



Expressions of Unity

The newsletter of Unity Intergroup

www overeaters.org

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over food — that our lives had become unmanageable.

Having a problem with food, weight or purging? Call our 24/7 hotline at **612-377-1600** and one of our volunteers will return your call.

In this issue...

Step Articles

Unity Day

Meeting Corner

Buffalo Retreat

Upcoming OAQS dates

TSW Corner

Unity Intergroup Calendar of Events

Region 4 and WSO Calendar of Events

I AM NOT ALONE!

From the outside I was successful and sure of myself; yet inside I knew my relationship with food was creating mayhem in my life. I had boxes of cereal on my bedside table, so there was something at hand any time I woke up. Sometimes I finished one or two boxes a night. I also compulsively stocked up on my binge foods, worried that I might run out. It was enough to get me through a few days, but I inevitably ate everything I bought in one setting.

My behavior, my thoughts, my life had become unmanageable. Once, I had to go out of town on business, and I showed up in the wrong city. I could no longer focus. I was constantly losing things and forgetting important tasks. I literally started to panic about my behavior, knowing it wasn't normal, and knowing I couldn't stop it. In fact, the thought of stopping just created more panic, and my coping tool for panic was binge eating – an unstoppable cycle.

As a control freak with an outward self-image of having my life together, I was embarrassed and ashamed that I was losing the battle with food. After struggling for so many years, my mental health just couldn't keep up any more. I felt crazy and had no idea where to go for help. Amazingly, that's when my

road to recovery began – when I started searching for help. I finally accepted that I couldn't do it on my own, and I let myself search for anything that would break the cycle. Finally, I found OA.

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It still wasn't easy to admit I was powerless over food once I started the program. Feeling like a failure, the embarrassment and shame – it was still there. It's still with me now. But in the program, I'm not alone. I practice admitting I'm powerless at every meeting, with every check-in, in every conversation with my fellows, and in every reading. I see others who understand my story, who are willing to listen to mine and share their own. From that, I've learned that I still have some power – not power over food – but the power to redefine what a successful life is to me. The power to share and support other fellows. And the power to start over every day by admitting I can't and don't need to do this alone.

Anonymous

G.U.I.DANCE

For me, the Steps are a problem solving technique I use every day to live in the real world without binging and purging. In the course of a day I can feel myself getting riled up...Somebody said something, somebody did something I didn't like, something didn't go my way! My thoughts begin to spin, my chest constricts, anger rises (or fear!) and I'm just about to have a big ol' reaction but then I catch myself. I remember to ask: "Laura, what are you powerless over?" Ugh.... My shoulders drop, my breath evens out, my thoughts slow down. "That's right...everything." Step One releases me from an escalation that used to culminate in a trip to the grocery store, the Super America, or whatever I could scrounge in my cupboard. I couldn't accept whatever was happening so I needed to drown my feelings in a mountain of food. Step One frees me from the bondage of self and this disease. When I can surrender and admit that I am not God I have experienced such grace. I have then been able to ask my Higher Power to take the lead. I have then been able to say:
"God, you and I dance." G U (and) I DANCE!
Laura E

I Will Do Anything!

"We admitted we were powerless over alcohol, in my case it was food—that our lives had become unmanageable"

I had never felt so much despair in my life. I had truly hit rock bottom. This is what brought me to my first O.A./H.O.W. meeting. Seeing a lot of thin people made me think I was in the wrong place. Once I heard their stories I realized I was exactly where I needed to be. Everyone was so welcoming and kind that I got choked up. It was the first time in many years that I actually felt hope that there was a solution to my compulsive over-eating.

My personal powerlessness was so overwhelming all I could think about was food. To say it was an obsession was an understatement. It was all I could focus on and if people interrupted one of my binges I would be very humiliated and upset.

Finally being able to admit to my utter defeat that I was able to take my first steps toward liberation and strength. I will do anything to lift this merciless obsession from myself.

I'm so happy to live a purposeful and joyful life one day at a time.

