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Hi! I'm Joan, a compulsive eater and the editor of the Steppingstone. I am truly blessed to have this opportunity for service - and - having a heck of a time fitting everything we have received into this issue! To be fair, we normally choose on a first-in - first-published basis, and then consider space constraints. If your offering isn't in this issue, watch for it in the next!

Since a meeting list is always included, please be sure to send meeting updates to us as well as to the Webmaster.

I am wondering today . . . why doesn't every meeting send a representative to the Intergroup meetings? BAIG meets on the third Sunday of every month for 1 1/2 hours. The service consists in attending the meetings and reporting back to the group represented. It's a wonderful way to do service, and keeps your meeting in touch with the others, gives advance notice of upcoming events and what's happening in our Intergroup - and it's fun.

Yours in service,

Joan 410 483 4212 jmwehberg@hotmail.com/joanmwehberg@yahoo.com

WORDS

How do I speak -

Summon from my loins

Words that incarnate

The flesh of me?

So often I shut down,

Subdue, cut off the vibrant flow of me.

Words, severed from what they speak.

That has been my life - lifeless words.

But now I want more.

I want words that aim and fire from the heart.

I want words that tremble with fullness.

I want words that pour forth convictions and commitments.

When I move, I vibrate, hum, and hold forth the essential me.

When I move, I contact the ground, feet free to feel and to be.

When I move, I convey what I really mean. Ann T.

REFLECTIONS ON A RETREAT I was blessed with the great good fortune to get to the August 18th Wellspring Retreat, and I floated home on a lovely pink cloud, ready to write and shout to the world how wonderful a retreat weekend can be. I purposely waited to see what my life would be like after falling off that beautiful pink cloud. Why? Because I have never been able to trust myself, any Higher Power, or any kind of process - for anything. So why write in the fullness of the moment when surely, surely, it would wear off and my old unmanageable crazy life would come back in full force?

Well, it's been 2 weeks since that retreat, and I am definitely off the cloud. Back to mornings of trying to get to work on time, dealing with people I'd rather not deal with, planning and preparing meals, trying to figure out how to balance time with my family and time devoted to OA, and figuring out how to find the time to move and to exercise in addition to everything else. A friend has been killed in Iraq. My own child is going to Iraq in December. And guess what? I have been abstinent since that retreat weekend. I am abstinent today. Which is the longest string of abstinent days I've had in quite some time. And I'm starting to understand that there truly is more to abstinence - at least for me - than following a food plan. Even though right now I am very much questioning any HP that can watch families and communities suffer the horror and pain of Iraq, I am also starting to trust my personal HP, trust that maybe, just maybe I was given the gift of some kind of transformation from my weekend immersed in the OA program. And I want to share just some of the things I learned during my August weekend.

- I was reminded of the absolutely deadly nature of this chronic disease called addiction. It is not going to go away and if I don't get serious about finding a way to live in recovery with this disease, this disease will get serious about coming after me.
- I was reminded that this bleak fact does not have to mean the end of the world. In fact, it can mean a sane serene life I could once only dream of. That life is called recovery.
- I was reminded that even though I have a full-time 40 hr a week paid job I also need to work full time on immersing myself in the recovery process. My sponsor is not going to do this for me, and even though I absolutely love the meetings, simply going to a meeting when I can fit one in isn't going to do it either.
- I was reminded - through others willing to share their stories and their lives - that there truly is hope and life and long-term recovery and that I, too, can find this IF I GET OFF MY BUTT AND DO THE WORK.
- I was reminded that wallowing in depression and being unwilling to do the footwork devalues my HP's love for me. And I know today that I can trust that love, and with that love and with my willingness to turn all things over - all things, not just my food - that I will be able to live in the Promises.
- I was reminded I don't have to "BE" on the 10th step to do a 10th step every day. And isn't this particular tool a miraculous gift?
- I re-discovered I am not alone.

