



**JULY 2007**

Volume 30, No. 3

I'm Joan, and I'm a compulsive overeater and editor of the Steppingstone.

At the last Intergroup Meeting our Treasurer, Larry A., noted that not all groups are submitting their 7<sup>th</sup> tradition share to the Intergroup Treasury. We ask all group treasurers to keep current with this responsibility; if you feel that Larry may not have received the donation you sent, don't hesitate to contact Larry (info on back page).

As always, I encourage you to list yourselves as available for sponsoring, or as a speaker – volunteer to be a telephone contact, join the email loop – these are all services we perform for one another that keep us on the road to recovery. And don't forget to keep sending those articles to the Steppingstone!

Yours in service, Joan 410 483 4212 [imwehberg@hotmail.com](mailto:imwehberg@hotmail.com)/[joanmwehberg@yahoo.com](mailto:joanmwehberg@yahoo.com)

### WORD SEARCH

G O D F L E S I D G N I T I R W K C E N B O S  
B A H C T P H N F C A G I K S Y O I S H A R E  
U F N P E I B T S R T W K D T T W M U K F B R  
H Y G C R Y H E L P I N G S P N E H A S N L V  
P W I E C A R G U N E P E K C E L P R F C M I  
U A R W A L N R W E N N U T R T F I G K G Y C  
L N E C O N T I N U O U S A B S T I N E N C E  
E S K L G N L T E H U F D P U I K W A P I O L  
V D A M B H D Y I R G O L W N S F N D T L S M  
F R E E D O M E T O H C A C D R T Y P H A W E  
B C P H O P E F U L B U E M W E O L W G E D R  
Y T S G I D U O T R U S T C E P S E R F H M A  
S W O N D E R F U L H E N I L P I C S I D T G

Find these words, all of which were taken from the November 2006 issue of our very own Steppingstone.

- Integrity     Share     Service     Gift
- Respect     Wonderful     Freedom     Focus
- Discipline     Enough     Step     Speaker
- Honesty     Helping     Writing     Grace
- Persistent     Healing     Trust     Continuous Abstinence
- Special     Hopeful     Awe

*--from an anonymous recovering compulsive eater in Baltimore.*

## TIME FOR THE FIFTH TRADITION WITHIN?

Recently, several OA members told me that they were on the receiving end of some rather scathing e-mails and telephone messages from another member that questioned their abstinence or their qualification to give service because of their physical size. Some have reacted so strongly to these unsolicited communications that they now avoid meetings where they know this person attends.

While I haven't received such communication myself, I was disturbed at the tone and content of the messages described to me. I can't help but wonder how this will affect the fellowship as a whole. What if a vulnerable member, whether a newcomer or one with more time in OA, is the recipient of such invective? The member may view one person's good-intended message as a condemnation from all of Overeaters Anonymous! What if the member decides to leave the program over it? That could be a death sentence; as I've heard time and again from members that OA was their last hope.

The Fifth Tradition states that our primary purpose is to carry the message of recovery to those who still suffer. We may believe that means only to carry the message to those who have not yet entered our rooms, but sometimes it must be carried within. How do we carry the message of recovery to those already in our fold: with outstretched arms or a baseball bat?

Like the Twelfth Step Within, perhaps it's time to begin the service of the Fifth Tradition Within. Service bodies could take a look at how to help members help each other to carrying the message of recovery in a supportive manner. This could be accomplished in workshops, newsletter articles, as a meeting topic, and by other means.

For me to fully and effectively carry the message of recovery to another, I must do so with courtesy, compassion, and courage. If I am concerned about the quality of another person's recovery, how can I best communicate that concern? I may want to discuss with my sponsor and trusted friends (and my Higher Power) what I want to say and why and I must respect anonymity. What is my motive? Am I taking another person's inventory? Is it my place to express this message? Is this a true concern that needs to be expressed to save someone's life?

If it is appropriate to forge ahead, what is the best method of communication? Is an e-mail appropriate, or would a telephone call or speaking in person be better? How would I feel if I received the message that I want to express? By what method of communication would I prefer to receive it? Am I prepared to extend the same courtesy? I may want to rehearse what I might say with my sponsor or a trusted recovering member so I am speaking in kindness but also not shying away from stating a painful truth.

