

News and Noteworthy

The September
Intergroup meeting will
be held on
Saturday, September 10
from 12:30 – 2:30pm
via
Zoom
ID 810 4426 4132 /
PW 12345#
Phone: 312-626-6799 12345#

Relapse Recovery Meeting

Thursday evenings
at 6:00 pm CT
Zoom ID: 871 0023 6034
Passcode: 93D9ie or
Call 312-626-6799, Same
ID, Passcode: 546650
For more info
contact Annette:
aprlovesoa@gmail.com

New Newsletter Email
If you are interested in
contributing to the
monthly newsletter,
please send your articles
to

ExpressionsofUnity2022@gmail.com



Step 9: Made direct amends to those we had harmed, except when to do so would injure them or others.

When we are standing at the beginning of the steps, Step 9 seems like the worst idea we could think of. How on earth, we might wonder, is this going to help me stop eating compulsively? The reason I eat is because other people are so difficult to deal with! Anyway, this was my initial thought.

Luckily, the steps are in the order they are for a reason. In my early recovery, I heard over and over: "Trust the process." And "You only need to focus on today." And "Do the next right thing." By focusing on today and the step, I was on today. I became ready for Step 9 by the time I got to it.

It was so important for me to be working with a sponsor during my 9th Step process. I swung wildly between feeling like the most horrible person in the world, needing to apologize to everyone for everything, and feeling like the biggest victim in the world, responsible for none of the interpersonal difficulties in my life. Having a sponsor to guide me helped me see my part and to identify persons I had harmed vs persons I wished I could have a different result with. Sometimes I had behaved with integrity, but the relationship was still strained. In those cases, the amend I needed to make was to let go of expecting the relationship to change. In other cases, I needed to speak directly to the person, own up to my wrong and discuss how I planned to change.

For the direct amends, I found it helpful to write down exactly what I hoped to say and to share it with my sponsor before meeting with the person. This is a practice I continue with my sponsees as they work on the 9th Step. It helps me keep the focus on my part and not try to justify, defend, or dredge up other wrongs or topics.

Step 9 is an integral part of the Spiritual Awakening we are working toward in our recovery. As we progress in our Spiritual program, we find that God does for us, what we cannot do for ourselves, and we are relieved of our compulsion to overeat.

Anonymous

Three Letters

Several years ago, I was revisiting Step 9 and became focused on three people I had relationships with in my late teens and twenties.

Despite sharing with my sponsor about the harm I had done and having had a positive experience doing Step 9 amends previously, I was not willing to take action and make direct amends. I spent my time thinking, pondering, and re-thinking about these people and my behavior towards them. I turned it over to my Higher Power and then took it back, again and again.

Eventually, I wrote each of these people a letter of apology and amends. Next, I read the letters to my sponsor. After taking these actions I chose to send the letters.

I felt a burden lifted when I took action and trusted the process of the 12 Steps. Step 9 shows me how being honest with myself and others about my mistakes and harmful behavior leads me to recovery - one day at a time.

A Grateful Recovering Compulsive Overeater

Save the Date for the *Quick Steps*

The next offering of the *Quick Steps* will be Saturday, October 29 and Saturday, November 12 from 9am to 1 pm. A flyer with registration information will be available on the Unity Intergroup website the last week in September.

Note that the workshop consists of two Saturday sessions. The first session will discuss Steps 1 - 5. Then there are two weeks between the first and second sessions, which allow participants to complete a 4th Step inventory and complete Step 5 with a sponsor or 5th Step listener. The *Quick Steps* can help participants find a 5th Step listener if needed. The second session discusses Steps 6 – 12 to complete the Steps.

Step Nine

Step Nine states that after making a list of all persons we had harmed in Step Eight, we “Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.” Love is the spiritual principle of Step Nine, according to “The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous”. Important spiritual qualities of compassion, courage, and character are liberated by the Ninth Step.

