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I Found Myself In OA

I always was looking out to please someone else before program and I couldn't make it work any more. The program changed me to think about myself. Was I Hungry Angry Lonely or Tired? I find now I get up early and I really need at times to take a nap or I will eat to try to regain energy. Instead I found I needed to charge with rest then I think straighter about food. My thinking before program was to go thru the day more like a bulldozer as I got more and more frazzled. Extra food was making me crazier. Now I really try to think where I'm short circuited. Starting

my daily early with my Higher Power in devotions and prayer and throughout the day I stay connected to get my direction. Before OA I was all over the place in my thinking and actions to please others. Now I can learn to slow down and wait for an answer from my Higher Power as to what to do. I used to react like a stick of dynamite so waiting for an answer as to what to do is really heard but so rewarding I am a child of God I found myself.

- C. C.
Lakewood

OA Changed My Life

How has my life changed since coming to OA? Easy answer...now I have a life! I did nothing before OA but study, argue with my mom, take it out on my boyfriend, and eat. I had one friend who I never did anything with, I was afraid to socialize with people, and I had no hobbies or interests. I was involved in nothing. I was absolutely miserable! Since coming to OA, and becoming abstinent from compulsive overeating I have soooo much time now to live life! Since coming to OA, and working the 12 steps I have had a spiritual awakening that has let me find out who I am, what I like to do, and not be afraid to go do it!

I have friends today because of this program. I have a social life today because of this program. I enjoy people and going places and experiencing new things today because of this program. As a matter of fact, my time has gotten so packed with living instead of hibernating in the house and eating, that I have had to struggle with choosing what I can and cannot do. From the fellowship before or after meetings, to conventions, to dinner dates, social events with co-workers, family birthday celebrations, mother-daughter time with my mom, spending time with other family members (especially my nieces and nephew), vacations and traveling, working on home improvement projects, gardening and yard work...ah the list goes on! It's wonderful to have a full life today.

My sponsor says to "keep it simple" which helps me "keep it sane," because sometimes there is too much all at once. But I am grateful for having those choices today, whereas before coming to OA, I had no choice but to once again open the bag of potato chips while I did my homework, cursing my mother under my breath and waiting for my boyfriend to call so I could find a reason to argue with him. I am living life, happy, joyous and free today.

Thank you OA!

- MMV

Traditions 7, 8, & 9

I never really understood what the traditions meant or their purpose. After attending a 12 & 12 for the past six months with my sponsoree, I have been blessed with a bit more knowledge of them. I am quickly reminded of my self-centered ego when it comes to the steps, but I never related that to the traditions while an active member in the program for many years. I was taught a long time ago that the 12 Steps are HOW OA works and the 12 Traditions are WHY OA works. I still am no 12 Tradition guru – however after I stopped moaning when I learned we were going to discuss a tradition one night a month and actually digested them – I am SO VERY grateful for them. Here are some questions to ask myself relative to each of the traditions discussed.

- Anonymous

Tradition Seven: Every OA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions

Honestly, do I do all I can to help OA (my group, my central office) remain self-supporting?

How generous was I when shopped for food?

Is it more important to get a big OA collection from a few people, or a smaller collection in which more members participate?

Is a group treasurer's report unimportant OA business?

How does the treasurer feel about it?

Tradition Eight: Overeaters Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

Is my own behavior accurately described by the Traditions?

If not, what needs changing?

When I chafe about any particular Tradition, do I realize how it affects others?

Do I try to sound in OA like an expert on compulsive Overeating? On recovery? On medicine? On sociology? On OA itself? On psychology? On spiritual matters?

Do I make an effort to understand what OA employees do?

Tradition Nine: OA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

Do I still try to boss things in OA?

Do I resist formal aspects of OA because I fear them as authoritative?

Am I mature enough to understand and use all elements of the OA program - even if no one makes me do so - with a sense of personal responsibility?