Linda H.

Unity Day: A New Experience in Unity

Until Unity Day 2015, two OA conventions had been my only experience at OA events beyond my weekly face to face meetings and regular phone meetings. I had a vague feeling of OA fellowship, but pretty limited.

That changed when I worked on the committee that sponsored Unity Day in Owatonna last year. Meeting together and emailing back and forth for four months of planning created true fellowship in our group. When I contacted potential speakers, their enthusiasm and commitment gave me a true sense of the fellowship beyond.

But I gained perhaps the greatest sense of fellowship from the event itself. Because Unity Day is smaller in scope and attendance, there were no break-out sessions. Everyone heard the same speakers in a setting that felt safe and intimate. Conversation and personal sharing—including talking with the speakers—was easier at breaks and comfortable during the "bring-your-own" lunchtime.

Truly, Unity Day met my need to feel personally connected to the broader OA fellowship, and I plan to go each year if for no other reason.

Pat P.

Unity Day Recovery Event

Sponsored by...OA Unity Intergroup Twelve
Step Within

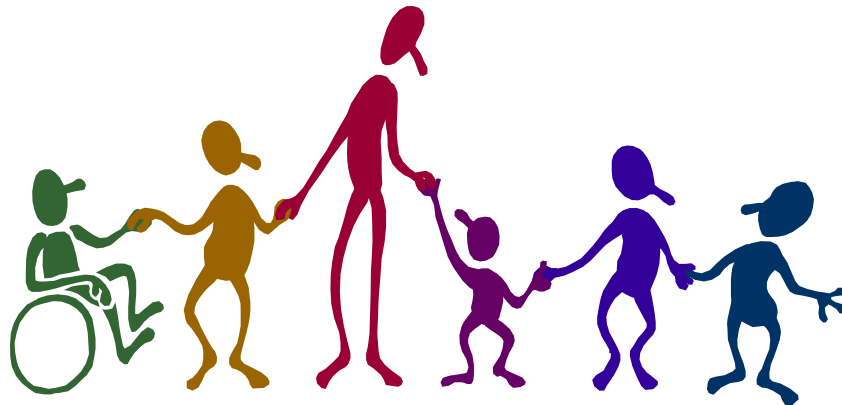
Saturday, February 27th, 2016

Registration opens at 9:00am

**Full day of workshops... 9:30am to 3:00pm!!!!
(BYOL...bring your own lunch - refrigerator available)
Building fully handicapped accessible!**

**Coming together for a day of encouragement,
sharing our experience, strength and hope**

\$5 suggested donation for the event at the door!



**Cornerstone Evangelical Free Church
1500 18th St. SE
Owatonna, MN 55060**

**For more information
call...507-363-6574**

Am I in the right place?

When I first came into OA in 2004, I wasn't sure I was really powerless over food. I listened to the stories shared in meetings and I did not relate. I had not done all the things other people had done in the service of their disease or in their attempts to control it. Was I really in the right place?

On the other hand, my life was completely unmanageable. Extremely challenging circumstances swirled around me—things over which I truly had no control, and which had left me feeling utterly abandoned by God. I recognized that maybe, just maybe, I was eating in order to cope with my crazy life. That, at least, I could relate to.

I got a sponsor and I said to her, "I'm not sure I'm really a compulsive eater." She replied, "Give it six weeks and you'll know."

I knew in two.

How? First, I put down the food. I got a food plan, committed everything I was going to eat every day, and stuck to it. At the same time I jumped into the literature and started working the Steps. I read Step One in the A.A. 12 & 12. I re-read Step One. I re-re-read Step One. I wrote on it. Again and again.

What jumped out at me most in that powerful reading were the following quotes:

"In A.A.'s pioneering time, none but the most desperate cases could swallow and digest this unpalatable truth... It is a tremendous satisfaction to record that in the following years this changed. Alcoholics who still had their health, their families, their jobs, and even two cars in the garage, began to recognize their alcoholism... They were spared that last ten or fifteen years of literal hell the rest of us had gone through." (AA 12 & 12, pp. 22-23)

This sounded like me. I had only been in what I consider truly active disease for about three years at that point. I only had 45 pounds to lose. I had only tried dieting three times in my life. I had never even been to Weight Watchers, for crying out loud!