1. Step Nine is Ninth for a Reason

The steps are beautifully ordered and are meant to be taken one at a time until we embark upon maintenance Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve. Without taking Steps One through Three, we aren’t motivated to do the difficult work of Steps Four through Eight, which lead us through acknowledgement, confession, absolution (perspective) and self-forgiveness.

After completing my fourth and fifth steps, my sponsor and I discussed how my character defects and strengths affected my damaged relationships. She pointed out that I had often behaved badly but I was not unusually terrible. I was merely terrible in all the usual mundane ways! I had nurtured resentment, anger, and self-pity towards myself, family, friends, acquaintances, organizations, and institutions that I didn’t understand and found difficult. Her compassion allowed me to feel compassion toward myself and others with whom I’d had tumultuous relationships. My sponsor reminded me of strengths and helped me acknowledge good relationships and solid accomplishments. Guided by my sponsor, I meditate, prayed, wrote, and released negative emotions to become as spiritually fit as possible before I set out to make amends.

Work on Steps Six, Seven, and Eight is a road map out of the deadly traps of resentment and self-justification. Ninth Step amends and the maintenance steps demonstrate more effective ways to manage frustration, disappointment, loss, and fear than by eating destructively and lashing out at others. We are not alone in these endeavors. We have powerful allies in our sponsor, OA friends, OA groups, and our higher power.

Our relationships with ourselves had been deeply harmful and had overflowed into all relationships. Once we can feel compassion toward ourselves and others, we can muster the courage to make amends, and making amends lays the groundwork for better character.

2. What Step Nine Means

Step Nine is sweeping in scope, telling us to make “direct amends” to “such persons” except when to do so would “injure them or others.” “Harm” is an act that causes loss, pain, physical damage, mental damage, or other suffering.

“Such persons” means the people on our Step Eight list. Making amends means admitting our part in harm we caused and offering to repair the damage. It is not the same as asking forgiveness, which asks something of the other person. Nor do we need to entirely forgive others to become willing to make amends. Forgiveness flows from the process.

“Direct amends” means to communicate with and offer reparation to people face-to-face when possible, and, if not, by the next best method, such as by telephone, email, or letter. Not making amends “when to do so would injure” someone is a narrow exception.

Some say that we should include ourselves as “others” for whom we should be solicitous but the source of the Steps, Alcoholics Anonymous, demonstrates that the possibility of self-harm should not be exaggerated. We cannot choose our own comfort over making amends. We decide when others will be injured by communicating with our sponsor, spiritual mentors, and our Higher Power.

I had quite a crush on a married man when I was in college and between Boyfriends, and wondered whether I owed amends to his wife. Her husband and I didn’t misbehave sexually, but were obviously attracted to each other and lived next door so we saw each other often. One night we stayed up very late drinking wine and talking about the meaning of life. His wife went to bed, assuming the worst. During my first round of amends, I called her to say I regretted not being a good friend and neighbor because I’d been obvious about how I felt about her husband. She said she assumed that we were having an affair and was relieved to know that we had not. Our literature addresses infidelity and the facts that must be considered in these delicate situations. No matter what, it must be about the other person, not ourselves.

3. When and How to Make Amends

“The 12 Steps and 12 Traditions”, the stories in “Overeaters Anonymous”, our sponsor, experienced program members, and Alcoholics Anonymous, among other resources, deftly show how and when to make amends. We make amends as soon as we can and with as many people as we can to clear our conscience and begin a better way of life. A life free of our tangled past—one that allows us to grow spiritually, heal physically, and normalize relationships.

Planning with a sponsor is key to making timely amends in an effective way. We can discuss what the person to whom we need to make amends was like, what their present circumstances are, what type of reparation would be suitable, what we should say, how we should say it, and how the person is likely to react. We can sort amends into categories—are they owed employers, colleagues, family, friends, merchants, customers, neighbors, or teachers? Each type may require a slightly different approach.

