

2006 Tri-County Board

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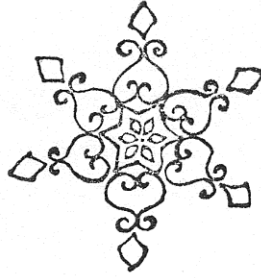
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LOOKING UP

OA Tri-County Newsletter
December 2006

Sunlight of the Spirit

“By going back in our own [eating] histories, we could show that years before we realized it we were out of control, that our [eating] even then was no mere habit, that it was indeed the beginning of a fatal progression”. (*THE TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS*, p. 23).

When I first started using food it made me feel better. It took away the pain of what I was feeling and I was happy. But since I never dealt with the pain, it just continued to grow inside me. When it surfaced again, I needed more food, my drug of choice, to take it away. Like a drug addict, I needed more food to make me feel good, all the while believing I controlled the food, until one day I realized food controlled me.

To keep me coming back, food kept me in denial about how fat, unhappy and unhealthy I was and how I cared more for my time with food than I did for my time with family and friends. Food became my lover, giver, taker, everything. One day, I saw what I had allowed the disease to do to me. Then came the shame, guilt, isolation, anger, depression and hopelessness.

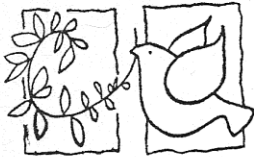
The disease laughed at me and told me to eat more every time I shoved food into my mouth, while inside I was screaming “Stop!” and “I can’t”. I began scrounging for anything to drown my emotions: looking through garbage, eating someone else’s food, taking another’s money to buy more, going to different drive-thru windows because I’d been to the same one too many times that day – anything to get my fix. It didn’t matter who needed me; food was more important, my god. I followed it 24/7.

Then OA came into my life. OA brought relief, hope, a solution, sanity, a Higher Power, strength, love, joy, laughter, smiles, hugs, kisses, sharing, understanding, friendships, knowing looks, acceptance of the fat me, encouragement and peace. Food never gave me these things. It only gave me depression, isolation, fat, anger and shame.

OA has brought me into the sunlight of the spirit. So why would I want to choose food again? It is usually because I forget what I have received in this program and begin to believe the lies this disease tells me – lies of false relief, an easier, softer way and half measures.

But not this time. This time I choose life, sanity, surrender, power, hope, health, friends, joy, laughter and love. Thank you, Higher Power, and thank you, OA!

PR, Conroe, TX, reprinted from *LIFELINE*, March/April 2006



The OA Responsibility Pledge:

**Always to extend
the hand and
heart of OA to all
who share my
compulsion; for
this, I am
responsible.**

LOOKING UP is a monthly publication of the OA Tri-County Intergroup. The opinions expressed here are those of the writer and not of the OA Tri-County Intergroup or OA as a whole. Please send submissions to rrobbins@uta.edu. The editor reserves the right to edit any material submitted.

Affliction of Addiction and a Bright Light to Follow

What do you get when you have struggled for months, but are still not "getting it"? Fellow OAs tell me to keep coming back, but it means little to one steeped in judgment and the fear of continuing to fail. I don't think I am alone in this experience – but only because I have learned that I am not terminally unique! It all comes down to me and the God of my understanding. Today is a day when it feels like God is all I have: God, my disease and my determination to keep trying to get better no matter what.

It is very humbling to admit that "first a slip, then a fall" has become my pattern in this program. In my world, I screw up again and again. I cause problems and react badly to life. But every time I have taken the risk of sharing one of these truths during a meeting, I've been met with understanding, both spoken and unspoken. No one has yet thrown me out of these rooms.

The literature tells us that the only way to fail in meditation is not to try, and my sponsor has a saying, "keep on keeping on". Where else but the rooms of OA can this miserable food addict go for acceptance and encouragement regardless of my record of abstinence, emotional sobriety and weight loss? Just for today, I am imagining our program as a brightly lit path to recovery, a path that is solidly laid before me and along which I can stumble or fall as many times as need be.

Anonymous
reprinted from *THE OA STEPPING STONE*, Baltimore



God Gives Me Abstinence

Abstinence is probably the most discussed and least understood concept of OA recovery, and with good reason – it's the most personal. I came to recovery from a lifetime of diets. I wanted something spelled out for me, like the diet sheets from Weight Watchers and my diet doctor (read the amphetamine connection) and the photocopied magazine articles all us chronic dieters shared over coffee (and pastry, of course).

It took a while for my Higher Power to get it through my head that his way was easier than measuring string beans and memorizing diet charts. After a few weeks of playing word games I was able to relax and accept the idea of guilt-free, binge-free eating. That's still the basis of my abstinence.

I also began our standard 3-0-1 program. Three meals a day, nothing in between, one day at a time. That zero is deceiving...actually, it's not "nothing" in between meals; it's LIVING between meals. When my life was one long binge from sun up until bedtime (and often after) I didn't have

much life beyond food. Now my life is so busy and full that I need the structure of 3-0-1 to remind me to eat.

