



April 2021

Expressions of Unity

The Newsletter of Unity Intergroup

www.overeaters.org

News and Noteworthy

Meditation and Prayer Workshop

Saturday, April 17
9am to 3pm

For more information about the Mediation and Prayer Workshop, look for the full-page flyer in this newsletter!!

Quick Steps

Saturday, April 10 and 24
12:30-2:30 pm

For more information about Quick Steps, see the full-page flyer in this newsletter!!

RECOVERY FROM RELAPSE MEETING

Thursday evenings
at 6:00 pm

See the flyer in this newsletter or contact Annette for info:
aprlovesoa@gmail.com

INTERGROUP MEETING HAS A SPEAKER!!

Did you know that the Intergroup has a recovery speaker at the beginning of every meeting? Please join us for some Saturday afternoon recovery and stay for a bit of the Intergroup meeting.

Everyone is welcome!

Saturday, April 10
12:30-2:30 pm
on [Zoom](#)

ID 810 4426 4132 / PW 12345

The New Intergroup Chair

Hi, I'm Lori a compulsive overeater and your new Unity Intergroup Chair. I want to let you know a bit about myself and my story. I live in Arpin, WI about 20 minutes from Marshfield, WI. This is about the middle of the state and 3 hours from the Twin Cities. The first time I went to OA in Marshfield they had a large group of 20 people and met at a room in the hospital. There was a heated discussion going on and I did not feel welcomed. No literature was offered. I thought, I don't need this crap, so I left. Bottom line, I wasn't ready. After a few more years of further *research* and trying to do it my way, I decided to try again. But the meeting was no longer there, and whatever happened to those 20 people I will never know.

Someone from MN, who had been in OA, moved to Marshfield and got an OA meeting started again in a church basement. I saw the meeting listed in the paper and went back to OA in 1995. The meeting was just this gal from MN and one other besides me. She told me about the MN State OA Convention and the Buffalo Retreat. At these events I got to meet others like me, only they had abstinence from the food, and I did not. At one retreat the speaker shared about many years of relapse and how she finally had 2 years of abstinence. I connected to her story about relapse, because that was my story too. I never left OA again but struggled for years in the rooms. I was not able to get more than a few months of abstinence at a time. I had no sponsor and was trying to do it my way. It just wasn't working too well for me.

The one gal left the meeting, eventually the MN gal moved back to MN and then it was just me. I kept the meeting going and sat many months by myself, using the time to read OA literature or journal. Eventually someone else came and then some others. Some stayed for a bit and some left. Over the years a small group became more committed and now we generally have 5-8 people attending weekly. When COVID-19 hit and the stay-at-home orders went in effect last March, the church closed down and we went to phone meetings. We did that until the church reopened and went back with masks and

social distancing. Many in the group were not comfortable meeting in person so we kept the phone going during those meetings as well. With cases of COVID again increasing in the fall, the group conscience decided to go back to phone meetings even though the church was open. We have now started ZOOM meetings while still paying our rent for our meeting space at the church. We meet on Sundays at 6-7pm on ZOOM. If anyone would like to visit or join our meeting, please give me a call for the ZOOM info. I have also been attending the Crystal, MN Wednesday 1pm meeting by ZOOM for the past 2-3 months. With this new technology I don't have to travel 3 hours to get to that meeting.

My sponsor, who was that speaker on relapse many years ago, is very involved in service work. I always thought about doing some service beyond my group level but due to working and distance for traveling that was not an option for me. I have been attending the Unity Intergroup ZOOM meetings as a representative from our Marshfield meeting. Service positions were becoming available with the January elections, and I sat back hoping someone would step up and fill them. With COVID-19, not meeting in person, and using ZOOM I thought maybe I could help with something since no traveling was required. Not expecting to be Unity Chair, perhaps something else. Well my Higher Power had other plans and here I am on a journey of service. I have much to learn, and I am so grateful for the rest of our team who is helping me with the challenges of technology amongst our other duties. They are a great team and I look forward to working with them and you to make our Intergroup of service to all our groups by offering workshops/events by ZOOM until we can safely meet again in person. Everyone can be a part of Intergroup, so please feel free to visit/join the Intergroup meetings, held the second Saturday of every month from 12:30-2:30pm. I look forward to meeting you at the next Intergroup.

