



# Expressions of Unity

The Newsletter of Unity Intergroup  
www.overeaters.org

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## News and Noteworthy

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The May Intergroup meeting will be held on Saturday, May 11 from 12:30 – 2:30pm via [Zoom](#) ID 810 4426 4132 / PW 12345 Phone: 312-626-6799 12345

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## Unity Intergroup Fall Convention Save the Date!

October 25, 26, 2024  
Crowne Plaza Minneapolis  
West Hotel

The theme is “Acceptance is the Answer”. Scholarships will be available. Mark your calendar now and watch for more info to follow. You won’t want to miss it!

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## News from Unity Intergroup

### Unity Intergroup 2024 Buffalo Retreat Report

April 14-16 Ninety-one fellows gathered at King's House Retreat Center in Buffalo, Minnesota, for the 2024 Unity Intergroup OA Retreat. Many hands went into making the weekend happen and thanks go out to everyone who did service!

For those who attended, the post-retreat survey should be in your email.

The recordings of the speakers will be posted on [overeaters.org](#) under Events / Speaker Recordings. There is no cost to access the recordings.

Two of our fellows volunteered to chair the 2025 retreat to be held April 4-6, 2025. Watch for more information as we get closer to that date!

### Transition to Region 5

As of June 1<sup>st</sup>, Unity Intergroup will be part of Region 5. Region 5 has a number of exciting recovery events being planned and we are invited to them all. Please see the message below from the Region 5 Convention Committee.

*“We are now starting our countdown to the Region 5 Convention in Cleveland Sep 6-8. We are just about 120 days away from seeing you in Cleveland. We want to say to you “Welcome Home” in our exciting weekend of recovery and connection.*”

*“You can follow this link to the Region 5 website <https://oaregion5.regfox.com/region-5-oa-convention-2024> or use the attached flier above to access the registration and hotel information. EARLY BIRD registration ends June 7th.*”

*“Please share this information regularly with your meetings and all OA members in your intergroup.*”

*“We look forward to seeing you soon in Cleveland.”*

Region 5 Convention Committee

## **Step Five: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.**

It says in the OA 12 and 12 that step 5 is the beginning of the end of our isolation. That was my experience. My first one was about 6 years ago, and it's been a very long and bumpy road since then. A lot of pain, relapses, and suffering. But also, despite my best efforts otherwise, a lot of healing, joy and love. Somehow, in the thick of new and seemingly endless bottoms, god was working miracles in my life. It didn't feel like it at the time, but I've come to understand healing as a deeply mysterious gift, and if I keep coming back and doing this work, miracles DO happen. For me, I really can trace it back to my first step 5. Honestly, it was underwhelming in a lot of ways, because I had this expectation that it would be a burning bush, lightning striking, seismic spiritual awakening, and it wasn't.

But what did happen was; for the first time in my life, I was honest about things I'd never been honest about with anyone, things that I was barely able to be honest with myself about. And, for sure, there were things I wasn't ready to be honest about yet; things that have come up in subsequent step 4s and 5s. But it was the beginning of the end of my isolation from my fellows, god, and myself. It came through sharing my life honestly with fellows, god, and myself.

A lot has changed since then, and I like to think I've become a more honest, humble, loving, considerate, and kind person. I've found long term abstinence, which is still so incredible to me. One day at a time, of course.

None of these changes would have been possible without step 5. I don't know how it works, I just know that it works if we work it, and I know that we're ALL worth it. Nathan V.

### ***“The \_\_\_\_\_ time is the charm! How the 5<sup>th</sup> Step brought a gentle release from isolation in my life.”***

I'd been in AA for a long time when I first found my way to OA. I'd been a food addict my whole life but didn't really know that until I quit smoking in my late 30s and started gaining weight. Initially I explored OA HOW as I was acquainted with someone who was in that program. It worked for me weight loss wise and I learned a lot, but I wasn't ready yet. I stopped going to meetings and, just as it was for me with drug addiction/alcoholism, once I stopped going to meetings, the clock was ticking before I'd end up back in the food.

Luckily, the recovery I was experiencing everywhere outside of food made my neglect of OA pretty uncomfortable and, one night when I was suffering, I Googled regular OA meetings and lo and behold, there was a meeting two blocks from the house we'd recently moved into. (Thanks, Higher Power!) That was about 11 years ago. It's still my home group and it's a wonderful group of people that I'm so grateful for. I also found a couple other OA meetings around that time and still attend one of them regularly too.