About three months into recovery my Higher Power gave me the gift of sugar-free abstinence. I know it was a gift from God because until that time, I'd never gone 24 hours without sweets. And I'd tried. Because it was a gift from God, that's the part of my abstinence I guard most carefully. One of the constants of my life and my recovery is, "I'm not going to eat sugar today". Sometimes that's all I can hang on to – it's my safety net. It's always been enough.

As I've continued in recovery, my abstinence has changed many times. I look back at years when I was "stark raving abstinent"...my program wasn't much beyond what I was or wasn't putting into my mouth. Today it's a lot more than what I eat. My abstinence has gone far beyond food, because my recovery has gone far beyond food.

I found my definition of abstinence in the Tools of Recovery pamphlet, under "Service". It says, "A life of sane and happy usefulness is what we are promised by working the steps." That's my abstinence – a life of sane and happy usefulness. That means I'm going to work on my recovery on all three levels – spiritual, mental and physical. I'm going to read some, and pray some. I'm going to talk to at least one person, in or out of program, and tell them the truth about me. I'm going to do something for someone else. I'm going to do something productive. And I'm not going to eat sugar today.

Donna A.
reprinted from Feb. 1994, *OA TRICOUNTY NEWSLETTER*



News from California

The Los Angeles Intergroup of OA (home of the "Virtual Speaker's Bureau") presents their 47th Annual OA Birthday Party on February 23-25, 2007. This event will be held at the LAX Crowne Plaza Hotel at the Los Angeles Airport and consists of workshops, panels, meals, a play, a dance, inspirational OA speakers and a variety of participatory activities, including the renowned "ABCs of Abstinence" workshop. Many of the members leading these various activities have 20, 30 and even 40 years in program. For more information, please go to the LAIG website's Birthday Party page at: www.oalaig.org/html/birthday_party.html or contact the LAIG at: registration@oalaig.org.

And speaking of the "Virtual Speaker's Bureau", they have uploaded 17 more sound files – for a total of 54 files (almost 40 hours of speakers). You can find the Bureau on the Speakers page at www.oalaig.org. This page contains MP3 sound files of speakers with long term abstinence sharing their experience, strength and hope. The average time in program for these speakers is about 25 years. The MP3 files can be played directly on a computer or downloaded for later use in portable sound players such as i-Pods, etc.

A Letter

Just now, as I nonchalantly slipped my jeans down, sat on the side of the bed to easily pull them off, and unthinkingly reached down to slip off my shoes and socks, I was seized with such humility and gratitude to my Higher Power as my mind zoomed back to a time a few years back when I would have had to use a lot of mental energy to try and figure out how I was going to accomplish this feat without asking my husband for help. I remembered the hell of morbid obesity and the terrible ramifications of it – not only the gigantic size of my body, but the absolute slavery I experienced as food dictated to me how I would be living every moment of my waking hours. And that segued into the root cause of it all – powerlessness because of an obsession of my mind and a physical allergy of my body, as it tells us in the Big Book.

And I wondered, because some in program are not morbidly obese, if that's why it's easier for them to not set strict limitations on the allergic foods they eat and be too generous with their portion sizes, and to compromise on carrying excess weight while claiming abstinence. And is that why long-term abstinence doesn't seem to be important enough to do whatever they have to do to stay that way?

I'm learning things that disturb me; they frighten me. So few people have long-term abstinence. And these same people are sponsoring others. What message do you carry to your sponsee if you are not abstinent? There are only two messages to carry: wellness/recovery (obtained by staying abstinent and taking and living by the steps), or relapse.

Other than my sponsor, where and who do I go to to get strength and support to STAY abstinent since there are so few who have any length of abstinence to support me? And why isn't abstinence talked about more?

So my joy at the ease with which I can reach my feet is diminished because I know so many others, inside and outside program, who are not experiencing this same joy – still hiding behind the same lies I told myself: I have a metabolism problem; I don't know how I can be so heavy because I don't eat that much; obesity runs in the family; it's harder for me that it is for other people; there's nothing wrong with me – I just like to eat! And on and on and on.

I love OA, and I want it to grow and prosper. Please help me to make it stronger by putting abstinence first, working and living the steps, and STAYING abstinent **NOMATTERWHAT!**

Yours in OA love, Faye F.

Learn to Let Go

Learning to let go is something we all have to do sooner or later. Life changes. We all hang on to things even after they have ceased to serve a purpose in our lives, because it's difficult to let go of something that we once perceived as good. Cleaning our mental closets is an essential skill, and until we found this program, no one ever taught us how to do it. All growth comes from recognizing when things don't work any more and being able to let them go in order to make room for new things that better suit the people we are now. Most of us know how to get rid of things that are healthy (just ask anyone in relapse). But it takes such strength to let go of something that is not right for us and trust in God that what is right for us is on the way.

One way of making it easier to let go is to have a ritual of appreciation for the thing that you're letting go of and remember the good and bad things about it. Be thankful for the experience that you gained in holding onto that particular problem for as long as you did, then write the problem on a piece of paper, put it in a shoe box or envelope, and give it to your sponsor, or just give it directly to God. Once you have given the problem away, take several deep breaths and repeat out loud, "I let go of the past to open myself up to the present." As you say this, you might want to open your hands to heighten the feeling of release.

