

THE OA STEPPINGSTONE

SUMMER ISSUE

JULY 2023



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Acceptance

I have been thinking and praying a lot lately about acceptance. I accept that I had a stroke and will spend the rest of my life in a wheelchair, but what is harder to accept is that my anorexia contributed and possibly caused it. If I hadn't stayed up late to binge in private, my husband would have been able to help me and get me to the hospital sooner. He didn't find me till morning, and by that time my brain had been bleeding all night. I had to have a drain put in my head and spent two weeks or more in ICU. I had a feeding tube. I spent four months in brain fog. My weight was so low that I suffered from re-feeding syndrome, which really delayed my recovery. Therefore, I spent nine months in rehabs. I had two trips back to the hospital - once for aspiration pneumonia and once when my feeding tube blocked. I had to learn how to speak and pee. After being in diapers for several months, it was a big accomplishment to actually go in the toilet! Plus, I had to learn to swallow. At first I was only allowed pureed foods, then thickened foods (both are disgusting), then next came the tests to prove I could swallow whole foods. It wasn't until I accepted that I couldn't walk that I finally learned to get around in my wheelchair.

Now I live in an assisted living facility. I've lost all independence. My left side doesn't work right. My left hand is twisted and pressed up against my body. Even my face doesn't work right. I can't even smile right. I have to have help going to the bathroom, bathing, and going to bed. The only time I can go outside the facility is on our bus or my husband's car. Gone are the days when I drove myself everywhere.



I do thank God that I still have my mind and memory. And I'm especially thankful to my saint of a husband and close friends. I'm also grateful for the ability to use my computer and cell phone, to feed myself, and to brush my own teeth. Although I lost some breath capability, I can still talk. I continue to attend (listen in on) my weekly OA meetings. They are still zooming this meeting, which is beneficial to me. I need the support and love this program provides, as well as the reminder that I'm still an anorexic and continue to need God's help daily. I say the "Serenity Prayer" a lot to remind me that I need to accept my limitations and fight my urges to restrict my food. I was in two in-patient facilities before coming to OA, but OA is the only program that truly helped me enough to keep me out of the hospital and be relatively happy. I hope my story might help someone who thinks anorexia is not that serious.

~ Mary Ann M.

No More Cravings? I Think Not.

Someone suggested to me recently that if an addict still had occasional food cravings, it reflected a spiritual problem. As if having a craving was a sign that there was something wrong inside of them.

I've been in program since 1990, continuously abstinent since January 1996, and I still experience twinges, impulses, notions, enticements or an occasional dream where the food is calling me.

I've come to believe that those urges and impulsive desires are opportunities that G-d presents to me so I can choose abstinence, and choosing conscious contact with Him. He's just playing the role of my perpetual personal trainer; working overtime to help me stay in fit spiritual condition.

In order for me to preserve this beautiful life that I have today, I need to stay motivated to seek His help. So I view temptation as a personalized invitation to consciously remember that my abstinence is a gift, never to be taken for granted.

Man was given the ability to choose between right or wrong so that he had the potential to be even holier than an angel – to transcend physical desire and enjoy the ultimate human experience – to be as close as possible to his creator, and the source of his Grace.

It is the ability to seek help to overcome adversity that makes an addict a special creature. To resist the well-grooved habit of relief-seeking, with G-d's help, is a hard-earned capability.

I still occasionally watch the clock in anticipation of my next meal. Often, I'll just make a cup of tea or do something constructive so as not to be distracted by my hunger. Or if I'm at a restaurant where they serve me a larger portion than what I usually have, I'll cut off what is not mine and have them put it in a take-out bag. Sometimes it tries to speak to me a bit, and I marvel that knowing what I know, my mind is still selling the same old song – "Go ahead, eat it – what's the harm?" - even now, after all this time.

I can't forget that in order to live a spiritually-centered life, I must be ever-mindful that abstinence and sobriety is like a garden that must be tended to lovingly in order to maintain its natural beauty.

I continue to work an honest, structured OA program, with crystal clear guidelines that defines what too much or too little food is, and how much food is just enough to satisfy me & maintain my ideal weight, a pretty reliable metric as to whether my impulses and desires are compromising my plan of eating.