We discuss how we will explain our ninth step to the person we had harmed. Ours is not a society in which people go around making amends to those they harmed ten

minutes ago, much less years and years ago. People will likely be surprised by our call. During my first round of amends in 1980, OA books did not exist. We relied on “Alcoholics Anonymous” and “The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions” of that program. They suggested explaining we are recovering from active alcoholism, which we transposed to compulsive overeating. Well, forty years ago, people knew a bit about AA and alcoholism but surely did not know there was such a thing as food addiction. They were gob smacked by my explanation that I was recovering from compulsive overeating. In the ensuing decades eating disorders were identified and studied, and perhaps these people remembered their encounter with me and could help others find a way out.

Having explained why you are there and admitted misconduct, do you ask a person how they want you to make it right or do you offer options? Someone may not want a reparation you have in mind and others may welcome suggestions because they haven’t thought about you for years. Most will thank you for your visit or call and part with kind words and reassurances that further action is unnecessary.

Some amends are once-and-done affairs because we don’t regularly see the person. In contrast, we owe “living amends” to family and friends with whom we have continuing contact. We owe them steady effort to improve our behavior. We will never be perfect in our relationships, but we can be less impulsive, more compassionate, more cooperative, more generous, and less self-centered. And, of course, we owe lifelong amends to ourselves for brutally hurting ourselves with food and self-recrimination, isolation, and despair, while we flailed around trying to find a way out in a culture of ignorance and punitive judgment about eating disorders.

Occasionally someone who still nurses a grudge against an amends-maker will slam the door in their face. It’s helpful to plan for an unfriendly reception by rehearsing how to stay calm, on task, and exit gracefully. One former housemate was not at all happy to see me at her doorstep, having removed herself from ours in high dudgeon. I knew her address but not her phone number and had little choice but to show up unannounced. She said she did not want to talk with me, but I could write a letter. We saw each other years later at a mutual friend’s house, and she was warm and friendly. She said nothing about the amends, but her behavior demonstrated that she was able to let go of resentment once I’d had made an effort to admit my part in our damaged friendship.

Ultimately, we must let go of expectations. Our job is to plan, show up, suit up, and make direct amends. The consequences are up to our Higher Power.

4. The Promises

As a result of this Step, our “spiritual awakening has become a reality.”

We feel that we are a part of humanity and not apart from the world. We feel compassion towards ourselves and others and a desire to bring this solution to those who suffer. (OA 12 & 12, p. 67)

We may be relieved of the drive to overeat compulsively after taking the Ninth Step, as “The 12 Steps and 12 Traditions” says. Unfortunately, that was not my situation. I felt peace around past relationships but fought hunger and cravings constantly because my food plan was not sustainable. By working the Steps and performing service, I clung to the promise that cravings and hunger would someday melt away. I white-knuckled abstinence for over two years, but relapsed when I moved away from my close group of OA friends and lost access to OA meetings. Without them, I lacked the energy or support to fight my own body. I gained 30 pounds in 30 days.

The biological and behavioral sciences, particularly genetics, neuroscience, and psychology, have come a long way in forty years. I understand why the various plans I tried over the years could not relieve my twin saboteurs, craving and hunger. I needed one that accounted for individual susceptibility to specific foods and environmental cues. I am very grateful that I found a food plan that relieves craving and insatiable hunger so that I can enjoy peaceful abstinence.

Finding the right food plan is like giving up alcohol or harmful drugs because we never again have to try something that doesn’t work. Following the Steps gives life meaning and direction. That makes Alcoholics Anonymous prophetic when it describes the result of abstaining from compulsive behavior and completing Step Nine:

1. We will know a new freedom and happiness.
2. We will not regret the past nor wish to deny it.
3. We will comprehend the word serenity and know peace.
4. We will see how our experience can benefit others.
5. Feelings of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.
6. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in others.
7. Self-seeking will slip away.
8. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.
9. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us.
10. We will intuitively know how to handle situations that used to baffle us.
11. We will have a valuable relationship with a power greater than ourselves.

