

Story Number 1

I came to OA one March night more than two years ago. We read the Third Tradition from the OA 12&12, and by the end, I knew I belonged. Then we read the Promises. The first part didn't really strike me. Maybe the idea that "fear of people and of economic insecurity" could leave me was just too far beyond my comprehension. But the Tenth Step promises, that I might "cease fighting anything or anyone - even food" - that got my attention. But I was still afraid to get my hopes up.

I called a friend who'd gotten to the Twelve Steps a year ahead of me. "Do you have those Promise things in AA?" She laughed, and said yes. "Do they really come true? Because if they do, it's worth it, but if they don't, it's so not." She paused for a moment, and said, "Yes."

I abstained, one day at a time, for a year and eight months. The promises - both Step Nine and Step Ten - came true for me. I lost 130 pounds from my outside, but more important was what was happening to my insides. Before OA, I was numb in mind, body and soul, because I could argue myself out of any feeling, from happiness to hurt to hope. To admit I wanted something would make it worse when I didn't get it, so I never tried.

But when I came to OA, I started to live. Within a year, I had traveled to London and Iceland, and gone to a college reunion. I applied and was accepted to a PhD program in my field. I moved across six states to start school. I started running. And I started letting myself feel.

Everything about my life was changing, and I had to stay in touch with OA and HP to keep up. But when I moved, I left my new network of OA friends - and everyone else I knew. I had been working for four years, and when I started school again it felt like I'd forgotten everything. Classes, teaching, research, homework, two to three OA meetings a week and work with my new sponsor and sponsees. By New Years I was having slips. I walked through a very hard spring with the help of HP and OA, but by the end of June, I had to face the fact that I was in relapse.

In July, I went on a research trip to Arizona. For six nights I'd be on top of a mountain, with very limited food choices. On the flight there, I struggled with the compulsion to eat, and thought about what it would be like on that mountain. If I wasn't abstinent, I wouldn't be able to learn, to do the things I was going there for. I'd be thinking every moment about how to get away, when I could eat. I wouldn't be present for the beauty around me. But what finally got me was that I

wouldn't be able to get the food I wanted. To not be abstinent and still not be able to get the food I thought would fix me - that would be torture.

But, of course, no food in the world will ever be able to fix me. It was at that moment that I truly understood that while abstinence can be hard, not being abstinent is worse.

That was three months ago, and my life has changed all over again. I've surrendered my food at a new level, because that's what it took to be free of the compulsion. I'm on my second trip through the steps. I've made the transition from surviving to thriving in my classes and research. I find that my heart is open to love now that my body issues have made room. And I know that if I let HP help, I can be more the person I want to be every day for the rest of my life. What greater motivation could there be?