So I thank HP for retreat weekends - for the chance to live in a huge loving embrace with other people just like me and be fortified to re-join the outside world. And today, I want to actually live in that world.

P.S. - - And one other thing - on Saturday night of the retreat it was suggested to me that I subscribe to Lifeline. I know that it's a great bargain at \$15.00, but still, \$15.00 is \$15.00 in our household budget, not something conveniently found. Well, "coincidentally" I won a subscription at the raffle on our closing day. So thank you BAIG for the free raffle tickets, and thank you HP, for such an amazing, great "coincidence". Denise, Lemoyne

However I am, that's how he'll take me
It doesn't matter if I am fat or skinny
Thin or wide
He is always on my side
Cuz wherever I am, that's where he'll be
As His love comforts me
I feel safe in his care
Just knowing he'll always be there
He is on-time
As he accepts so many imperfections of mine
He is my Valentine in May and every other day
Because he makes me shine

However I am, that's how he'll take me
And shape me and I feel precious and free
Just because his love surrounds me
And wherever I am, that's where he'll be
Because I am enough for him to follow me
And send his friends to watch over me
I call them angels
Because whenever I call, that's when he answers
And I don't have to let that phone ring long
He answers on the first ring
Because I am his everything

I mean more to him than I mean to myself
As Mommy puts it, "I am his girl!"
If only I could love him half as much as he loves me
And trust him entirely
Then maybe however he is, I'll take him
Wherever he is, that's where I wanna be
And whenever he calls, I answer promptly
To offer myself to him
As an earthen vessel and a testament of his grace
Through prayer and meditation
constantly seeking his face

Cuz I gotta be with him
As only he makes it alright
When she sends the sun to awake me
and the moon to hold me at night
The intimacy we share is beyond words
As I pray so many prayers
And my prayers are heard
Because however he is, that's how I'll take him
Wherever he is, that's where I gotta be
And whenever he calls,
I find joy in answering promptly.
May 17, 2006

ODE to A Binge Food- Original words and music by Earth, Wind and Fire

Now, I'm craving you,
Is this real?
My temperatures rising, I don't want to feel,
I'm in the wrong place to be real.

I'm longing for you,
Just for tonight,
Ripping and tearing
And holding you tight,
I want to devour you
With all my might.

Reasons, the reasons that you're here,
The reasons that I fear
My feelings won't disappear.

After the food game has been played,
All my illusions were just a parade,
And all my reasons start to fade.
After all the reasons why,
All the reasons were a lie
I did all that for the high.

And in the morning when I rise,
No longer feeling hypnotized,
There was no reason, no reason.
Have I no pride?

From the World Service Business Conference - Part One

For the first time in a long while, the Baltimore Area Intergroup sent a delegate to the World Service Business Conference (WSBC) in Albuquerque, New Mexico. You have honored me with the responsibility to be that delegate. I am Mike, a gratefully recovering compulsive overeater in Overeaters Anonymous with membership and abstinence since 1990, an 80-pound weight loss, and freedom from tons of resentment, pain, and fear.

In this and the next few issues, I will share my experience as a delegate and how our Intergroup and meetings benefit from what I've learned from Region Forums, involvement in the 12th Step Within Committee, business motions considered, and the workshops I attended. A short- and a long-form of my final report are available, and will appear on our website soon. I'd also be happy to speak at your meeting about the WSBC. Please contact me at **[CHECK PAPER COPIES AT LOCAL MEETING FOR CONTACT INFO]** to arrange for copies or for me to visit your meeting.

There were many amazing people at the Conference, all who qualified when sharing, stating their length of abstinence from compulsive eating as well as their physical recovery (Note: I hope you will qualify at your meetings, as this gives us hope that we can recover.) We debated business motions, shared in workshops, discussed issues in Region Forum, and supported each other in meetings. Besides the workshops, I attended 11 OA meetings; several were held each day and I led one on the 12th Step.

