



THE STEPPINGSTONE

*Newsletter of the Baltimore Area Intergroup of
Overeaters Anonymous*

Hotline 443-475-0443 BAIG Website: <http://www.oabaltimore.org> Region Seven: <http://www.oaregion7.org>

March/April 2014

VIEW FROM A NEWCOMER

I have been in OA for about 90 days. I found OA from the rooms of another 12 step program. When I started to write my fourth step in the other program, I saw there were many issues around food and my self worth that needed to be addressed. I was already sold on the benefits of 12 step recovery but being a newcomer can be scary.

It was frightening to say I was a compulsive over eater and to say I needed help. I had some extreme eating behaviors in my past that were ghosts haunting me. My self worth was tied to the scale and my weight. The people in the rooms that made the time to say hello to me as a newcomer gave me the courage to come back. I was blessed by one woman who said she would help me as a sponsor. She invited me to lunch with people from the meeting. This was such a meaningful gesture and really made me feel warmly welcomed.

Next I met with a registered dietitian to get a food plan. She recommended a food exchange plan for me. It actually seemed like too much food! I had convinced myself that at my age I was not going to be able to lose weight anymore. I had been trying some of the popular diets, exercising and doing things on my own, but the weight was creeping up more than going down. I was starting to think about food all the time. I was buying bigger clothes and when I saw some pictures of myself I was not looking healthy.

I started on the food plan and after 90 days of OA have lost about 10 pounds and dropped back to the size pants I used to wear. I prepare most of my food in advance and have a plan for the day

that I email to my sponsor. I exercise almost every day only do things I truly enjoy such as walking, water aerobics and Zumba. It is part of my plan of action.

More than the physical recovery that has started, the emotional and spiritual recovery is what is healing me. I think the physical changes are an outward reflection of how well I am caring for myself. I am learning that nothing is worth eating over and that one single thought has gotten me through some very stressful days. I surrendered my own ways to follow other peoples advice. Sharing my life with them on a daily basis is so encouraging and supportive. I had a strong faith before OA and saw my higher power perform miracles in others, but today I know he is working a miracle in me.

The best part of OA for me is the unconditional love and acceptance from the people I meet. I spent many years alone with this disease convinced that no one did the strange and unhealthy things that I did with food. I punished myself with food and could not stop and felt this was a dark secret that I had to hide even from those closest to me. Today I feel I can tell someone in the program my innermost thoughts and feelings, and they will still love me in a special way. I do call people in OA and share my life, or just call to catch up and say hi. It is great to get a phone call back! My favorite part of the meeting is the fellowship after the meeting where we catch up, give and get hugs. Please keep encouraging the newcomers, it means so much!

Cathy M

**Act on life rather than react
to it.**



HE AIN'T HEAVY, HE'S MY BROTHER

At the 2013 World Service Convention, I attended a workshop with this title, which was for and about men in OA. Some women attended, too, as they wanted to get a perspective on what it's like to be a man in the program where 85% of the OA membership is women.

When I attended my first OA meeting, I was the second man of 28 in attendance. The other man and the women welcomed me and gave me hope. I soon found my home meeting in another location, and again, I was one of maybe two or three men of the 20 in the room.

I was grateful to the man who introduced himself and told me that he would be my sponsor. But what if he had not taken that courageous step of service to a newcomer? Would I have come back? One man at the Convention workshop said that in his first meeting, he was the only man and was overcome by self-consciousness. His hardest decision was to walk through the OA door the second time. Fortunately, he eventually found a sponsor who helped him take the journey through the 12 Steps to continuous abstinence and recovery.

Men seem to have a unique challenge in finding sponsors and may give up on OA before they find one. I heard in my early OA days and even now that members don't sponsor members of the opposite sex. A sponsorship relationship is intimate as we share ourselves and our secrets as part of our 4th Step inventories. There could be a risk of inappropriate connections that might hurt, not only the sponsorship, but also family and spousal relationships. So what's a man to do? How do men find sponsors when there are relatively few men in

OA, especially heterosexual men surrounded by our wonderful OA women?

