
News and Noteworthy

The January Intergroup meeting will be held on Saturday, January 14 from 12:30 – 2:30pm via [Zoom](#) ID 810 4426 4132 / PW 12345# Phone: 312-626-6799 12345#

Fifth Annual Men's OA Retreat Registration is now open!

Spring 2023
April 28-30

More info on page 3

Circle Pines In-Person OA/HOW meeting

Saturday mornings
8:00 am-10:00 am

Our Savior Lutheran Church
9185 Lexington Avenue
North Circle Pines, MN. 55014
Contact: Dave M 612-636-0287
2-hour OA HOW meeting
Enter church through back door. Meeting is straight ahead.

MASKS REQUIRED BY THE CHURCH

Step One: We admitted we were powerless over food – that our lives had become unmanageable.

Before coming to OA, I was part of the “I’ll start Monday, January 1st, or tomorrow” club. I was always going to begin following a diet or exercise program “someday” – but not today. I believed wholeheartedly that someday I would manage my eating like a normal person. As my disease progressed, my ability to believe the illusion faded and I was face-to-face with the truth. I am powerless over food and my life is unmanageable.

Luckily, the OA program doesn’t leave me there in my powerlessness and unmanageability. But until I came to that Step One truth, I am not willing to do the rest of the work.

My own best thinking got me to that powerless and unmanageable point. I needed to follow the directions in the 12 Steps. I needed to put down my alcoholic foods and behaviors and do something different. For me, that involved first getting clear, honest, and intentional with my food plan. I need a well-defined plan. It felt frightening to me at first, to trust this plan. However, as I surrendered to that plan, I was set free of the cycle of obsession and compulsion. I was astounded that discipline brought me freedom. Coming to admit that I was powerless, and my life had become unmanageable was the beginning of a life beyond my wildest dreams

As it says in *Our Invitation to You*, “If you decide you are one of us, we welcome you with open arms. Whatever your circumstances, we offer you the gift of acceptance. You are not alone anymore. Welcome to Overeaters Anonymous. Welcome home!”

Jean K.

All the Destructive Things – A First Step Inventory

When I first came to OA in 2004, I was desperate, suicidal, obsessed with food and with trying to control my weight. I thought about food, eating, diets, and my body size all day, every day. Taking the first step back then was easy. It was obvious I had a problem and that it was out of control.

After attending meetings and working the Steps on and off for more than 15 years and experiencing extended periods of abstinence and a return to health, I started to rest on my laurels and forgot how insane I used to be when it comes to food. The more I let myself forget, the less diligent I became in my commitment to working my program and living in recovery. The less diligent I became, the more I slipped back into my old ways of thinking and behaving.

When the COVID lockdown happened in March 2020, I knew the pandemic would take me in one of two directions: I would either use it as an excuse for a full-blown relapse or I would use it as an opportunity to work my program and focus on strengthening my recovery. I decided I wanted to come out of the pandemic stronger and healthier than I was going into it.

I started by finding a sponsor who would take me through the Steps... again. We started at Step One. Unlike my previous experiences with Step One, where sponsors simply asked if I admitted I was powerless over food and that my life had become unmanageable, this sponsor asked me to do a "First Step inventory." She explained that the purpose of the inventory wasn't to ask *if* I was powerless over food, but to honestly reflect on *how* I was powerless over food.

I started by listing all the destructive things I had done with food prior to starting the program all those years ago. Binging, purging, pills, diets, fasts, abusing laxatives and Ipecac, compulsive exercise, lying about eating, eating in secret, stealing food, going to multiple stores so clerks wouldn't know how much I was eating then binging and purging in the car, leaving my young children at home unattended to go get my "fix", eating from the garbage, throwing up blood, ruining my teeth, eroding my esophagus... the list goes on and on. Reflecting on those thoughts and behaviors from my pre-OA days, there was no doubt that before I joined the program, I was powerless over food and my life was unmanageable.

Then, I humbly looked at the ways I was still powerless over food. While less obvious, my ongoing powerlessness soon became clear. I avoided social situations that involved food. I resented people for eating foods that were problematic for me. I thought about food when anxious, tired, angry, and sad. I exercised to "earn" more food or to try to make up for food I had eaten. I felt a dopamine hit when walking past certain sections of the grocery store. Just the thought of secretly buying and

consuming those foods elicited a high. I avoided eating in front of people. I felt ashamed for being different and having a problem with food. The scale had the power to destroy how I felt on a given day or to justify eating because I could “get away with it”. The more I honestly reflected on my thinking and behaviors around food, the clearer it became that I was still in the grips of a compulsive disease. This first Step inventory process reminded me of my ongoing powerlessness and of the subtle and cunning ways my disease creeps back in. It helped me get honest about where I was in recovery, and it helped me see the correlation between getting lazy with my program and the obsessive thinking and shady behavior quietly slipping back in. It also reminded me of how bad “bottom” was and how bad it would get if I continued drifting away from the Steps, the tools, and my Higher Power.

The first Step got me in the doors, but I’ve learned the importance of periodically doing a first Step inventory. It is my way of checking in with my recovery and keeping tabs on my disease. I know now that it is no longer a question of if I’m powerless, but how am I powerless today?

- J. Golden Valley, MN

5th Annual Men’s OA Retreat – Registration is now open.

Space is limited, on a first-come basis.

