

Cathy L – OA is also for Anorexics

Originally, many years ago, my mom had suggested I contact a family friend who was going to OA - although what made my mom think, back then, that OA was also for anorexics, was beyond me. (Turns out she was right.) Anyway, suffice to say that if my mother suggested something to me, I would run, not walk, in the opposite direction. I recall calling the phone number for OA and getting a recorded message that said if I wanted a meeting schedule, I should send in 25¢ along with a self-addressed stamped envelope, blah, blah, blah. I just hung up. It was too much trouble. I guess I hadn't hit my bottom yet.

At the depths of my anorexia, I weighed about 84 1/2 pounds, and I thought I was fat. I watched what I ate to a microscopic degree, and I barely ate anything at all. I would cry on Thanksgiving, terrified of the abundance of food. I always thought I was getting fat, was fat, or would become fat.

I had a very strange ritual concerning my food: I would chew it and then swallow it up to chew again, sort of like I imagine a cow would do. I did this so that I could extend one mouthful of food to make it last longer, so that I didn't have to take more food.

It took several more years of struggle before I was guided to OA a second, and then a third time. That third time stuck. It had been suggested that I go to a meeting that had an anorexic/bulimic emphasis, and this was really important to my recovery at the time, to hear stories that were highly relatable. Later, it became less important. I could hear the message regardless of the specific stories being shared. I could hear the underlying message.

One of the biggest changes that I underwent in program was that I was able to make a spiritual connection. I was raised in a conventional religion, but never subscribed to it. I didn't believe in any organized religion. I felt they lacked spirituality, ironically, to a great degree. In the rooms of OA, I was able to find a way to connect spiritually without the divisive nature of organized religions - The "our God is better than your God" syndrome.

I slowly put on weight in OA, and that has always been difficult. For an anorexic, it is a most traumatic thing. But, I managed to become part of the human race, eat three meals a day, and enjoy going out to lunch or dinner with friends.

I used to never eat lunch. Then one time I had a job that began early in the morning, and when we broke for lunch, everyone had something to eat. These people looked normal and healthy. And I decided to take a chance. I began to eat lunch. And it was great! I got my strength back, my afternoon headaches went away, and I began to live a little more.

I have recently turned another corner in my life, and it's uncomfortable. I've gained more weight, and my spiritual connection has temporarily loosened. I can say temporarily because I have so many people in my life who live spiritually that I'm buoyed by their connections and reassurances.

I don't know what it's going to look like on the other side of this, but I don't want to leave before the miracle happens.