Lori K

Step 4 – A Thought Progression Leading To Change

Ah, yes - Step 4! Part of the series of Steps 4-9 that everyone seems to dread. Who wants to find out their character defects, let alone admit them, right? That's such a harsh term 'character defect.' It makes us sound, well, defective. And since we're probably deeply into our ego-driven existence, we don't want to contemplate our defects, thank you very much.

I went through the same thought process, and after lots of meditation, experience and just learning the hard way, I realized that what might be classified as character defects were simply survival behaviors I had used in the past because I didn't know any better way. What I finally realize is that, guess what, I'm really not that different from anybody else. I have the same emotions, the same ego, a lot of the same reactions – and all because I'm just a human. My self-centeredness prevented me from accepting this about myself. When we think of ourselves as different (more shy, less than, more than, weaker, whatever) than anybody else, that's self-centered. Weird, huh? These 'character defects' are just our own particular human foibles – our mistaken or worn-out thoughts – that are now causing us problems. Most of us desperately want to change this because we're tired of the problems that we're causing ourselves.

This is where Step 4 comes in. What has helped me is to see it as a *thought progression*. First there is *awareness*. I become aware that a behavior is not working or is causing me problems. The Step 4 inventory helps to identify this. Next comes *understanding*. I really look at what the inventory is telling me and understand how I'm using this behavior and why. Next comes *acceptance*. I own up to it. There it is on the inventory sheet. I get why I'm doing it. I accept that this is a human foible I have, and it's fine because, hey, I'm human. No need to judge it, feel shame about it, or try to avoid it. Next comes a *decision* to change it – not because I'm defective and need to be 'fixed'; but because I want to be restored to sanity and have a better life. Usually this decision comes after a bit of meditation/prayer. Next comes the *action* of change. What could I do instead? What is the sane choice? The action is actually doing that new behavior instead of the old one. This leads to growth. I grow in my recovery.

This doesn't mean that I'm perfect now; far from it. I'm still just like any other human with failings and strengths all my own. The point is, I am aware and willing to change. After Steps 4 – 9, I live in Steps 10 – 12. I am intentional about daily awareness of how I'm doing. If problems come up, I can look at them squarely and see where I need to identify, accept, understand and change anything that is causing me a problem.

Finally, the really great part about all of this is that we don't have to do it alone. We have a sponsor and we have a power greater than ourselves; we have fellow OAs; and we have a wealth of literature at our disposal to support and help us along this journey. But in the end, it's up to us. I'm grateful to be just another human, doing the best that I can with the support of other humans who understand. I wish you well on your journey.

JuliAnn N.

The Joy of Living Step, Step 12

Dipping into the Big Book, I read "The joy of living is the theme of AA's Twelfth Step, and action is its key word....Here we begin to practice all 12 Steps of the program in our daily lives so that we and those around us may find emotional sobriety." (Page 106)

Two simple sentences have given me clear instruction and guidance. The text says that the whole purpose of this program and the whole point of being in recovery is to be happy. If I am at a healthy weight, but am miserable, so what? I can hardly consider myself recovered. Conversely, if I am not a healthy weight or working towards it, I truly doubt I will be very happy.

