

The OA

# STEPPINGSTONE

October 2005

Volume 28, No. 4

## heard at meetings

Hi! My name is Joan, and I'm a compulsive overeater and the new editor of the Steppingstone. Thank you all for welcoming me into this position.

I am grateful daily for the gift of OA and the miracles performed by my HP. OA has provided me with a new way of living through working the Steps and by using the tools of the program, showing me how to be functional in the world today and to enjoy the wonders of life.

I am making an appeal for all of our members to consider service in one or more of the following areas: Accepting calls as Night Owls or Morning Doves, or serving as Sponsors or Speakers. Please send me your information and you will be included in the next issue of Steppingstone.

There are also two new email opportunities described within which offer yet more ways to stay in touch with the program.

This is YOUR newsletter; ideas, comments and suggestions welcome.

Heartiest thanks to Ashley and Mike who have offered constant support and suggestions - and thanks to all contributors, too!

**"We are not bad people trying to be good, but we are sick people trying to get well."**

**"I have enough; I do enough; I am enough."**

**"When trouble overtakes you let God take over."**

**"Prayer is the bridge between panic and peace."**

**"I came for the vanity and stayed for the sanity."**

**"This is love if we can handle it."**

**"Don't feed the feelings."**

**"Stay close to the spout until the grace comes out."**

**"Live in your needs and not in your wants."**

**"Change we must or die we will."**

**"Let God write the script."**

**"Fear - false evidence appearing real."**

## long-term abstinence

Why are there not a lot of obvious long-timers and sponsors?

Personally, I believe it is because people are exercising all-or-nothing thinking and a strict food plan that denies that food is a gift necessary for life and rather than something to punish oneself with. We forget it is a disease and try to fit into the social expectations of a Size 4 body because society says that we all should look like Twiggy and magical thinking says all will be well when we are a size 4-10. The messages that support this might start with our nuclear family and childhood peers as well as the media, but it continues in our groups when we reward with praise those who say they are keeping a strict food plan or are at a very low weight. There is a saying that the person with the longest abstinence is the one up the longest this day. It is a day-by-day program that lasts a lifetime. We receive it to give it away. To carry the message to another who is still suffering in or out of the program. Many believe that to sponsor they have to be perfect. Isn't that what we thought about life before we were found by OA? Doesn't that produce paralysis with recovery? Those who do achieve a healthy weight and maintain it get busy with their lives and often forget that they have to give it away to keep it.

Then there is the group of us who feel they have to do the Steps nearly perfectly and be at their desired weight before we give it away. Sponsors can work the program with others one minute ahead -- surely by the time we have been to 4 weeks of meetings. Buddies working the program can share their work with each other and help each other. We have to continue to reach out to others from our first day and members with new members from the first day.

Could we give each newcomer ourselves as a temporary sponsor until they find one who can be with them in long term recovery? World Service says we can. How many newcomer calls are we making?

It is a "we" program. Yes, it is a selfish program and one of the most important things we can do for ourselves is to help another person suffering with our disease. It will refresh our own program no matter how long we have been around. I have been around for 29 plus years. There was a 5-year relapse from meetings ending over 10 years ago. My abstinence is reliance on my HP day by day. My food plan is mine and it varies. Counted individually, I have many, many days of imperfect abstinence. I am a thankful member of OA whose physical and emotional life has been saved by OA. My spiritual life is being cared for directly by my HP and He sure uses OA. Thank you for listening. - Anonymous

**CHALLENGE TO THOSE WITH LONG-TERM ABSTINENCE . . . WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE TO STEPPINGSTONE COMMENTING ON YOUR EXPERIENCE?**

The Newsletter of the Baltimore Area Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous

**OA IS EVERYWHERE!**

Recently, I had the privilege of visiting Ireland with my husband for two weeks. We visited many towns, including a little village on the southern tip of Ireland called (would you believe it) Baltimore. Ireland is a beautiful country with lots of ancient castle ruins, friendly people, green hills, and OA!

What I love about OA is that it's an oasis for my soul. It's a place where I can go and people truly understand and accept my foibles, and me especially when it comes to my tendencies around food. What I also love about OA is that it's all over the world, including Ireland. It's a divine gift to be able to attend an OA meeting anywhere and be welcomed into the worldwide family of recovering compulsive eaters.