An immediate WSBC benefit to our meetings and Intergroup is that we found our Keynote Speaker, Allen B. of Ohio for our recent retreat. I also brought ideas and experiences from meetings, Intergroups, and Regions - expanding 12th Step work, that there are exciting, new pieces of literature and recordings that can enhance Public Information Service to potential members, dealing with disruptive members at meetings, and fundraising ideas, to name a few. Our Executive Committee Intergroup officers, past Chair, Region Reps, and the WSBC rep will use this information to craft a vision of future service to our meetings and members.

In Part Two of this series, I will tell you about the Region Forums and the 12th Step Within Committee work that I am doing. One last thing, the Intergroup is considering sending a second rep with me to the next conference, to take place April 30-May 5, 2007. Watch for information from your Intergroup Rep and the Steppingstone about that effort. It will take some work to raise the funds to send a second rep, but I think it's an important action that I hope you will support. I'll tell you more about that, too.

I'm new in town and finding my way into the OA community. The people have been wonderful. The outpouring of support has been fantastic. There is fellowship, acceptance and love amongst the members, but relapse seems all too common. Unfortunately, it seems that the perception is that relapse is part of recovery. In my quiet time, I'm asking God to help me to understand how to alter this perception without offending others. My mind says, "Don't worry about what they think; you're helping to save their lives". But then, my mind is the source of most of my problems.

I was fortunate to find my OA recovery in a place where continuous abstinence was considered the fastest and most effective way to cleanse my body of the toxic effects of compulsive eating, and leave me most receptive to the healing grace of a Higher Power, the only true source of renewable energy in my journey to overcome the personality and character flaws that fed my disease from the word "go".

My actions were so shrouded in dishonesty when I was actively eating that I had lost the ability to appreciate the simple fact truth that I was choosing a slow death each and every time I picked up the first compulsive bite. I was no different than an alcoholic. I was doomed to chronic suffering so long as I chose food over recovery.

I had to be shown the value of structure. It was not about restriction or deprivation, but about acceptance of the gravity of my problem. I had to experience the effect of having a daily commitment to abstinence, as evidenced by a series of actions (the tools) that reinforced the need for and effect of discipline and personal responsibility upon the chaos and randomness of my unmanageable life.

Once I did, I found a newfound sense of personal power in being able to honor limits; in relation to portions, in the demands upon myself on a given day; in my numerous unfulfilled expectations that fed the negative self-talk that was my disease.

I had to set aside my fear of judgment and humble myself to find a sponsor with whom I could be completely honest and accountable. I had to be willing to open myself up to their input and let them guide me through the situations, one by one, that challenged me (with food and otherwise) and become willing to substitute positive actions for passive resignation, knowing that deep down, I lacked the personal resources to overcome them on my own. Little by little, I gained the knowledge and experience I needed to thrive.

I have over ten years of continuous abstinence now, and I don't know if it's available to everyone in OA. I know that there is nothing exceptional about me, and that I was a relief-seeking person ever since I was an infant. I chose comfort over learning through sacrifice and compromise almost every time.

So I speak my truth, and hope that it will be sufficiently attractive to rub off on those around me. I believe that our program is perfect just as it is. Whether people are motivated to go to any lengths depends upon the strength of the message of the people around them that are living in recovery every day.

It's not supposed to be easy

When I dragged my sorry butt into my first OA meeting in 1990, I was spirited, agitated, out of sorts, and frustrated. I knew I was overweight, I knew I ate more than I planned on, and I knew that I wasn't happy. Beyond that, I didn't have a clue that I was spiritually ill, and frequently not of sound mind. I felt like a loser, especially when the chips were down, which happened more & more often. I was told that I might be a compulsive eater, and if I was, they could show me a few things that would restore a sense of order to my very unmanageable life, and possibly even some balance.

But first, I would have to address my food issue. It was recommended that if I was unhappy with my weight, I might try eating less. And if I suffered from a lack of discipline, I might spend more time organizing and preparing my food, and have what I needed for abstinence in the house.

