



November 2006

Volume 29, No. 6

10 THINGS THAT THE TOOL OF ANONYMITY DOES FOR ME (in random order)

1. Cultivates respect.
2. Helps me to understand others, no matter their outside status.
3. Creates a safe space in meetings to share openly.
4. Learn about and create humility and awe.
5. Allows focus on the spiritual principles of the 12 Steps.
6. Affords loving treatment of all in the use of the 12 Traditions.
7. Gives freedom from fear of public embarrassment about our illness.
8. Allows focus on the message, not the person.
9. Allows the privacy and courage to explore myself through a searching and fearless moral inventory without rancor, fear, or admonishment, because I am just like everyone else.
10. Allows me to explore my spiritual beliefs and connect with God using whatever method and understanding I have that is necessary to make that connection. It is the springboard to my deeper recovery.

10 THINGS THAT THE TOOL OF SPONSORSHIP DOES FOR ME (in random order)

1. Teaches me how to have intimate friendships.
2. Builds trust.
3. Gives me guidance on how to eat healthily and how to work the 12 Steps.
4. Shows me how service helps other by being a recipient of service.
5. Challenges me to grow out of my comfort zone.
6. Allows me to pass on what has been given to me.
7. Teaches me to be gently assertive.
8. I can work the Steps repeatedly with others.
9. I receive insights from sponsors and sponsees that make my recovery and abstinence stronger.
10. I grow by taking time to support another person.

WHY DO I HAVE AN ENVELOPE IN MY STEPPINGSTONE THIS MONTH?

In your Steppingstone this month you will find an envelope with a notation “Second pass to send Intergroup delegates to the World Service Business Conference.”

One of the visions of the Baltimore Area Intergroup this year is to make certain that we have the ability to send Baltimore area delegates to the OA World Service Business Conference. Having Baltimore Area delegates at the WSBC gives us the following benefits:

- Keeps OA alive. World Service is the pinnacle of the OA fellowship. Without it there would be no literature and no guidance to the regions, the intergroups and the groups.
- It's how OA operates. The World Service Conference is the place where the most important decisions are made regarding organization, literature and operation of OA. Our delegates vote for us on many important OA policy and procedure matters.
- Helps to maintain abstinence. It is a known equation, the higher the level of service, and the higher amount of abstinence.
- Makes our Intergroup part of the whole of OA. Our delegates serve us and make sure that our needs and objectives are raised and addressed to the entire OA community. Our voice and that of all of our groups can be heard.
- Provides literature to us all. All literature is approved through the WSBC.
- Gives all of our groups important WSBC information. The Intergroup delegates agree to bring important information back to the Intergroup and individual groups. He or she will do this through articles in the Steppingstone as well as visiting individual groups.
- The goal of the group is to send two (2) delegates to World Service because only then can we gain the maximum amount of information that will help our Intergroup carry the message of recovery to those inside and outside of OA.

Therefore, please use the envelope. Take it to your group. Pass the basket a second time stating the reason for the second pass (to help send a member to the World Service Business Conference) and send all those funds in the envelope by simply attaching a stamp. **ALL FUNDS COLLECTED WILL BE HELD SPECIFICALLY FOR THE PURPOSE OF SENDING BALTIMORE AREA INTERGROUP DELEGATES TO THE WSBC.** Who knows, you could be a delegate.

THANK YOU.

ANNOUNCING THE WINTER HOTLINE!

THESE MEMBERS ARE PROVIDING A VALUABLE SERVICE TO COMPULSIVE OVEREATERS FOR THE NEXT TWO MONTHS – THEY ARE VOLUNTEERING TO BE AVAILABLE BY PHONE OR EMAIL TO ANYONE EXPERIENCING A STRUGGLE DURING THIS TIME OF YEAR WHEN FOOD ABOUNDS!

Lisa M. -- leave msg on cell phone at any time 443-677-7219 (hm 410 663 8219)

Sheffi 443 858 7030 8AM to 10PM, safe to leave a message

Irma - 410-663-2799 from 8 AM to 9 PM. Safe to leave message. Email: irma8820@comcast.net

Laura - 443-631-6102.

Ashley 443 570 7890

Ellen - 443-421-2236.

Neal S. - I would be grateful to receive calls for those in need during the upcoming season. I can be reached mostly on my cell at 301.213.8719 (Verizon for those that have it, it's a free call) and home is 301.841.7609.