I need a 3-fold recovery...physical, emotional and spiritual if I am to have a true message to share. Currently, I feel I am a work in progress, of many years I might add. For me, physical recovery at the beginning of my journey was just don't eat, lose weight and spread the message. My journey has been a circuitous one...that is just me. I have always been encouraged by our founder, Roseanne, who courageously never gave up. On page 198 of the Overeater's Anonymous, she says "today I can care about myself. Because I kept coming back, I learned the validity of an elementary spiritual principle...if you remove your body from the truth, then when you are ready, the truth is nowhere to be found. But if you continue to bring your body to the truth, then when you are ready the truth is waiting there for you." But action is the key word and that has absolutely been my story. By completing Steps 1-11 to the best of my ability, not once but many

times, and doing the action pieces required, not just reading or talking about them, my opinions shifted. My beliefs were challenged, my attitudes changed, my thoughts and feelings were transformed. I know I am no longer the same person I was. "I have a new state of consciousness and being" as it says on page 107. It allows me to be sincerely happy while living an up and down life. Now, the true challenge comes in maintaining that joy outside of the rooms of OA. It is easy to be at peace in the rooms of OA and I can do a great job of being kind to a newcomer. But it can be hard to extend that same patience, tolerance and understanding...and compassion in my "other world." Yet it is the true testament to recovery. If I can ONLY maintain a joy-filled life in the sequestered rooms of an OA event, I have to wonder how much emotional/spiritual growth I have really experienced. To be blunt, talk is cheap. If I have interactions within my world and do not treat them with patience, tolerance and compassion, I do not have that elusive recovery. I have moments, hours and sometimes even a day where I feel distress and anxiety instead of the peace that is such a precious recovery gift! Mercifully, this is all part of the experience of being human. It does not mean I have failed and am "not a recovering compulsive overeater". It just means I have a deeper reason to continue working my program and take the right action to keep coming back. Fortunately, today the good days outnumber the bad hours and gratitude, peace and joy are my dominant emotions. I came into this program clueless of what could happen if indeed I kept bringing my body to the truth. I ask the following questions to you: Can you bring the spirit of 12th Step into all your relationships? Can you carry the 12 Step spirit throughout your daily life? Can you find the joy of living in it all? Even in the messy?

Joan K.

Tradition Four: "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole."

I love all the Traditions, but I especially like Tradition Four because it lends itself so nicely to both our amazing program and to life in general. I looked up the word autonomous to give a better understanding of this tradition. I chose two definitions. The first definition is: "Having the right or power of self-government." This definition of autonomous applies very well to our recovery and business meetings. Each group has the right to self-government, meaning each group makes decisions for themselves. One of my two home groups asked that there be no mention of food at our meetings. Other meetings do it differently. My other home group will soon be having our first business meeting – giving attending members the opportunity to weigh in on things that concern our meeting. The second definition is, "Existing or capable of existing independently." I see this one on a more personal level. I am capable of acting independently – making decisions for myself. I acted autonomously when I came back to OA by my own decision. I act autonomously when I deal with my money. I live alone, so I have a lot of autonomy.

But there is an exception to this autonomy. It cannot affect any other group or OA as a whole. Deciding to do away with the Steps affects other groups and OA as a whole because it gives the impression that OA does not need to use the Steps. Bringing in

outside literature affects other groups and OA as a whole because it gives an inaccurate impression of Overeaters Anonymous.

This exception translated personally might be, 'in matters affecting other people or any group I am in as a whole.' This suggests that I need to consider the affect my decisions will have on others. I would not be free to drive recklessly, not only because it is illegal, but more importantly my reckless driving could cause an accident. I am not free to ignore policies from my apartment management, because many of these policies can affect others such as having the radio blasting – particularly late at night. I am not free to ignore my bills because it affects the person to whom the money is owed. My daughter is not free to ignore her student loans because I am a co-signer, and it affects my credit as well as hers.

I need to be cautious however, with my understanding of how it affects others. While I need to be aware of others and how the things I do affect them, I also need to be aware of whether that affect is mine to control. For example, if I say no to a request, that person may rebel. But I don't necessarily need to give in because my answer is affecting them. I need to remind myself that I am not responsible for their reaction if – and this is a big if – if I am acting from a place of love and I am connected with my Higher Power.

APR – Crystal Wednesday 1:00p.m.