For me to fully and effectively receive the message of recovery, I must be open-minded, discerning, and grateful. As a recovering addict, it's natural for me to shroud myself in a cloak of denial. I may need to hear from someone that my own recovery can be improved if I simply stop or change my behavior here and there. I need to be open-minded if another lovingly suggests that perhaps I may want to look at my physical recovery. Am I gaining weight? Am I overeating but believe I am abstinent? Am I lashing out in sideways anger? Am I in denial about some character defect? I must remember that this disease is cunning, baffling, and powerful, and that the members of Overeaters Anonymous are here to help me recover.

I have the right to take what I like and leave the rest. I have the right to disagree with someone's concern. I have the right to tell someone that I think he or she is out of line. I have the right and responsibility to deal with someone directly when it's not an abusive situation. I have the responsibility to look within myself when someone expresses concern. I have the responsibility to be courteous no matter how others treat me. I have the responsibility to adjust my food plan when I might be eating just a little bit too much. I have the responsibility to amend my behavior for the better when I am acting outside the spiritual suggestions of our beloved 12 Steps and 12 Traditions.

Finally, I have the responsibility to keep coming back to meetings and not allow personalities to triumph over principles. I must remember that an opinion of one member or others or mine is not the opinion of Overeaters Anonymous as a whole.

I hope that all of us will be courageous enough to offer kind but truthful words to members in trouble, and I hope that we will be open-minded enough to hear concerns. Courtesy, civility, and love will carry our message of recovery further than we can imagine. *Mike B., Baltimore, Maryland, USA*

**Region 7 Report from April 13-15 2007 -- Trusted servant Wajeeha**

My personal message from Region 7 this session was service. I have been a Representative since April 2005 and this was by far the best assembly I have attended. This session we had approximately 9 to 10 new representatives. Joan W. was unable to serve because of health issues. Getting an alternative Representative was like pulling teeth. Wendy agreed and we were represented by the three we are allowed. Thank you again, Wendy.

In October '07, all of Region Chairs will be at the October assembly. This is a "first" for the Delaware location. There are 3 Board positions that are open: Vice Chair, Corresponding Secretary, and Recording Secretary. The requirements can be found on the Region 7 website. In brief - 2 years of abstinence are required; individual must have attended 3 Region assemblies and must have two years of service above the meeting level.

This was the first assembly that HIPM/ PI and Intergroup insights were combined and now known as the **Outreach Committee**. Unity and 1st Tradition is now the **Unity Committee**.

**From the 12<sup>th</sup> Step Within committee:**

This committee adopted a new statement of purpose. This committee addresses relapse and recovery among other things. The official statement is on the Region 7 website. At the next assembly we will have a literature table with items to sell and to bring back to your Intergroups. Many items we offer have not been seen by all yet were discussed at Region. There will be a new link on the Region 7 website for 12 Step Speakers. This link will be in the resource library. Please pass this on to meetings that are seeking speakers.

**From the Unity Committee:** This committee helps our members find unity and diversity and the best atmosphere for personal recovery. Several topics from last October were discussed.

In an effort to strengthen our Intergroups and increase membership and our meetings it was suggested that each Intergroup conduct an Intergroup Inventory. Just as we do meeting inventories, bringing those same practices to our Intergroups.

We are suggesting that each Intergroup take back to the meeting level the idea of inviting outside groups to affairs that OA conducts. Groups such as FA, C-HOW, RFA as well as other eating disorder groups. We provide workshops, recovery retreats and many other program-related activities. It is an opportunity to work the 12<sup>th</sup> step. We are not advertising these events. We are inviting others that we may know that are part of these fellowships. We are not violating our 11<sup>th</sup> Tradition. We also are not a secret society!

NJIOA conducts a 13 week BB study. This is done twice a year. The additional 5 weeks they run a well advertised **5 Week Speaker Series**. The topics so far have been on the Traditions, "What is Intergroup," "What are service bodies?" -- The topics are never ending. They are service related, again to promote and encourage service. It is strongly suggested we give this idea consideration.

The Website Committee. I have been the Chair for 3 assemblies and will need to rotate out in October. We have 11 Intergroups in our region without websites and some of these do not send Representatives to Region. Eight members on our committee divided the 11 groups among themselves and will contact each group to see where we can assist them. Our Webmaster can help them with technical issues but not with setting up their websites.