Do I exercise patience and humility in any OA job I take?

Am I aware of all those to whom I am responsible in any OA job?

Humility

Throughout my whole life I have NEVER been able to lose weight and keep it off or affect long term change with regard to anything, it just wasn't possible. My best efforts only resulted in a higher weight, an ever increasing number of secrets, and unmanageability that would take years to face and understand. It wasn't until I threw my hands up in surrender, hit my knees (yes, literally), and admitted defeat, that I find the ability to stop compulsively overeating.

That was, for me at least, a bona fide miracle. And that, my friends, is where the humility comes in; that I needed nothing short of a miracle to be able to stop eating. The number on the scale, the size of my jeans, even the disapproval or fear from others never made me stop. As a matter of fact, they just exacerbated my compulsion to eat. I was a slave not only to food but to the idea that food would make everything better.

It wasn't until I came to OA that I found out just how small my world had become. My addiction had not only taken away my ability to eat normally, it had relegated me to a life of isolation by denying myself a place in society. All those failed Monday morning diets had seeped into all aspects of my life, chipping away at my self esteem along the way. Before I knew it, anything and everything related to my self-worth was filtered through the prism of my food addiction and my inability to successfully deal with it.

Today, as I live in recovery (a power greater than myself, abstinence, the steps, sponsorship, the fellowship, the tools), I know my thinking needs to change as well. For me, humility is not just admitting defeat at the hands of a potato chip; it is acknowledging that my attitude towards life, and me in it was wrong. Humility is accepting a compliment, no matter how incongruous it is with how I see myself. As a matter of fact, how I see myself is just as damaged as the part of me that says food will make it all better.

When I am really hurting I try to remember how lucky I am to have a seat in OA with my name on it. Humility is knowing that they are not my laurels to rest on and there is no such thing as a free lunch except on your birthday, and then only MAYBE. Humility is allowing me to see myself through the eyes of my higher power and other people in this fellowship and know that I deserve the promises, every last one of them.

Humility is writing an article for Heart To Heart because I have to give it away to keep it and, just for today, I want to put everything I can between me and that first compulsive bite.

Always keep coming back.

- J. L.

Working It Out With The Principles

It's 5:30AM. I've been sitting here in the Emergency Room with my parents since about 1:30. That's when the squad brought in my 97 year old grandmother. We think she's dying. I don't want to be here. It starts me facing and thinking through my feelings for this woman. Maybe I'll try writing an article for the Heart 2 Heart to keep my mind busy.

"Do I love you, Gramma? You hurt me very badly when I was a child. You let other people hurt me too. How can I possibly love you?"

"You're supposed to love her. She's your grandmother. And she's 97 years old." I think I used to try to love her. But I was generally uncomfortable and frightened around her.

Now I pray that her Higher Power provides her with what she needs. And I pray that my Higher Power will guide my actions and words around her. I don't wish her any harm or ill will. This is the best I can do as far as love for this woman.

"This is more than you could have done when you first came into OA. Your Higher Power will guide you. Just be open to the direction." I also think about justice. In her delirious state Gramma asks several times "Why do I have to suffer so much?"

"Why shouldn't you suffer after what you put me through?!"

The nurse keeps giving Gramma morphine to ease her pain, to help her rest, to keep her calm.

"Hey!! No more morphine! Let her suffer like I did. She never stepped in to ease my pain or to calm my fears during those terrible ordeals. She watched from the background. It's not fair!!!"

Still, I know in my imperfection it is not my place to determine what is or is not just. I don't administer justice. Thank you OA and HP for helping me to see the difference between me wanting vengeance (but not taking it) and HP deciding cosmic spiritual justice.

The medical team doesn't think she's going to make it. Am I sitting here waiting for her to die? Dad is taking it rough. Mom looks

stoic. I pull out a crossword puzzle to occupy my mind.