Reluctance with the 4th Step

I struggled with relapse for many years in OA. Mostly because I could not find a sponsor, and then because I was not willing to do Step 4. I felt the Step 1-2-3 waltzing was all I really needed. Besides I was searching for the perfect way to do the 4th Step and I just kept waltzing away. My small group had no one with any long-term abstinence too, so how was I going to find a sponsor? I started to do some traveling to events held in Minnesota. That's when I learned that a sponsor does not have to belong to the group that you go to, and you can even have one from a different state, thanks to email and phone calls - this was before cell phones. When I finally found a sponsor, she brought up that we needed to work on Step 4. I bug in my heels and said I was not ready yet. I have to say that I felt I was getting away with something and that did not sit well with my sponsor. She gave me a little more time and a few suggestions on how to do it. I came up with a lot of excuses – no time with my work schedule etc. Finally, I saw how much time I was wasting putting it off, and wondered why I wasn't experiencing any long-term abstinence.

I needed to take an honest look at myself, not everyone else. It was easy for me to play the victim, blame everyone else, and not take responsibility for my life. Of course, I wondered why my life seemed stuck. Why wasn't I getting anywhere? Why was I still living in my past, hoping it would be different? There were many other questions that I had and I needed some answers. Those answers were found doing my 4th Step and

taking my inventory. The funny thing at first was that I got stuck in the resentments and could not see my part in them. My sponsor helped to guide me through the process, break through the past and move on to see my part. Sometimes the only part I had to play was that I would not let the resentment go. Some resentments were from over 20+ years ago, like the one where my older brother had sexually abused me. Eventually I got through the resentments, along with the fears and the other parts of Step 4. My sponsor asked me if I could see any patterns and honestly, I could not at that point. She mentioned a few things and then it happened. My eyes opened and I saw how I was selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and fearful in every situation. I was finally able to take responsibility for my own actions and make the necessary amends where needed. With my brother, I had no part to play in what had happened. My part was not being able to let it go. My turning point came when I did let it go, and I was able to ask for healing from my Higher Power from those memories.

Since surrendering those memories and others, I have been able to move on with my program and finally put the food down. I do not need to stuff down my feelings anymore and I can face life whatever comes my way. My Higher Power, the OA groups, my past and present sponsors, and so many others that I have met along the way have been my guides on this 12 Step Journey.

Peace and all Good my recovery friends.

Lori K.

Insights on the 4th Step

Why do I wait till the last minute to write on the Fourth Step? A month ago, I said “yes” when asked to write on this Step. My procrastination is just one of many insights to a searching and moral inventory of myself. What else have I learned about myself in delaying this action to write on the Fourth Step.

- Fear: What I write will not be good enough
- Perfect: Try really hard to be my best work
- Resentment: Why did I say yes!
- Ego: My way or when I want to do it

That is a simple example to why I waited to begin this writing. I am abstinent today. Not by my will but by God who is my Higher Power. The Fourth Step is an action Step. A searching and fearless inventory of myself helps me know why I want to eat over my feelings. To distract myself from things that are difficult to do. I am grateful for abstinence and grateful to give service to others.

Barbara L.

Naked and Afraid

The first time I completed a Fourth Step inventory, I was focused on writing the *right* things. Why? I wanted my treatment counselor to believe that I had fulfilled the expectations of Steps 4 and 5, which would signal my completion of the treatment program. Was my Fourth Step searching? Not really - I only looked as far as I wanted to. Was my Fourth Step fearless? Not at all. It was full of fear - but I handled that by only looking at certain things, thus eliminating the fear. Was my Fourth Step moral? Absolutely not, as I could only focus on the things that others had done TO ME, which made me a victim of circumstances and other people's actions. I wrote very little about my own behaviors and actions. You see, I was under the mistaken impression that my behavior was flawless, and that I had never done anything to hurt another person.

People continued to come out from behind the closed sessions at the treatment facility, describing the wonderful freedom that they had experienced after telling "it all". I did not have that experience, and could not figure out why. Two years later, I completed another Fifth Step, but again, without doing the intricate and elaborate work of Step Four. I still didn't feel relief. I still didn't know why.

