



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>

DECEMBER 2014

A B C's of Abstinence

Sunday, December 7th, the Abstinence Workshop took place. The meaning and practice of abstinence and food plans were explored. Abstinence details how you eat. Food plans describe what you eat. The workshop included a presentation and panel discussion. At the end all participants were asked the following question: What behavior change do you commit to for the next 30 days in order to strengthen your program? The following are some of the responses made by the workshop participants:

- Write an article for the *SteppingStone*
- Put down the fork between bites
- Eat more slowly
- Take time for self
- No juice at night
- Think about my character defects
- No eating standing up
- Read the Big Book pages 84-88 more often
- Give up bread
- Shop well for abstinent food
- Have emergency foods available
- Let feelings pass
- 301(three meals a day, nothing in between, one day at a time), nothing after dinner
- Eat sitting down
- Meditate in the morning
- Eat more veggies
- Do not eat sugar
- More planning
- Get up early to write a food plan for the day
- Practice mindful eating
- Less high fat foods
- Pause before a binge
- Pause before I respond to others
- Butt out of my adult children's lives
- No tasting or licking
- Take time to relax/breathe
- Connect more with HP
- Measure nut butters (No fingers in the jar.)
- Call my sponsor



At the end of the workshop, it was noted, "We're not a glum lot as we trudge the road to happiness."

When we commit to a behavior change one day at a time for thirty days, the new behavior turns into a habit.

Working our way through the holiday season, what commitment can we make to create a life that is joyous, happy and free?

Attending these events is a real boost for recovery. Go to as many as you can.

Phyllis



Eating Is Not a Victimless Crime

Every time we choose food instead of opting for an honest accounting of our behavior to someone who might be able to help us (or to our Higher Power), we alter our universe.

When we choose the perceived pleasure of eating, we are forsaking the possibility of a day of freedom from obsession and from the darkness that resides deep within us that tells us that we are hopelessly broken and unworthy of better things.

By settling for less in this way, we are shouting from the rooftops that we are liars, cheaters and cowards who would rather spend intimate moments with our binge foods than we would with our loved ones.

I used to think that I was just indulging myself, but eventually I realized that my preoccupation with compulsive eating (and other extreme behaviors) sent a message to others in my life that food was more important to me than they were.

I became less responsible, I lied about what I was doing and why, I trusted them less and lost the ability to connect with them in a genuine and authentic way. I became an emotional child.

I had lost my integrity and sent signals, with increasing frequency, that when push came to shove, I would choose short term pleasure over uncomfortable circumstances with the potential for enduring life lessons that required emotional honesty.

I either preferred to blame others (and G-d) for my problems, or manipulate them, lie or conditionally give of myself, expecting something back in return for doing what others gave freely and without expectation.

When we thrust others into that sort of relationship, whether they see our emotional isolation for what it is, or they just respond as anyone would to someone who consistently treated them as an optional priority or just some sort of disposable form of entertainment or support, we are consciously or unconsciously forcing them to into a front row seat to our self-destruction, or to opt out, knowing that we are regrettably beyond the reach of their kindness and concern.

Of course, there were many others who had long since abandoned a relationship with us because our thoughtless words, last minute cancellations, and generally uncivilized behavior were immediate signs of our instability or unreliability.

So, whether we accept it or not – EACH time we choose the food over some person, place or thing of importance in our lives, we our setting in motion a future of pain, disappointment and anguish....not only for us, but for those around us as well.

I pray that we are reminded of these words before we take the first compulsive bite.

Neil R., Baltimore, MD



On "Maintaining Fit Spiritual Condition"

Recently my sponsor asked me to think about what it means to be in "fit spiritual condition." A good description can be found on pages 84-86 of the Big Book. We are told that so long as we maintain fit spiritual condition, we will be free of our compulsion: "We are not fighting it, nor are we avoiding temptation. We feel as though we had been placed in a position of neutrality -- safe and protected. . . . the problem has been removed." (p. 85). We then learn what we must do to maintain fit spiritual condition: "Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities." Finally, the Big Book explains the nuts and bolts of how to do this: by reflecting on our actions

daily, praying and meditating, and asking for guidance.

For myself, being in fit spiritual condition means staying connected to my own thoughts and actions, acting with awareness, and remembering that I am a compulsive overeater. It means appreciating this moment and being grateful for what I have. I maintain my spiritual condition through meditation, exercise, attending meetings, reading program literature, writing, and sharing with others in program. My HP speaks to me through my own breath, through nature, and through other OA members. If I stay in touch daily with all three of those sources, I can maintain fit spiritual condition.

Abby

WHY DO WE DO IT?

A program friend of mine and I are answering a bunch of questions to explore ways to deepen our commitment to abstinence and recovery. We've been exchanging answers to the questions to see what we can learn from each other. I've encouraged her to write a few Steppingstone articles from her answers, so it's high time I do so.

