place of hopelessness. I am new to Overeaters Anonymous and will no doubt with more time in the program grow to have a better understanding of myself. In the meantime when those feelings of despair do come up, I have a new game plan to deal with it. You see, in the past when those feelings have arisen, it has been my habit to "try to figure it all out" while I am in that state of mind. This has often led to me making poor life decisions out of panic or of course to bingeing. It has become clear to me that this is not "figuring anything out" at all and is just causing me more suffering. So if something is not working for you, you've got to change it up. Now when I feel despair, I put that energy into one of the activities on my Despair List. And this is what my Despair List looks like so far...

1. Do I need to reach out to someone? Who can I call?
2. Do I need to move my body?
3. Do I need to spend time in nature?
4. Do I need a good cry?
5. Do I need to take a hot bath?
6. Do I need to read something inspirational?
7. Do I need to pray?
8. Do I need to change something up?
9. Do I need to have fun?
10. Do I need to be helpful to someone else?
11. Do I need to journal?
12. Do I need to be social?
13. Do I need to go to an extra meeting?
14. Do I need to do a phone meeting?
15. Do I need to rest?

16. Do I need to stay busy?
17. Do I need to breath?
18. Do I need to bring mindful awareness to my thoughts?
19. What is it that I am currently doing that I need to cease doing?
20. What beliefs are keeping me from taking care of myself in a way that is best for me?

I have this list at home and also in my phone in case I need to reference it on the go. As I have been using this list for a couple months now, it has been a good way to get to know myself. I have discovered that there are certain activities that I find myself regularly deciding to do over others. I have found I need to move my body in the form of dance, I need to pray, and I must mindfully breath on a daily basis. When I keep up with doing these activities, they become preventative measures so that I do not so easily hit a place of despair in the first place. I came up with this list while journaling and have come up with other tools along the way from journaling as well. My wellness toolbox is becoming more robust and it is helping me be able to act instead of react to life.

Sarah U.

## The Freedom Club

I am struck by the fact that the word admit is both a noun and a verb. My honesty is the ticket into what I call “the freedom club”, i.e. O. A. We really can’t get to experience the full benefit of this club without first getting the ticket. My full honesty admits me to a world where both my mind and my heart are open-minded and willing to experience the world as it really is; not in the painful world my disease of compulsive overeating kept me in for most of my life. My addiction has lured me back several times. The misery my compulsive overeating bestowed on me was the only path to bring me to the desperation and realization to seek such a serious solution for what I have, a life-threatening situation. No one convinced me I was a compulsive overeater; it was only my disease doing its work on my mind and body. I have since come to the realization to stop trying to convince or judge someone they are a compulsive over-eater. If they have what we have I can only offer a serious solution; they must already know they have a serious problem. That is the personal decision all must make to get the ticket. Once I was inside my first HOW meeting I learned of the seriousness of my condition, but I was quickly handed the keys to a solution. I was told that if I continued to punch my ticket of honesty, freedom from my disease would follow. I desperately wanted that freedom, so I desperately sought to be totally honest. With my honest admission I was admitted to the “freedom club”. To this day my honesty is the ticket I must punch every day to keep chaos and unmanageability out of my life.

Anonymous

## Those Old Places

"I needed the experience of staying sober in the very surroundings where alcohol had cut me down." (As Bill Sees It, p. 128)

It's eerie to go back to where I used to binge, or to drive past the places where I have memories of eating compulsively or over-exercising. Life is different now, gratefully. It's truly my Higher Power's strength that allows me to be abstinent and go back to or see those old places. I know it's not my own strength. It's a miracle when those places and memories don't bother me. Sometimes it doesn't even cross my mind anymore. But sometimes when I'm frustrated or angry, I still have the urge to eat compulsively. Gratefully, I continue with my new patterns of being abstinent. Now if I can abstain from negative thinking too!

Anonymous

# Unmanageable Lives

A situation necessitated me talking to my renter. I had to ask him to leave. Aside from damage to the room he had rented, the rent had been late or unpaid for a few months. I didn't look forward to confronting him, but my fear of people wasn't so bad as I have gradually practiced better communication skills over the years while working the OA HOW program. When I was growing up, I didn't feel safe confronting people about problems, or talking about problem issues, because in my family of origin, I would sometimes suffer a backlash for doing so. When I talked to the renter, he told me he was very upset that his girlfriend was breaking up with him, and that he wished she wouldn't have left, that he didn't want her to have to be a single mom, that he wanted to be with her and their new baby more than anything, that he had never hit her, he only hit the walls. And now that she had put a restraining order on him, he couldn't even talk to her. "Well, you know," I said, "for example, the condition of the floor in the room you left wasn't safe for a baby to crawl on," "I know," he said, "I let myself go. I was a mess. I hate myself."

"I hate myself" was a phrase I recognized. The more active my eating disorder had been, the more I used to think "I hate myself." In contrast, fortunately, it wasn't a thought that has occurred to me lately. I felt like this situation was a textbook example of what addiction does to people, and it's always easier to point out in more extreme cases, and in people other than myself. Later the renter made a lot of posts on his Facebook page, lamenting that his girlfriend had broken up with him. He posted that it wasn't fair she left him, and that "You can't drink, smoke, snort, or \_\_\_\_ the pain away." From my perspective and from being in OA so many years, while I didn't doubt that this guy had unresolved trauma and emotional pain, his girlfriend leaving was a consequence of his own recent actions. A young man renting one of the other bedrooms in the house said, 'he would play video games, and when he'd lose he'd punch the wall.' When I told the girlfriend I was surprised to find the room in such a bad state, she said, 'I'd ask him to clean but then he'd get mad.' I feel like some of what I've learned in the 12 Step OA HOW program is the part I have played in my own suffering, what I *can* do about my problems, and what I *can't* do and don't have control over. I learned that I was responsible for my actions, that when I had been irresponsible, not to blame others. Also I was not responsible for other people's problems when they are capable of solving them. I have experienced what many other people working this program have; that I don't have to be an active participant in my life falling short of what it could be, or the suffering caused by eating disorders anymore.

