

# THE SANCTUARY

One, Two, cha cha cha, Three and Four  
Greater Dayton Area Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous  
P.O. Box 1919, Dayton OH 45401-1919

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Happy New Year Everyone!!

I hope that this paper finds each of you well.

I always start the paper long before anyone actually reads it. Hence, sometimes when a holiday occurs I have to write about it before it happens.

But, the one thing I am finding in recovery is not to sweat the small stuff. Probably Christmas went well for me. If I plan for it to go well, it will go well. If I plan for an unpleasant time, it will be just what I ordered. So, "Zing," "Zang," I "iz" ordering pleasant and fun.

It kind of fits in with what I've been doing for the last two years as a matter of fact. What I've learned is that positive affirmations, said on a daily basis about the things in my life that I want to attract unto myself, can be manifested if I trust the principle of positive thinking in my life and in my program.

So, as I peer at Thanksgiving in the rearview mirror, I am feeling grateful that I have this program of recovery, my abstinence and of course you as my family of choice. Wow you're a big family!

I'd like to welcome Louistine T. to the rag. She'll be with us for a while. Louistine will be taking the paper to have it printed and distributed.

Judy will remain in corrections. Geeze, that makes her sound kinda scary doesn't it? Aw never mind that. We'll work on keep'n

her pumps on the right feet. By the way she really does wear pumps to work on the paper.

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## THE HISTORY CORNER

Here is a little history on the Serenity Prayer as well as the long version of it.

"God, grant me the Serenity...." These familiar words have inspired and comforted millions ever since Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr of the Union Theological Seminary, New York, composed them as a part of a longer prayer he wrote in 1932. A few years later, a friend of Niebuhr's asked to use that portion of the prayer in a compilation of inspirational works. But it wasn't until Niebuhr's verse came to the attention of Bill W., the founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, that it began to be known throughout the world as the "Serenity Prayer."

"God, grant me the Serenity  
To accept the things I cannot change..  
Courage to change the things I can,  
And Wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time,  
Enjoying one moment at a time,  
Accepting hardship as the pathway to peace.  
Taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is,  
Not as I would have it.  
Trusting that He will make all things right  
I surrender to His will.  
That I may be reasonably happy in this life,  
And supremely happy with Him forever in the  
next. Amen.”

Every two months I send out an E- mail with something for our electronic readers to ponder and then hopefully write their thoughts on. This was our query.

### CONTEMPLATION QUESTION

“If food is my problem then I am not a Compulsive Overeater. If I am a Compulsive Overeater then food is NOT my problem.”

### IF FOOD IS MY PROBLEM....

My problem is that I am emotionally, physically, and spiritually bankrupt and I lack the power I need to abstain from compulsive overeating on my own. I've tried for 39 years to 'get a handle' on this problem of overeating and obesity. Everything I have tried either worked only temporarily or not at all. I didn't want to admit that I was physically and emotionally different from other kids, so I looked for kids to hang out with who used food like I did, or I found rationalizations for eating the way I did that satisfied me. Excuses that I could live with, so to speak. The same was true when I became an adult, only I could add to this the cry that as an obese person I was discriminated against by society. Once again keeping the focus off myself, the problem out there.

Eventually I found my way to OA. I didn't like it at first. I thought it was religious, but then I had to admit once I started working the program that none of the churches I attended ever had me do all the things that being 'in Recovery' from compulsive overeating had

me do. And the AA Big Book says when you're having a hard time staying abstinent, intensive work with another compulsive overeater will help when nothing else will. I found out this is true. When I was thinking about bingeing, planning on bingeing, getting ready to binge, the phone would ring, and it would be my sponsor or another Recovering compulsive overeater. After some conversation, I wasn't thinking about bingeing anymore and when I hung up, a lot of times I didn't 'feel' like bingeing anymore.

OA was the first 'program' to tell me the truth about myself. "You have a compulsion to overeat that no human power can relieve you of." I didn't like that, because that meant not only could someone else not help me, I could not make it happen by my own unaided willpower. I don't like relying on a super-human power called 'God' to help me with anything. So I talk to my sponsor, I do what she tells me and then I let go (of the need to control the situation, whatever it may be) with a prayer "if you really exist God, I know you'll take care of this. Let me know when you're done with it."