If I weighed and measured, I could chart my progress, and I could make sure I'd always get everything that I had coming. (Of course, I could only see what was being taken away from me).

They suggested that I get a sponsor; someone who could help me deal with the logistics of being abstinent, and everything that followed. What I found out was that they meant I had to learn to be accountable to another person, something I'd studiously avoided most of my life. I started to write down and commit my food to my sponsor every morning at exactly the same time. Each food and quantity, right down to the type of dressing, fat or condiment.

What an outrage....that I should have to humble myself to share my food with a stranger.

Well, the truth is, my arrogance, my pride, and most of my other character defects revealed themselves in the coming months as I struggled to be abstinent for one day. If I wrote down a pear, I wanted to have an apple. If I wrote down that I was eating at home, I wanted to go out. If I committed to eating at 6AM, Noon, and 6:30PM, I wanted to eat at 9, 12 and 4. I had no idea that my thoughts and my feelings influenced what I ate, when I ate it, and how much I ate. I was out of control, and using food as a pacifier. I was powerless over food. Duh!!

It's sixteen years later, and I have over ten years of abstinence - 3,832 days and 11,500 meals...and some days, it's still hard to stick with my food plan, and keep my life simple.

I have dealt with success and loss without needed to medicate with food. I get excited, bored and everything in between, and still haven't found a situation that eating compulsively wouldn't make worse. I have matured and learned to respond to life instead of reacting to it.

Recovery never gets easier, but I feel comfortable in my own skin. I suit up, show up, and give the day my undivided attention. Oh yes...and I strive to be always mindful around food, and appreciative of how easy it would be to return to my chaotic life if I picked up the first compulsive bite. The literature says "the disease is activated before the bite is taken"...and I believe it.

Neil R. (Baltimore, MD)

It is 12:30 in the morning and I can't understand why I am still awake, but a thought came to my mind that I wanted to share with our community. You know what I get a pleasure out of? Dessert time at my friend's dinner's table, especially when I am abstinent. I like to watch people eat the dessert, because they only eat one piece! And it still shocks me that people can take it or leave it. I see my friends and realize how I could not just eat one. Or if I did eat one, I'd come home and eat more. Dessert time at other people's homes just reminds me that I have a disease and I can't stop after one. And that does make me a different eater. I need these reminders because my addiction lies to me. So I enjoy dessert time for a whole different reason than ever before. It reminds me that I am a compulsive overeater. Sheffi in Baltimore

WOW, WHAT A RETREAT!

Who knew what would happen when a few members dedicated to organizing a retreat leafed through several Lifeline magazine issues last February on the hunt for a theme? Several phrases popped out at us, but we were drawn again and again to "Willingness and Action." How much simpler can recovery get? We need to be willing and we must take action to recover. The "Willingness and Action" retreat, held last month at Wellspring was a beautiful weekend of recovery for 30 folks from far and wide. Having the honor of being the chair of the Retreat Committee, it was a particularly special experience for me. Here is some of what I heard and what I learned at the retreat:

- Not everyone can string together months and years of continuous abstinence from compulsive eating and overeating, but everyone can string together moments and more moments of abstinence.
- I can perform service in all kinds of ways. If I don't know how to do a particular service, then I ask for help and I learn. My recovery and abstinence grow stronger when I challenge myself to do service, one of our eight Tools of Recovery.
- Our members are exceptionally talented as I saw many wonderful performances of music, dance, poetry, and comedy at the Talent Show.
- I can stop...and even take a nap, even if that means missing a workshop (and I did!). It's good to listen to and honor my body's needs.
- Meditation is an amazing thing to do. I really felt the loving presence of my Higher Power.
- I found new friends at the Retreat who are seeking deeper recovery just like me.
- I can celebrate my body and myself exactly as it is today. I must ask my Higher Power and recovering members for guidance in self-care and physical health. I must let the results go, lumps and bumps and all!
- I was reminded to trust my Higher Power and my fellows (especially my fellow fabulous Retreat Committee members) that everything that needs to be done will get done. It was a joy that the Retreat seemed to go very smoothly.
- I can and do accept love and affirmations and give them in return.
- Being in touch with nature - seeing deer watching us, listening to the crunch of pebbles under my feet, feeling the sunlight filter through the trees - keeps me present and gives me peace.
- Serving on the Retreat Committee brought incredible joy and honed skills that I used in other areas of my life.
- It's okay to cry.
- It's okay to laugh. It really is.