Morty – 443 – 850 - 2515

Kay – 410 – 358 - 2119

Neil R – 410 – 318 - 6737

Terri - I can certainly be available for calls 410-838-3135. I am not really a night owl, but if it's 911 will take anytime!

Judy - 410-615-1707 gorillamom@gmail.com

Mike B., 410-467-7472, mikeb1bear@aol.com.

Nicole - I can take emergency calls 7a - 8:30a during the week, and anytime before 10p on Saturday and Sundays at 443-253-9430.

Joan – hm 410 483 4212 work 410 522 2505 x 1264 (confidential voice mail) cell 410 440 8087

jmwehberg@hotmail.com/joanmwwehberg@yahoo.com

ENOUGH

I do enough.
I have enough.
I know enough.
I am enough.

**I CAN'T
UNTIL NOW.**

Now, by the grace
of God,
I'm healing, healthy,
hopeful, & helping.
HERE I AM and I
CAN, little by little, step by
step.

Part Two - Region Forum and Committee Work

This is the second of a five-part series on the 2006 World Service Business Conference. All 200 delegates and trustees joined together in a morning-long Region Forum in which a host of subjects were discussed, including online Listservs and other services, cooperation of Intergroups, financial concerns of service bodies, and HIPM/Professional Outreach. Members were asked to answer two to three questions on a pre-prepared worksheet, discuss our experiences and thoughts in our groups of six to ten people. A spokesperson from each group then reported their answers to the entire body. This gave everyone new perspectives on how to deal with all kinds of issues.

Every delegate also had the opportunity to join one of several World Service committees that requires collaboration and service for one year. I and 30 others joined the 12th Step Within committee and formed several subcommittees. I am on the Speaker List sub-committee, and my job is to receive applications for and update a worldwide speaker list, where members volunteer to speak at a meeting or other OA event anywhere in the world, should service body so choose to ask that member to attend.

I have had the opportunity to speak with members all over the United States and Canada as I have updated information and confirmed their availability and eligibility to offer this service. Members must have at least one year of continuous abstinence to join the list. As mentioned in the last issue, we have taken advantage of this service and found our keynote speaker at last summer's Retreat. A member in our Intergroup recently traveled to Colorado to be the keynote speaker at their statewide OA convention.

There are many wonderful opportunities to share and help other compulsive eaters all around the world. Would you like to be part of this list? Contact me and I will be happy to sign you up after confirmation of your eligibility.

In Part Three, I will tell you about our experience with the five business meetings that happened at the Conference. It was amazing, so stay tuned!

Writing is a tool that intimidates many people. I was one of them. My writing or "journaling" as I like to call it, has grown and changed over the years. I wanted a "formula" to get started. I heard at a retreat - just write about your day and what you did. I thought, "I can do that" and I did. Somewhere along the way I started also writing three positive things I did each day.

My writing also takes the form of Dear God letters, and that helps keep me connected.

Remember that writing doesn't have to be in a formal journal. I have written on a napkin when I wanted to get some feelings out. My journals these days are spiral notebooks.

A written inventory is a great way to get at the root of problems. I use the AA format:

- ❖ What happened- very simply, without editorializing, describe the event
- ❖ What it affected - usually my relationships with others
- ❖ My part (usually 100%) which is a good thing because I can't change anyone else!
- ❖ What character defects were involved: that's an easy part, generally fear and drive to control for me

I usually share it with my sponsor at this point to determine what corrective measures should be taken.

As far as writing goes, the above inventory is so powerful!

But let's talk more about journaling. I was at an OA conference in Colorado recently and I went to a writing workshop. The leader had us write for 5 minutes without stopping. Wow, was that powerful. It took me to surprising places.

Someone recently sent this suggested writing exercise to me. Write a letter from your disease. What would your disease say to you?

Now write a letter back to the disease.

That's a great writing experience.

Writing is a very powerful tool. These are but a few of the ways that writing can be used.

Terri B.

What is abstinence?

What does the word abstinence mean to you? Is abstinence an action, or is it a state of mind? I consider abstinence to be a purposeful set of boundaries, checks & balances, and guidelines; a definitive line that once crossed, means I have returned to compulsive eating.

Some years ago, the tool of "Abstinence" was replaced with the tool of "a Plan of Eating". The literature at the time said that OA members could use "some or all of OA's eight tools". But OA felt that abstinence was much more important to us than a "take it or leave it" proposition. So they elevated abstinence to the equivalent of sobriety in Alcoholics Anonymous.