The hardest part has been that there is no mental defense against that first compulsive bite. I keep thinking that I should be able to talk myself out of overeating. Or talk myself through a tough situation. The problem is that on my own, my desire to abstain is so weak that I cannot resist the urge. It's only by using the tools of the program that I gain the power that I need. I use phone calls, sponsorship, service work, meetings—tools that end my isolation. It doesn't help to rely on my own unsteady willpower. I always fail that way. It is a life-long lesson for me to learn the right use of will, to trust in the fellowship and my Higher Power, to know that H.P.'S will is for me is always in my best interest even if it doesn't feel like it at the time. I've learned that feelings can be deceiving.

Because my life growing up was difficult, even horrible at times, I blamed 'God' and not the spiritual, emotional, and physical bankruptcy of the other humans I dealt with. By blaming 'God' I put a barrier between me and the only Power that could resolve the situation for me on a daily basis if I would avail myself of it.

That's another thing I don't like about this program. I have to start over every day. It's like brushing my teeth or taking a shower. My breath stinks anew the next morning and the B.O. builds up if I don't take a shower. The spiritual plaque and spiritual B.O. builds up if I don't do daily spiritual maintenance.

If food was the problem, I'd go to Diet Workshop or Jenny Craig or Weight Watchers, drop a little or a lot of dough (uh, money), get fixed, and get on with my life. And for people who don't share my compulsion, those things work. I tried them. They were temporary solutions for a permanent problem. I need a permanent solution and OA seems to be it today.

#### **“IF FOOD IS MY PROBLEM...”**

When I began to get serious about The Program of OA, became desperate, and then subsequently became willing to admit that I had a Higher Power and it wasn't me nor was it that dozen donuts I had been eating, I was ready to begin in earnest to take a look at my life and to listen to someone other than myself. In the first two years I had some reservations about whether I was a COE or just a heavy eater. But, after a relapse that lasted around nine months—which by the way was completely demoralizing, I was ready to admit it, let go and then let the God of my understanding do it for me.

I got a sponsor that I know was truly God directed. Why? Well because it was one of those times in my life that I was desperate and I heard a calm voice telling me what to do and who to ask.

At this moment I can only think of two other times that it was that blatant.

That voice was a blessing to be sure. It was the start of being lead out of the darkness. That was my step one—realizing that I needed help and being willing to do as my inner-voice was instructing me.

Not too long into my relationship with my sponsor, he gave me something to ponder. “If food is my problem then I am not a Compulsive Overeater. If I am a Compulsive Overeater then food is NOT my problem.”

That completely boggled my mind!!

I am not good with puzzles and I didn't like the thought of even thinking about it. So, I asked my sponsor to tell me the answer and he did.

He said that if I was a COE that the food was just a symptom of a deeper problem—one that was mental, emotional, and spiritual.

Whew! That was new. I had been fighting the battle on the wrong front! I kept focusing on the food. Looking for the perfect way to eat, the perfect food and how to keep it out of my sight so that I wouldn't be tempted to eat what was clearly bad for me. That made me the HP, which clearly didn't work for me. I was too lenient with myself, or I was too strict with myself—depending on the day and my current whim.

So, with that new information in my arsenal of weapons, I was able to begin to let it sink from my head to my heart that diets and food plans alone would not, could not cure me.

I would need the entire program of OA. I began working the steps out of the Big Book, discussing my thinking with my sponsor and others who similarly had experience, and becoming honest with myself about myself. And then the information began to travel from my head down to my heart, slowly, One Day At A Time.

I am powerless over food and my life is unmanageable. I am glad that I found out and I am glad that I can be honest with myself

about it today. That admission saved my life and helped turn it into a beautiful and wonderful experience. I get up everyday thankful that even though I too “came to scoff, I stayed to pray.”

Claudia

### INTERGROUP REPORT— ELECTION OF OFFICERS

“Known to be short , sweet and productive.”

On November 17<sup>th</sup>, we had our bimonthly IG meeting. We elected new officers who will serve a two-year term.