The "Willingness and Action" retreat was an unforgettable experience: with lots of love, miracles, and recovery to take home and pass on. I am forever grateful to the Retreat Committee for all of the hard work they have done to create this event, and I am indebted to all 30 of you who attended for teaching me about your willingness to serve, and taking action to use the 12 Steps in your lives to recover from compulsive eating. May you be blessed with wonderful recovery every day. --- Mike B., Baltimore

Today is the Monday after the Region 7 Willingness & Action Retreat at Wellspring. I walked away from the retreat on Sunday with a slight fear about what was to come that night and the next day. I was anxious about what I would do with those fears. When I woke up on Monday I was no less anxious but was willing to take the time to fill out one of the sheets that was given to me in my retreat welcome packet. The form title is Program First All Day, Every Day. I read the form and started to fill it out. One of the action steps on the form was to do a reading. Luckily I had won a prize at the retreat raffle that included a Lifeline. The very first page I opened to had a letter called Voice of Reason. It was written for me and I thank God for the person who took the time to write it. I am taking action today!!! Can I believe it? ME...willing to take action. It is the retreat that has lead me to these grateful words. What joyous words. I sit up straight just as I learned to do at our meditation workshop. I have taken another action! I am most grateful for the folks who worked hard to make our retreat and weekend a success. I am grateful that I went. I am grateful for everyone that participated. I am grateful for this new willingness in action. Marcella

WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND OA?

On November 18, Overeaters' Anonymous will be honoring IDEA Day.

IDEA DAY INFO UPDATE!!!

NEEDED: Donations for silent auction to be held at IDEA DAY November 18th.

We will be having a silent auction during IDEA Day to help raise funds for step 12 work. Theme baskets will be created. Do you have any crafts, new household items, candles, mugs, etc. that you would like to donate? Please call Terri [CHECK PAPER COPIES IN LOCAL MEETINGS FOR CONTACT INFO] for more information or to donate items.

We will be having a clothing exchange at the IDEA Day. Here is your opportunity to donate the clothes that you no longer use, and pick up some lovely new clothes. THANK YOU!!!! from the IDEA DAY committee

Hi, my name is Neil, and I'm a compulsive overeater and BAIG's new Public Information Committee Chair. Our goal is to make sure as many people know about Overeaters Anonymous as possible. It's remarkable how effective simple grass roots, common sense, "why didn't I think of that" activities can be.

So, here is a little of what we'll be trying to accomplish in the coming months:

- Disseminate fliers to all BAIG meetings to be hung in supermarkets, health clubs, places of worship and libraries, and any other high-traffic area that permits public service announcements to appear. They will include the location and time of the OA meeting closest to that facility. It will include a tear-off portion on the bottom with a number to call to speak to a live person.
- We will instruct members how to call their local newspaper and get them to put a free listing in the "activities" section, identifying all OA meetings in your vicinity.
- We will encourage members to ask their health providers (Doctors, Nurse Practitioners, Therapists, Social Workers, Counselors, Nutritionists, Massage Therapists, Personal Trainers) if they have any information on OA, and make sure they have some the next time they see them. If you're comfortable with it, tell them you'd be glad to talk to a client about OA.
- We will invite anyone with a nice idea to share it and see if we can support them in making it happen.