We must do hard things for little or no reward because we are human. We can do the hard work of the Steps for great rewards. The promises come true, slowly but surely.

Christine M. Eden Prairie, MN and Austin, TX



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R4ward

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www.oaregion4.org

*****In This Issue*****

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 - Intergroup news
 - Community Conversations Sun September 18 (5PM Central time)
- **WSO Updates**
 - Where to find all the news at WSO

*****Region 4 Updates*****

Exciting news!!

Quad Cities and Heart of Illinois Intergroups have merged and are now known as “Two Rivers Intergroup”. The two rivers are the Mississippi and the Illinois, and they grace this newly formed union. Please help me congratulating them in creating a stronger community. They did marvelous work in discussions, merging ideas and combining communities. Thank you for keeping the light on in Region 4.

Region 4 Fall 22 Assembly

2022 Fall Assembly: September 30 – October 1, 2022 – Virtual (information coming soon)

- REPS: Reach out to admin@oaregion4.org if you aren't getting the Assembly Planning emails. Please sign up online at www.oaregion4.org.
- GUESTS: We welcome all curious members, abstinent or not to join our assembly as our guest. There is no cost, no fuss, no travel. You can join in on the fun and sit in on our committees: Campvention, Intergroup Outreach, and the Finance committee.
- Join us for our Friday night icebreaker (aka: FUN) and to hear what's going on in Region 4
- Sit in on our elections and affirmations for the following:
 - Region Chair
 - Region Secretary
 - Region Trustee Liaison
- WINNERS: Winners of our Region 4 Language contest will be chosen. Come and find out what our cool new words and Region 4 slogan will be.

(send your events to admin@oaregion4.org to get listed on the R4 Calendar of Events)

****WSO Updates****

The new *Voices of Recovery, Second Edition* is now available in print in the OA bookstore and in e-book format from third-party vendors.

Here is the direct link to the OA bookstore page: <https://bookstore.oa.org/books/voices-of-recovery-a-daily-reader-second-edition.asp>.

Links to the e-book are below.

Voices of Recovery, Second Edition Arrives in Print and Digital Formats

Great news! The long-awaited second edition of OA's beloved daily reader *Voices of Recovery* is finally available, both in our OA bookstore and online digital platforms. The second edition has been attentively reviewed and edited to bring its daily meditations—sourced directly from the testimonials of OA members—into alignment with OA's currently available literature and policies. Physical copies can be obtained in our bookstore at bookstore.oa.org, inventory number #986-2, and digital downloads are available for purchase on the following platforms:

- Amazon Kindle: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0B99L2RTS>
- Barnes and Noble Nook: <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/voices-of-recovery-overeaters-anonymous/1141991658?ean=2940186594079>
- Apple Books: *coming soon*

Send Your Story of Recovery to the New Lifeline Blog!

Lifeline is back! We are now sharing stories of recovery through OA's Twelve Steps at lifeline.oa.org. Together, as we grow *Lifeline*, we will provide experience, strength, and hope to everyone in our Fellowship and become an ever-brighter source of light to the still-suffering compulsive eater who is searching online for a solution.

You can help *Lifeline* grow by sending in your story, whether it is written, recorded as an audio file, shot on video, or is an image of your own making. Send us your recovery-focused story, digital painting, song, video, or any other type of digital media, and we will put it in the queue for eventual publication. Read the new [Contributor Guidelines](#) for suggestions and use our [submission form](#), found at oa.org/lifeline, to send us your submission. Thank you for your service!

Important Dates and Deadlines

NEW! OA has moved event listings to <https://oa.org/event-calendar/>! Use the submission form at <https://oa.org/event-calendar-submission-form> to send in your event details and get your event posted. It's never been easier to submit or find an event!

