



STEPPINGSTONE

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I don't really know what to say. It's my last issue as editor of the 'stone and the service has been great for my recovery. Now it's time to move on and it's time for someone else to receive the benefits of this unique service.

So I think I'll expound on the virtues of service and what it's done for me and my program.

Service gets me out of myself. If I'm committed to doing something I'm going to do it, even if I don't want to. I remind myself that I don't have to WANT to, I only have to be WILLING to. If I have the capability of doing a service then all that is required is the willingness.

Service keeps me in touch with my fellows. Nothing kicks my disease in the tail like being with other compulsive eaters ~ people who are just like me and who speak my language like no other people in my life can do.

Service keeps me from eating compulsively. All that time I spent planning, buying, hiding, lying, consuming ~ turning that time into attending meetings (THAT'S a service), helping on a committee, going to a workshop, making phone calls ~ how can I say, "I don't have time?"

These are just some quick thoughts on service; there are many more I'd love to hear.

Thanks for the support and I'll see you at a meeting!

Yours in service, Joan W

STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH

What better way to hear what really is helpful to newcomers and keeps them coming back than from newcomers themselves?

Here are some suggestions offered by newcomers during the workshop on Service held on October 12:

- ❖ **Having an "old faithful" at the meeting before it begins to greet a newcomer (5 – 10 min early)**
 - ❖ **Welcome a newcomer in whatever way possible – explaining the way the meeting works, e.g. What are "readings," "sharing," "tools," the "we care list" (including the information that no one is required to sign)**
 - ❖ **Assuring newcomer he/she may just wish to observe, no pressure to participate**
 - ❖ **Calling a newcomer after his/her first meeting to say you'll be looking forward to seeing him/her again, doing this shortly before the next meeting**
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2008 WORLD SERVICE BUSINESS CONFERENCE – PART FOUR OF SIX

A benefit of going to the World Service Business Conference is that one has access to up to three regular OA meetings per day. By the way, with the exception of voting at the business and committee meetings, anyone can go to the Conference and participate in any or all of the workshops and meetings. Considering myself a "meeting junkie" at the Conference, I went to nine of the 20 available OA meetings. Some incredible wisdom was shared, some of which I'll share in this and the next issue.

Keeping in Fit Spiritual Condition (p. 84-88 AA Big Book) – May 5

- Page 84 of the Big Book, paraphrased for OA, tells us that we have ceased fighting anything or anyone. We lose interest in the food. We are not fighting it or resisting temptation. The problem is removed for us. It happens automatically . . . as long as we keep in fit spiritual condition.
- I am a spiritual being that lives in a physical body.
- It's better to give than receive; better to be loved than to love.
- Whatever I put before my recovery, I lose.
- You do everything you judge.
- How tolerant and accepting am I?
- The best thing I can think of for my life is not even close to what my Higher Power has in mind for me, as long as I follow the spiritual path of this program.
- Just live the program. Others will see it. Don't force it upon them.
- We have to go out on a limb and trust God, especially in unfamiliar or unusual situations.
- People pleasing is selfish manipulating (I do what I want to "manipulate" them into liking me and to give me attention).

Working an Honest Program – May 5

- I first read the Steps; then practiced the Steps. Now I live the Steps.
- My week was rough, but I never put my OA program on the back burner.
- Blessings come when I get a sponsor and am honest with that person. I receive blessings beyond imagination.
- Service: what you put in you get ten times back.
- I have to be willing, like the Steps say.
- Why I have a life is that I'm in the OA program.
- Today, it's about taking an honest look at myself and my life and not judging what others say.

An Acceptance-Based Life – May 6

- There is a big difference between an acceptance-based life and a fear-based life.
- Acceptance helps resolve expectations, which increases serenity.
- "It is what it is" is a short version of the Serenity Prayer.
- There's no other place than OA where I get direction on how to live.
- I know that I am a completely new person today because of recovery.
- Acceptance helps when I am out of my comfort zone.
- A new slogan: "Oh, well!"
- I don't need a charmed life; all I need is a charmed attitude.
- At times of growth, I spend a lot more time in prayer and meditation.
- Acceptance formula: do the next right thing and don't pick up.

In the next issue, I'll share notes and tidbits on three other meetings that I attended. I encourage you to ponder and discuss these words with your sponsors, sponsees, and fellow members at meetings and outside. May these words of wisdom bring you serenity, abstinence from compulsive eating, and a recovery that warms your soul and those around you.

