

Expressions of Unity

The Newsletter of Unity Intergroup

www.overeaters.org



May 2023

Special Edition Buffalo Retreat recap!

Pages 5-11

Enjoy the photo gallery, read what attendees had to say, and read a very special writing on Freedom from Insanity & Hopelessness by our Intergroup Chairperson, Jean K.

The May Intergroup meeting

will be held on

Saturday, May 13, 2023

from 12:30 – 2:30pm

via Zoom

ID 810 4426 4132 /

PW 12345#

Phone: 312-626-6799 12345#

Did You Know?

Where do I start? Everything a newcomer needs to know is available for purchase, but you can also download a free PDF of the pamphlet as well.

<https://oa.org/what-to-expect/where-do-i-start/>

The free PDF download is available in 21 languages!!

Twelfth Step Within Corner

Are you looking for help getting back to abstinence? The OA World Service Organization has the below free download available.

From Slip or Relapse to Recovery – an action plan for reclaiming and retaining our abstinence. <https://oa.org/app/uploads/2021/08/from-slip-or-relapse-to-recovery.pdf>

Keep coming back!

2023 Big Book Study (Zoom)

“Find Abstinence Through the Big Book”

Friday–Sunday, May 19–21

\$25 registration fee

[Download flyer/registration form](#)



Save the Date!

MN State Convention

Oct 6 + 7, 2023



Crowne Plaza Hotel, Plymouth, MN

- Special Room rate of \$115 plus tax
- Entertainment and recovery speakers
- Abstinent lunch included in registration

Watch for registration information at Overeaters.org (sign up for email alerts)

Expressions of Unity

The Newsletter of Unity Intergroup

www.overeaters.org



May 2023

Step 5:

Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs...

How many times have I taken Step 5 in less than seven full years in OA? How many more will I need to take? I don't know the answer to the first question. To the second, I say "As many as I need."

As a human being, it is inevitable that I will continue to do thoughtless, stupid things that impact my friends and family. As a recovering compulsive overeater and sugar addict, it is essential that I keep working all the steps, including the really tough ones like steps five and nine.

Who really wants to admit to themselves, let alone to God and another human being, the exact nature of their wrongs? I do – now that I know how important that step is to my continued abstinence. It helps, of course, that I know that God and the human being who hears my fifth step will not think less of me. So, I really just need to be able to get over myself and take the step as often and as many times as needed. In the meantime, I can be honest with myself each day and apologize/atone/amend before a little harm becomes a big one. Thank God for bringing me to and keeping me in this 12-step program of recovery.

Jeanine N.

Community Conversations with the Region 4 Chair
Meets monthly: 3rd Sunday at 5 PM CST on Zoom

An informal gathering of fellows from across Region 4!

ZOOM

ID: 918 9633 5029

Passcode: 182172

Freedom five - Freedom from isolation!

No longer must we go it alone. No longer must we each depend upon our own unsteady willpower. We have the amazing blessing of taking off our masks and showing another human exactly who we are, and receiving unconditional love and acceptance, free of judgment. We don't need to despair in our weaknesses and defects of character, we simply get to take the inventory and bring another trusted human being along to help us identify patterns in our lives of old thinking and behaviors.

These patterns no longer serve us, and we get to move forward asking God to remove our defects. Thank you, God, that I am no longer alone!

Tirzah M.

Buffalo Retreat—April 14–16, 2023

Buffalo Facts:

109 Attendees

\$1700 raised for scholarships from the raffle

Committee:

Co-chairs:
Amy R & Mary B.

Registration:
Jackie K

Finance:
Michelle B

Decorations:
Christi C. & Cathy J.

Speakers:
Kari E

Small Group Coord.
Kathy M.

Check-in & Greeting:
Katherine B & Gwen H.

Raffle: Coordinator:
Heidi K

Bingo Coordinator:
Nancy K

The 2023 Buffalo Retreat was a huge success despite some true Minnesota weather. Guests arrived on Friday afternoon to 80° with clear sunny skies.; and departed Sunday to 30° and snow—only in Minnesota right?