It's 7AM. Gramma is in a room. Mom and Dad had to leave to get some sleep and put in an appearance at work. I'm here sitting with Gramma, by myself. Yes, I'm sitting here to comfort and to reassure a woman who hurt me so much and who I don't remember ever comforting me. We still don't know if she will live or not. But her vital signs seem to have stabilized. She is breathing better. At present she is quiet and sleeping. I can't sleep.

For some reason that I don't understand I am humbled and honored to have this time alone with Gramma when she might be dying.

"You can say to her whatever you want. She won't know. Everything that has been bottled up inside for so long. Just let it out."

Humility -- accepting myself, others, the world, this situation, and even Gramma exactly as it all is today, in this moment. I will not forget the past. But it will do no one any good now to dwell on it. HP brings this thought into my awareness and I am ready to accept it. There is nothing I need to say to Gramma at this time.

And I feel a sense of honor that HP helped work things out so that I would be here in this place with this person now. I think I have a new respect for death and the dying process even though in this situation the process is short. I am honored to witness this. I realize that without the OA program and the assistance of my Higher Power and the recovery that I am learning, I would never have been able to deal with this.

"I still don't like her."

No, I may not like her but I can sit in the same room with her and not feel uncomfortable or repulsed. I don't feel that anger inside me right now. I think I might be feeling a sense of peace.

I don't know how this day will end. For the moment Gramma is quiet and stable and I am going to close my eyes and try to rest. God, thank you for the serenity to accept this situation and this moment just as it is.

Gramma died peacefully that night.

- Anonymous

The Seasons of OA

The Winter of OA: I believe almost all of us began our lives in winter. We used compulsive eating to bury our lives, our emotions, and our bodies under massive amounts of food. We each have our own story, each one different, but those stories are all the same. We thought by hibernating we could avoid people, situations and life. We thought we would spare ourselves pain and ridicule. But the more we hibernated, the lonelier we became and the more we hurt. We learned that we didn't need others to ridicule us, we could do a bang up job all by ourselves. We tried hundreds of ways to shut out the cold – diets, exercise, pills – but we never accomplished much. We just kept running in place and, if we were lucky, we ended up right where we started. But too often we ended up farther and farther behind.

I was a cold person, very offstandish. I was emotional, but I didn't know how to express those emotions. I was afraid to share my feelings, to allow others a glimpse of me that they might not like, because I certainly didn't like me. It wasn't fair to my friendships, it wasn't fair to my children, and it certainly wasn't fair to me. Loneliness is the pain of being alone.

The Spring of OA began when we admitted we were powerless over food and that our lives had become unmanageable. OA told us to look to a Higher Power who could help us. We came to believe a Higher Power could restore us to sanity and we began to have faith. Scriptures tells us that "we guide our steps by faith, not by what is seen." I know it isn't referring to the OA Steps, but that it could. It seemed too simple to be true that God not only could remove our obsession with food, but that He would! So, going on faith alone, we began to cultivate our relationship with Him. We tended our spirituality with prayer, meditation and just being open to Him. We looked for Him in our lives and found him in places and people we shied away from before.

We came to believe He could restore us to sanity, and as that relationship grew, we were finally able to turn our lives over to Him. Once we let God mind the store, we were able to turn our attention to ourselves, not selfishly but with care and concern. By the time we reached the fourth Step, we were able to survey ourselves with a certain amount of detachment that enabled us to identify the weeds that were choking our well-being. If a cactus is growing in a field of wheat, it's a weed, but in the desert it can become a lifesaver to someone who is thirsty. Stubbornness might be a weed; determination can be a strong asset. By working the Steps, we put our lives and our shortcomings in their proper perspective and we became more aware of our unique personalities, abilities and talents. We found that traits we thought were faults could be redirected into virtues. In Steps 6 & 7 we asked God to pull out all the weeds and make more room for our physical, emotional and spiritual growth.