Please share or reprint this announcement in your group and service body newsletters. Thank you.

Tradition Nine

Tradition Nine states that, “OA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.” Our literature identifies the associated spiritual principle as “Structure.” Democracy, trust in our Higher Power, and trust in our natural drive to heal are closely allied with that principle.

The gist of Tradition Nine is that I am not the boss of you, and you are not the boss of me. We are peers. Our shared objective is release from the compulsion to overeat. Of course, OA is structured and of course, OA is organized but we aren’t organized in hierarchies and power relationships. “Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.” Leaders are chosen by the group, whether that be a meeting leader, group officer, intergroup representative, or regional delegate. Leaders are fully accountable to the group that elected them. No authorities designate what must be done, by whom, and when. Each OA member has an equal vote on every issue in a group conscience meeting and about who represents and serves the group. This is how democracy animates the Ninth Tradition.

Trust is also central to the Ninth Tradition. We trust that a power greater than ourselves can heal us. We trust that our strong drive for recovery motivates us to behave cooperatively because without a healthy group we cannot become healthy individuals. We serve the group not for recognition, power, or money but for a future as recovering individuals. Without OA, we are alone in the face of our difficulties, and that never ends well.

Occasionally someone sweeps in who wants us to believe they have all the answers—the best and only way to run a meeting, the perfect food plan, the ideal manner of sponsoring, and other such nonsense. In 1981, such a person appeared my OA hometown, Austin, Texas. There were only two or three groups in what was then our little city, and they were new and small, so this confident California transplant wielded outsized influence. More than one of us decided to follow the food plan that this person swore by, and many of us fell off the beam because it was too restrictive. Our small, friendly community was riven by our reactions to this person’s insistence that his and only his approach to compulsive overeating worked.

OA groups today are more experienced about the risk posed by confident charismatics. We study, discuss, and apply the Traditions. We recognize that we are equals finding our way together. We experience increased compassion and peace of mind knowing that the Traditions have worked for eighty-seven years because they were crafted by people who thoroughly understood the cunning, baffling, and powerful nature of addiction. The Traditions have worked despite our human frailty because they take account of our human frailty. They are far more trustworthy than any one person could be. Let us continue, then, to serve one another in the wide, beautiful world of the Ninth Tradition.

Christine M. Eden Prairie, MN and Austin, TX

Step 12: Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Once we receive the gift of a spiritual awakening, we are able to do, feel, and believe what we could not before with our unaided strength and resources alone. This is a free gift - as being sponsored is a free gift and giving it back by sponsoring others is a free gift.

I am so blessed to have this life. I owe it to my Higher Power and the people who have sponsored me, as well as the people who continue to sponsor me and walk me through the Steps. I couldn't do it without a sponsor - someone taking time out of their day to work with me. After being in the 12 Step program for nearly 9 years, I too needed to give back and sponsor others. It hasn't been easy to get over the doubt I have in myself, but this program has taught me to say yes to fear and I know that God will enable me to help this person.

The reward of helping others is great! The sponsee might not take to the program but the effort hasn't gone unnoticed. I know that self-doubt is my own character defect, but by saying yes if someone asks me to sponsor opens me up to a new light full of mysteries, joys, and experiences which I never dreamed of. It is a beautiful thing to help someone who is brand new in the program.

The other part of Step 12 is to practice these principles in all our affairs. I feel I have a positive attitude at work that everyone can appreciate. I know this attitude comes from being in the program and working these Steps. Also, as a newly married woman and mother of an eight-year-old, I transition through the seasons of life with high stress. Left to my own devices I would lash out in anger or eat compulsively or even drink... but I know the answer rests in still more spiritual development. I know if I continue to grow spiritually, I will be relieved of the obsession of food or alcohol, and God can help me with my character defects. I am so glad I don't have to do this alone. Because of this program, I am surrounded by people who love me and in turn I can give them the best me!

Nicole C.