Before we left, I mailed letters to the Dublin and Cork area Intergroups to let them know I was coming and to find meetings. Joanne, my new OA friend in Cobh, a village near Cork says that my letter was read at all the Cork meetings. That was quite exciting, especially since I received some very friendly e-mail from people looking forward to meeting another compulsive eater.

I attended meetings in Dublin and Cork, and they are just the same as our meetings here. There were people of all shapes and sizes, with all kinds of stories who came together to recover from our common malady. The readings in the beginning were just the same: the Steps, the Traditions, and sometimes the Promises. One meeting was a speaker meeting, another was a Step meeting, and a third was a literature meeting. Members shared and other members nodded their heads in understanding. The Group Conscience meetings afterward discussed all the usual business items. The only thing different was that everyone except me spoke in a lovely Irish brogue.

One of my favorite things to do when I travel is to find an OA meeting and meet my own kind. Besides the Irish meetings, I've been blessed to be able to attend meetings in several states, plus France. It's inspiring to see that this program has helped so many people all over, and I hope to attend more out-of-town meetings soon. It's a true blessing to know that we are loved everywhere. All we have to do is get to a meeting wherever we are. ---Mike, Baltimore

*I am always looking for outlets. The most common is the phone, but what about when I can't get anyone? There is praying. Honestly, though, sometimes I am not interested in that. Journaling is a great resource too, but what if I have written the same thing over and over again with no resolve? This is common for me. I need to talk through my feelings rather than eat over it. But there is one thing that any music lover will enjoy, **TURN IT UP!** (with respect to those around.) I am currently in a confusing situation that was not being relieved in any way described above. I was sitting at my desk attempting to journal and work on schoolwork, and then I saw my CDs. I put them in, turned it up and started dancing. I even closed my eyes and thought I was somewhere else than my room. I have read about dancing before; I had even experienced it sometimes, but I guess I had forgot that as a resource. I sang along, I danced, I raised the volume. The problem is not gone, unfortunately, but my anxiety is not there anymore. So try it, turn up the volume and just dance. Don't worry, I'll deal with the neighbors for you. - Sheffi*

**Our Higher Power Speaks:** I love you. You are beautiful in my eyes and I created you to be just as you are. Don't criticize yourself or be down for not being perfect in your own eyes. This leads only to frustration. I want you to trust ME and take one day at a time. Dwell in MY power and MY love . . . be yourself. Look to ME and I will guide you if you let ME. Be aware of my presence in everything. I will teach you patience, love, joy and peace. Look to ME for answers and I will lead you. Listen and I will tell you MY will. I love you! I really do. Let that love flow from you and spill over to all you touch. Don't struggle, relax in MY will. My will is perfect. My love sufficient and I love you! From Shirley R.

*So HERE I stand before you ...*

***Rambunctious Hips  
Full Breast  
a smile larger than the average life  
Nothing air brushed  
No nips, tucks  
No model by No standards  
but loved on my own terms.***

***Nicole  
Baltimore***

**I'm Not Like "Those" People**

Is there any difference between addicts? Can it be said that we're all the same regardless of our addictions, be it drugs, sex, food, or alcohol (not to mention the countless other 12-step programs that exist)?

Is my bottom less arduous than that of a crack addict seeking her last hit? The feelings and emotional havoc are parallel in essence -- self-condemnation: guilt, shame, and self-pity.

Recovery is Re-cover-y. Who am I to distinguish myself??

The beautiful thing is that the answer is *too* the same: Honesty, acceptance, and finding a loving God of our understanding. What's more, working *all* of the tools of our program, any program, day in and day out (just as we would chase that addictive substance day in, day out).

So yes, we *are* all the same! Our goal is common: souls searching to be free and loved; to have a FULLER living experience...the substance is merely a symptom of self-chaos.

Nicole  
Baltimore

**FAT SERENITY**

Personality

They say I'm always the same, like oil on a duck. -- Mark

**GETTING BACK**

AFTER THIS HAND GOD DEALT ME

MAKING ME DIFFERENT

LEFT OUT

LET DOWN

I'M GOING TO LIFT THIS STAFF: I DESERVE IT.