First, I’d like to take a second to thank our outgoing officers. I was amazed and deeply attracted to service because of your dedication to your jobs.

Thanks to:

Tim H—Chair

George C—Vice-Chair (1 yr remaining)

Louistine T—Treasurer

Nora D—Secretary (1 yr remaining)

Becky C—Region V Reprehensive

Your service was greatly appreciated.

Our new Officers will be:

Claudia I—Chair

Nan S—Treasurer

Becky C—Region V Rep

Thanks to everyone who so graciously gave service this year.

### My Step One

As a new member of OA I have only recently reached step one. The circumstances of this realization occurred prior to my first OA meeting.

I had grown up with a general belief that twelve step programs didn’t work and were not worth investigating. This mistaken belief came from many people that I had been acquainted with during my formative years and early adulthood. They were men who had entered AA only to leave the program and relapse after very short stays. These people (including my father, a couple of family friends and later coworkers) had all

said the program was a sham, it didn’t work and wasn’t worth the effort. I didn’t know then that the addiction was talking and they weren’t ready to be free of their problem. Consequently, I never looked toward OA as a solution to my compulsive overeating; that is until now.

My compulsive overeating has been a forty-year problem that had developed into a nightmare over the last several years. By mid-summer of 2001 I was 380 pounds, often sick, always tired and generally depressed. My social life was nil, my loving wife was becoming more and more worried by my weight, I was depressed (which I wouldn’t admit), and I didn’t do any of the activities that I had once loved to do. I had given up hiking, fishing, hunting, golf and any social activity. I was sitting around binging on anything and everything and waiting to die. The only things I had left were my family and my job and they began to suffer.

I began to notice that I couldn’t concentrate on my work. I couldn’t play with my grandchildren. Even conversations with my wife and children were becoming a strain because I was in a constant fog and couldn’t concentrate on what was going on at the time. I put up a good front for a while, but my family noticed and my output at work began to diminish. I don’t know if my boss saw the change going on, but I did. I was getting frantic—my mind had always been my strongest asset. I didn’t know what to do.

I realized that something had to change, but what? I couldn’t control my eating. I had tried so many diets, food plans, herbal remedies—you name it—to no avail. I was out of control and my life was unmanageable. Compulsive overeating had me by the throat, and I was down for the count. This is where I hit bottom. I was powerless over food; I had to get help! Me! Mister self-sufficiency! Mister, “*I can do anything*,” had to admit that I couldn’t do it alone.

Without knowing what I had done, I had reached the first step. I had, after fifteen years of progressive weight gain and chronic binge eating, finally admitted that I was powerless over food and my life was unmanageable. But what do I do next?

I remembered the newsletter, "Employee Care News," that we received at my workplace. The latest edition had an Article called, "Is Your Eating Under Control," with a number to call to enroll in an eating illness support group. I called the number, got into the program in September. Enrollment includes an agreement to attend at least one OA meeting. My first Overeaters Anonymous meeting was October 6, 2001.

That eating illness support group probably saved my life. It gave me tools to work with and most importantly it introduced me to OA.

Overeaters Anonymous is helping me live my life sanely, with a program of recovery that is changing the way I live. I now know the steps and am working diligently on them. I don't know what is in my future, but I do know it is far brighter now than it has been in many, many years. I remind myself of step one every morning, lest I forget, I was powerless over food and my life was unmanageable.

Pat

#### From "Cultivating Faith:"

"Fear is often the force that prevents me from acquiring and cultivating the power of faith. Fear blocks my appreciation of beauty, tolerance, forgiveness, service, and serenity." c. 1990, Daily Reflections, pg. 120

#### STEP 2 TRADITION 2

Work the steps. I took an inventory of my thoughts and feelings, because these motivate my behaviors. Then I shared them with my sponsor. Then I prayed that 'God' would remove from me every single defect of character that stands in the way of my usefulness to 'God' and my fellow humans. I

asked 'God' to take all of me 'Good and Bad' (my judgment of what's Good and Bad may not be my Higher Power's judgment of what is good or bad). Then I give up playing the role of 'God'.