Being abstinent isn't a guarantee that I'll never experience an urge or desire to do something harmful with my food. I've learned how & why I ate destructively, and what the consequences are, so I stay close to my Higher Power, who reminds me that I don't have to do it anymore.

Pain is inevitable, but suffering is optional. Circumstances will sometimes arise that are upsetting enough to ignite the memory of a time when compulsive eating was a viable course of action, but I've never once resisted the urge to eat compulsively and then come to regret it later.

If I can remember the pain that accompanied my destructive eating – I'll stay properly motivated to make the right choice today.

~ Neil R., Baltimore, MD

The Buzz

(Something Heard at a Meeting That Kept Buzzing in Your Head!)

- “Our defects play on the radio. Sometimes the volume is way too loud—but the radio is on a shelf we can’t reach, and we can’t access the knob to turn the noise down. When we can’t reach the knob, we ask God to turn it down for us. Then work Steps 10 through 12.”
- “It is better to start in the evening than not at all!”



- “If my serenity is disrupted and I don’t work to regain it, that disruption almost always shows up in my food behaviors.”
- “We come into OA with a million dollars of self-will but tend to surrender only a nickel at a time.”
- The steps are the engine of our recovery; the weight loss is the caboose.”

The Tools Work If I Work Them!

It’s Teacher Appreciation Week this week and the Faculty Room, which is two rooms away from my classroom, is filled with every baked good imaginable. It’s been a challenge to abstain through it, but I have. Many times I’ve made a beeline for the Faculty Room as soon as an all-campus email was received: “Faculty, the Parent Association has just delivered [some sweet]. Please enjoy!” I would race to the room (if anyone was in my path, they better watch out!). In fact, I learned to keep zipper storage bags, tin foil, and other storage containers in my file cabinet. Embarrassment wouldn’t allow me to be seen with them, though. I would just visit the room as many times as possible and leave with my “one” plate of treats, sneakily transferring them to my baggies once back in my room. I wouldn’t care about sharing - I was gluttonous and selfish. I would even go through the school calendar at the start of each school year and check for special events for which these treats might be available and mark my lesson plan book as a reminder.



Mid-morning today was the closest I came all week to giving in to my will, to giving in to a disease that will truly take my life. I was sitting at my desk wondering if I could get through the day without picking up that first compulsive bite. I was white knuckling it. I had created an action plan to help me in just these moments: Use the Tools! First one, then another, and another until the obsession lifted. And that’s what I did. I joined a Zoom meeting, even if just for a little bit during break time. Then I texted someone in the program. Then I started editing the *Steppingstone*. This tool of service helped me the most; as editor I have the wonderful opportunity to read OA members’ submissions, which contain such helpful insight about working the Steps, maintaining abstinence no matter what, and addressing all three aspects of my disease - the spiritual, mental, and physical. Within no time I was full of such gratitude for my abstinence, and hope that I could abstain, that I was swaddled in serenity for the rest of the day, and for the rest of Teacher Appreciation Week, no matter how much food was two rooms away. The Tools work if I work them!

~ Shelye K.

Recovery Is Reality, Not Reality TV

I was thinking about my recovery recently and how it is such an ongoing and long-term work. I started imagining my recovery as a home improvement or remodeling project.

Sometimes I get mesmerized by all the different home improvement shows. They call it reality TV, where a lucky family gets picked, they meet with a designer, and then they vacate the house for a few days or even a few weeks. Then they come back for the big reveal and see the most magically transformed living space!

If I'm really honest, this is what I want recovery to be. Can't I just check out and then come back to magically transformed space? But this is not reality - it's entertainment.

Many of us have lived through an ACTUAL house remodeling project - maybe a kitchen, a bathroom, or having the floors sanded and refinished. It is inconvenient and messy. You've got strangers in the house, and maybe you're doing some of it yourself. Overall, it is slow and difficult.

The results can be very rewarding, but it takes time and commitment. To me, that's a good picture of recovery from compulsive eating. Compulsive eating and the extra weight are the visible problems. But, the remodeling gets MUCH more in-depth and complicated. We are remodeling our life while we're still living in it.



Anyway, I've been in some type of recovery with marriage and personal issues since I was in my early 40's, and now I'm in my early 60's. But after all that work, there was more to do. I just started addressing the compulsive eating problem a couple years ago, in 2020, when I finally reached the point of being willing to admit that I had a REALLY serious problem.