As a gay man, I have been sponsored by both men and women without problem. I currently sponsor both men and women and will sponsor anyone as time and commitments permit, no matter who they are. Experience has taught me to avoid sponsoring someone to whom I am sexually attracted but to offer what help I can.

Another conventioneer said that he doesn't have the choice whether or not to help anyone. To recover, he must help others so he sponsors. It's part of Step 12. Yet another attendee observed that many men isolate and not admit the need for help.

Are we willing to step out of our "comfort zones" and reach out to a man in OA? How do we help a man feel welcome while negotiating our own feelings and boundaries? If we are unable or unwilling to sponsor a man, do we introduce him to others who will sponsor a man, even temporarily? Do we try to connect him with other men in the fellowship, either locally or through the virtual meetings?

I hope all of us, the brothers and sisters of OA, will reach out to men in the rooms, especially the newcomer. We may save his life as we show him the value of abstinence and the 12 Steps as we recover together. The more men we reach, the more men will stay in OA and will become sponsors that will help even more men join and recover in the lifesaving fellowship of OA. Will you do your part?

--Mike B., Baltimore



New on the OA Website!

Strong Abstinence Checklist and Writing Exercise

Use this valuable tool every day to support you in keeping your abstinence strong and intact. You may also use it as the focus for meetings and workshops.

<http://www.oa.org/pdfs/StrongAbstinenceChecklist.pdf>

LITERATURE FOCUS

March 3, 2014 For Today Workbook

It is when we try to make our will conform with God's that we begin to use it rightly.
Bill W.

For today: To know what God would have me do is my first priority, for that knowledge smoothes my path and frees me to live with energy and love.

Workbook Question: How can I seek to fulfill God's purpose for me on this day?

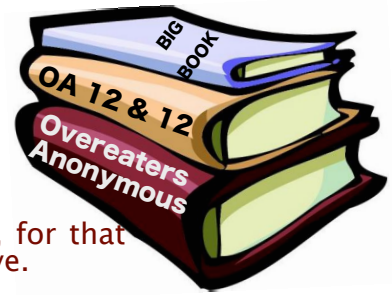
Well right away I notice I feel a resistance to this question. I want to do what I want to do when I want to do it. Never mind that this may not be the best way to do things for all concerned, including myself. However, I feel differently when I read from that same entry for March 3rd, "Self will is an infantile expression of omnipotence, the delusion that I can force life to be exactly as I want it to be. That is the insanity of compulsive overeating."

That sentence paints for me the picture of what is really going on. When I think that my way is the only way that will bring me happiness I become like a little

child. She doesn't know enough to realize that she does not have the life experience to make decisions without her parents to help her.

Today, I will put on my big girl pants and realize I need to ask for HP's help in knowing the next right action for me. This will impact positively not only my food choices but all the other choices I make today. I will become a more peaceful and capable adult knowing I have been able to put my will aside for something better.

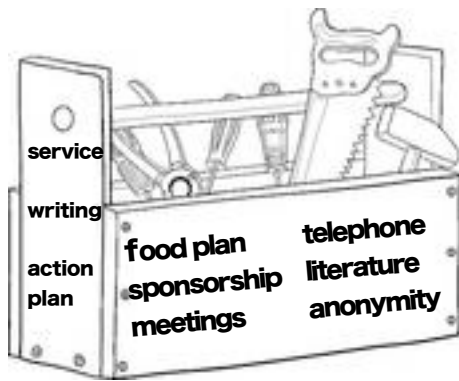
M.C.