In the winter, the lake is cold and the water forbidding. It can sap our strength; it can be lethal. But in the spring the water begins to warm. With the help of the Steps and the Tools, we can feel safe enough to put a toe in the water and perhaps wade a bit. Eventually, summer warms the lake, and we have gained the confidence to splash in it, swim in it and maybe even dive into it.

By the Summer of OA we are finally able to see progress. As we carefully tend our lives to nurture our spirituality and protect it from negative elements, we allow ourselves to accept the warmth of OA and open ourselves to brighter days. We are able to weather the clouds and rain because we are developing a strong root system in OA. We learned to bend with the wind instead of defying it and insisting it blow in a certain direction. In the summer, trees grow taller and spread their wide protective branches and shelter us with their cool leaves. So, too, OA members can shelter newcomers and share the comfort of their experience, strength and hope -- and love. We learn from each other, we grow with each other. We hug each other. Hugging is good. I loved to be hugged care-fully. I don't mean polite, restrained social hugs, I mean warm, sincere hugs full of caring. As Summer moves into Fall, we begin to see the promises being fulfilled and we know that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

The Fall of OA is ablaze with color, with joy, and with life. The seeds that we planted during the spring and summer are now safe beneath the soil, preparing to blossom in the spring. The trees and bushes begin shutting down, conserving their strength for greater growth in the spring. And, though we know that Winter is not far behind, Fall promises that it will not be the cold stark winter we knew before. With OA companionship and strength, we know we can weather the snow and ice and bitter cold. We have meetings, service and friends to sustain us. When we hibernate this time, it will not be in fear, hiding from life.

In this new Winter in OA we will hibernate with our Higher Power to grow stronger in our faith and our strength. Loneliness is the pain of being alone -- solitude is the joy of being alone. In OA, we discovered the difference. We know now that we are never truly alone, God is always with us if we just look for him and rely on him. We don't fear the Winter any more. We can patiently use the quiet time to strengthen our OA life and build on it, looking forward with hope and confidence to the coming Spring.

- E. C.

This essay was written for panel discussion on
The Seasons of OA in June, 2006.

How Do I Reward Myself In A Non-Compulsive Way?

I reward myself in a non-compulsive way by taking time just for me to read a book for pleasure only or watch a good movie.

- Anonymous

It took me a long while to think of how I reward myself because I didn't know if I did reward myself. But I do. My reward to myself is taking the time to do the things I just like to do. Last Christmas we bought a PlayStation 2 for the entire family and it sits in the living room. Some evenings, I'll give myself an hour just to play. Sometimes I soak in a hot bath or go for a stroll in the park. To me, a reward is whatever rejuvenates my spirit and often, it's very simple things that do it. But the best reward of all is having a program and rewarding myself with a better life. The oasis of the meeting room can be the best refresher ever.

- Gratefully, S. M.

Wow, this is really a tough question for me! I never knew how to reward myself in a non-compulsive way. People in program constantly told me I needed to take care of myself, but I never knew what they meant or where to begin. Through time and working my program, I learned more about myself.

- Anonymous

Today, I will reward myself by allowing time for me. I now have learned to take care of my needs, which is a HUGE reward. I will do little things as well. For instance, I will take a long hot bath, read a magazine, hang out with friends, go to the movies, watch my favorite TV show and visit with my fiancé and his adorable daughter, who currently lives in another city. I will turn my music really loud while singing and dancing around my house. I also find out things that I have always wanted to do and do it. For instance, I always wanted to learn how to knit so I took a class. I really enjoyed that. I, also, play tennis again after not playing for ten years! By learning to take care of me, I am rewarding myself because I no longer feel the need to live for everyone else. My codependent ways are fading because I work my OA program. I have learned a whole new of living and rewarding myself in a healthy way. I am living today as a result of OA!!!