Step One then asked, "Since Step One requires an admission that our lives have become unmanageable, how could people such as these take this Step?" (p. 23) Yes!, I

demanded, How? I *really* wanted to know how to avoid the years and even decades of literal hell I had heard described by so many in the rooms of recovery.

"It was obviously necessary to raise the bottom the rest of

us had hit to the point where it would hit them." (p. 23) Or, as I have often heard in the rooms, "You hit bottom when you stop digging." Even though I hadn't reached the point so many shared about, it was clear to me that I was starting down the path. My disease was quickly escalating into dishonesty and frightening compulsion.

My bottom was what I refer to as "The Incident of the Cookie in the Kitchen." One afternoon I wandered through the kitchen and there, on the counter, was a plate holding a single sugar cookie. It was old and dry. No one wanted it. I didn't want it. I told myself, "I'm not going to eat that cookie. I'm supposed to be on a diet. It doesn't even look appealing. I am not going to Eat That Cookie."

And then, as if in a dream, I watched myself pick up that nasty, dry, unappealing cookie and pop it into my mouth.

It scared the living daylights out of me. I wish I could remember whether I had already heard about OA at that point. It was either right before or right after I started working the program. Either way, it was enough. The bottom had been raised to hit me right between the eyes. If I did not get help, if I did not *do* something, I would soon be unable to cope with my unmanageable life because I would be too busy stuffing my feelings with everything I could get my hands on, completely detaching from my husband, my children, my job, my community, my life.

I took Step One
honestly, openly,
willingly, and then
kept right on going.

I took Step One honestly, openly, willingly, and then kept right on going. Eleven years later, I continue to follow my food plan every day, work the Steps over and over, and live life on life's terms without eating compulsively. The promises have come true for me a thousandfold. I am no longer a victim of my circumstances. And I am here to tell you that it does not matter how far down the scale you have gone—or not gone! It is never too late, nor too early. Recovery is open and available to *anyone* who wants it. All it takes is the willingness to take that First Step...

Rebekah M

Meeting Corner



. **Unity Golden Valley Anniversary**

Unity Golden Valley Saturday 10 A.M. meeting is celebrating it's 30th anniversary January 30, 2016. Please considering joining us in celebration of the longevity of this meeting.



Unity Christ Church
4000 Golden Valley Road
Golden Valley, MN

. **Mark Your Calendar**

Feb 27, 2016 9a - 3p

**Unity Day...a Chance to Strengthen Your Recovery
Owatonna, MN**

Are you one of us OAers who live life one day at a time but also keep an eye on upcoming events to strengthen your recovery?

Unity Day, celebrated internationally, is a day in our OA year to celebrate and give thanks for the strength of OA fellowship. It is always held

on the last Saturday in February. In 2016, Owatonna MN's OA group will host Unity Day and provide a number of speakers on February 27, 2016 from 9 to 3. Mark your calendars and watch for more.

The event is free.



. **Podcast now available**

The October virtual workshop is now posted. Pass it on!

<https://www.oa.org/podcasts/step-ten-october-11-2015/>

Daily Surrender

Step 1 was definitely NOT something I swallowed all at once when I came to OA since I had very little idea what a compulsive eater was. I had the misconception that if I was, by definition, morbidly obese or anorexic or bulimic then I might have a problem with food. But if I was none of those I was clearly normal when it came to food behaviors.

I had no idea that my thinking was a large part of my disease.