The question: "What were my thoughts before I indulged in the first compulsive bite?" Since I've been blessed with the gift of abstinence for a long time, I thought about the times before I joined OA and in the first few months when I was still learning what abstinence was about.

Here are a few samples of my experience why I indulged in the first compulsive bite:

- I can't take it anymore
- \$%^&(%@!
- I'm an adult, I can do anything I want.
- It's okay, I'll make it up tomorrow.
- Some unresolved resentment (or hundreds of them)
- Moodiness or anger at something or someone that was immediate or had been festering for a time.
- "I gotta do something to stop my stomach upset" (from a previous meal, usually overeaten)! Crazy, I know.



- Oh, the heck with it, I'm not good enough, I'll never lose weight.
- It's Christmas! It's Halloween! It's May 3rd! It's (insert day here)!
- I am lonely (though I did not know that).
- I am scared.
- I don't want to have to deal with it, so I'll forget about life for a while.
- My checkbook won't balance.
- "You" were mean to me, said something to or about me, or talked behind my back.
- I won't gain any weight if I eat this. It's just a little.
- I can drink water to displace the extra sugar.
- I want it, therefore, it's mine.

These memories are a great reminder of what could trigger me to compulsively overeat. I can't be complacent in my recovery activities. Just because I've been in the program a long time doesn't mean that I can ease my meeting attendance, service work, and living the 12 Step way of life. I'm grateful to my recovery friends who challenge me to remember what it was like then, because I don't want to return to that painful way of living through excess food. -- Mike B.



A "WE" Program

I am new to program, and one thing that was difficult for me was figuring out how to go about finding a sponsor. The first meeting I went to only had a couple of people and none of them wrote down that they were sponsors in the 'We Care' book. The second meeting location I went to was a similar story. I was a little confused about the whole sponsorship concept, and I almost decided that I could do program on my own without one. By a spur of the moment decision I ended up at a meeting I didn't normally go to, and it happened to be the largest meeting I had been to yet. I think my higher power gave me a push to go to that meeting. When the 'We Care' book was passed around, there were many names that had a 'yes' under the sponsor column. I took down the names and numbers of all the people that had resonated with me. I talked to some people after

the meeting, and I later called and talked to a couple of people that I thought I would be able to work with. I found a perfect match, and I am having a wonderful time getting to know my sponsor. We have only been working together for a short while, but she has helped me take leaps and bounds. We have created what I hope to be a symbiotic relationship, and she has really accommodated me and even my whacky schedule. Having a sponsor is a beautiful thing. My sponsor is guiding me through the steps and she is showing me that I am not alone. If you're new to program or having trouble finding a sponsor, I would recommend getting more involved in the OA community. I think you will find what you are looking for.

Anonymous

Heard at the "We Agnostics" workshop at the Region 7 Convention, November 8, 2014

- I was failing on all fronts, including spiritually and I didn't know what to do about it. When I went to OA, I was ready to hear, "Welcome to Overeaters Anonymous, welcome home." I was told I did not have to believe in God, so I decided to try it. People in OA are kind, whether or not I believe in God.
- The Fellowship of OA is a perfectly acceptable Higher Power.
- There is room in the OA program for all of us, no matter our worldview.
- When some people hear the word "God" they are turned off. We must be careful in discussing the concept of a Higher Power. Some may come to believe in God or a Higher Power, some may not. Recovery is possible for all.
- In the AA Big Book, p. 44 - only a spiritual experience will conquer your addiction. We have to live on a spiritual basis. We must come to believe in a Power Greater than Ourselves. But it doesn't have to be "God."
- Moral conduct are the behavior choices we make. Spiritual beliefs come from outside, beyond ourselves, and may affect our moral choices.
- Believers, agnostics, and atheists might not be that different. We may describe a spiritual experience with slightly different words.
- If you earnestly seek, God (and spirituality) will be made available. The Big Book describes powers in all forms in this chapter. Laziness, closed-mindedness, and lack of creativity in thought will not help.
- AA Big Book, page 52: those who can surrender to a Higher Power can and do recover.
- Suffering from an addiction makes us teachable including in areas of spirituality.
- My Higher Power is the truth, listening to the truth. Being able to tell myself the truth.
- My Higher Power is the principle of love. Another Power is the concept of good.
- There are many Powers greater than myself. Which ones can help me with my disease of compulsive eating? Which ones help me cultivate my spirituality, serenity, and recovery?
- Willingness to grow along spiritual lines is often enough today. But don't get stagnant. Continue to explore and deepen open-mindedness.
- I can interpret and work the program based on my experience and what I believe.