It was hard to admit I needed help, but when I found the OA fellowship, I found a new connection with my Higher Power and a group of friends who understood deeply and who could encourage, advise, and set a great example for me to learn from.

I've embraced the idea that I am a work-in-progress and will be until the day I pass on to whatever is next. That's ok. In fact, it's great. Having a growth mindset - a life improvement mindset - gives me a sense of purpose and growth that I need to really face the ups and downs of life.

Here's to living in home improvement mode!

~ Hans M.

Blasts from the Past

Enjoy these pearls from *The OA Steppingstone* archive!

"I do not ask to walk smooth paths
nor bear an easy load.
I pray for strength and fortitude
to climb the rock strewn road.
Give me such courage that I can scale
the hardest peaks alone,
And transform every stumbling block
into a Stepping Stone."

~ Quote from author Gail Brook
Burkett
Reprinted from one of BAIG's first
Steppingstones (Sept. 1993)



Perfect Sponsor Is a Myth

The *Tools of Recovery* [pamphlet] tells us that "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."



Dispel the myth of the perfect sponsor, and gently prompt members who hesitate to sponsor to consider the following:

- * You don't have to be flawless —just willing
- * Sponsors share their program up to the level of their experience
- * If people ask you to sponsor them, remember that this may be their first attempt to establish contact with someone in the program. If you are truly too busy, take the time to introduce these members to other qualified sponsors.

- * Be realistic about the times you want the person to call.
- * If the [person you are sponsoring] stops calling, don't take it personally. Make a "care call" expressing your concern.
- * It is important to remember we are sponsors, not therapists.
- * Being a sponsor continually renews and reaffirms your own recovery.

~ Reprinted from one of BAIG's first *Steppingstones* (Sept. 1993)

Blasts from the Past (continued)



“Trying to Be” vs “Willing to Be” Abstinent

Trying to be abstinent is an act of submission/self will without an acceptance of powerlessness, so it . . .	Being willing to be abstinent is an act of surrender to my HP, so it . . .
<i>generates a state of great frustration</i>	<i>generates a state of great humility</i>
<i>implies that I should know how but can't find the one right formula</i>	<i>allows me to accept that it's okay if I don't know how because I trust that HP is there to guide the way</i>
<i>promotes self-judgment and self-condemnation if I don't do things perfectly</i>	<i>promotes self-acceptance of me as I am right now</i>
<i>closes me to guidance because I assume that I should know how</i>	<i>opens me up to receive guidance</i>
<i>sets me up to fear failure and to judge myself a failure because it assumes that my success or failure is all up to me</i>	<i>helps me see the needed lessons even when I fail</i>
<i>sets me up to see any setback as proof that I will never find lasting abstinence</i>	<i>helps me accept that I will be shown eventually even if I have a setback today</i>
<i>increases the distance between HP and myself because I see any success as mine and don't let myself feel the support of my HP</i>	<i>brings me closer to my HP as my feelings of isolation and fear fade</i>
<i>generates resistance and struggle</i>	<i>generates acceptance and surrender</i>

~ Reprinted from Jan. 2007
(Volume 30, No. 1)