-- Mark

## Gratitude

"You have a potentially fatal heart arrhythmia, and you need to see a cardiologist." A few weeks ago I saw my physician's lips moving and heard her words as if she were talking from inside a well. Beyond the fear, though, I was aware of a feeling of overwhelming gratitude.

Nearly 16 years ago I came to this program with a body I had battered and bruised with my disease. My kidneys were in trouble. My heart muscle was being cannibalized because my body couldn't find other nutrition. My IQ had dropped dramatically because I wasn't getting my brain the fuel it needed. I was dying physically and all but dead spiritually. And I hated myself. I felt I was getting exactly what I deserved. I struggled to believe I was worth recovery or that I could have a Higher Power that thought I was worth recovery.

Today there's so much to be grateful for. I knew the symptoms I was having were not due to electrolyte imbalances or malnutrition because I've been abstinent for many years. I was willing to acknowledge the symptoms and seek help. I was willing to continue to pursue help, even when the answers I was getting weren't the ones I wanted. I had a sponsor and other friends willing to help me sort out what I was experiencing and what the next right thing to do might be. And I have the steps to guide me as I walk this unfamiliar path.

Recovery doesn't promise me a problem-free life. Indeed the promises say, "We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us." This is a wonderful promise that has come true for me in many ways, but it does suggest that we will continue to have problems. The problems I have today, though, are so different than they were before. I'm able, with the help of y'all in this fellowship and my Higher Power, to deal with a much higher level of concern than I ever could have when I was actively using. For that and so many other gifts I am truly grateful.

-- Anonymous

## ***I HAVE BEEN GIVEN GIFTS TODAY***

*I have been given gifts today. Those gifts are patience and acceptance. Allow me to explain.*

*About a week ago, I threw out my back playing volleyball at a picnic. It was painful, so I took some precautionary measures regarding my recovery. I had already eaten lunch and soon would eat supper. In spite of the pain I made careful choices so I did not overeat. After eating, I committed to my husband that I would not eat anything the rest of the night, because I could see myself grazing the leftovers to distract myself from the pain.*

*I figured that I wouldn't have to live with this pain for long because the last time I hurt my back in a similar circumstance, it was better in two days. Unfortunately, the pain worsened throughout the week. When I realized that it was not going away by itself, I saw my doctor, who prescribed medications. I took them and started to feel a little better.*

*The acute back pain is gone as the medications reduced the swelling and muscle spasms, but my sciatic nerve is still hurting quite a bit. In fact, my sciatica has never been quite this agonizing. So, I figured some spiritual activity might contribute to the healing.*

*I asked my Higher Power for help. First, with Step One I realized my powerlessness over this condition. With Step Three I turned over my fears of the onset of chronic pain, the inability to participate in sports and exercise, and of getting fat because exercise would not be available. Next, I listened via Step Eleven. God told me to be patient and that acceptance helps, and that he would help me through this. Stay grounded in the present, and, oh yeah, don't eat extra food. It really won't help.*

*Because I felt my Higher Power's presence today, I was able to endure a very physically painful session of therapeutic massage that my doctor recommended. I was able to turn over my fears about the future and my physical shape to God, and I was able to accept that I am in pain and that I can take it easy. I also received the gift of patience and acceptance that healing happens in God's time and that I have choice of being of use or sinking into self-pity. It's my choice.*

*Patience, acceptance and being of use certainly feel better than self-pity, and contribute to the serenity that helps keep me abstinent and at peace. So, with those options is there really a choice? I am grateful to my Higher Power and to this fellowship for showing me a better way of life and the ability to get through all sorts of pain. - Anonymous, Baltimore*

**Each time relapse started with the same thought - "I can do this on my own - my food's under control, I've got this thing licked now - all I have to do is just eat protein and vegetables in moderate amounts and exercise and I'll be fine - I don't need a sponsor, or meetings, or to give my food away, or weigh and measure or have a food plan, or any of the other tools." Within a short time the old obsession would return - my portions would increase - I would be hungry and snacking all the time, I would start eating trigger foods ("just this once - tomorrow I'll get back to eating better") and before I knew it I was bingeing to calm that "itch" inside again, and wouldn't get a vegetable in sideways if you paid me - the good food all looked bad and the bad food all looked good (so much for just eating protein and vegetables!) I wouldn't be able to stop until I had hit my highest weight again - then I'd be in pain, horrid shame, and try numerous ways from diet books to psychologists to psychics to deal with the "problem". Of course nothing would work for more than a few days, if that, and I would finally come back to OA and the 12 steps, get a sponsor, a food plan, weigh and measure, lose the weight - and then I'd have "the thought" again - "No problem, I can do this on my own..."**