To register, open this link <https://forms.gle/QFkUp6TVqCRtCBVN6>

Retreat information:

Spring 2023, April 28th - April 30th

Two-day retreat focused on recovery for men dealing with compulsive eating. This is our 5th annual Men’s Retreat. In the past, the retreat was a combination of fellowship, speakers, hiking, meditation, personal time, and free time for a bonfire. In addition to wildlife on the property, trails, a library, a bookstore and guided meditation, the Center also has a wood-burning sauna at our disposal.

Additional information will be forthcoming.

Please visit the [website](#) for the location and accommodations that will be available to you to choose from.

Contact Sasha K. 763-443-0393 or John G. 612-570-2181 if you have any questions.



Are you new to OA or just need help getting through the Steps?

Completing this two-part OA Quick Steps Workshop may be just the answer.

**Dates: Saturday, January 7, 2023
and Saturday, January 21, 2023
Time: 9:00 am to 1:00 pm (CDT)**

Location

These sessions will be on Zoom.

One of the promises in the AA Big Book is that before you're done with Step Nine, the obsession is lifted. Increase your chance of success—join the OA Quick Steps series, get abstinent

To register, contact unityquicksteps@gmail.com.

Registration is required as **class size is limited**. The zoom link will be sent to registrants

You will need to have a sponsor or someone who can listen to your 5th Step.

There are no fees for this workshop, but we encourage a 7th Tradition donation to Unity Intergroup.

Time commitment is two Saturday sessions, plus homework. **We expect participants to attend both sessions**. Expect to be very busy working on recovery for these weeks!

The purpose of this workshop is to get people through the 12 Steps quickly, to help people obtain a successful, life-long recovery, and aid in retention and growth of recovered compulsive eaters in OA.

POWERLESSNESS

O Restless heart,
searching to fill the emptiness,
looking for comfort in the pain.
Seeking help wherever to be found.
Even in the fleeting, the moving and shifting,
the here-today-gone-tomorrow
of the temporary fix.

Food looks like a good one!

And it works—
until it doesn't.
It's only a matter of time
before it takes over everything,
once again.

Then, down on my knees,
I plead to see the face of truth:
that there's no end in sight to this failing
when trying to fix things on my own.

And then, comes holy surrender—
an acceptance of my powerlessness.
And a willingness to let go
the illusion of control
that was never mine to have.

From out of this bottom,
this desperate deep,
comes light, and hope
and a lifting up!
“But how?”, you ask!
I say, “I don't know!
Except, that it's not of me!”

Dianne M.

I Have Peace

My name is Joni, and I am a compulsive overeater, more specifically, a refined sugar addict. I was listening to a podcast on sugar addiction and heard this quote from Johann Hari, “The opposite of addiction is not sobriety, it’s connection.” That was certainly true in my case. Somewhere along the way I learned that I had to care for myself, that others wouldn’t or couldn’t be there for me, that it was all up to me. This attitude got in the way of forming intimate relationships and the hole was filled with addictive substances. These gave me a nice chemical lift to smooth the feelings for about 15 seconds. Then I was in misery of the compulsion to eat more. The cycle continued for many years.

I joined OA but kept thinking I could moderate those addictive substances. For me, this was any kind of refined carbohydrate. I finally came to the realization (thank you Higher Power) that I had to follow a food plan that eliminated those foods. Because I also loved the feeling of being full, portion control became essential. I would have never believed when I walked through the OA doors that I would be following a food plan, weighing, and measuring my foods. But I am and I have peace.

But I knew from the Big Book’s teaching, that abstinence is just the start of recovery. “I had to find a new way of living, of acting on life rather than reacting to it.” This is where connection became important. I attended OA meetings, slowly speaking up at meetings, and offering to do service. I heard I had to enlarge my spiritual life, so I began to make phone calls, not just to program people but to my old friends who I had no longer stayed in touch with out of shame or isolation.

It worked. I am clean, sober, and more connected than I have ever been in my life. But I’m not perfect. My sponsor and 12 Step friends remind me to be on the lookout for isolation, self-control, and fear and to do a 10th Step, call someone, and then be of service to others.

Joni

“Tradition One: Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on OA unity.”

Tradition One is genius. I've really enjoyed reviewing OA's Tradition One to prepare a few paragraphs for the January "Expressions of Unity" newsletter. The name of the newsletter itself takes us right to the heart of Tradition One – Unity.

The OA 12x12 begins by pointing out that the disease takes us down the path of isolation. We protect and defend our relationship with the disease by disconnecting with others and our Higher Power. The first gift many of us realize in OA is the group. "We discovered we were never meant to live alone." "As we opened our hearts to other OA members, we found acceptance, a sense of belonging and unity with other OA members that satisfied us in ways food never could."

OA literally saved my life and to stay on the path of recovery and increasing health I must stay connected in OA groups. When I first started in OA, I didn't have skills for relating to other people and their ideas in healthy ways. I started off seeing how my views and opinions were better and different from those of others. My high school debate team radar kicked in and I was silently building a case for my own approach of the best way to run a group. When I attended group conscience meetings, instead of listening to others with an open mind and praying for insights from my Higher Power on the subject.

Another resource I read about Tradition One quoted Bill W. the cofounder of AA. While speaking at AA's Third International Convention he said, "We are division proof because we can safely invite division. We don't, like this country once did, have to fight a civil war to stand united. We fight lots of civil wars, to be sure, but not to be united. What can we do? A fellow says, "I don't like my group." We say, "For heaven sakes, start another one." Bill went on, "Good friends, we have no pride of membership. We have no property to quarrel about. We have no authority to defend."

Thank you OA for leading me on a path where I place the needs of others before my selfish pursuits and in so doing come into balance with all of creation!

In love and service - Liz D.