

The Newsletter
of the Baltimore
Area Intergroup
of Overeaters
Anonymous



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THE OA STEPPINGSTONE

SPRING ISSUE

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MAKE IT ENOUGH

The January 14 entry of *Voices of Recovery* describes the writer’s experience with adjusting to a first abstinent meal that was about half of what the writer would have normally eaten. There was quite a bit of anxiety that the food would not be enough. The writer’s sponsor suggested asking God to make it enough. The writer acted on that suggestion “on blind faith” and it worked.

Though I am a long-time member with long-term abstinence and health, I still feel this fear on occasion. Oh, my word, how am I going to survive on such little food for the next . . . Gasp . . . *five hours*!! This indicates the need of a spiritual and emotional adjustment where I focus not on the feeling of deprivation, but instead on gratitude for learning what amount of food sustains a healthy body weight for me and for the desire to eat that amount and only that amount at meals.

When that desire does not exist at a meal, it is usually from discontent. I have the opportunity for a spot-check 10th Step and the use of the tools to connect with another recovering compulsive eater. That’s another reason for gratitude: the support that our tools and our members give to me in the very moment that I am making a choice on whether to eat abstinely, as long as I accept and act on that gift of support. When I do, as the writer states, “I no longer use food to fill the empty places inside me; God fills me instead.”

~ Mike B, Baltimore



GRATITUDE IS A MUSCLE THAT MUST BE STRENGTHENED

I’m not naturally a very grateful person. Ever since childhood I’ve tended to dwell on the negative, grumbling about what should have, could have, and would have been if only . . .

This is the hardest habit to break—but a habit that I must break in order to maintain my abstinence, especially since I was a pity-party eater. I’m in another 12-Step fellowship in which I’ve often heard, “A grateful addict just won’t use.” The same goes here. Daily—and even every time I begin to sulk—I must strengthen my gratitude muscle with a verbal thank you to my Higher Power and recognition for what I have to be grateful for. I’ve also heard other OA members mention that they thank their Higher Power for the food they are about to eat before each meal, a practice that I would like to develop so that I can learn to see food as nourishment rather than escape from my woes and stress.

~ Shelye K, Baltimore

I GAINED SIX POUNDS

A couple months ago, I had minor dental surgery and took a prescription medication to help heal the incision. About a week before, I was happy with the number on the weight scale and continued my usual eating, although I since chewed on just one side of my mouth to allow healing of the affected area.

A couple weeks later, I was horrified to see that I gained six pounds! Over the last 10 years or so, my weigh never fluctuated more then 2-3 pounds on either side of my healthy weight (I do realize how lucky I am for this gift and its testament to abstinent eating). So, it was a bit of a shock to see this much of a gain. I was mystified. I thought about the food and quantities I ate over the period and nothing seemed amiss. I was told to avoid most exercise for about 10 days after the procedure, but that didn't seem to account for six pounds. I found out later that the prescription promoted weight gain, water retention, and increased appetite.

I felt anxious and talked about the weight gain a bit too much to the slight irritation of family and friends. Thank goodness for my sponsor and OA friends who understand this depth of feeling around weight. It reminded me that I need to examine my own actions and reactions.

First, the number on the scale does not define my existence and worth. Someone said at a meeting, "Weight is information, not an affirmation." Someone else told me, "If you're too worried about the number on the scale, remember that you will always weigh one 'Mike'."

Next, I am 62 years old. My body is aging, hopefully gracefully. My doctor recently affirmed in my annual physical exam that I am in excellent health, even with these five extra pounds (one pound dropped away and I feel like the other five have signed a long-term lease). That said, she also told me that it takes some time for the body to release the effects of this medication, including weight gain, so not to worry.

I discussed with my sponsor about how to address this. First and foremost: I am powerless. Step 1. I must surrender this to my Higher Power – Steps 2 and 3. I examined my recent food intake and discussed it – Steps 4 and 5. Also, I had to explore my tendency toward immediate, automatic, and irrational anxiety - all-or-nothing-usually-negative thinking: that I will not be viewed as a valid member of OA with any kind of weight gain, that my recovery and abstinence no longer exists, that I will gain "all my weight back and then some" since I gained six.

Speaking of six, Step 6 was the opportunity to surrender irrational and catastrophic thoughts to my Higher Power, who is more than capable of handling them . . . more so than me. Step 7 is to accept, accept, accept: me, the number on the scale, and the continued need to monitor and adjust my food intake. Am I truly eating the proper amount of food and exercising well to keep healthy at this stage of my life?

Steps 8 and 9 are opportunities to forgive myself for automatic catastrophic thoughts and to make active amends by not dominating the conversation in constant discussion of these six pounds. I already surrendered them to my Higher Power, so there is no need to take them back. Steps 10 and 11 involve checking in with my sponsor and Higher Power on my behavior and feelings on this quest. Step 12 is practicing gratitude for this growth opportunity and by staying abstinent and sharing what I have learned with the hope that it helps others.