Heard at the Region 7 Convention Workshop: Getting Out of the Rut of Routine of Recovery, November 8, 2014

- Do we have old habits in our program or eating behaviors that we need to change to deepen our recovery?
- Sharing and giving of ourselves and doing good service can get us out of a rut.
- We have a hopeless obsessive state of mind from which recovery can save us. But we have to switch up the activities we do to keep recovery fresh. How do we do that? How will we ask our Higher Power for help in keeping our recovery fresh?
- The Big Book is a textbook. We want to work our 10th and 11th Steps every day. Some routines (like this) keep recovery fresh, no matter what.
- Active gratitude for the gifts of recovery today keeps recovery fresh and in the forefront.
- We are free from food obsession in recovery. It may be easier to do the maintenance work of recovery today but I cannot take it for granted. I am the message of recovery every day. Am I doing all I need to recover fully and being an effective message?
- Life changes from day to day. Sometimes we are forced out of our normal routine of recovery. How will I do the recovery work - tools, steps, sponsorship, service, healthful abstinent eating - in the stress of the upset of the routine? What opportunities will I have to serve others who cross my unfamiliar path?
- Is it a rut or a routine, our recovery work? Is it a matter of spiritual attitude on which "r"-word we use
- The best way to get out of a rut is to reach out to a newcomer. Offer hope!
- To stay out of a rut, tell others around that I'm in recovery and in a 12-Step program. I'll never know when someone will refer someone or him- or herself to me to ask about OA. That will be a 12th Step opportunity that I did not have before.

ABSTINENCE is ATTRACTIVE

At the October Intergroup meeting, we had a workshop entitled, “Making Abstinence and Recovery Attractive at Meetings,” which asked three questions. We shared our answers and were asked to write an article about them.

“How do you help make abstinence and recovery attractive at meetings?”

One member said we don't have to make it attractive, because abstinence is already attractive. We attain a healthy body weight and open our minds to learning the 12 Steps. People who stay serene and grateful for recovery and abstinence are more attractive than those who are imprisoned by the misery of excess eating in body and mind. When I am abstinent and living the 12 Step way of life, people see a happy guy in a healthy body, which is only 2/3 the size it used to be. My meeting shares focus on how I can apply a step, tradition, or concept of service principle to an issue that allows gratitude and focus on service instead of resentment, anger, and fear.

“How do you reach out to those not fully committed to abstinence and recovery?”

First, I remember that while I can be of service to others, they are responsible for their paths to recovery and whether or not they will practice abstinence from their drug(s)-of-choice in unbalanced eating or other substances. Next, I maintain my own spiritual practices and abstinence from compulsive eating so I have an attractive message of recovery to share before I make that call, text, or e-mail. When I do connect with a member who's not sure about taking the steps to abstinence and recovery, I listen to what

they have to say. I'll then share about my experiences of recovery, but will continue to listen. I may get the opportunity to offer to sponsor that person or suggest others who might be willing, or suggest using one of our other tools and the benefits I reap from their use.

“When tempted to overeat or binge (or restrict), what do you do to avoid the first compulsive bite?”

One of my favorite actions is a verbal commitment – either a call to my sponsor or other OA members, or saying out loud to my husband or friends that I have finished eating during a meal, or that I feel like eating but I'm not going to do so. A quick 3rd step surrender of my desire to my Higher Power works – either a quick, “Here you go, God, I surrender this desire,” to a formal prayer in meditation or in writing. Sometimes I will meditate or write about my feelings to see what I really want – is it food to quench physical hunger or to escape a feeling or resentment? Is it to get rid of the onion aftertaste of my last meal where brushing my teeth will suffice (that's happened before)? I ask myself, “How important is it, really, to my emotional sobriety that I eat this extra food? Do I really want to trash over two decades of abstinence for this?” Paraphrasing from p. 69 of the AA Big Book, I turn resolutely from my desire for extra food and turn to someone who I could help. Sometimes, it's not easy to do these things, but when I remember that abstinence from my drug of choice – excess food – is the most important thing in my life today, making abstinent choices is much easier. – *Mike B.*

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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 Shaarie Zion Synagogue 6602 Park Heights Ave. Neil 410-318-8737 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 Gall 410-456-4306 HA, Bus M3 & M10</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>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 monary.kathy@gmail.com Call about HA</p>
<p>5:15 Tpwson Speaker Meeting Caevry 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 tania.mazaliss@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>7:30 Columbia Serenity Center 9650 Basket Ring Road (off Stevens Forest, off Broken Land Pkwy) 21045 Carol 410-551-1149</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 Tania 443-660-8299 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 Monday Night Miracles 7310 Park Heights Ave Baltimore, MD 21208 Parking and entrance on left side of building. Yochanon, 718-427-5192</p>					
	<p>7:30PM "Beginners and Strugglers" Bel Air, First Presbyterian Church Main St & Broadway (main building - basement) Michelle, 410-937-7500 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>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>						