- V. H, Compulsive Overeater

I buy myself a cup of flavored decaf w/ cream and sweetener, find a quiet place to sit, and allow myself the luxury of enjoying that coffee sip by sip. Sometimes, I take a pleasure reading book (light reading instead of stuff that requires deep concentration) and I get lost in those pages for awhile curled up in a chair w/ my coffee.

- Anonymous

I reward myself every day by treating my body with the respect it deserves. Today, I am really living my life, not just sitting on the sidelines of it. I no longer have to live in the craziness this disease brought me--to me, that's better than any candy bar!

- Anonymous

Go to a movie (before 5pm because I am cheap)! Soak in a bubble bath and read a magazine!

- M. F.

Wow, this was harder to answer than I would have thought! One of the I reward myself is through the gift of time -- allowing myself a few hour or a day of being a human being rather than a human doing. This could mean anything from putzing in the garden for a 5 minute break; taking the evening off to just read and watch TV or go for a walk rather than feeling compelled to do house work or household paperwork; taking a half or full day off from work to get some personal things done; or taking a whole day and going for a ride, or going out on the lake, or to a festival. I guess it's really "time off for good behavior"!

- Anonymous

Marlene, who is the contact person for the Thursday Meeting at Church of the Master in South Euclid, requested that the H2H made the following announcement for her. She just wanted to say that she has had a conflict on Thursdays and she picked up another person who would open the meeting, so there were times the other woman couldn't get there if she didn't have a ride either. Her point was there were probably times people showed up and no one was there. She wants to apologize to anyone that may have happened to. She wants everyone to know that she is a responsible person, the conflict is finished and the meeting will be open as it should be every week and she's sorry if she inconvenienced anyone.

Please send submissions to:

Address

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CCI Announcements

Bainbridge goes "Into Action"

The Thursday Night Bainbridge Meeting of Overeaters Anonymous will be hosting the "INTO ACTION" Big Book Meeting format, a 21-week study of the 1st 164 pages of the "Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous. Please Join us, beginning Thursday, October 5th, at Lord of Life Church, 17989 Chillicothe Rd. (Rt. 306) in Bainbridge (Same location as the Thanksgiving Gratitude Meeting). This is a meeting about solutions. Bring your Big Book, a highlighter, and a pen. Hope to see you there!

Please contact Tina R. with any questions: 440-537-8476

See You In Columbus!

The 2006 Region V OA Convention is being held on October 6, 7, 8 in Columbus, Ohio. Pre-registration deadline is September 30th. After this date, you must register at the convention. Deadline for hotel registration is September 17th.

The Midwest Hotel and Conference Center
Toll Free 877-609-6086 - www.themidwesthotel.com

For more information, contact:

Barb R. - 614.88.1751 - bramsey@insight.rr.com

Now Accepting Articles for the Winter Heart2Heart!

The Heart2Heart is Cleveland Central Intergroup's quarterly newsletter where all members are encouraged to share. Consider writing this year. Your voice is important to the fellowship.

Articles Accepted until December 1, 2006

Available at the CCI Intergroup Meeting on December 17, 2006

Topics include:

Steps and Traditions: 10, 11, 12

Tools: Service, Plan of Eating

Principles: Perseverance, Spirituality, Service

Absolute: Purity

Focused Topics: How do I plan on getting through the holidays abstinently?
What am I grateful for?

Guidelines:

- There is no abstinence requirement to submit articles to the Heart2Heart.
- Articles can be typed, legibly handwritten or called in to the Editors.
- All articles will be accepted.
- Articles will be reviewed in accordance with the OA Traditions.
- Consider the Heart2Heart a "paper meeting" where suggestions like "no cross-talk or advice giving" apply.
- Positive pitches requested; share your experience, strength and hope with each other.
- No article is too small—share as the spirit moves you.

NEW! All articles will be printed with first and last initials **ONLY** per the CCI Board.

Thank You!

Thanks to those of you that wrote articles, provided ideas, and made it your own!

We're on the Web!

See us at:
<http://www.region5oa.org/cleveland/newsletters.html>