Time will tell when the remaining five of the six gained pounds will be released. In the meantime, abstinent eating and focusing on the moment without the crutch of excess food is the way to go.

~ Mike B, Baltimore



The Buzz

Sayings heard at a meeting that keep buzzing in your brain!



Without meetings and OA contacts between meetings, I don't get those pauses before reacting with food.

Anything I put into my mouth I should savor, enjoy, and be thankful for – instead of stuffing or buffering.

How can I be like water and flow around my difficulties without eating?

Don't blow up your life with your mouth (saying or eating something that causes harm).



Nothing can make me overeat if I don't want to, but anything can be an excuse to overeat if I want to.

Recovery is about finally growing up and accepting that I can't always have what I want.



THE OA STEPPINGSTONE

STEP TWO WORK

When working Step Two, my sponsor asked me to consider this: How can my Higher Power help me abstain from compulsive overeating and recover today? Having identified God, the OA group and its members, and the Twelve Steps as powers “greater than myself,” here’s what I wrote:

God

I pray each day for God to give me the strength to face life without excess food. I don't understand how prayer works since my prayers aren't always “answered” as I see it, but this prayer is working now and I'm grateful for the reprieve from my disease.

I believe prayer works, especially when paired with honest willingness - so I will continue to ask God to help me with my abstinence, with honestly assessing my problem with food, and with modifying my food plan when needed to arrest my disease.

~ Shelye K, Baltimore



The OA Group and the 12 Steps

Using the OA group and its members can help me because the group is a power greater than me alone. The group and its members' insights can counterbalance and even destroy my own twisted thinking when it comes to my disease. How powerful! Certainly more powerful than me!

The 12 Steps - a sort of entity in itself - represent a “power greater than myself” in that the steps were written by Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob, inspired by the Oxford Group, and refined by other early AA-ers, again, all of which are a power greater than me alone. The therapeutic value of relating to others like me through the Steps is powerful enough to break through my walls of isolation, resistance, and fear as I become more and more willing. If the 12 Steps worked for them, they can work for me, too.

“GOLDEN NUGGETS” FROM IDEA DAY 2023

In November 2023, the Baltimore Area Intergroup presented a wonderful International Day of Experiencing Abstinence celebration that featured speakers from Iceland, England, New Zealand, and the United States! It was great to get perspective from OA members from different cultures and nations. Yet, the message of recovery was quite similar from all four speakers. Here are a few “golden nuggets” from our speakers:

- Before OA, what I ate in private, I wore in public.
- I need a *daily* program of recovery – emotional, spiritual, and physical (Action Plan, anyone?).
- There is such freedom and liberation from obsession with food in OA.
- How do I keep a relationship with God/ Higher Power and life? Steps 10 -11-12.
- We must do everything we can to get abstinent. What are those things? If I do not do them, the (excess) food will kill me.

- Any time I want (excess) food I turn to Step 1. Be completely honest with yourself, God/ Higher Power, and your sponsor.
- When I have food neutrality, the Promises come true. (See pages 83-85 of the AA Big Book for more.)
- Abstinence is the cornerstone of a good life.

The last statement stands out for me. For each day I am abstinent, I will have more physical, emotional, and spiritual energy contributing toward the joy of the day. Without abstinence, I will have physical pain, emotional regret, and spiritual isolation.

If you missed IDEA Day this year, consider adding it to your schedule next November. It's almost guaranteed that someone at IDEA Day will say something profound to not only keep me abstinent but inspire me to seek further spiritual growth in my recovery.

~ Anonymous, Baltimore

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 upcoming meeting dates are

April 21
May 19
June 23
July 21
August 18

To access the meeting link, visit <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.

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BALTIMORE AREA OA HAS A FACEBOOK PAGE!

Follow BAIG's new **Facebook** group! Our new Facebook page, Overeaters Anonymous, Baltimore Area, will be a source of inspirational information, meeting information, *Steppingstone* articles, and special event announcements. Join us!

- ◆ We are looking for someone who would like to become the administrator
- ◆ Help us get out the OA message! Contact Hans M. at 443-878-3503

OA EVENTS IN BALTIMORE & THE SURROUNDING REGIONS

SCPOAI RETREAT

April 12—14, 2024
At Camp Hebron in Halifax, PA
Registration ends March 15

45TH ANNUAL RETREAT: FINDING THE POWER WITHIN THE STEPS

April 26—28
At the Carousel Hotel in Ocean City, MD

CONTRIBUTE TO THE STEPPINGSTONE!
Deadline for the next Summer issue: June 5, 2024

We welcome your contributions to the Summer 2024 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 June 5!