People's food plans differed, but abstinence was about whether we were honestly sticking with the plan, whatever it was. It was a call for personal responsibility in the area of physical recovery. But, while abstinence is an unmerited gift precipitated by a humble admission of powerlessness for some, it's little more than a general idea of a way to eat, followed with a meandering sense that life would be better if it more closely observed. It's a nice idea, with no teeth.

I recently attended a Region Convention where they did a countdown to determine the person with the longest abstinence in the hall. Ultimately, a woman who said she was abstinent for (a long time) was asked to come forward to light a commemorative candle. As she approached the dais, she said repeatedly "imperfect abstinence, imperfect abstinence." I was struck by this admission of past food slips even while being publicly honored for abstinence.

What message did it send to someone new to OA? She was not overweight, but what if she was? What then? At what point would it beg the obvious question, what does abstinence really mean? There is no doubt that everyone who comes to OA is better off for his or her membership.

But why have we gotten so fearful of the appearance of having "winners" and "losers" that we have become willing to diminish the integrity of our primary purpose in the process? What is our legacy to the people who follow us if our bodies enlarge while we claim abstinence? If we raise our hands to sponsor others after owning up to "having problems with the food," are we a credible example of recovery in OA? If we are immersed in the steps but actively eating with no end in sight, wouldn't it be useful to find more honesty around the food (Step One) before expecting ourselves to become possessed of the clarity, fearlessness and insight it takes to benefit fully from the difficult actions called for in subsequent steps?

Physical recovery takes discipline, but it is a bringer of honesty, character and self-confidence, all of which make for a stronger OA fellowship. Some might consider this a shortsighted approach to a spiritual malady, but who would attempt to take a long car ride without first making sure that the oil filter and the windshield were cleaned? So it is with our bodies.

I've heard people say that they have 15 years of "perfect keep coming back" and we smile, knowing that they lay claim to their lifetime OA membership and nothing more. While counting days may not be an answer to anything, it certainly is a reflection of something persistent and special, and worthy of further exploration. Don't be afraid to aspire for continuous abstinence. With the right help and support, it is attainable.

"I Must Never Forget"

An OA friend recently shared with me that of all of the diseases one could possibly have, ours, food addiction, might be the worst. "Think about it," he said. "We are addicted to the very substances that we must use on a daily basis to keep us alive and healthy. And yet, it is the very thing that could make us unhealthy and ultimately kill us." It gave me pause. We must eat and yet, what we eat, how much we eat, and how we eat, could be and if left to its own device, will indeed be, the death of many of us. This is a cruel fate to endure. I know this first hand, because it has taken the life of an uncle of mine, my grandmother, several OA friends, it may yet take the life of one of my sisters and it almost killed me.

It seems strange that something so innocuous, food, could be the cause of such pain and suffering. After all, it's not like alcohol or drugs, is it? With alcohol or drugs, I could binge so much in one night that I could actually die from alcohol poisoning or a drug overdose. It is not likely that I would die after eating a gallon of ice cream and a box of donuts in one night. But yet, I almost did die, eating that night after night after night. I came into program 16 years ago weighing over 350 lbs. I did not get that way over night. I have come to believe that this disease is indeed malicious. It grows over time and gets bigger and stronger and ever more relentless. It is like going out and finding a sapling, a baby tree, and tying one end of a rope around one of the branches and the other end of the rope around my neck and then standing there and waiting for the tree to grow. Eventually it will kill me. As the tree grows, the noose gets tighter and tighter. Just as each binge took me a step closer to death. And the tree did grow and the noose got tighter and I became paralyzed with fear trying to numb the pain. And yet, the noose just keeps getting tighter.

In recovery today, I must never forget that pain. I must never believe that I am normal, that I can eat like a so-called "normal person." I can not, I am a food addict and I will die a food addict. But, I can live a healthy life as a food addict in recovery, not as a food addict in the throes of my disease. It is because of OA and because of all of you that I am free of that tree, for today. My Higher Power bent the bough of the tree and eased the pain and all of you, my brothers and sisters in Fellowship, helped me remove the strangling noose. And you have given me my greatest **GIFT** (**G**od **I**'m **F**inally **T**hankful). Although I have Physical (I weigh 160 lbs), Spiritual and Emotional recovery, I no longer live in fear of my disease today. I can do something about it and everyday I go into battle prepared. My food scale is my sword; my plan of eating, my shield; my Big Book, my battle plan; my Sponsor, my guide; my Higher Power, my King; and all of you, my fellow foot-soldiers in the battle for freedom from this agonizing addiction. I do this one day at a time and I can not do this alone. I am very grateful that I don't have to.