When something about my thoughts and feelings disturbs me, I share those thoughts or feelings with a safe person, preferably my sponsor, and then turn it over to my Higher Power again. I am more sane than I have been in the past. I want to continue to gain in the sanity department. And I am subject to becoming insane at a moments notice.

It's back to that daily work to gain spiritual power. I can never 'rest on my laurels'. Whatever I did the day before does not carry over into what I may need to do today. It may be the same as yesterday, or it may be something entirely new. When I got bridge work, I had to brush my teeth in a new way. The spirituality that was right for me as a child, teenager, in my 20's or 30's, will all differ in significant ways from what I have to do for my spirit in my 40's.

#### Step Two

"Came to believe a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

Plan of eating. If I can say, in my head, automatically, "I eat to live rather than live to eat," I am working Step Two.

Sanity around food is doing all of the things below with the goal of eating to live with a spiritual purpose.

My plan of eating embraces the three areas that OA says we must deal with—food, weight and body image. I do not weigh or measure my food. I resist this because to me it feels like a diet. Sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. I realize that my portions are still too large, but I am doing this the way I do it. I have a sponsor in OA who has more time than I. This is to help me with the Steps in OA,

which I feel are critical to any growth in the program of Overeaters Anonymous.

I do not eat between meals, save for fruit, Saltines, protein enriched no-sugar Balance bars, sugar-free popsicles. I do not want to be like Alien, the monster in the movies. In other words, I want to remember what I just ate. And if my mind is in a state that I eat like Alien devours its food, then I am just sucking down some food ... in what I call "a foodout." Like Blackouts for alcoholics, a "foodout" is basically doing something related with food ... and not remembering it later. The ingestion of that drug that food can sometimes become is done without any true focus or presence of mind. I just am eating like a monster.

When I consume food like Alien, I am not eating mindfully. I do not eat in the dark. I try not to sneak food ... meaning, if at an AA function (I am in AA and Al-Anon, also), and I see another OAer there and cake is there ... if I want a small piece, I do not sneak it because I want to look good for them. If I choose to eat it, I do not hide it from them. On the other hand, if I want to eat it but feel restrained from eating because they are there, I thank God that they WERE there.

I try to eat three meals a day. Working alternating weekends, four to twelve, and going to college three days a week, I find I stay up late and sometimes do not have my third meal until eight or even nine PM. This can confuse my mind and stomach. But, three meals a day seems to work. I pray when I wake up in the middle of the night and want to eat. I used to eat, drink, and take drugs in the middle of the night to go back to sleep and deal with my chronic sleep disorder. Now, I do not eat, drink or do any kind of drugs in the middle of the night. I pray, instead.

I don't eat doughnuts, Twinkies, Hostess Cupcakes, Cream Puffs, Cream Horns, Ice Cream, Shakes, Malts, etc. I have not had any Macaroni and Cheese for more than a year. I have not had any doughnuts for six

years now. Same for Twinkies, which is a MIRACLE! Shout it out from the rooftops!!!!

I also have not had any Pringles for a year or more. Pringles can be "drunk" -- just shake the chips into little pieces, and "drink" them, holding the can up to my mouth. Pringles for me, therefore, is a binge food, and I have a list of those, too. I do occasionally have a small single piece of chocolate. I do have Sugar-Free Angel Food cake, but I try to avoid all processed sugar.

Likewise, I do not eat food out of the trash or off the floor (clean it off, brush it off, etc). I do not eat food that smells bad or that is overly cooked or cold ... just to get something into my mouth.

I look at myself naked in the mirror and realize that while I am not losing weight per se, my "tire" which used to circle my girth like an inner tube, is disappearing. Were it not for the fact that I got my ponytail cut off last April, I might have thought the weight was going into my hair. My toenails and fingernails are trimmed, so the weight cannot be going there! I suspect that like a bear, I have a gut that has loads of blubber stored in it and it takes time to reduce it. This is a result of years of overeating, including thirteen in AA recovery. The "compulsive overeating bear" that I have been in here needs to stay out of hibernation longer, be more active, and surrender more food items to God.