New plans already! BAIG will be sending representatives to two area health fairs in the coming months:

AEGON Health Fair - 520 Park Ave (Downtown) - Sept 21 - (11-2PM)

US Postal Service - Baltimore - October 18th (1 - 5PM)

Any members willing to volunteer please contact Neil at - [CHECK PAPER COPY FOR CONTACT INFO]

Volunteers should demonstrate three-fold recovery and be comfortable working with the public. Before and after pictures are welcome.

Looking forward to working with you to raise awareness about OA, inside and outside of the fellowship. Neil R - [CHECK PAPER COPY FOR CONTACT INFO]

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

EACH MEETING IS ASKED TO HAVE ONE SPECIAL COLLECTION EACH MONTH TO CONTRIBUTE AN ADDITIONAL \$10 TO BAIG TO BE ABLE TO SEND AN ADDITIONAL WORLD SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE TO THE WORLD SERVICE BUSINESS CONFERENCE. THANK YOU.

One year in program some thoughts from the path...

Step One: We admitted we were powerless over food, that our lives had become unmanageable. Honesty. My name is ChanaElsa; I am a compulsive overeater. And I am powerless, as someone in the rooms once said, over "nouns". If I cannot accept the truth, that I have this dis-ease, I will lie and cheat to conceal it, creating all manner of unmanageable scenarios.

Step 2: Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. Hope. I came to, after the black outs and "white" outs, the physical and emotional lapses in consciousness, to discover that it was the nihilism of the spiritual blackouts that was causing the problem. All my life I'd been searching for community and a connection with my Higher Power. I found both in program.

Step 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of Gd, as we understood Him. Faith. At first it felt heretical to mess with my Gd concept, but the truth was the HP I brought into program had not kept me out of the food. So I made a decision to expand my concept of a Higher Power. Wanting to stay connected to my tradition I had the 3rd step prayer translated into Hebrew by a friend in Jerusalem. I said it constantly. My doubt and suspicion diminished. One day at a time I began to trust. I saw that my abstinence really was a gift.

Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory. Courage. I could not wait to do my 4th Step. I literally downloaded the wreckage of my past in a matter of days, into a hand bound journal I had saved for many years. I knew that my 'gold' was buried there in the experiences and emotions of my past, even if I could not yet unearth it. Any fear I had was minor compared with the promise of relief (and even weight loss) that I heard described by others who had done a 4th Step.

Step 5: Admitted to Gd to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. Integrity. Before I read my 4th Step to my sponsor I thought it would be, as a good friend had once quoted, "enough about me what do you think about me". But when we got together, my Sponsor in a casual aside said, well I wonder what I'm going to learn about myself. What a relief. With that my fragmented, organically rendered 4th Step became a share just like in a meeting. My Sponsor was always saying, sharing is praying. My 4th Step became my prayer for a new life.

Step 6: Were entirely ready to have Gd remove all these defects of character. Willingness. At this point I was able to learn how to do a Big Book 4th Step. Plotting my resentments, anger, fears (and secrets) in a logical way allowed me to see the bigger picture and to identify my character defects.

Step 7: Humbly asked him to remove my shortcomings. Humility. In a meeting I heard "self-blaming is an ego trip to hopelessness". Armed with my character defects, I went to a thesaurus on-line to help name my character assets. False pride had me thinking I was largely if not solely responsible for the state my life was in.

Step 8: Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all. Discipline. This was by far the hardest step for me. Preconceived notions of what an amends even was kept me from beginning. As with every single action I had taken towards recovery there was that paradox, I would not understand the step until I had taken it. I finally accepted that an amends might look different from what I imagined. This was actually a key step towards growth and healing. Stopping the cycle of immaturity and irresponsibility became more important than what I thought I might lose. I put everyone in my 4th Step on the list and then added quite a few more names and institutions, including Gd and myself and at my Sponsor's insistence I added them as well, though at the time I could not imagine having a reason to need to make amends to them.