**It's taken me 17 years to get it. It's taken me 17 years to understand that if I want a relationship with my Higher Power who will restore me to sanity, if I want good health and vibrant living, if I want to be able to take care of myself in a loving way, if I want good health - I CAN'T DO IT ALONE!!! Without my program, God, my sponsor, meetings, my food plan, my scale and measuring cup and all the other tools of the program, I cannot "just eat protein and vegetables, and exercise and I'll be fine!" Maybe some people can, but for me, it's never happened and it never will happen. How many times do I have to "jaywalk" (as it says in the Big Book) and get flattened by a bus to realize that jaywalking might be fine for other people, but I can't get away with it! It's not for me this lifetime - I'll just stand at the corner and wait for the light to turn green. Thank God that there is a program of recovery for this illness. Thank God I didn't wait another 17 years to get it! -- Rivka**

Humbleness, honesty, willingness to turn my will and my life over to the care of God daily, hourly, minute by minute, is the only way I can recover - only then can I have the "profound alteration in my reaction to life" (Big Book) and awareness of God that will, on a daily basis, allow me to continue to experience recovery. How can I grow daily? I can continuously acknowledge throughout the day that God is running the show - whatever, whoever is put in my path - whether an inconsiderate driver or a person I have difficulty with, they are there by Divine Providence. The uncomfortable thoughts and fears that float up continuously -I have to let go and let God run the world - say the Serenity Prayer and let God take away my fears because I am truly powerless over it all. I also need to grow spiritually by asking God for help with my character defects. I tell myself to "pause for a PKL" (pronounced pickle) - Patience, Kindness and Love - because I too often use my anxiety to control people and situations and I need to remember that patience, kindness, tolerance and love have to be the way I live my life now - not impatience, resentment, victimization and control. (I appreciate the phrase "progress not perfection" as I have a long way to go in this area!)

Most importantly, keeping an awareness of God always is, as the Big Book says, the essence of spiritual growth - am I keeping my will in alignment with God's will? Asking for His help and direction when agitated and uncertain? Being honest in facing the truth about myself and being honest with my sponsor so that I don't give the illness a foothold in my soul?

After just being through a bout of lice with one of my children, I can say that the illness is like a louse - it jumps in your head - like a nasty thought, a little dishonesty, an unwillingness, and it can lay oodles of tiny, nasty little eggs that you must pick out relentlessly, or they will hatch and give birth to many more lice. So I have to get the louse out of my head - that I'm a louse, that others are lice - and realize what the Big Book says - that I need a profound alteration in my reaction to life, by relying on G-d in all things, at all times, continually, every day. - Rivka

## WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND OA?

### SO HOW DO WE GET SOME LITERATURE?

Did you ever wonder how our OA and AA literature appeared at our meetings? Where did it come from? How can I get some? Well, of course you can purchase literature at the meetings, and in a couple meetings some literature is actually free. Does your meeting have a lot of literature? If so, does it seem like the same old stuff is on the table week after week? Well, you can do something about that and volunteer to be the Literature service person for the meeting. It's easy to order literature. Simply go online to the OA Online Store at [http://www.oa.org/literature\\_catalog.htm](http://www.oa.org/literature_catalog.htm). You can order literature for your meeting, yourself, and for your sponsees. You can order Lifeline magazine, too. It's easy, and the website will guide you through the process. Even if you are not the Literature service person for your meeting, go check out the site. You'll find lots of intriguing items that surely will deepen yours or another person's recovery!

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email opps

**Hello All!** As a service to all of us, the Steppingstones newsletter will begin offering an email list similar to the phone lists that we currently publish. If you would be willing to have your email address published in the print edition of the newsletter, in order that others might reach out for help and/or service by emailing you, please forward your name and address to the newsletter editor, Joan W. at [CONTACT INFORMATION DELETED FROM ONLINE VERSION OF STEPPINGSTONE. PLEASE GO TO AREA MEETING FOR PAPER COPY]. The email addresses will not be posted on the web version of the newsletter for reasons of anonymity and confidentiality.