Suffering from other things that are out of my control still comes my way from time to time, but fortunately I have a coping mechanism now, a program with steps and tools that is effective at these times. Legitimate suffering, I have learned, the kind that comes from going through problems without trying to escape them or look for a quick way out, is a hallmark of mental health. Avoiding legitimate suffering trends towards mental illness. In the renter's case, it seemed like he didn't fully realize that his girlfriend breaking up with him would be the consequences of his actions. In my case, I realized my part in this was that I had rented the room out without doing a good enough screening process, like I normally would do, because I was in a hurry to get it rented. The house was a few hour's drive away from where I lived, and I didn't want to make another trip back to screen more potential renters. The young man had put on a good personality and seemed initially to get along well with the other people who lived in the house. If I had been more careful ahead of time, I would likely have realized I shouldn't rent to him. As I cleaned up, I meditated on how a young adult with everything seemingly going for him, could let it get so bad. Every trip to the garage became a breath of fresh air, because cleaning the room was hard on my nose and eyes.

I reflected upon the fact that I had had pretty good luck with renters over the last 12 year up to this point. Buying a house near the University and renting rooms out to college students (heck, even buying a working car) were steps in life I never would have been able to accomplish if I hadn't been working an OA program. Doing so got my life on track and more manageable, but I had to accept that it was unmanageable first. I had to take Step One.

I have experienced so much growth in OA over the 17 years that I've stuck in there, going to meetings and working the program with a lot of slips and having to start over, but also with a lot of slow progress. There's been a lot of times where I had to go back to **Step One: "We admitted we were powerless over food – that our lives had become unmanageable."** My life had been unmanageable. As the patterns changed from being obsessed with dieting, working out, binging, and purging, to being focused on improving my life and being on track with my food plan, I realized there were layers to this onion! There were other areas of my life that were unmanageable, that I was powerless over, and that I needed God's help with, such as finances, and difficult relationships with family and coworkers. As I have grown to appreciate and trust the fellowship in this program, and the steps and tools that help me transform my distress into serenity, a lot of problems that have cropped up in my life have been resolved. Then sometimes new problems crop up that I haven't dealt with before. In the situation of the destructive renter, my fellow OA members had some good advice.

Thanks to having less fear of people and more courage to say what I mean without saying it meanly, I was able to confront the renter with compassion and without drama, but also enough firmness to state that he did need to leave. He had also left a broken-down car in the garage with a skateboard thrown through the wind shield. I was worried that if he just left it there, I would have to pay to get it towed. Rather than being too afraid to bring it up, I confronted him about it. When the renter left, he left me the title to the car, so that a car parts place came and picked it up and paid (a very little bit) for it. Eventually, I got all the trash out of that room, disassembled the furniture that was in it, and got it to the dumpster. Floor refinishers came to give an estimate on ripping out the carpet and refinishing the floor underneath. I apologized because it still smelled like cat "Don't worry," they said, 'We've seen it all.' "There must be more people out there who leave rooms looking like this" I thought.

My phone rang. It was my sponsee calling. Taking my sponsee's daily call is a grounding experience. After we prayed and she told me her meal plan for the next day and she read me her writing assignment, she said "I saw that financial counselor you suggested..." More than 6 months into the OA H.O.W. program, my sponsee was realizing other areas in her life besides food where she needed to take Step One. Hearing her say this was so pleasant. It was such a contrast from someone actively living out their addiction, such a contrast from what I was cleaning up. She was somebody experiencing the effects of healing from addiction, not somebody experiencing the effects of being destroyed by it.

As I observe the world around me, I see some people that seem like hopeless addicts, and then I witness other people who had been hopeless addicts make incredible transformations and that are now healthy and recovering. I feel like addictions and their consequences are a big tragedy for humans because of the affects they have on the addict and their loved ones. While I can't gift my former renter the experience of taking Step One, I can do it for myself in my own program - and for problems which continue to surface in my life, one day at a time. Some days it's tedious and hard, and I'm hardly willing, yet when I take a step back and look back at my life, I've come a long way over time.

Anonymous



The February 2019 **Expressions of Unity** will focus on Step Two: "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Although one meeting or group generally sponsors each newsletter, articles from anyone are welcome. Please indicate if it is okay to print your name with your article and email your contributions by January 31 to [ExpressionsofUnity2018@gmail.com](mailto:ExpressionsofUnity2018@gmail.com).

**Be Part of Unity Intergroup in Action!**

The next meeting is January 12th from 12:30-2:30 at the Sumner Library, 611 Van White Memorial Blvd Minneapolis, MN 55411.

All OA members are welcome to join us in person or on the phone (515) 604-9700

Access code: 896976#

**Intergroup Board**

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**New Storage Unit**

Unity Intergroup has a new storage unit. Lock Up Self Storage located at 701 North 7th St. in Minneapolis, MN 554511.

Contact Betty C. for more info

763-535-3939

**Mark Your Calendar...for 2019**

January 19	Newcomer Meeting
January 26	Body Image Workshop
February 2 & 16	Quick Steps Workshop

All articles written are the opinion of the writer and not of OA as a whole or of the *Expressions of Unity* newsletter.



**Unity Intergroup** meets the **second** Saturday of each month at Sumner Library.

**Newcomer Meeting** is the **third** Saturday of each month at Sumner Library. All are welcome.

**Newsletter articles** are due the **week before the end** of each month.