I don't eat in the car. I rarely eat at the table since I live alone and often like to eat while I am watching the boob tube. However, I do turn on a light on either side of me. They are like anchors and keep me from eating in the dark, in shame.

My sponsor has heard my Fourth Step in a Fifth Step. We see each other about every two weeks. We occasionally are at the same meetings together.

A lot of my shame surrounding food has diminished. I try to attend at least one OA meeting a week, two AA and two Al-Anon

meetings. I sponsor one guy in OA and sponsor one guy in AA who is also working on OA stuff. I sponsor one guy in Al-Anon. I have relationships and try not to let anything negative in them drive me to eat compulsively. Sometimes Shit happens.

I feel that for me, rigidity in thought, in practice, in my expressions of sharing in meetings, and how I see my recovery, are like the breath of a dead man. Rigidity, in other words, can be very dangerous because I, as I am in Overeaters Anonymous, must eat some time, somewhere, and I can and do make mistakes. If I approach OA recovery with rigidity, I feel there may be an element of self-righteousness within me that is scary. I try to practice metta, which is loving kindness towards myself, in Buddhist parlance.

My Higher Power is Jesus, Buddha, the Hindu concepts of creation and cosmology, and, of course, a Native American view towards all things as being alive. There is, of course, Zazen, which is sitting meditation and breathing, in the Zen form. I read spiritual material and try to observe nature as it is. I try to practice love and kindness where I can. I am not perfect, by any stretch whatsoever. I believe in "the Spirituality of Imperfection." Imperfection is reality. Reality is spiritual. All of the "shadows" that I cast on reality are self-will run riot.

Fruit and vegetables are very important. I have tried to integrate some Vegan stuff into my diet. A friend I loved very much showed me how to make ratatouilles and salads. I think of her making them for me every time I do this, and remember the love I had for her. She was a woman in OA of another culture, and I loved her very much. I sometimes cry inside for our love, and how we laughed together. In the old days, falling in love with a woman like that and then losing it would have sent me into reclusive isolation, deep depression, and a long binge into sweets.

But now, I can say that she is always in my heart for how she made ratatouilles and

taught me about Vegan food. The love she gave me as a member of OA and she a member of OA was wonderful. Until I die, I will remember her, and pray for her wherever she is.

Bread is not a big deal to me, although I do see how eating white flour at fast food places can be a problem. Accordingly, I try to look at what is on a fast food menu that I might substitute for the white flour.

There is no doubt that if I adopted more stringent HOW like fundamentals, I could lose weight. However, I am not in this merely to lose weight. I have an obsessive-compulsive food disorder. It tells me crazy things about food, weight, and body image. I feel that once I get fixated on "losing weight" I have set something in motion I call self-will. This works for me. It would most likely not work for you. I believe in my deepest heart of heart that I have overeaten for nearly forty-eight years. If I live forty-eight more years in OA, I believe I will know much more about how to eat in God's eyes and mind.

My pants fit better. That is on my plan of eating, too. If I have a slip, my sponsor has said, "yes, let's talk about the slip, but more importantly, let's talk about the feelings" I did not want to feel before the slip. These are the things that work for me.

I wanted to share my experience, strength and hope with you, the beloved people of OA. I try to do the First, Second, Third, Seventh, Tenth and Eleventh Steps, as well as the Twelfth Step every day.

I know where I have come from more than you. Accordingly, I have a fair idea of what measures have worked and how I have become different. So does God, as I understand God. God and my sponsors are who are important when it comes to self-image. What other people might think about me is none of my business. My sponsors in AA, Al-Anon and OA know who I am. God does, too. This is the essence of the Fifth Step.

I will have been sober 19.5 years in AA on 24 December, in Al-Anon in February and OA seven on March 12. It works if you work it. I believe there are as many programs for the individual as there are individuals in "the Program." Yes, of course, there is a "Program [of OA]." But we also each individualize "the Program" into "our program." And so it goes.

It is a wonderful thing ... recovery. Wonderful. God bless you all. My seventh OA anniversary will be March 12. I hope to be in México by then, learning to speak, read and hear Spanish better. I will try and find OA meetings wherever I go in México. The plan is that after I finish learning Spanish better, I will move to New México. I know there are OA meetings in New México (nueva méxico). This is something for you to remember me by. I won't forget you.