Step 9: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. Love. I have always felt like a stranger, the black sheep or at best a rebel. This step offers healing to the victim in me, healing from the isolation, the abandonment and fears long carried. Some people didn't even need to be on the list, and many of the relationships would be healed with living amends made one day at a time over a lifetime. With the help of my Sponsor I have seen how seemingly disparate persons and institutions are connected around a wound I have nursed. And that ways of making amends are infinitely creative and come in Gd's time if I will only put out there my intention to do the right thing. I do not need to know what it will look like only to be open to the possibility when it arrives. Above all else amends are not so much saying I'm sorry, as being grateful for another human being and whatever lesson, message, or quality they are in my life to teach me. It is said that Steps 8 and 9 are who we want to be.

Step 10: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it. Perseverance. Not building up new resentments requires daily action. On the advice of a program person I admire, I started setting aside an hour each morning to inventory the previous day. I use a beautiful 10th Step inventory from another program which asks things like "Did I consciously remember that I have a choice today?" Writing has become an essential tool for me. It helps immensely to 'download' my hamster-head, when I'm running round and round on the wheel of my own thoughts. If I quit using it, even for a short period of time I put myself in a dangerous place. This dis-ease is cunning, baffling, and powerful enough to keep pace with my recovery.

Step 11: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with Gd, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry that out. Spiritual Awareness. Learning to meditate. My Sponsor says imagine a snow globe and let the flakes settle. Someone else offers hit the "pause" button. What is my spiritual purpose? Anger?! I am faced with my anger, and the anger of others. I used to eat over anger. I am finally present enough to get angry, but anger is a dry drunk. Al Anon teaches me emotional sobriety; detachment with love is life work. I feel myself on a 'false summit' so close to the top. How will I take the next step from here? I remember more will be revealed and sit down. I am on a peak in the clouds and it is 'snowing'. Rumi says, "bewilderment is your entrance ticket into the mystery of presence." I have found a place to meditate.

Step 12: Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to compulsive overeaters and to practice these principles in all our affairs. Service. I have yet to take Step 12 with my Sponsor. But I have done "service" since my first day in program, coming to meetings, keeping to my plan of eating, being a secretary and a treasurer, and sponsoring others up to the level of my ability. Being able to distinguish service from people pleasing has not always been easy, both in program and out. I must empty myself enough to hear you, then we are both healed. True service is letting "You serve others through me". * Thanks for letting me share. ...offered in deepest gratitude to my Sponsor, my sensei

*OA's 12&12 on p106

"EXPECTATIONS ARE PRE-MEDITATED RESENTMENTS"

Watching downtown Baltimore pass by as I sat in the Light Rail one day, I pulled out a Lifeline and began to read. I love this "little meeting in print" as I learn from other members that write about their experience, strength, and hope in recovery. "Expectations are pre-meditated resentments." That profound statement leapt from a member's article. It stopped me cold.

As I read that phrase a few times over, I had to ask myself if I am creating resentment from within with expectations, even ones I don't even know I have. I have come to discover that I unconsciously and routinely create expectations internally. These could be as blithe as expecting the lights to come on when I flick the switch to as hopeful that the summer beach vacation will be sunny all week.

We all know that something as simple as a thunderstorm could dash both expectations in a hurry. Sometimes I don't discover that I have an expectation until something's not going my way. How do I react when an expectation isn't met? I have choices. I can either accept and adjust or stoke feelings of anger and self-pity.

If I stew on my disappointment, anger and self-pity quickly replace my well-being and serenity. If I'm not serene, I am vulnerable to acting out in my disease by eating compulsively. If I compulsively eat, the emotional thunderstorm begins: regret, self-righteousness, fear, self-anger, and defiance swirl around and around. I run the risk of a spiritual hurricane exploding within, and then I am back into hopelessness and into the food, with no guarantee that I can find my way back out.