But I was still struggling with food. I remember complaining a lot to my AA sponsor about how OA was different than AA and I was stuck listening for what I *didn't* relate to in meetings, rather than what I *did* relate to. Finally, my AA sponsor said “Well, have you worked the Steps in that

program? Do you have an OA sponsor?" He knew the answer was "No" to both. We laughed pretty hard. I'm so grateful for the kind of humble, gentle humor I've been able to open to. I like to say now that "I don't laugh *at* myself, but I love to laugh *about* myself." There was a time when my dis-ease made me very sensitive and defensive.

So, I got a sponsor. We met and made a "Red, Yellow, Green Light Food List" and through what I'd learned in AA and OA HOW I started to get some real experiences of recovery through abstinence in OA. I struggled with my first sponsor as she was a very direct speaker and she had almost no tolerance for the vagueness that had allowed my dis-ease to sit quietly in the background while also having a hand on the wheel now and again. We never made it to the Steps. I got mad at her about something I can't even remember now, and stopped calling. That's been a classic storyline in my journey. But she helped me get a little further. After some time passed and I got more solid, we became friends. I ran into her once at the grocery store and almost started crying as I realized my cart was full of abstinent food! Hers was too! We hugged! Sadly, she died about a year ago. I was really struck realizing how much she'd affected my life and journey. Recovery is like that sometimes. I'm grateful now for everyone I've met on this journey.

A few more stretches of good abstinence and a few more wipe-outs and sponsors went by. I got a great dietitian and food plan. I finally met a sponsor who I could really hear deeply. We did the Steps. I'd always had this idea deep down that since I'd been in AA for like 28 years at that point and had been through the Steps many, many times both as a sponsor and sponsee, that I didn't really need to do them in OA. So grateful I got past that too!

But I was still not prepared for what doing Steps 4 and 5 would be like. I didn't really think that my food had hurt others. But working with that sponsor – she was so great – I learned that a huge portion of my life had been built on a kind of dishonesty that's not that visible at the surface. And what dishonesty has done in my life is create separation from both my spiritual self and others. Suddenly I could see how my intimacy with my wife had been terribly broken because I was sick from eating a lot and didn't like who I was... I wasn't comfortable cuddling. And I was so dishonest with myself that it wasn't possible for me to be honest with others. Truly. I even discovered that I was a litterbug! And in my non-dis-ease life I'm an environmentalist! But one night my sponsor was talking about how she used to throw fast food "evidence" out the window so her husband wouldn't find it and – ding ding ding – I realized I did that too!

I think my food addiction was partially inherited from my Mom who has struggled with food her whole life. She went to an OA-centered food retreat about 10 years ago and found abstinence. She attended the OA Buffalo Retreat after she'd been in program a couple years and it just so happened that the keynote speaker was my sponsor and – my Mom didn't know this of course due to anonymity – but my sponsor told a story that was from my recovery and my Mom recognized it! I was becoming more and more surrounded by recovery. But as many of you may have experienced, my dis-ease was not done with me. I ended up slipping off. Another period of in and out food recovery happened. I decided to try the food retreat my Mom had such a good experience with and am happy to report that it really filled in more blanks.

Doing my 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Steps there, where I met my current sponsor who was one of the speakers, things got deeper. I learned that I have a profound struggle in accepting love from others. I learned that when I'm afraid I get really self-centered and controlling. I have social anxiety. I'm prone to some depression too. Food had always been a sort of sedative for me. I would spend a lot of time feeling tight in my body without quite knowing it and it was attractive

to binge for the numbness it gave me at night. But I also learned that the numbness hadn't been working for a long time. Food didn't work anymore. And it hadn't worked for a long time.

After working the Steps with the OA workbook with my current sponsor I started to soften and relax. My meditation practice got much more serious... though, serious isn't the best word? I had help from a therapist who really helped me see what he called a "crisis / numbness" model in my life. I'd go and go and go on self-will each day and get more and more tight with nervous crisis-like feelings, then I'd want to collapse into numbness with food at night.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Steps I did were – as it says in the literature – the beginning of the end of my isolation. A feeling of peace washes over me even now as I write this. I'm quite literally moved in a somatic sense. I learned that I mis-take "intensity" when what I really want is "intimacy" and similarly will often accept "sensations" when what I really want from life is "meaning."

I keep doing the Steps now and my life is transformed. It is not without struggle! I often say to one of my sponsees, "My life isn't perfect! But it's better than perfect!"