HEARD AT THE NORTH JERSEY INTERGROUP ABSTINENCE WORKSHOP

March 8, 2014

- ★ How far will I go for my abstinence? I have to take the time to be prepared for it.
- ★ I am a compulsive overeater and must measure food, my drug of choice. I must measure the right "dosage."
- ★ As much as I am in pain, this too will pass. It's temporary.
- ★ I'm good at mental gymnastics. I must avoid rationalization.
- ★ When you're 100 pounds overweight, you're not anonymous.
- ★ I've been doing this program for years. Imperfectly but doing it. I have to stay abstinent.
- ★ If I'm abstinent today like yesterday, then the clothes will still fit.
- ★ Food was about the quantity. Recovery about the quality.
- ★ Before OA, I was digging my grave with a fork.
- ★ If we expect others to fix us, we will remain broken. We are responsible to ask for help and do the repair.
- ★ There is nothing I would not do to protect my abstinence.
- ★ When suggesting to make a call or text, ask a sponsoree who he or she will call. Ask for a commitment.
- ★ Remember to commit to meetings and service as part of the busy life that recovery allows me to have.
- ★ I have a healthy fear of relapse. Just for today. I don't worry about tomorrow. I'm abstinent today. That I can do. Do today what I did yesterday when I was abstinent. This fear keeps me in a healthy place. It's like respecting the fear of running across the street in heavy traffic.
- ★ I can't be abstinent myself. It doesn't last that way. Accepting help from others is vital to abstinence. I can't take this recovery and the people in these rooms for granted.
- ★ I treat myself as if I am my own sponsoree. What will I do to achieve honest and deep recovery from compulsion?
- ★ Diets end and the benefits leave. Recovery and abstinence is a way of life. Like Step 12 says, we must practice these principles in all of our affairs.
- ★ I intend to stay abstinent one day at a time for the rest of my life.
- ★ Put food on a smaller scale and the larger scale will take care of itself.



OA TOOLBOX

WHEN WILL IT STOP?

My first mistake today was when I said to a coworker, "You can leave that leftover breakfast right here. Everyone will walk by it and can take some." So, she left it right next to my desk. My second mistake was not having breakfast. My third mistake was not having a good lunch. I had made lunch and brought it with me, but it wasn't completely fresh. It was missing some enhancing ingredients because I was rushing out of the door

that morning and I didn't have time to put anything fancy together. I typically have protein with every meal, but I just didn't feel like eating the protein I had brought. So I took a few bites, but my lunch just sat on my desk for most of the day.

Around 3 PM, I was over-hungry and I kept walking by the breakfast that was next to my desk. Finally, the obsession was triggered and I took one of the items. I brought it back to my desk and ate it as quickly as I could, so no one would see me. It didn't stop there.

Next I went after the candy dish that was on my co-worker's desk. When no one was looking, I took 4 items and again ate fast so that no one would see. I put the wrappers in my trashcan, and covered them with other trash. It didn't stop there.

I wanted something crunchy. I went to the vending machine and purchased an item. I brought it back to my desk, but I strategically waited to eat it. The co-worker I tell my progress to, who is really proud of my success so far, reserved an office right next to my desk and she was not on a call anymore. I feared she would see what I bought. So I opened the bag, hid it in my desk, and snuck the contents here and there when she wasn't looking. All of a sudden, she was standing right there! She said, "You didn't eat your lunch." I said, "I know; it wasn't appealing." She said, "You didn't have any protein?" I said, "No, I didn't feel like eating it." We had this conversation as I was still crunching on the contents of the bag, so to make the crunching sound believable, I took a bite of the lunch I made, that would make a crunchy sound too, to cover it up. I did this, as I nervously wiped my mouth a hundred times to make sure there was no trace of the vending machine food. She walked away and when I knew she wasn't there, I went into my desk for the bag, dumped the rest of it in my mouth, and threw the bag in the trash - again, covering it with other trash. A few minutes later I looked down and realized I had traces of the vending machine item on my chest. I quickly brushed it off, but was dreading the thought that it might have been there when I was talking to my co-worker. It didn't stop there.

At the end of the day, when everyone left, I cleaned up the breakfast that was left out. I dumped everything in the trash, except one thing. I ate it at my desk, a little slower this time, but with just as much guilt. As I walked out the door, there was a dish of candy on another co-worker's desk. And, of course, I had to take one more piece.

As I made my way to my car, I thought to myself, "If I am bingeing right now, I better get my favorite food in. If I don't have it now, then I could possibly think about it in a few days and break a streak of good eating." This was my justification. So I planned it. I called and placed an order on my way home. I drove there, picked it up and brought it back to my car. I ate the whole thing in the parking lot, in secrecy. There was someone in the car next to me, so I turned away from them so they couldn't see the food going in my mouth. When I was done, I drove to the supermarket near my house and trashed the evidence.