The Region Board will create an information page for new reps in an effort to increase service. Explaining to new reps what to do, what's required, BEFORE attending the 1<sup>st</sup> assembly. Again, to encourage service. This will be in the Resource Library.

We have a Paypal account set up and it will be active in approximately 30 days. At this time only our Region 7 pins will be available for purchase. It was brought to our attention from another Intergroup that there were last names on our Region 7 website. Clearly an 11<sup>th</sup> Tradition violation and the names will be removed. We are implementing a program of having our stories live on our Region 7 website, like the series on the LA website. The committee will investigate the permission slips, the waivers and all the particulars needed to set this up.

**Letter to me from my disease:**

Dearest Friend,

Well, so you think you have another opportunity!?! Oh, good for you. Hmm. I am pausing to think if you are really committed or are you ready to come out and play with me?

No, I guess not, but that's ok. I am really, really patient. I don't really have anything to do but workout and make sure I am strong enough to overtake and seduce you as I have always done. I will wait for you always. I am loyal. I am confident, but most of all, I am waiting .....

**Letter to my disease:**

I guess you have forgotten that I have a Higher Power walking hand in hand with me, and as long as I make myself available to walk in the light of the spirit, you don't stand a chance. You are like a bad ex-lover. I may see you around town, but I won't get into bed with you. I have a chance to be serene, I have a chance to grow, and I have a chance to stay free of your bondage. You can wait in the wings if you want to, but the show is going on without you. *Anonymous*

## WORLD SERVICE BUSINESS CONFERENCE REPORT

To those hearing or reading my report, please take note, wherever you are in your program - one minute of serenity or abstinence or 100 years. This is a service that can hardly be described in words. What this service did for me and allows me to continue to do has propelled my program forever. One of the joys of I took away from this is conference was the true gift and understanding of Tradition Five

I arrived late Tuesday afternoon. One of the first people that I met was a woman, Millie, with TWO months in program. Millie was a volunteer at conference. Two months in program, and this delightful woman was serving as a volunteer at the World Service Business Conference. Later that night I learned that she is also a professional opera singer. A delegate I met that afternoon, Millie and I had dinner where Millie works. We were greeted as though we were entering with a celebrity. Our table was adorned with fresh cut flowers, and everyone in attendance greeted Millie. After dinner Millie performed, right from our table! I share this just as an example of one of the gifts of this program that I received at Conference. Two months in program, giving service.

I had not signed up for a committee prior to arriving. Once there, I did register for the Public Information Committee. When approached by a Trustee to sign on and do service on the Conference Literature Committee I initially said "No.". I felt that I was being pressured. With approximately 10 to 15 minutes to make a decision after asking my Higher Power's guidance, I walked into the Public Information Committee. In 30 seconds or less, I knew my Higher Power's message. I proceeded down the hall to the Conference Literature Committee! Talk about a spiritual experience! You are now reading the report of the Chair of a Sub-Committee within the CLC! More about this to follow.

I also sat in that night when a Parliamentary Procedure workshop was held as well as attending a late night OA meeting. I need to mention this meeting to show that the gifts continued. After leaving the meeting I was approached by a woman from Region 5 or 6. She wanted me to know that she remembered talking to me well over a year ago, when she called me about the meeting at 39th and Charles, my Home Group! She'd gotten my number as the contact person. Again, it's just a service. Who would have thought we would see each other again, after her weekend in Baltimore nearly 2 years ago. The gifts continued.

In the up coming editions I will continue to share my experience at this conference. I cannot imagine not going back. Was it worth my vacation time? Was it worth moving my work around on short notice for a week? Was it worth having to make a refrigerator from the white Styrofoam coolers (and getting ice everyday) because the hotel ran out of refrigerators? The answer is an astounding yes! I would do it all again. Give yourself a treat and take a service position at the meeting level. More WILL be revealed!!! In Love and Service, Wajeeha

***Editor's note: This is the second of three articles on our recent Sponsorship workshop. The last will cover "HOW IT ALL WORKS."***