OA, the Big Book, and the 12 Steps have taught me how to recognize and let go of resentments, which for me are insidious poisons that will slowly choke me. Because I have followed the directions of this program, the benefits of my recovery are incalculable. I enjoy a serenity I never knew could exist and freedom from compulsive eating that I never thought was possible. My relationships with my husband, family, friends, and others are forever happier because I know how to let go of resentment.

I would rather feel my disappointments and stay abstinent. The AA Big Book (p. 452, 3rd Ed.) says that "...my serenity is inversely proportional to my expectations....and when I place more value on my serenity and sobriety [abstinence] than on anything else, I can maintain them at a higher level, at least for the time being." I must use the spiritual principles of the 12 Steps to accept and adjust to today's reality.

Step One guides me to grateful powerlessness, Steps Two and Three allow me to let go. Steps Four and Ten ask me to explore the possibility that I had a part in it (having an expectation is having a part in it). Steps Five and Eleven are how I can 'fess up to my part to my Higher Power and to you. Steps Six and Seven helps me explore ways to let go of expectations a little earlier than before by seeing what character facts (or defects, if you prefer) contributed to my expectation. Steps Eight and Nine help me make things right within myself and to those around me.

And Step Twelve asks me to tell you that I've found a better way to cope with expectations than to form resentments. The last thing I want to do today is to eat over dashed expectations. I want to see the sun, not a thunderstorm, in my soul today. The only thing I can do with expectations is to accept and adjust with the 12 Steps, calmly and gratefully, to life around me as it is. --Mike B., Baltimore

An OA Fable A compulsive overeater has just shared at her 5PM OA meeting that she's abstinent and grateful. On her way home, she sees that her neighbor's house is on fire. Amidst the chaos, she runs into the burning building and saves the family's dog. Soon, the local news trucks pull up, and they spend the next 2 hours making our heroine the focus of a human interest story for the 11 o'clock news. "Housewife hero saves dog." She goes home, and, thoroughly exhausted from her heroics, she goes straight to bed. The next day, she oversleeps from the physical exertion of the night before, but she needs to get the kids to school. So she throws on her clothes, grabs a cup of coffee and an apple and dashes out, just in time to get the kids to school. As long as she's out, she figures she'll go food shopping. She goes to Whole Foods, and having missed her "normal" meal (it's now 10AM), she "tastes" enough of what's being offered to make up for the earlier shortfall. She knows she didn't overeat, so she's abstinent, right? On her way out of the store, she buys a scratch ticket and wins \$500. Knowing that her children need many things that aren't in the family budget, she runs (not walks) to the mall to spend her winnings on her family, whom she loves more than anything. After the shopping frenzy, she realizes that it's 3PM and she missed lunch, so she grabs a quick bowl of soup at the food court, to "tide her over." It's the small soup, so it's OK. Her husband, not having seen his heroine wife since the dog-saving incident, comes home early to take her out to dinner. Even though she just had some soup, she doesn't want to "disappoint" her proud husband, so they go to her favorite restaurant, and she eats her entire typical abstinent meal. She figures it "makes up" for what she "wasn't able" to have earlier because of her unusually active day. She needs the extra calories.

The next day is a special day - because she's going to be celebrating her six-month abstinence anniversary by telling her story at her regular meeting.

What do you think?

Is this woman abstinent? If she told this story and said "At least I didn't eat compulsively," how would you react? What would a newcomer think about OA and this thing called "abstinence" from this story?

If the woman was a diabetic and not a compulsive eater, and she made the same decisions toward "getting her medicine," would your reaction be the same or different?

What's the moral of this story?

No one has the right to judge another person's abstinence. Abstinence should have bottom-line guidelines like having a set food plan and sticking with it. There's only one requirement for membership in OA. Nobody HAS to do anything. Each of us has a personal responsibility for being honest about whether we are meeting our commitment to abstinence. Abstinence and compulsive eating should be distinguishable.

This whole article makes me (angry, nervous, nauseous, uncomfortable).