I would have told you that I didn't obsess about food. Well, maybe sometimes I thought about it or ate ice cream when a stressful event happened, but I didn't think that made me a compulsive eater. But that was not where my thinking ended. Many times my disease took the form of obsessing about how many extra minutes I had to do on the treadmill after I ate that Twinkie. Sometimes I would say to myself or my friends that I had to work out extra tomorrow because I've been "bad" lately. Or that I've "got to start going to the gym again after the holidays". And how many times have I said to myself that Monday I was gonna start this or that. The behaviors and thinking never ended, it might have changed form or I would change my own boundaries for myself but I did not realize that my disease was progressing.

The most astonishing thing was that I never wanted to join Overeaters Anonymous because that would mean that I could never eat sugar again or that it would somehow be punishment for the rest of my life. I am delighted to report that my preconceived notions were incorrect. If I did not like my life better in OA than

before when I was indulging in eating whatever I wanted whenever I wanted it, I would NOT stay. My life is so much more peaceful and sane since I realized that I was powerless over my eating/exercising behaviors. In OA I learned that my eating, thinking, and behaviors were only a symptom of my real problem of how to live life on life's terms.

The steps and tools I use in OA give me a way to deal with my life and problems in a way that makes me feel like I'm a great person. I feel like I belong in the world now and I'm not afraid of people, places, or situations like I used to be. I'm so glad that I was able to realize that the food was not giving me joy, that instead it was killing me slowly and painfully.

One of the gifts I have received, other than understanding compulsive eating better, is that I really do enjoy my food today. I don't hate my food anymore, I've made peace with it. Food is no longer my enemy. I really enjoy learning new recipes and ways to enjoy my food without feeling shameful and guilty about it.

I have to surrender each and everyday so that I don't start thinking I am a normal eater all of a sudden. Step 1 reminds me that I don't graduate from my program. It reminds me that my life would be miserable if I had to be back in the food again. I hope I never forget how crazy my mind is around food and how shameful I felt before OA.

Tammy G.

Curbing My Fear of Anger

By at least second grade, I could feel people's unexpressed anger. It gave me a heavy feeling in the pit of my stomach; it felt dangerous. No one expressed anger in our family of four, but I felt the tension. On the rare occasions that anger was expressed I felt I might be abandoned or annihilated. I became a charming, engaging child who kept the peace. (Even as I write this, the whole matter seems like in a mist, as if I can't quite get my hands around the reality of it, but it feels true.)

My own anger was also heavy inside and frightening. Eating something made that heavy, frightened feeling go away, so as I became more vigilant and more a people pleaser, I ate to numb my fear of anger. For years.

When I joined OA four years ago and became abstinent, of course anger and fear were my greatest challenges. I learned to breathe deeply to loosen the tightness inside when I felt others unexpressed anger. I learned to say to myself 'You're feeling a feeling. It's only a feeling. It will pass.' I'd remind myself that if I ate compulsively to numb the fear, it would bring back the craziness of craving and obsession. I learned to call my sponsor and to ask my Higher Power to be by my side with the right words or action.

I still don't like feeling other people's anger, especially unexpressed anger floating just below the surface. And angry words between people still feel like they could cause final ruptures in a relationship. But my friend who grew up in a household with 14 people says such outbursts are passing—things that sane people accept as part of life. Being in OA and working the steps today shows me that when I am in fit spiritual condition no one else's feelings or actions have the power to knock me off balance.

Anonymous

2016 Unity Spring Retreat in Buffalo! Come have fun BEFORE the retreat! To make this retreat fabulous...

WE NEED YOU!

Contact us at oabuffaloretreat@gmail.com and tell us what your favorite skill sets are! We'll match you with the perfect opportunity!

Volunteer options include: Be A Speaker, Center Liaison - Menu, Center Liaison - Rooms, Decorations, Front Desk/Registration, Lead A Class, Marketing, Packets & Gifts, Silent Auction Team, Small Group Support, Speaker/Panel Coordination - Programs, Volunteer Coordination.

Watch for more news in the February Edition of Expressions of Unity
When the winning group is announced!

Registration will be open with the February Expressions of Unity.
Plan ahead Spaces will fill fast!

NOFOOLIN WITH RECOVERY!! April 1st, 2nd, & 3rd 2016!



