



August 2020

Expressions of Unity

The Newsletter of Unity Intergroup

www.overeaters.org

NEWS & NOTEWORTHY

UPCOMING EVENTS

[Quick Steps Workshop](#)

August 8 & 22 on Zoom

To register, contact Cecelia at
205-292-5242 or
calaurie78@gmail.com

INTERGROUP MEETING

Join us on [Zoom](#)
Saturday, August 8
12:30–2:00 pm

Coming soon!

UNITY INTERGROUP SURVEY

Your input will help us better
serve our OA community!

NEW MAILING ADDRESS!

Unity Intergroup
5115 Excelsior Blvd.
Box 325
St. Louis Park, MN 55416

Our topic this month is:

“Tips for traveling and vacationing abstinetly”

September: Positive recovery experiences

October: How service helps your recovery

November: Share a favorite line from OA literature
and why it inspires you

Looking for a service opportunity you can do in
your PJs?

Write an article and email it to:

ExpressionsofUnity2020@gmail.com

PHONE & ONLINE MEETING RESOURCES

[Unity Intergroup Phone & Online Meetings](#)

[OA Phone Meetings](#)

[OA-HOW Phone Meetings](#)

[OA Speaker Recordings](#)

“A Vision For You” Big Book Phone Meetings

Ph: 712-432-5210, Code: 876148#

Monday–Friday

6–7 am CT (recorded)

7–8 am CT (not recorded)

9–10 am CT (recorded)

Sunday Special Edition

7:30-9:00 am CT (recorded)

UNITY INTERGROUP BOARD

Leigh M, Chair: 612-244-5511 | aml45marr@gmail.com

Marque N, Vice Chair: 612-655-6960 | thumprq@gmail.com

Sheila L, Treasurer: 612-845-3604 | sheilaklawson@yahoo.com

Kirsten S, Secretary: 612-839-5079 | focusonthejoy@gmail.com

WHEN I DO THE FOOTWORK, GOD DOES THE REST

I've had many opportunities to practice this program away from home. Being abstinent is better than compulsively eating, every day and every place! I definitely don't want to ruin a vacation with food, nor do I want to lose focus on a business trip. So here's what I've learned:

Abstinence is my #1 priority. It's my responsibility to make sure the foods I need are available. That means calling ahead to ask or bringing my own just in case. Restaurants and banquet halls are accustomed to getting calls to find out what will be served. I ask for as much detail as I need – whether something is prepared with sugar, for example. I am not requesting any modifications or special treatment; I am just getting information so that I will know how to prepare for myself. If necessary, I can make other meal plans or bring food with me.

I plan for being in transit. For example, I pack a meal if I'm flying during mealtime. I also take into account the time it takes to get from the airport to my final destination. Rather than take a chance that the airport will have food I need, or that flight won't be delayed, or that restaurants will be open and nearby once I've arrived, I simply bring a bag lunch. Before leaving home, I also plan for my return trip.

Foods on my plan that travel well include:

- Vegetables: baby carrots, pickles, soup-to-go, 8 oz. cans with pop-tops
- Proteins: hotdogs (frozen can double as an "ice pack"), boiled eggs, string cheese, tuna
- Fruit: fresh fruit, individually packed unsweetened applesauce, prunes
- Carbs: rice cakes, corn tortillas, popcorn

Staying in someone else's home can be tricky. I don't want to be a difficult guest AND I don't want to jeopardize my recovery. Before travelling, I always tell my hosts that I have some dietary restrictions. Whether I divulge more depends on our relationship and how much they want to know. At the least, I will ask if may bring a few items for myself and put them in their refrigerator. I let them know in advance, so they won't be offended if there is something of which I don't partake. They can be as accommodating of my food plan as they want to be.

I call my sponsor daily, as I do when home. I also bring along my mini Big Book and a list of phone numbers.

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If I am away for longer than a few days, I go to a meeting. Phone meetings make this easy, but truly some of my favorite times have been visiting an out-of-town meeting. I HIGHLY recommend making the effort! The [OA website](#) includes the meeting contact person.

There have been times that I didn't have a car and arranged to get a ride from a meeting member. To feel so "at home" in a room of people I've only just met is a powerful, wonderful experience! Don't miss it!

No matter where I go, I do the footwork to follow my food plan. God *always* provides a way to stay abstinent.

~ Roxanne, Chippewa Falls

CARING FOR MY ABSTINENCE LIKE A NEW PUPPY

I've never had to take care of puppy day after day, so I sincerely apologize if this analogy is completely whacked. But based on casual observation, there seems to be some similarity between caring for a puppy and protecting ones abstinence.

For starters, both take planning and forethought: if you have a puppy waiting for you at home, you're probably not going to skip town for the weekend and just assume the puppy will fend for itself. (Again, no firsthand experience, but I expect this would result in a serious mess and a deeply traumatized dog.)

Same holds true for my abstinence. I love to travel, but I can't afford to be spontaneous. Before I leave town, I pack all my meals I'll need for the road or the flight—plus one more in case we're delayed. I also bring dry foods, like nuts, dried fruit, powdered milk, protein powder, oats, shelf-stable packets of chicken or tuna, and mini-deli packets of real mayonnaise and mustard. In addition to my food scale and extra batteries, I bring a back-up scale. (I've had scales die on me at the most inconvenient times...)