A very special thanks to the 2023 Buffalo Committee, you raised the bar! “Your attention to every little detail did not go unnoticed!” Special thanks to all who volunteered in any capacity—it takes a village and WE did it together!

Friday night was filled with fabulous speakers on the freedoms of recovery, fellowship and BINGO with some great prizes. Saturday, guests had the option of morning yoga followed by more speakers, and small groups. Saturday night after dinner more fun was had with the raffle drawings and fellowship. We broke the record with funds raised this year.

Sunday morning, guests had the option of a special mass in the chapel, followed by a special wrap-up to the weekend. New connections were made, and longtime friendships were reunited! Newcomers found their solution, and others were able to reset, reinforce, and strengthen their recovery! Thanks to everyone for a healing retreat!

Together WE Get Better!!

Christi C.



Buffalo Retreat—April 14–16, 2023



Here is what I have to say about the Buffalo Retreat... As you can see by the smiles on the faces of the people captured in these photos, the OA Buffalo Retreat was amazing! I had no idea what to expect. However, despite the fact that I hadn't met most of the participants "in person" and some only via Zoom meetings, prior to attending, it was like coming home to a family reunion! Our stories are each uniquely different and/or our own; yet, the similarities and shared commonalities within bring us together. This bond of "WE" united us in such a special way. Many thanks for your supportive ways, hospitality, and welcoming home. **Cindy K-W**

Buffalo Retreat—April 14–16, 2023



I love going on the Buffalo retreat it never disappoints. I have gone many years and never had a bad experience. It is great to see other people continuing on their recovery year after year, and also hearing some great speakers and watching people transform.” **Lisa F.**

Freedom From Hopelessness & Insanity

Jean K.

I do not know if I was born a compulsive overeater, but I have no memory of a time in my life when I was not preoccupied with food and my body size. An early memory of wanting more came up recently. I remember being held by my father. We were in a long line and we got a vaccine that was administered on a sugar cube. I remember wanting another sugar cube. I could not have been more than three. I have turned to food to soothe, comfort, excite, relieve boredom, and entertain. I experienced a disordered relationship with food and my body from a very young age.

I was a chubby kid beginning around third grade when my weight started going up. My dieting career began when I was 11. Thus, setting the yoyo cycle in motion. This was repeated over and over through my teen years – and regardless of the number on the scale, I looked in the mirror and saw fat. I was obsessed with sneaking, trying to restrict, trying to “be good.” I was certain that those pounds were ALL that was keeping me from having the life I wanted – the attention of the boys I liked, being part of the cool crowd. The pattern of yo-yo dieting; obsession with food and my body carried through my high school and college years – into adulthood. Through wedding bells and burying my parents.

I recognize now that I suffered from anxiety—and had ineffective tools to cope with it. Food became my solution. I have heard it said “if the only tool in your toolbox is a hammer, you start treating every problem like a nail.” Since food was the only coping tool in my toolbox, I treated every problem like hunger.

I experienced Insanity and Hopelessness in my disease in unreasonable thoughts that THIS TIME I could have just one trigger food and thinking that if another person behaved differently, I would not eat compulsively. I was trying to live by self-propulsion, self-will and thinking my way to a new outcome.

I found my way into the rooms of OA in February 1992. I got a sponsor, quit eating between meals, stopped consuming sweets and started working the steps. I found some relief. I stopped gaining weight—maybe even lost a few pounds; but I was not able to put it together to have a lasting recovery and kept relapsing back into the food and obsession. We hear in our literature “we

Freedom From Hopelessness & Insanity - pg. 2

have learned why (we have this disease) is unimportant. What deserves the attention of the still suffering compulsive overeater is this: there is a proven workable method by which we can arrest our illness.”