Then I started to feel really sick. The nausea and feeling of being stuffed to the brim really set in. It had been almost two months, to the day, that I had not binge, and all the feelings came back. I physically felt disgusting; I felt guilty for bingeing; I was worried about what would happen to the progress I had made; I was bloated; and the happy, successful spirit I had been exuding was gone. I forgot how much I hated feeling like this.

I went into the grocery store and bought a pack of gum so I could get cash back for an OA meeting. Now despite the horrible physical feelings I was experiencing, which never stopped me before, I could have bought other things and kept going. I could have brought them back to my car and stuffed them in...but I didn't. I was done. I stopped myself within a binge, and I have never done that before. Instead, I wanted to be kind to myself. I didn't want to hurt myself anymore. I choose to stop it there.

Rebekah W.



FOOD PLAN, PLAN OF ACTION

TIPS ON FINDING AND KEEPING SPONSORS/SPONSEES
Advice from the FAQs on the WSO
 website oa.org on sponsorship

What is a sponsor? How do I get one?

Sponsors are OA members who are living the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions to the best of their ability. They are willing to share their recovery with other members of the Fellowship and are committed to abstinence.

Find a sponsor who has what you want, and ask that person how he or she is achieving it. A member may work with more than one sponsor and may change sponsors at will (adapted from Tools of Recovery).

When am I ready to sponsor?

Sponsoring can begin at any time. Simply sponsor up to the level of your experience, sharing as much recovery as you have. It may be helpful to discuss sponsoring with your own sponsor first, then begin sponsoring when you both feel it's right. Ask your group to introduce you as a new sponsor, or identify yourself as one. We have found that sponsors are most effective when refraining from compulsive eating. Many of us believe clarity of mind comes with abstinence. Having a sponsor is the best way to learn to be a sponsor; we are learn by example. We also learn to sponsor by doing it (adapted from A Guide for Sponsors). The Sponsorship Kit contains helpful resources to get you started.

UPCOMING EVENTS

★April 25-27, 2014. Big Book Study Weekend. Heritage Hotel, 500 Centerville Road; Lancaster, PA. Alicia B. 717-333-8711. Sara Jane B. 610-823-9673

★May 10, 2014. Body Image Workshop. NOVA IG. Arlington, VA. Sabrina: 571-429-9514 sabrinainva@gmail.com

★May 16-18, 2014. Big Book Study Weekend. South New Jersey. Jill at gratefuljill@yahoo.com or www.oa-southjersey.org

★June 20-22, 2014. Miracle on the Mountain. Camp Hebron Central PA. Mary S. 717-673-6170. Sara Jane B. 610-823-9673

BALTIMORE INTERGROUP MEETINGS 2014

April 13	Sept 21
May 18	Oct 12
June 22	Nov 16
July 20	Dec 14
Aug 17	

***The Steppingstone* needs your service.**

It is written by local members for local members. Without you there is no *Steppingstone*. Work Step 12 and use the tools of service & writing by creating an article of your choice. Call Tonia at 410-665-57 . Send all submissions to:

tonia.g.4editing@gmail.com .

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7th TRADITION CONTRIBUTIONS

Intergroup is again receiving mail at the address below. Please resume sending contributions.

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Baltimore Area Intergroup OA Meeting Directory