OA RECOVERY WORD SEARCH

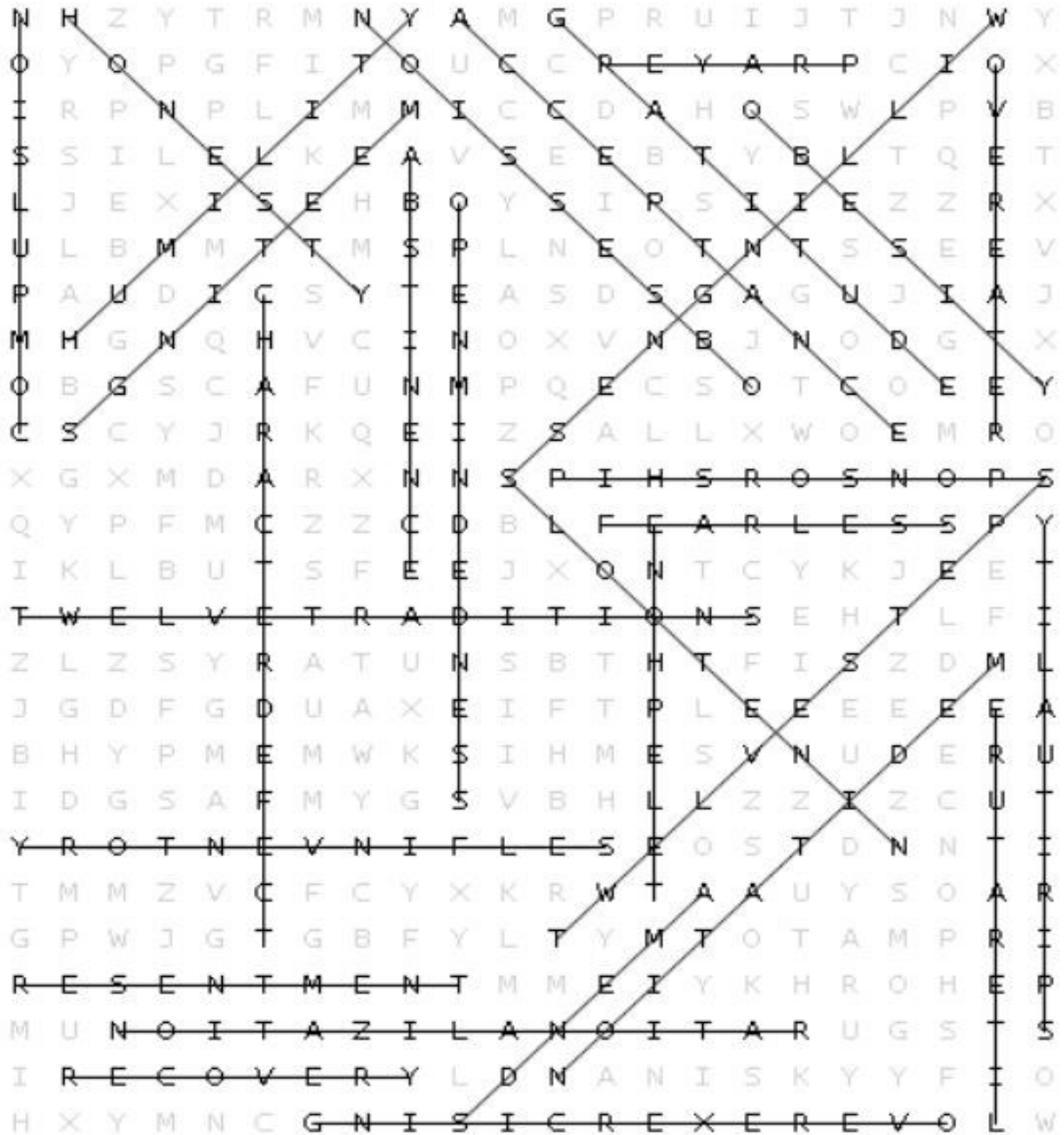
DIRECTIONS: Find the word in the puzzle. Words can go in any direction and can share letters as they cross over each other.

N H Z Y T R M N Y A M G P R U I J T J N W Y
 O Y O P G F I T O U C C R E Y A R P C I O X
 I R P N P L I M M I C C D A H O S W L P V B
 S S I L E L K E A V S E E B T Y B L T Q E T
 L J E X I S E H B O Y S I P S I I E Z Z R X
 U L B M M T T M S P L N E O T N T S S E E V
 P A U D I C S Y T E A S D S G A G U J I A J
 M H G N Q H V C I N O X V N B J N O D G T X
 O B G S C A F U N M P Q E C S O T C O E E Y
 C S C Y J R K Q E I Z S A L L X W O E M R O
 X G X M D A R X N N S P I H S R O S N O P S
 Q Y P F M C Z Z C D B L F E A R L E S S P Y
 I K L B U T S F E E J X O N T C Y K J E E T
 T W E L V E T R A D I T I O N S E H T L F I
 Z L Z S Y R A T U N S B T H T F I S Z D M L
 J G D F G D U A X E I F T P L E E E E E E A
 B H Y P M E M W K S I H M E S V N U D E R U
 I D G S A F M Y G S V B H L L Z Z I Z C U T
 Y R O T N E V N I F L E S E O S T D N N T I
 T M M Z V C F C Y X K R W T A A U Y S O A R
 G P W J G T G B F Y L T Y M T O T A M P R I
 R E S E N T M E N T M M E I Y K H R O H E P
 M U N O I T A Z I L A N O I T A R U G S T S
 I R E C O V E R Y L D N A N I S K Y Y F I O
 H X Y M N C G N I S I C R E X E R E V O L W