**Attention OAers!** There is an informal OA email list used to send out information that might be of interest to those in OA. Emails are sent out as a blind copy, so anonymity is protected. If you would like to be added to this informal email mailing list please contact Mike B. at [CONTACT INFORMATION DELETED].

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**!!!Exciting news!!!!** There will be a new meeting starting November 1st. Tuesday night at 7:30pm. In Owings Mills area. For more info, contact Sheffi [CONTACT INFORMATION DELETED.]

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Are you interested in improving your recovery in the areas of body image, sexuality and/or relationships? The Baltimore Area Intergroup is sponsoring a workshop on these issues on a Saturday in January. If you would like to help plan this workshop, please contact Ashley V. at [CONTACT INFORMATION DELETED FROM ONLINE VERSION OF STEPPINGSTONE. PLEASE GO TO AREA MEETING TO PICK UP PAPER COPY WITH THIS INFORMATION].



spiritual solution  
answer in the steps  
all in God's time  
let go and let God  
into my life

get out of the driver's  
seat  
keep showing up  
do the work  
follow directions  
stay on the path

come back no matter  
what life brings

be of service  
be honest  
to the bone  
especially when all  
you feel like doing  
is hiding under  
covers with food

anonymous, baltimore

The **Baltimore Area Intergroup** hopes your reading this newsletter will strengthen your recovery and allow you to maintain or attain your abstinence from compulsive eating. **Please share by writing about your experience, strength and hope for the next issue.** Contributions for the next issue are due January 1, 2006.

Email editor Joan W.  
[Jmwehberg@hotmail.com](mailto:Jmwehberg@hotmail.com)  
Your contributions.

This is a great opportunity for service and to do a wonderful thing for your fellow recovering compulsive eaters!!

The art in this publication is courtesy of **Overeaters Anonymous and Microsoft Office Clip Art and Media.**

**QUICK AND FREE PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICE YOU CAN DO!**

*Did you ever notice in the grocery stores that there are these huge and fancy bulletin boards with "Free Ad" cards attached? When I see those, I write a quick note about OA on a card...something like the note cards below. Sometimes all I can fit on the "Free Ad" card is*

**"Overeaters Anonymous – No Dues or Fees – We Can Help  
410-764-3136 or [www.oa.org](http://www.oa.org)."**

Every little Public Information service that each of us can do could bring sanity and joy to a suffering compulsive overeater. Make copies of this page and then cut out the cards below and hang them on local store bulletin boards of all sorts. You can add the Intergroup telephone number 410764-3136 or your meeting contact's number on the card. If you want a Microsoft Word document of these cards, e-mail me at [\[CONTACT INFORMATION DELETED FROM ONLINE VERSION OF STEPPINGSTONE\]](mailto:CONTACT INFORMATION DELETED FROM ONLINE VERSION OF STEPPINGSTONE) and I will send you one. You'll never know whose life you'll save by taking a few thumbtacks and a few minutes of your time to carry the message! -- Mike, Baltimore

**EATING TOO MUCH? CAN'T STOP?  
STILL GAINING WEIGHT?**

Do you want to stop overeating but can't?  
Don't want to stop but must?

**WE CAN HELP  
OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS**

No Dues, No Fees, No Weigh-Ins  
Day and Evening Meetings

For Info: \_\_\_\_\_, [www.oa.org](http://www.oa.org)

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**BINGEING AND PURGING?  
CAN'T STOP?**

Do you want to stop bingeing and purging but can't?  
Don't want to stop but must?

**WE CAN HELP  
OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS**

No Dues, No Fees, No Weigh-Ins  
Day and Evening Meetings

For Info: \_\_\_\_\_, [www.oa.org](http://www.oa.org)

**ARE YOU OR A LOVED ONE  
ANOREXIC? STARVING YOURSELF?**

Do you want to stop starving yourself but can't?  
Don't want to eat regularly, but must to live?

**WE CAN HELP  
OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS**

No Dues, No Fees, No Weigh-Ins  
Day and Evening Meetings

For Info: \_\_\_\_\_, [www.oa.org](http://www.oa.org)