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p>8AM: "Rise and Shine" Baltimore Bnai Jacob Shaarite Zion Synagogue 6602 Park Heights Ave. Neil 410-318-6737 Dress Code: No revealing/provocative attire</p>	<p>10:30 AM Columbia Medical Pavilion at Howard County 10710 Charter Drive, G level Columbia, MD 21044 Tricia 410-489-0033 or Ruth 410-740-6955</p>	<p>11:30AM Pikesville Big Book Meeting Etz Chaim Center 3702 Fords Lane Gail 410-456-4306 HA, Bus M3 & M10</p>	<p>6:30PM Bel Air Focus: 12 & 12 First Presbyterian Church 224 North Main St. (Main and Broadway) Daniel 443-655-6399 danielroz@yahoo.com</p>	<p>10AM Parkville Literature Meeting HISS United Methodist Church 8700 Harford Rd, RM C under the sanctuary. Park in lower level lot. Pat 410-663-3670 HA, Bus #19</p>	<p>5:30PM Baltimore City First English Lutheran Church 3807 N Charles St. at 39th St Enter on east side of building Mandy 410-825-1782 HA, Bus # 3, 11 22</p>	<p>9:30AM Columbia Serenity Center 9650 Basket Ring Road (off Stevens Forest, off Broken Land Pkwy) 21045 Kathy 410-312-2742 moriarty.kathy@gmail.com Call about HA</p>
<p>5:15 Twpson Speaker Meeting Calvary Baptist Church (closed) 120 W. Pennsylvania Ave Side entrance - basement Brenda 410-491-3446</p>	<p>6:00 Baltimore City "Homewood Abstinence" First English Lutheran Church 3807 N Charles St. at 39th St Enter on east side of building Tania 443-660-8299 taniamarzalski@gmail.com HA Bus 8, 11</p>	<p>Noon St Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church 7834 Eastern Avenue Baltimore Bob 410-335-7748</p>	<p>7:30PM Columbia Serenity Center 9650 Basket Ring Road (off Stevens Forest, off Broken Land Pkwy) 21045 Mary Ann 301 775-0422 HA</p>	<p>7:30PM Bel Air Big Book Meeting Main St & Broadway (main building - basement) Daniel 443-655-6399 danielroz@yahoo.com HA</p>	<p>11AM Baltimore City First English Lutheran Church 3807 N Charles St. at 39th St Enter on east side of building Annette 410 825-4639 HA, Bus # 3, 11, 22</p>	
<p>7PM "Hour of Power - Mixed Format" Bel Air Upper Chesapeake Medical Center 500 Upper Chesapeake Dr. Terri 410 459-9100</p>	<p>6PM Columbia Serenity Center 9650 Basket Ring Road (off Stevens Forest, off Broken Land Pkwy) Garr 301-829-8218 garr@isaccocpa.com HA</p>	<p>7:30PM Pikesville "Abstinence First" Baltimore Hebrew Congregation - Room 211 7401 Park Heights Avenue (Parking lot on Slade) Neil 410-318-6737 HA, Bus M5</p>		<p>8PM Baltimore City (Closed Meeting) Search for Serenity Group (mixed format) Church of the Redeemer, Rm 41 5603 N. Charles St, N of Northern Pkwy Katie H, 856-506-1236 Bus 11, #44</p>		<p>11AM Lutherville Step Meeting St. John's Methodist Church 216 W. Seminary Avenue Phyllis 410-653-2264 lucindaruby@gmail.com HA</p>
<p>7PM - Carroll County St. Joseph's Catholic Church Religious Education Bldg. 915 Liberty Road Eldersburg, MD Contact: Joanne 410-552-9246</p>	<p>7:30PM Pikesville - Recovery From Relapse Shomrei Emunah Synagogue 6221 Greenspring Ave (Corner of Cheswolde) Shani 410-917-7466 Dress Code: No revealing/provocative attire</p>					
	<p>7:30PM "Beginners and Strugglers" Bel Air, First Presbyterian Church Main St & Broadway (main building - basement) Suzanne 410-8383-9353 SVL1020@comcast.net Call about HA</p>					
	<p>7:30PM Catonsville Salem Lutheran Church 905 Frederick Road Naomi 443-838-7970 Call about HA, Bus #2</p>					
	<p>7:30PM Parkron - Step/Discussion (New) St. James Episcopal Church 19200 York Road Karen 410-299-1675</p>					
<p>Abbreviations: HA= Handicapped Accessible; Bus # = Accessible by MTA Bus routes; Closed: These meetings are only for Compulsive Overeaters</p> <p>For Online or Telephone Meetings: http://www.oa.org/meetings/find-a-meeting-online.php</p> <p>If your meeting information changes, notify the World Service Office (WSO) at www.oa.org in the Meeting Registration/Change Information Section. In addition, call Tonia 410-665-5754 or tonia.g.4editing@gmail.com</p>						