Abstinence
 CharacterDefect
 Gratitude
 Literature
 NineTools
 OpenMindedness
 Prayer
 Resentment
 Sponsorship
 TwelveTraditions

Acceptance
 Compulsion
 Honesty
 Meditation
 Obesity
 Overeater
 Rationalization
 SelfInventory
 Telephone
 Willingness

Amends
 Fearless
 Humility
 Meetings
 Obsession
 OverExercising
 Recovery
 Spirituality
 TwelveSteps



**FIND AN OA
MEETING AT**
<http://oabaltimore.org/>

**JOIN YOUR
FELLOWS AT
INTERGROUP!**

The Baltimore Area
Intergroup meets
virtually one
Sunday a month from
2 - 3 :30 pm.

The Summer
Intergroup dates are:

**July 16
August 20
September 10**

To access the meeting
link, visit
[http://oabaltimore.org/
intergroup/](http://oabaltimore.org/intergroup/)

All contributions to this
newsletter are the
opinion of the writers
and not of Overeaters
Anonymous or the
Baltimore Area
Intergroup as a whole.

Post Office Box 20013
Baltimore, Maryland 21284

Telephone: 443-475-0443

Email:
info@oabaltimore.org

Web: oabaltimore.org

Region 7: oaregion7.org

**WANT TO BOOST YOUR RECOVERY?
CHECK OUT THESE OPPORTUNITIES TO DO SERVICE**

- ♦ On Wednesday, September 13, Baltimore City will be hosting a wellness fair for city employees, and possibly for the general public. BAIG is looking for individuals to take a turn hosting our information table. Please contact Hans at HansMeeder@gmail.com if you are interested in helping, include time of day that works for you. Location and specific times for the event are forthcoming. The rain date for the event is September 20.
- ♦ Interested in starting a face-to-face meeting, contact Janet at 206-261-3124.

MEETING CHANGES IN THE BALTIMORE AREA

Baltimore Now Has a Sunday Meeting Again!

The First English Lutheran Church (39th & Charles) meeting (#45417) now meets on Sundays at 11:00 AM, and the Zoom link and password has been updated.

Zoom Link – [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7310889762?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7310889762?pwd=QklrWFFPZmhCdUMlbnRB4SjZ5bnk5dz09)

[pwd=QklrWFFPZmhCdUMlbnRB4SjZ5bnk5dz09.](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7310889762?pwd=QklrWFFPZmhCdUMlbnRB4SjZ5bnk5dz09)

Meeting ID: 731 088 9762, Passcode: BeAbstn8

One tap mobile +13017158592,,7310889762#,1#,628738#

ABOUT THE BALTIMORE AREA INTERGROUP

The Baltimore Area Intergroup (BAIG) is a group of OA members who seek a simple but more challenging level of service to help our affiliated meetings in the Baltimore metropolitan area. BAIG presents recovery workshops, produces the *Steppingstone*, serves as a liaison between groups and Region 7 and the World Service Office, and reaches out to the community to offer the hope of recovery from compulsive overeating.

Every OA member is welcome to join us at Intergroup meetings as a representative of a group (or “meeting”) or to learn more about the opportunities for service that help us grow as OA members. Learn more at <http://oabaltimore.org/intergroup/>.

CONTRIBUTE TO THE STEPPINGSTONE!

Deadline for the next issue: September 5, 2023

We welcome your contributions to the Summer 2023 issue! Suggested topics include:

- Recovery from Relapse
- Your gratitude “list” (How does gratitude help you maintain your abstinence?)
- Any other subject that inspires your recovery

You can also create a puzzle, drawing, painting, or other art (no faces, please). Contributions from everyone - newcomers to long timers - are valued. Articles may be edited. Send your contributions to steppingstone@oabaltimore.org by September 5!