Letting go with love is the best way to move forward in life, as long as you are moving towards your betterment. When you're living your life to the fullest, you'll never have to look back!

Sherrie H.

reprinted from the Feb. 1994, *OA TRI-COUNTY NEWSLETTER*

A People Place

William J. Crockett

If this is not a place
Where tears are understood,
Where do I go to cry?
If this is not a place
Where my spirit can wing,
Where do I go to fly?
If this is not a place
Where my questions can be asked,
Where do I go to seek?
If this is not a place
Where my feelings can be heard,
Where do I go to speak?
If this is not a place
Where you'll accept me as I am,
Where do I go to be me?
If this is not a place
Where I can try and fail
And learn and grow,
Where can I be...just me?



TRI-COUNTY MEETINGS

MONDAY				
6:30 pm	Fort Worth - Bethel Methodist Church 5000 Southwest Blvd.	HOW	Wendy	(817)472-6943
7:00 pm	Arlington - Trinity United Methodist Church 3216 West Park Row Drive, Wesley House	Abstinence	Billie	(817)460-3083
7:30 pm	Fort Worth - South Hills Christian Church 3200 Bilglade	Step Study/ Literature	Happy	(817)370-7207
TUESDAY				
6:00 pm	Weatherford - Campbell Hospital 713 E. Anderson, Basement Conference Room	Step Study/ Literature	Betty	(817)220-1851 (817)223-8864
6:30 pm	Granbury - 5678 Highway 4 (Triangle)	HOW	Rene	(817)326-3893
7:00 pm	Arlington - Covenant United Methodist Church 3608 Matlock Road (west side between Arbrook & Mayfield)		Dianne	(817)980-3013
7:00 pm	N. Richland Hills - St. Johns Hall (the center building) 4101 Frawley Rd., between Glenview & North Hills Mall	HOW	Barbara S.	(817)284-4258
WEDNESDAY				
12:00 noon	Fort Worth - King of Glory Lutheran Church Corner of Sandy Lane and Brentwood Stair		Gay	(817)275-1085
7:00 pm	Arlington - Trinity United Methodist Church 3216 West Park Row Drive, Wesley House	Literature	Billie	(817)460-3083
THURSDAY				
6:30 pm	Acton - Acton United Methodist Church 3433 Fall Creek Highway	HOW	Rene	(817)326-3893
6:30 pm	Fort Worth - Bethel Methodist Church 5000 Southwest Blvd.	HOW	Wendy	(817)472-6943
6:30 pm	Cleburne - St. Marks United Methodist 1109 W. Henderson		Roxy	(817)641-5020
7:00 pm	Colleyville - Highland Meadows Christian Church 2600 Hall Johnson Road, Room 101	Literature Wheelchair Access	Mike	(817)498-4244
7:00 pm	Arlington - Millwood Hospital 1011 N. Cooper St. at Randol Mill Rd.	HOW	Bernie	(817)451-7493
7:30 pm	Fort Worth - South Hills Christian Church 3200 Bilglade		Happy	(817)370-7207
FRIDAY				
Noon	Arlington - Covenant United Methodist Church 3608 Matlock Road (west side between Arbrook & Mayfield)		Katie	(682)438-1851
Noon	Waco - St. Alban's Episcopal Church 305 North 30 th		Faye	(254)678-3420
SATURDAY				
9:00 am	Weatherford - Trinity Lutheran Church 1500 W. Ball	HOW	Kim	(817)594-5405
9:00 am	Fort Worth - South Hills Christian Church 3200 Bilglade	Step Study/ Writing	Happy	(817)370-7207
9:30 am	Granbury - 5678 Highway 4 (Triangle)	HOW	Rene	(817)326-3893
10:00 am	Colleyville - Highland Meadows Christian Church 2600 Hall Johnson Road, Room 101	Wheelchair Access	Mike	(817)498-4244
12:00 noon	Arlington - Trinity United Methodist Church 3216 West Park Row Drive, Wesley House		Billie	(817)460-3083
SUNDAY				
4:00 pm	Arlington - Millwood Hospital 1011 N. Cooper St. at Randol Mill Rd.	Newcomer/ Big Book	Glinda	(817)456-1602
Seventh Tradition Donations				
<p>OA's Seventh Tradition tells us that we are fully self supporting through our own contributions. After paying group expenses (rent, literature, supplies) and maintaining a prudent reserve (determined by group conscience) OA suggests that you distribute the remaining funds as follows:</p>				
<p>60% to Tri-County Intergroup Billie Stamp/Treasurer Tri-County Intergroup 1513 Tyler Court Arlington, TX 76012</p>	<p>30% to World Service OA World Service Office PO Box 44020 Rio Rancho, NM 87174-4020</p>	<p>10% to Region III Rhonda Jordan Region III Treasurer 2004 Surrender Ave. Austin, TX 78728</p>		