--Mike B., a gratefully recovering compulsive overeater in Baltimore

It's a Credibility Issue

Someone recently inferred that I respected people who were abstinent more than those who weren't. I thought about it, and spoke about it with a few people. I started writing, and this came out.

I don't believe I am biased against people who aren't abstinent. I just believe that OA is here to help us get abstinent, and people who aren't striving to make it a top priority have lost their way.

For the first five years that I was in program, I had slips with intermittent regularity. I wasn't binge eating any more, but my abstinence was sticking to a food plan, eating meals of a certain size, and eaten within certain times of day. So, if I ate spontaneously, impulsively, or defiantly, it didn't matter how much I ate. I was breaking my commitment to being abstinent. I wasn't refraining. My weight didn't even need to change. I was indulging my desires, engaging my will, and defending my right to do so. I was being dishonest and hypocritical, giving into temptation and demanding comfort from food. **For me, full blown relapse took the form of intermittent departures from my planned meals.**

I was still inflicting damage to my psyche and my spirit, only now I was sending a dangerously distorted message to any other OA member who saw the thin guy and took what he said seriously. I was lying about my relative success in program. I was doing service, and even sponsoring, convinced that doing so while I was eating was better than isolating and doing nothing, because I was "getting outside of myself." I was essentially manipulating the truth so I could feel better about myself.

The Big Book says quite clearly (Page 164) that "obviously you cannot transmit something you haven't got."...and that "G-d will constantly disclose more to you and to us...if your own house is in order."

If I'm eating, how in-order can my house be? My thinking is muddy, my logic is skewed, and by ignoring the damage that I was perpetrating upon myself, it was clear that I was still fighting the wishes and influence of a loving Higher Power that wanted only good things for me.

My watered down abstinence was the cause of my pain, and when I implemented structure and zero-tolerance strategies to avoid the first compulsive bite, it wasn't a function of "rigidity" or a "diet mentality," it was acceptance of the fact that my disease had gotten bad enough that only extreme measures could neutralize it. Continuous abstinence became possible only once I understood in "How It Works" where it said, "if you want what we have, and are willing to go to ANY lengths to get it, then you are ready to take certain steps." I surrounded myself with people who supported my abstinence, and built a foundation that prepared to me take the steps and the emotional shifts that came with it.

1) Why are we here (in OA)?

OA isn't a social club, a therapeutic environment, or a welfare institution. It's a place where people with food issues get better, and pass along what they've learned to others who have the desire to stop eating. That's our primary purpose, and we pride ourselves in excluding discussion of "outside issues."

2) Carrying the message

What is our message? Since abstinence is the action of refraining from compulsive eating, and we're told to share our "experience, strength and hope," then we are most helpful to others when we share **how we have gotten and stayed abstinent**. The tools, the steps and the traditions give us what we need to achieve our objective, so we can get to the root causes of our destructive eating.

If we are to propose that OA is a valid program of recovery, our credibility rests on whether we can look humbly and honestly at our progress at getting our members to **achieve & maintain abstinence**.

3) Members in relapse

So what about members in relapse? What do they have to offer in the OA family? I say plenty. I believe that people who are still struggling or are new are the most important people in OA. Everything that I say and do is geared toward emphasizing how much better my life became **once I became abstinent and experienced the joys of living that were a direct result of that event**.

The OA 12+12 says that we can require periods of abstinence in order to hold positions within our service structure. OA history tells us that the overall health and welfare of OA is best preserved in the hands on those demonstrating three-fold recovery. Yet sometimes we find ourselves in contentious disagreement by those who lack physical recovery. This is a sensitive area in OA, and I do not profess to have "the answer" to that ongoing debate. It has little to do with a lack of respect for members in relapse though, and more to do with the knowledge that the side-effects of compulsive eating on our judgment and reasoning are well-documented and numerous.

(CONTINUED ON REVERSE SIDE)

(BEGINNING ON PREVIOUS SIDE)

Humility is knowing who and what we are, and where we can do better. To the extent that an active compulsive eater is oblivious to the effect of their eating on their mind, body & spirit, their pursuit of abstinence and humility, and the ability to reach their full potential will be extremely difficult, if not impossible.

But the traditions will always encourage us to make decisions for the greater good of the group, and not endorse mistreatment or opposition to anyone. We must all trust that this will always be so.

Our own credibility, and OA's as a whole, rests upon our personal power of example.