According to those who know, puppies are happier and better behaved when their needs are met in a timely manner. Ditto for me in recovery. Even if the car breaks down or the plane is stuck on the tarmac, if I've planned ahead, I can take care of myself and my abstinence. Without barking, shredding my Nikes, or peeing on the rug.

~ Anonymous (for obvious reasons)

TAKING MY PROGRAM AND MY RECOVERY ON THE ROAD

When I first came into the rooms of OA HOW and heard about all the tools I needed to work on a daily basis, I thought there was no way I could do it. I travel a lot for my job—and by “a lot,” I mean 25–30% of the time. How could I possibly follow a meal plan and eat “weighed and measured” food when I’m not in my own kitchen? How could I find things to eat that have sugar listed as fifth or beyond on the ingredient label, when I’m not making the food myself? I came up a million reasons why this was never going to work, but I also had one strong reason why I had to try: I was killing myself with food. If I couldn’t stay abstinent while traveling, I would never stop eating compulsively.

I had 11 days between my first day of working the OA HOW program and my first trip. I was full of self-doubt and self-pity, but my desperation to make this change in my life made me willing to try. Thank goodness for my sponsor and the requirement that I make three calls a day to other members in the program. I used these calls to talk about traveling and staying abstinent and received fountains of information. Within seven days, I had a real idea of what it would take to make this work. By the time I headed to the airport, I felt ready. I made it through that trip and hundreds since then.

Here are some of things I have learned that have made it possible for me to travel abstinely:

1. A quality compact scale is crucial. I found one that measures in pounds, grams and fluid ounces, folds up, and fits easily into a pocket.
2. If traveling by plane, take a soft-sided cooler bag with lots of pockets to carry things like plastic cutlery, napkins, Ziplock bags, scale and measuring spoons.
3. Keeping your food cool is not a problem with airplane travel. Anything frozen can go through TSA check-in, as it’s not in a liquid state (the 3 oz rule applies to liquids only.) I usually use frozen gel packs, but ice in Ziplock baggies works, too.
4. Planning ahead is key! At home, I make plan meals one day at a time, but when I travel, I plan ahead for snacks or meals I might have. Fresh fruit and proteins are easy to find, but other things can be more difficult, so I bring back ups. Also, if you eat specifics foods or have allergies, plan for those, too.

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5. Pre-measure your food, both for convenience and because digital scales don't usually work once you're airborne. I pre-measure baggies of carrots and celery as an easy back-up veggie, as well as nuts and other dry foods. Some stores sell single servings of cheese sticks, raisins, applesauce, and even small hummus packets.
6. Finally, don't be afraid to ask for what you need! This can be tough, but it's important. I will ask for an extra plate to weigh my food; I ask how things are prepared and ask for what I need; I check menus beforehand to make sure the restaurant has something that will work for me. If you are ever at a loss for what to do next, call a sponsor or another OA member. I have found that people are happy to help—I just need to ask.

Good luck and happy travels!

~ The Abstinent Traveler

ASK FOR WHAT YOU NEED!

Today I am able to travel being abstinent and feeling free from my food addictions as a recovering compulsive overeater. I am so grateful for this, as it has allowed me to travel all over, including a trip by myself to Nigeria, a trip with people from my church to Kenya, and even a trip to Jamaica on my honeymoon. If you would have asked me when I first started working this OA HOW program, if it was possible to travel staying abstinent and weighing and measuring my food, I would have said, No way! I credit my Higher Power, my sponsor and the people in this program for helping me find my way and my voice.

I was afraid to have to weigh and measure in front of others, so when I first started traveling, I would pack all of my meals. I would bring along protein bars, protein powder, cereal, almond butter, crackers, you name it. I would have almost an entire extra suitcase full of food with me. Now when I travel, and I travel quite a bit for both work and pleasure, I just bring some back ups in case I need to figure out something on my own in a pinch, but otherwise I have learned that I can find everything I need, if I just ask people for what I want and how I want it.

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One of the things my sponsor told me early on was, “Not every meal has to be 10.” This is good advice when traveling. We all get used to all the different foods and meals we can put together when we are at home in our own kitchen, but when we travel, sometimes we have to just eat what we need to in order to meet the requirements of our food plan. However, this doesn’t mean you can’t have fun meals. I tell my sponsees to have fun with their meal choices! Hey, if you have four proteins in a meal, there’s nothing stopping you from eating a different protein for each one of them.

As far as traveling and staying abstinent, the best tool to bring with you wherever you go is your voice. You would be surprised how many restaurants will prepare the food just how you need it, if you’re willing to ask. Some restaurants will even measure out your food proportions for you. Occasionally, before they are willing to accommodate my requests, I have to explain why I need things to be made so specifically. Depending on my comfort level, I typically use one of the following reasons: “I have a medically prescribed diet” or “I have special food needs” or even just laying it all out there and telling them, “I’m in recovery for an eating disorder.”

All of these are all true, of course, and people tend to be more helpful when they understand why you’re asking for their assistance. It’s not always easy, but I’ve found that five minutes of discomfort is worth years of freedom from the life I had when I was compulsively overeating. It is truly possible to do all things in life and remain abstinent.

~ In it with you