I kept coming to meetings and wanted to believe that the solution to my eating disorder was in the 12-steps. Then I heard: “if you say you have a belief, but it does not inform your behavior, you really have an opinion.” I grew up in a family that was very active in our church community. It wasn’t just being in church on Sunday mornings. It was central to how our days were structured. But my concept of a Higher Power couldn’t stop me from eating compulsively. It was a truly perplexing issue in my life – and a barrier to my recovery. I thought if I could just “Figure Out” this whole Higher Power thing, I could move forward.

Then I heard again the passage from the BB, page 47 “We needed to ask ourselves but one short question. “Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?” As soon as a man can say that he does believe, or is willing to believe, we emphatically assure him that he is on his way....it was comforting to learn that we could commence at a simpler level.”

“Our Invitation To You” from OA.org says:

“Once we become abstinent, the preoccupation with food diminishes and, in many cases, leaves us entirely. We then find that, to deal with our inner turmoil, we have to have a new way of thinking, of acting on life rather than reacting to it —in essence, a new way of living. From this vantage point, we begin the Twelve Step program of recovery, moving beyond the food and the emotional havoc to a fuller living experience. As a result of practicing the Steps, the symptoms of compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors are removed on a daily basis, achieved through the process of surrendering to something greater than ourselves; the more total our surrender, the more fully realized our freedom from food obsession.”

Step 2: Came to Believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. The freedoms associated with Step 2 are: Freedom from Insanity and Hopelessness.

Freedom from Hopelessness happened because I “Came to believe.”

Freedom From Hopelessness & Insanity - pg. 3

Freedom from Insanity happened because I cooperated with the “Power greater than myself that could restore me to sanity.” So, how did I “Come to Believe?”

I saw it in you—my fellows in recovery. The concept of God I grew up with hadn’t yet restored me to sanity around food. I listened to my fellows and realized that this program – the collective wisdom of the men and women who came before me in AA and OA -- was a power greater than me that could restore me to sanity. This Power; this process of the 12-steps, could restore me to sanity.

I had a friend in program who had started glow with her recovery. Not only did her body start changing, she had serenity about her – amid some difficult life circumstances. Her recovery attracted me. I wanted what she had – so I asked her how she was doing it.

She told me and I said “well, crap.” But I wanted what she had. She had gone all in on this program – really taking to heart that half measures avail us nothing. I had years and years of asking God to make me willing to take action. Why did this time work? I don’t know. I wish I could tell you the magic key that turned so I did take action instead of sitting on my couch eating and fantasizing about being thin and having a perfect life. But I kept coming back—I did not quit before the miracle happened.

I got on my knees and asked for the willingness and ability to go all in. I said out loud “whatever it takes.”

And I realized that “surrender” is an action. For me, it meant getting really clean with my food. Weighed and measured portions. No sugar—processed or natural (not even “sweetened with fruit juice”). No flour from any grain. No artificial sweeteners. Committing my food to my sponsor. I had resisted weighing and measuring for years because I equated it with the obsession and a diet mentality. However, in practice, I find that doing this gives me freedom from the mental obsession and physical craving.

My abstinence date is April 14, 2016. By the Grace of God and the fellowship, I am celebrating seven years free of food obsession. My body has released around 90 lbs from the weight I was on that date and I have maintained a healthy body weight for past five years - the first time in my life.

Freedom From Hopelessness & Insanity - pg. 4

I went back to my journal from early abstinence and one of the things I wrote down was something a speaker said at a meeting: “Nothing in program is going to change the fact that crap is going to happen. Going to meetings and complaining about it isn’t going to bring me recovery.” If I wait until the external circumstances of my life are perfect, I will not ever abstain or recover. I must be willing to follow the directions no matter what else is going on.