I remember a sort of salty, older sponsor I had for a while who hated talking on the phone – one time I called in a tizzy about some food curveballs I encountered at work... I was definitely heading toward crisis and he forcefully interrupted me and said with irritation and firmness "Can I ask you something? What is it you're looking for? A frictionless life? Because that ain't what we're doin' here." Wow. It changed my life. I suddenly caught a glimpse of what people meant when they said "imperfect" in relation to their recovery and abstinence.

I've just lived through about 5 of the hardest years of my life and lost my Dad to Alzheimer's last year. He was my best friend. I'm also high risk for Covid due to some health conditions and that's been such a difficult road. But I'm happy to say that I live life on life's terms now, a day at a time. I work the Steps. I write to my sponsor pretty much daily. I check in my food. I call when I'm in trouble. I go to meetings. I pray and meditate. I take a lotta classes on the internet related to spirituality. I am in recovery today and it feels great. By Matt O.

### **Tradition Five: Each Group has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to all compulsive eaters who still suffer.**

I joined OA about 13 years ago. At that time, I was pretty shy in group. I didn't get into my issues too deeply. Making phone calls was hard for me. The longer I attended meetings, I became aware of how important they were to everyone who made the effort of calling other members. I'm in another 12-step program and it also stressed how by calling other members you are also helping that member by telling your experience. So, I was told I was actually doing 12 step work by making that call. I felt good about this. In the OA 12 x12 Tradition 5 (page 120) it says "Every time we offered our experience, strength and hope to the still suffering compulsive overeater, we give back what we have been given and this continues the flow and healing power that fosters our own recovery." This has been a really big help to me because I do like helping others. So, this encourages me to make the call and answer the phone.

I have to remind myself that it isn't always newcomers who struggle. I can also be people I attend meetings with weekly. Life gets in our way often. It helps us see we are not alone with our disease.

I am also reminded how important the OA principles are in our daily lives. It reminds us that when we sponsor or talk or listen to others, it's important to listen and only talk about our own experience in our program, not to give advice. I've learned how important it is to know that everyone's food plan is different. They have likely gotten help from a professional and had a plan designed to their needs. We cannot judge how they do their program.

When we follow the 5th tradition, we will be practicing the 12th step by welcoming newcomers which is the primary purpose of the group.

Jule SC

## Tradition Five:

Before OA I had no idea what my purpose was. In fact, I would say I was purposeless. There's a lot of great things with tradition Five. It gives me purpose. Carry the message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers. I knew from working with my sponsor and from going to meetings to reach out to newcomers. Tradition 5 also reminds me to reach out to those who are still suffering and those who I haven't seen in the meetings for a while. It's important for me to try to connect with people. One of my favorite outreach lines is, "one phone call saves two lives".

Jake K.

## Recovery from Relapse

Relapse is not inevitable. But it is an important part of some OAs' journey. And it is possible to recover from relapse!

A warm, welcoming group of OA members who understand meet via Zoom at 6 p.m. Central time every Thursday. (See details below.) If you are struggling or in full-blown relapse, please join us in this meeting where you will be loved for exactly who you are right now. No judgment. No shame. No longer will you have a sense of hopelessness.

If you are in recovery and would like to do 12th-step service by simply showing up, and perhaps sharing a bit of your experience, strength and hope, please join us.

Nearly every week, we have a speaker who has recovered from relapse. These speakers know all about relapse and are happy to share how they got back on track.

You can join the meeting via this link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87100236034?pwd=d3ZsYThSTDViYm1JWlk0RWhLWE9Kdz09>

Meeting ID: 871 0023 6034 Passcode: 93D9ie

Or call 312-626-6799, enter the same ID as above, then enter Passcode: 546650

If you have any questions or would like to speak (you must be in recovery after relapse and have at least 30 days of abstinence), you may contact: Annette, [aprlovesoa@gmail.com](mailto:aprlovesoa@gmail.com) or (763) 447-5688, or Jeanine at [jeaninenistler@outlook.com](mailto:jeaninenistler@outlook.com) or (320) 493-2438.

Remember, together we can do what we could never do alone.

- Jeanine N.

## Are you new to OA and looking for how to start? Is your meeting looking for resources for newcomers?

The below link will take you to information and resources:

<https://oa.org/and-your-journey-begins/>

The pamphlet “Where Do I Start” is available for free pdf download in 21 languages! Printed pamphlets are available for purchase in the bookstore.

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