### BEING A SPONSOREE

- If no sponsor is available, call anyone in the program. They can help at least temporarily.
- Get a sponsor to whom you can be accountable.
- A sponsor is a gatekeeper of my abstinence. I give my sponsor permission to tell me things.
- Abstinence can have clear boundaries. We strive for life without the bondage of food.
- I must be mindful of my abstinence boundaries when I am around food. Don't lick the spoon!
- When in doubt – stick with your original plan. Don't do something you didn't before.
- A sponsor may be more interested in your welfare than your friendship. Be open to hearing what a sponsor says, no matter what.
- Find an abstinent person in OA to be a sponsor.
- A good thing to do as a sponsoree is to listen.
- Having a sponsor is an integral part of working the 12 steps.
- I can't work the steps alone
- There are always people available to sponsor, though sometimes the sponsors don't know yet that they're a sponsor.
- If you don't know what to say to your sponsor, call anyway. Practice reaching out. The words will come.
- Allow yourself to be taught.
- Don't expect your sponsor to make you feel better or change your life. You are responsible to work your program so you feel better and that you change your life.
- Sponsors give direction. It's good to follow them.
- Get consistent in doing step work.
- Sponsors have practical ideas on abstinence, food plans, step work, and experience in life like dealing with grocery stores.
- Having a sponsor is critical for growth in this program.
- Be clear on how much time you need from your sponsor and clear that with potential sponsors.

### **Abstinence - How Important Is It?**

Compulsive eaters spend a tremendous amount of time and energy defending their right to eat compulsively. I tell my sponsees that the fear that surfaces when they are faced with having to give up large portions, comfort foods, and unhealthy food-rituals is a natural part of the long road to spiritual recovery. Working through it is fundamental to their future success.

How can one be "living in recovery" while still actively eating? An overfed (or underfed) body produces a malnourished spirit. If we're still eating, are we actively extinguishing the spiritual spark that we need to move beyond the food to long term abstinence?

I hear many people talk about doing their step work, but even as they do, a great many of them won't structure their day so as to avoid putting themselves in harms way where food is concerned. A long time ago, I was told that "failing to plan is planning to fail." Abstinence is hard enough without aiding and abetting the enemy.

Taking full responsibility for shopping, preparing and planning nourishing meals that took me to a healthy weight was the most empowering thing that I was able to do while I worked to identify and deal with the underlying causes of my compulsive eating.

Every time I achieve a "breakthrough", I became aware of the internal conflict that was my disease, trying ever-so-desperately to get me to go back on my disciplines; to ignore my returning healthy instincts; to blur my judgment, and foster a return to eating.

If my food plan is so flexible as to have wide variances in portions, times between meals, and to be completely free from foods that I am "better off not eating", I will hardly be able to distinguish a return to compulsive eating from a day where I "have to tighten up my food choices."

I have a disease that wants me dead. And if it can't accomplish that, it will settle for generating guilt, self-doubt and a loss of self esteem. It will be pleased to simply undermine my resolve, and reduce me a diminished version of my best self. It will wait patiently, until the lessons that I learned when my physical recovery was strong have softened and morphed into the false sense of confidence that "I'm still way ahead of the game for being in OA, even if my food has become a little sloppy."

Nothing is more painful to watch than a long timer who is years past their last period of extended abstinence, talking program-speak while consistently avoiding doing the very things that they would recommend to a newcomer. Such is the power of the disease to hone rationalization and self-delusion to an art form.

So telling sponsees not to worry so much about the food . . . that what they have is a spiritual malady . . . and only a spiritual solution will help them . . . is not doing them any favors. Achieving a healthy body weight (i.e. not being too fat or too thin) is good for OA's credibility. It's far from easy, but who said getting well was supposed to be easy?

Did you come into OA looking for spiritual recovery? When did optimizing our physical recovery become the enemy of spiritual recovery? Perhaps this is behind some of the discord in OA. Perhaps some of us are still defending our right to settle for less. N.R. - Baltimore, MD

Just for today, when I think that I will do that tomorrow, I begin to do it today.

I used to put off anything stressful until "after". **After** food, **after** nap, **after** anything I could use to keep that stressful thing from being done. "**After**" is like tomorrow - it never came.

Bills went unpaid and ergo the telephone went unanswered. Phone messages were never returned. I hid in the stupor of excess sugar. I worked too hard to pay bills today. I was too busy to return calls from frantic bill collectors.

I was never too busy to eat, and when sated never too busy to nap.

I was independent, I ran my own business, I didn't need help, and I captained my ship until it wrecked on the shoals of obesity. My best thinking got me to a place of isolation.

Excuses, no matter how valid are just that, **EXCUSES**. I hit rock bottom, no friends, no business, no money, and no self-worth. When these programs offered me a way to live that was better than my way, I grabbed at it.