Some of you were here five years ago at Buffalo and held me up during my Saturday evening here. Being here was respite from caring for my husband who was on hospice care. Four weeks later my husband died from cancer. Life-on-life’s terms. I heard a speaker share about her own traumatic loss and she said “It does not matter what life circumstances come my way. I am not lost. I know who I am and whose I am.” I can tell you that applying the discipline of following my food plan and working the steps changed my life in profound ways and not only in those days of crisis. It didn’t happen instantaneously or without effort; but by showing up one day at a time and doing the next thing in front of me it unfolded. The connection to others, the ability to act in my own life, being able to cope with the mundane days and the frustrating days and the heartbreaking days of my husband’s cancer diagnosis and death are not visible; but are at least as profound as the dramatic weight loss. I heard another speaker early in my recovery say “the weight loss is the least interesting thing that happened to me.” I don’t want to diminish the gift of the physical aspect of my recovery, but it is just the tip of the iceberg. The first, visible layer of the miracles. And recovery is a miracle – but it is not magic. There is a difference.

The insanity I experienced was not only in my relationship to food, but also in how all my thinking worked. I was trying to think my life to suit me from the couch – fearful of economic insecurity and morbidly obese imagining a thin and wealthy person’s life. I knew it was insanity – and I recognized I had lived in a fantasy world from a very early age and I didn’t know how to stop doing it.

In my OA meetings, I heard – “trust the process” “next right thing” “be where your hands are” – all those things helped restore me to sanity around that character defect. The program slogans are not platitudes. Trust the process means I move forward without having to have it figured

Freedom From Hopelessness & Insanity - pg. 5

out before I do. Next right thing means I take SOME action after pausing to ask for direction. The next right action might be packing my food for tomorrow, or it might mean going for a walk to clear my head, or making a call to schedule an appointment I have been putting off. “Be where your hands are” is one that sustained me through the crisis times. It was a reminder to stay in the present – take my focus off all the ways everything could go to hell. It was also a reminder to sit with the feelings.

Voices of Recovery April 8 – p 99 *“Everything goes better when I cooperate with how things really work” I’m freed of insanity when I “employ the Twelve-Step principles: self-honesty, hope, faith, courage, integrity, willingness, humility, self-discipline, love, perseverance, spiritual awareness and service.”*

One of my fellows shared “When I try to go it alone, it is a lonely, hopeless place. Now I have so much hope. I am becoming myself again.” This resonated with me deeply. For years I thought of myself as a shadow in my own life. I was really, really good at disappearing into the woodwork. I felt like a sponge – whatever energy was in the room – that’s what I soaked up and gave off. Coming to believe – and acting on that belief – have given me agency in my own life. I’m discovering what I like; what I want. You shared your experience, strength, and hope with me – and I learned that I could take steps I didn’t believe in and get results I couldn’t deny.

Voices of Recovery, pg 345 - *“we begin to see the remarkable way the Steps will, from now on, continue to remove unnecessary turmoil and pain from our lives... More gifts are in store for us as we continue working the program and experiencing the miracle of permanent recovery, one day at a time.”— OA 12&12, pp. 89–90*

Ours is a disease of the attitudes. However, the years I’ve spent in OA have shown me that although my disease is progressive, so is my recovery. When I was active in my eating disorder, I hated everything about my life. My world consisted of binges, blame, fear, shame, jealousy, and rage. I was imprisoned by unrealistic expectations of people, bitterly resenting their imperfections. I also hated myself because I couldn’t stop eating. Negativity breeds hopelessness, and I was trapped.

Freedom From Hopelessness & Insanity - pg. 6

Recovery teaches me that my gratitude and serenity snowball, just like my negative attitudes did. As I work the Twelve Steps of this program, it becomes fulfilling to focus on the good in my life. It doesn't always come easily; sometimes I struggle But when my attitudes slip, I know there's hope. Now my world consists of daily miracles, both large and small, that keep the light in my eyes and lightness in my heart. "

As it says in the Big Book on page xxix in The Doctor's Opinion: ..."once a psychic change has occurred, the very same person who seemed doomed, who had so many problems he despaired of ever solving them, suddenly finds himself easily able to control his desire for alcohol, the only effort necessary being that required to follow a few simple rules."

Jean K