And to my friend who showed me so many wonderful things about being in love with a woman of a different culture, know that I love you, still. It is so wonderful we were and are in OA together, both of us learning how to eat to live, not live to eat.

Jerry E.

### **BUTTERFLY STORY**

A man found the cocoon of a butterfly. One day a small opening appeared. He sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through the little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gotten as far as it could and could go no further.

So the man decided to help the butterfly. He took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily. But it had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings.

The man continued to watch the butterfly because he expected that, at any moment, the wings would enlarge and expand to be able to support the body, which would contract in time.

Neither happened! In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled wings. It never was able to fly.

What the man in his kindness and haste did not understand was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the butterfly to get through the tiny opening were God's way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings so that it would be ready for flight once it achieved its freedom from the cocoon.

Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our life. If God allowed us to go through our life without any obstacles, it would cripple us. We would not be as strong as we could have been. And we could never fly. So have a nice day... and struggle a little.  
-- Author Unknown – submitted by Pati

### **Tradition 1**

“Our common welfare should come first. Personal recovery depends upon OA unity.”

There is a lot for me to learn in The Traditions, both within the confines of Overeaters Anonymous and in my personal life.

I attend another 12-step meeting in which we study a Tradition each month, reading it during the meeting and then discussing it. I have come to love and appreciate the opportunity to learn about The Traditions from some people who have years of solid recovery.

When I came into OA there was no real “our” in my life. I thought mostly about me, myself and I. It was quite a threesome. I was constantly focusing on how to get my needs met. And I was so needy at the time. With mental illness in the picture, and 3 addictions ruling my every thought and deed, I had to consider myself to survive. Or at least that is what I had come to believe.

Many times I focused on another in the family claiming that I was trying to help. But

in most cases I was trying to manipulate the situation so that my welfare was first.

In coming to meetings and in working the Steps with my sponsor, I soon began to learn that in order for me to recover there was a “we” mentality that I needed to have. Without the group I could not recover and would not survive.

My personal recovery is dependant upon God and each of the members of my Twelve Step programs to be recovered one day at a time.

It is much harder for me to practice this Tradition in my family. It’s about me becoming and remaining a team player. I like to rule the roost if I can, boss folks, insist I know what’s best for them and the whole nine yards.

I also have trouble in this area because I tend to forget that I don’t get to look at what they are or are not doing. It is only important to focus on how I am behaving and to be the best Big Book that they see. Pointing out their flaws or insisting they follow the path I deign is correct for them is unfair to them and to their HP who has a plan for them.

This was a long way around the bush but what I am trying to say is that when I force solutions, etc., I am not fostering unity but instead Chaos.

Claudia

### Tradition 2

“For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.”

This Tradition is easy to read and understand and hard to do on a daily basis! Basically, what it means is that there is one boss of the applesauce and it ain’t me!—that I am not your boss either, and that together, like in Tradition One with unity in mind, we will come to decisions that are centered on the will of our personal HP.

It also reminds me that when I do service to make sure to act only as a conduit for ideas and not to insist that I know the one and only way.

As I begin my two-year term as Chair of Dayton, I pray for the wisdom and the guidance of my Higher Power to pray often and to trust that (S)He will guide us in new and exciting directions.

Claudia

Please consider sending in articles to the paper. We are always interested in publishing your ideas.

If you are interested in working on the Public Information Committee or on the Bylaws Committee, please E-mail Claudia @ [msquixie@cs.com](mailto:msquixie@cs.com) or see her at a meeting. We will begin the procedures manual in January and need your help in deciding what is best for Dayton. The manual will be constantly updated as procedures come up.

Intergroup is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month—for the year 2002:

January 19

March 16

May 18

July 20

September 21

November 16 (elections)

Please come, participate and if you can, become a Group Representative. Please offer your service to the group.

If you receive this paper by e-mail, contributions would be appreciated (\$3).

The opinions expressed here the opinion of the writer and not of OA, and are the individuals experience strength and hope. Permission to reprint is given to any 12-step member or program. Thank you.