Fast forward about forty years, and I found myself approaching Step 4 in Overeaters Anonymous. I was terrified, and I finally figured out why. I felt 'naked and afraid,' like a popular reality TV program of the time. I felt naked because I had no crutches- no food, no treats, no diversions, nothing. Just me and that dang list, which included the category in which I described MY part of whatever anger or resentment I was harboring. I felt afraid because there was no place to hide, like an open wound with no covering. OUCH!

But SOMETHING about this process felt really good. For the first time in my life, I felt like I was being completely honest. I was really doing the work that the Program asked me to do. I had tried it the other way, and that didn't turn out so well. What did I have to lose? I took myself off of the pedestal that I had created, and dug into the hard work. While it was embarrassing to be honest about my behaviors and attitudes, it also felt good to be honest. I finally felt like I was not one of those described in How It Works (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2001; chapter 5, pg. 58) who are "naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty."

Completion of Step Four gave me hope and courage. Hope that I could be an honest person, and courage that I had the willingness to do the work that would get me there. What a relief. Finally, I was doing the REAL Program work of Overeaters Anonymous, and it felt good.

Sheri M., Crystal, MN

Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Steps One through Three were not very hard for me. I strongly related to them, agreed with them, embraced them and felt so freed by them. They pertained to my relationship with a loving God who is here to help me through all my difficulties and challenges. He was there to make my life full. My problem was my willingness, consequently my ability, to give them up. But still I knew God was there for me, no matter where I was.

Going to Step Four was very different. The prior Steps had me looking at how much God was there for me, while I needed to be able to allow Him to help me. It required me to receive. Step Four caused me to begin looking at and into myself, and not just ask how I can receive from God. Now I had to say, "What have I done wrong, how have I harmed others, and how can I make amends for what I have done wrong?" Suddenly I had to start looking at what I needed to do, not just what I could receive. I had to look at how I had been handling the pain, offense, resentment, blame, anger, self-pity, the list goes on. Am I to blame? Have I hurt others, no matter how 'justified' I think my acts were? How can I make amends, despite the fact I don't really want to make any amends?

Being forced to look into myself, rather than pointing at others, made my ability to justify my perspectives so much harder. I found the problem was that I did not like who I had become. I needed to change and I didn't know how. Plus, I didn't want to face the truth in many ways. Looking at myself in the mirror was so much harder than looking at everyone else and finding their faults or weaknesses.

I found the first step in making amends was to learn to see myself for who I truly am, someone who does not have to prove she is adequate or lovable. When I could see myself for who I really am, not who my mind had been telling me I was, it was the beginning of a long, difficult, but beautiful path. I found the first amends really had to be toward myself. I can try to care for others, but I can't give what I don't have in to give. That first step of forgiving and accepting myself as I am, an important and lovable person, was the first step in receiving the love and care I needed to care for others. I did not need to conjure up care, love, concern, or acceptance for others. I simply needed to be able to receive them from God. Then I could give to others. I could be a channel for what God had given to me. What freedom to no longer question why I couldn't give. I had learned that I can only give what I already have, and thankfully God is more than willing to give me all I need to enable me to be a blessing to others.

Cheryl New Hope, MN

Tradition Four: Each group should be autonomous, except in matters effecting other groups or OA as a whole

Autonomy is such an important factor in OA. It allows us to truly share our inner person, since there is no fear of others seeing you as right or wrong, but simply part of their 'family'. It allows us to embrace everyone for who they are and how difficult their path may be compared to our own. It allows us to be a strength for each other, rather than needing to turn to a 'leader', who supposedly should have all the answers.

It also gives us all a purpose and reason to know we have an importance place in group we belong to. No matter how famous, rich or influential we may be, we are not more important than any of the others. We can simply be ourselves and let others be themselves, knowing that we are there to both give and receive from each other.

Autonomy is a statement of worth for everyone. All of us have much to give and much to receive, no matter who we are.

Cheryl New Hope, MN