- If I was a tailor and my clothes fit terribly, would you want me to work on your fine clothing?
- If I was tone deaf, and kept auditioning for musicals, would you question my judgment?

Quite possibly, because of the credibility gap.

Each of us, in our own way and in our own time, has to ask ourselves whether we are credible in our power of example as OA members, and whether, in our carriage and demeanor, we reflect humble confidence, or the telltale signs of doubt and suffering that go hand-in-hand with a piece meal approach to program that we're not proud of.

Respect is often generated by one's inner sense of self-assurance. An active food addict usually projects extreme feelings of inferiority, or brash expressions of false bravado, but neither attracts the type of positive attention that ultimately makes them feel better about themselves.

It's important to know, however, that whatever their demeanor, their relative worth in program is not in question. All recovering members of OA want them to experience and enjoy the freedom from the bondage from compulsive eating, though they may express that wish for them in different ways. In answer to my fellow OA's observation, I now try to be a bit more compassionate and gentle in my efforts to reach out to them.

Neil R. – Baltimore

THANKSGIVING DAY MEETING AT HOMEWOOD 10:00AM!

FIRST ENGLISH LUTHERAN CHURCH AT 39TH AND CHARLES ST.

WHAT A GREAT OPPORTUNITY!

SEE YOU THERE!

RESOURCES

Have you signed up for our email loop?

It's a totally anonymous way of keeping up with breaking news within the fellowship. If a meeting changes, an event is taking place, an anniversary is being celebrated ~ the quickest way to get ~
AND SPREAD ~ the word is through the email loop.

For inclusion, or if you have any questions, please contact Joan at jmwehberg@hotmail.com

Have you visited our awesome local website lately?

oabaltimore.org

REALLY FABULOUS! Our web manager, who can be contacted through the website, responds quickly with meeting updates and event information. Another quick way to get ~ and spread ~
the word!

"Carry the Message, Be the Message" Workshop a Great Success!

The BAIG Service Workshop was held on Sunday, October 12th, at the Church of the Redeemer, Baltimore. A dedicated group of twenty participants braved the near-perfect weather to share their recovery and the gifts of service.

Our speakers for the afternoon included: Terri B., Laura S., Joan W., Mike B., and Sadhya. They shared their personal stories of recovery and the many ways giving service has enriched their lives.

The final hour of the afternoon was a brainstorming session on giving service. We had a great mix of people attending, including people with long term abstinence and a couple of newcomers. One of our new members voiced some very useful insights and suggestions regarding newcomer orientation and follow-up.

Over the coming months, we plan to put into action many of the following ideas:

- ❖ Groups could have an additional *Service Position for a Newcomer Support* person.
- ❖ Provide a half hour *Newcomer Orientation* meeting before the 11 AM Saturday Homewood meeting.
- ❖ Generate an updated available Sponsor Contact list to distribute with meeting literature.
- ❖ Explore starting new meetings in under-served areas, especially in urban locations.
- ❖ Have a regular *Newcomers Column* in the "Stepping Stone".

In closing, I would like to thank everyone who participated in the workshop and helped make it a success. Also, thank you to our speakers for their generosity of service. And a special thanks to our planning committee, Adam, Tania, and Amy for all their help in making the workshop a reality.

Thank you all for your service. Suellen

NIGHT OWLS ~ Taking calls at night			MORNING DOVE ~ Taking calls early in the morning			CAN AT TIMES PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION	
NAME	PHONE NUMBER	HOW LATE?	NAME	PHONE NUMBER	HOW EARLY?	NAME	PHONE NUMBER
Ann T.	410-435-8435	11:00pm	Ann T.	410-435-8435	7:00 a.m.	Morty	443 850 2515
Jay K.	410 980 9624	24/7	Wajeeha	410-663-8403	6:45 a.m.		
Nicole	443 253 9430	12:00am	Sheffi	443-570-1882	6:00am		
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	Laura	443-631-6102	7:00 a. m.		
Jill P	301-776-4572	11:00pm	Portia	443-414-1948	6:50 am - 7:30am		

DOES YOUR NAME APPEAR ABOVE? CAN YOU PROVIDE THE SERVICE?

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 (call for mailing address) or by e-mail to the editor, Joan W. jrnwehberg@hotmail.com or joanmwehberg@yahoo.com. Thanks for your support.

SPONSOR - I am willing to sponsor others		SPEAKER - I'll share my story at meetings	
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		ARE YOU WILLING TO DO SERVICE????	

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