One day at a time I did two things I didn't want to do. No excuses, I started out simply dragging a plastic garbage bag around my filthy house, twenty minutes at a time. I emptied the waste baskets. I called my sponsor. I did what she suggested - I went to ninety meetings in ninety days. I ate what I promised to eat. I didn't eat anything else. Suddenly I noticed that twenty minutes at a time I had cleaned my house. I had stayed abstinent. I had started to make friends and repair relationships. Suddenly months had passed. Suddenly I lost inches and clothes fit. Suddenly was coming one day at a time but I was living one day at a time. I was doing the next right thing. I was feeling inklings of self-worth and when I noticed these things it seemed as if they had all come to pass suddenly.

So just for today I am still doing two things I don't want to do, and just for today I am feeling the serenity of doing what I know is good for me. I eat planned and measured meals, I take time to pray and read and meditate at the beginning of my day and at five each afternoon I sit in my window chair and still my mind. I drink tea and think of nothing. Sometimes it takes effort to quiet my mind, sometimes I fall asleep. When my higher power has something I need to think about, those thoughts keep invading my quiet time. Just for today I am grateful for my recovery and I guard my recovery by guarding my spiritual health. For I am told that my recovery is the gift of a daily reprieve dependant on my spiritual condition.

NIGHT OWL – I can take calls in the evening or at night.			MORNING DOVE – I can take calls early in the morning.		
NAME	PHONE NUMBER	HOW LATE?	NAME	PHONE NUMBER	HOW EARLY?
Ann T.	410-435-8435	11:00pm	Ann T.	410-435-8435	7:00 a.m.
Jay K.	410 980 9624	24/7	Wajeeha	443-271-2273	6:45 a.m.
Wendy S.	443-854-4522	anytime	Sheffi	443-858-7030	7:00am
Hinda	410 764 2279	1:00am	Alice	410-243-2314	9:00 a.m.
Rachel	410 913 1989	2:00am	Annette	410-825-4639	5:00 a.m.
Ashley S.	443 570 7890	11:00pm	Lisa M.	410-663-8219 443-677-7219	7:00 a.m.
Jill	301-725-5464	7:00pm – 11:00pm evenings; anytime weekends	Laura	914-645-9839	11:30pm

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BAIG Website: <http://www.oabaltimore.org>

*Other Internet Sources:*

Region Seven: <http://www.oaregion7.org>

World Service: <http://www.oa.org>

***The Steppingstone is the bi-monthly newsletter of the Baltimore area Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous.***

***Editorial Policy: This is your newsletter. Your contributions, comments, and experience in the OA way of life are needed and appreciated. We also would like to print news about your area or meeting. Publication of any contributions or editorial opinions expressed herein does not imply endorsement by OA as a whole, but only by the individuals who wrote them. Material submitted cannot be returned. We reserve the right to edit, and it is understood that other OA groups may reprint all items without permission. Deadline for submitting contributions is by the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month in which publication takes place in January, March, May, July, September, November. Submit your contributions by mail to BAIG, P. O. Box 20013, Baltimore MD 21284 or by e-mail to the editor, Joan W. [jmwehberg@hotmail.com](mailto:jmwehberg@hotmail.com) or [joanmwehberg@yahoo.com](mailto:joanmwehberg@yahoo.com). Thanks for your support.***

SPONSOR – I am willing to sponsor others.		SPEAKER – I'll share my story at meetings.	
NAME	PHONE NUMBER or E-MAIL	NAME	PHONE NUMBER or E-MAIL
Carol S.	410-960-6493	Mary H.	410-256-8996
Wajeeha	<a href="mailto:mispistivity@hotmail.com">mispistivity@hotmail.com</a>	Wendy S.	443-854-4522
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Joan W	<a href="mailto:jmwehberg@hotmail.com">jmwehberg@hotmail.com</a> <a href="mailto:joanmwehberg@yahoo.com">joanmwehberg@yahoo.com</a>	Laura	443-631-6102 <a href="mailto:ljsicari@gmail.com">ljsicari@gmail.com</a>
Sharon B	<a href="mailto:Sharon.Boddie@ssa.gov">Sharon.Boddie@ssa.gov</a>	ARE YOU WILLING TO VOLUNTEER????	
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