OA Quick Steps Workshop **Two-Session Format Workshop** **Saturdays from 9:30am-12:30pm** **January 16 & 30, 2016** **Pilgrim Lutheran** **3901 First Ave S, Minneapolis**

To register, contact Julie C. at 612-558-3687 or oaquicksteps@gmail.com.
Registration mandatory. Numbers are limited. There are no fees for this workshop, but we will be collecting a 7th Tradition donation. Time commitment is two, three-hour sessions, plus homework. Expect to be very busy working on recovery for these weeks!

***For people who are new to OA or just need
help getting through the Steps***

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 and work through the 12 Steps in just two 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.

TSW Corner

Welcome to the TSW Corner, a place where you can come to find Twelfth Step Within ideas - ideas on how to carry the message to the still suffering compulsive overeater already in our rooms. Twelfth Step Within ... because 'Together We Can Do What We Could Never Do Alone!' For more information about 'Twelfth Step Within' go to: www.oa.org/membersgroups/twelfthstepwithin/

If you have ideas to share in this 'Corner', send them to Annette at aryan52@comcast.net.

This month we offer you hope in the form of personal story of one of our members which she has entitled:

Tried, Tried, and Tried Again

When I first came to OA, I heard a lot of things. Some of them I liked; some I didn't. Most of them either scared or confused me. Others simply didn't sink in for one reason or another, even if intellectually I understood them. But, I continued to come to meetings and soon I experienced the first of many spiritual changes. One of them was that I came to believe in a Higher Power and began to form a relationship with what I call the Great Spirit. I began to feel and act differently toward myself and other people in my life.

In spite of the positive changes, I couldn't find or keep abstinence for more than 20 minutes or at most a couple of days. I kept searching and I kept coming back to meetings. I saw glimpses of the recovery I so desperately wanted and needed. I tried, tried, and tried again. One thing led to another and I became increasingly convinced that I would never get better, that I would only get worse in my compulsive eating. By the grace of God, I finally came to a point of surrender. Only then was I willing to put down the food and be open to listening to those who had been gifted with abstinence. The gift was given to me, too, and I'm so grateful for it. I found hope and a way out in the understanding voices and kind eyes of the Fellowship.

Anonymous



Expressions of Unity

The February *Expressions of Unity* will focus on Step Two "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." and will be sponsored by the Wednesday 6pm St Joan of Arc meeting. Although one meeting or group generally sponsors each newsletter, we welcome articles from anyone. Please indicate if it is okay to print your name with your article and email your contributions by January 16, 2016 to ExpressionsofUnity@gmail.com.



Conference Dial-in Number:
(712) 432-0360

UIG Meeting Participant Access
Code: 468702#

Details of the telephone system and keypad options;

<http://www overeaters.org/conferencing.html>

All articles written are the opinion of the writer and not of OA as a whole or of the *Expressions of Unity* newsletter.



Intergroup Board

Chair—Peg M	612-280-6119	Pegm.unityIG@gmail.com
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Treasurer—Bob S	763-229-6196	bonasachs@g.com
Secretary—Jill	651-739-0212	jshortreed@centurylink.net

Unity Intergroup Mark Your Calendar...

January 9 and February 13	12:30-2:30	Unity Intergroup
January 16 and February 20	1-2:15	OA Newcomers Meeting
January 16 and 30	9:30am to 12:30pm	OA Quicksteps
January 30	10am	Golden Valley Anni- versary meeting
February 27, 2016	9a to 3p	Unity Day, Owatonna

Region 4 and WSO events...
Visit oaregion4.org or oa.org for details

June 10-12, 2016	2016 World Service Convention, Boston
September 1-4, 2016	2016 Region 4 Convention



Web submissions are due the first Saturday of each month.

Unity Intergroup meets the second Saturday of each month at Sumner Library.

Newcomer Meeting is the third Saturday of each month at Sumner Library. All are welcome.

Newsletter articles are due the third Saturday of each month.