In Fellowship, Service, Friendship and Love,

Neal S. – Food Addict and Relapse Survivor

WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND OA?

New meeting at Baltimore Hebrew Congregation on Tuesdays at 7:30! See meeting list!
Hiss Methodist Thursday morning meeting will not be held on Thanksgiving Day.
We will be holding elections for 2007 Officers for Intergruop at the December Intergroup Meeting. All are welcome.

BAIG Public Information Committee Report - October, 2006

I attended the AEGON Health Fair on Sept. 21 from 11-2PM. I was one of approximately 20 presenters. I would estimate that 150-200 people made their way through the fair. It was well organized. Health Fairs by Seven has planned and invited us to attend other Baltimore-area health fairs.

What the public sees - Our OA display

I am providing them with contact information for OA, and the following literature.

- Questions & Answers
- A Program of Recovery
- A Commitment To Abstinence
- About OA
- OA Cares
- Recovery Checklist

I wrote a published Lifeline article about my experience as a man in OA. I have that displayed as well.

I have placed an order to supplement our OA literature in the amount of \$50

I would like to recommend creating a CD with three 10-minute shares from recovering members - ideally someone coming from obesity, a man, and a young person. We can create them fairly cheaply, and hand them out to interested parties at events like this, or to professionals requesting OA information.

If there is anyone willing to assist me in this endeavor, please call me at (410) 318-6737, or email me at neilrauch@comcast.net.

Yours in Service, Neil Rauch Public Information Committee Chair

NOTE CHANGE OF LOCATION OF THE WEDNESDAY NOON MEETING AT JOHNS HOPKINS!! See meeting list for details.

The Importance of Physical Recovery

During my first 6 years in OA (still eating), I experienced only a fraction of the emotional or spiritual recovery that was available to me. I had yet to see that eating compulsively was a violent act that was the product of an unbalanced mind. A punishment disguised as "pleasure." It was a lie.

I finally became willing to accept help to put the food down, and keep it down. Was it anything other than insanity to voluntarily use a substance that caused depression, anxiety, and diminished my productivity and self-confidence?

I had to physically de-tox from compulsive eating until my thinking cleared. Once it did, I could see that I ate too fast, or ate foods that gave me stomach aches, bad breath or gas. I even found that I ate some foods even though I didn't like the taste. Crazy, huh? And I often unconsciously put myself in situations that led to compulsive eating. I had to become conscious, and build up my defenses.

My food plan has evolved, but my attitude remains the same. If it hurts me, or causes me guilt or doubt, I refrain and I give it to God. Chasing pleasure in food deprives me of the ability to see the miracle of being satisfied with "just enough". The search for satiation is the voice of my disease, in disguise.

For the record, my food plan is simple, but not bland. I derive great pleasure from it. It nourishes me physically & spiritually. I don't indulge, cheat, sample or snack.

I accept that I need limits as a compulsive eater. When I honor them, I enjoy a spiritual element to my life that I probably wouldn't have had as a normal eater. Maybe God used my condition to get my attention, and He gave me OA so I could experience usefulness. Today, my actions are not dictated by desire alone.

I use the tools every day. They provide me with structure & direction. They reinforce the central theme of connection with, and service to my fellowship. I see my insanity revealed in resistance to making a program phone call rather than in a bigger number on the scale, claiming not to know "how it happened?" Nothing can make me eat compulsively again if I am willing to bring God into it. But God will not do for me the things that I CAN do for myself.

The tools keep me honest every day. The steps are my roadmap to a better life. The traditions show me how to live well with others in OA. The twelve concepts teach me about how to work with them as well.

But the anchor that will always make this compulsive eater feel better about himself at the end of the day is if I don't pick up that first compulsive bite. That is the acid test that answers the question of whether food is God, or God is God. Everything else is the fruit from that seed.

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.
			Laura	914-645-9839	11:30pm

P O Box 20013 Baltimore, MD 21284 Hotline 410 764 3136

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 10th 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. imwehberg@hotmail.com or ioanmwehberg@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	mspistivity@hotmail.com	Wendy S.	443-854-4522
Jay K.	410-980-9624	Wajeeha	443-271-2273
Ashley S.	443-570-7890	Anne M.	410-825-4123
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Email Outreach		Terri	410-459-9100
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