

Society Pages

The Newsletter of
Unity Intergroup January, 2012

www.overeaters.org

Carrying the Message

Now you can read the Society Pages online every month at www.overeaters.org.

Step One: We admitted we were powerless over food—that our lives had become unmanageable.

Amazing Surrender

Coming to OA was the last thing I wanted to do many years ago, but nothing else I had ever tried had worked. I was brand new to 12 step programs and really didn't know what it all meant. All I knew was that something had to change. I was overeating daily, to the point of lying on the floor in the bathroom and vomiting from the day's binges. I could barely make it through each day. Every day tasks of cooking, cleaning, working and taking care of my family were burdensome and almost impossible. At the meeting I heard hope, freedom and a solution. I didn't know how all the people in the sponsor line could be abstinent, appear happy and lose weight, but I wanted what they had.

I started working with a sponsor and working on Step 1. I read from Alcoholics

Anonymous and the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions of AA. I quickly began to see how my life had become unmanageable but it took some time to see how my addiction was the main reason. As I became abstinent I started to see how I was powerless over controlling my food. I needed the help of others in the program and a food plan to follow. I had to admit that I was not in control even though I had spent most of my life trying to control everything and everyone around me. Over time it's amazing how this surrender, this powerlessness has actually been incredibly freeing. I don't have to be in control! When my life starts to feel unmanageable now, in my abstinence, it's usually because I'm trying to control things again. I can stop, reflect and admit my powerlessness to my higher power. I can do the next right thing and life seems to calm down. By continuing to admit I'm powerless over most things in my life I have found that same hope and happiness I saw at my first meeting.

Thank you God!

Every Day Had Ended in a Binge

For years, as the binging worsened I refused to admit it. Morning after morning, I swore to myself that today was going to be different, but as the day progressed, it was more of the same. Virtually every day began with at least a five mile run. But then I got down to business: The eating. I would have a large dinner, a very large dinner that continued until I could not eat another bite, until I felt like I was going to explode. And then a little while later, I would eat some more. "This will be the last night," I would say to myself, "After this, I am going to eat reasonably." But it never was. I ran to burn off the calories from my over-the-top eating, but no matter how much I ran, it couldn't quite burn it all off.

After several years of this non-stop binging I was in a panic. I came to the Sunday night meeting in St. Louis Park in August 2002 with very little knowledge about Overeaters Anonymous and skeptical that anything was going to help me. I felt I was stuck with this demon for the rest of my life. But I got a sponsor and started reading the Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book and the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous and writing on the questions that my sponsor gave me. "Was I powerless over food?" was one of the earliest questions. I thought about that. I could not control my eating no matter how hard I tried. I had to admit it. I had literally lost the stop button. As someone who had spent his life trying to control everything and everyone around me, the reality that I could not control what I put in my mouth was scary.

To admit my powerlessness was a first step, but a necessary step if I was going to recover. My life had become unmanageable. Much as I never thought I would, I surrendered.

I recently celebrated nine years of abstinence. Credit it all to OA. And credit it to a continued acknowledgment on my part that though nine years have passed, I am still powerless over the food. I need the program more than ever and I cherish the fact that it has made it possible for me to live.



A Slip Taught Me

In step 1 we must admit we are powerless when it comes to food and for me this took some time. Then I slipped back into the food and proved to myself I had no control. After that things started going better because I realized I need OA because I am powerless. I am now more open-minded to working the program. The slip set me back to day one but it taught me I cannot control my eating.

Big Book Study

May 18-20

Info at www.overeaters.org

My Family Walked on Eggshells

Step one for me is the step of surrender, admitting I am powerless over food, that my life had become unmanageable. I had to give up control. What I was doing was not working. Five foot tall, 198 pounds (last time I would step on the scale) and climbing with no end in sight. I had tried everything I could and success never lasted for long. When my doctor told me I was obese and that I was going to kill myself with food; that was my wakeup call and my rock bottom. I couldn't walk without running out of breath, I had high blood pressure, took water pills, and anxiety meds because I was afraid I was going to die of a heart attack. And that was just the physical.

I lied, hid, manipulated, and ate. I would do whatever I had to do to get my fix of food. I was selfish and mean when I didn't get my way. My family walked on egg shells around me. I was moody; my concentration was poor at work. I was miserable. Unmanageable life—you bet. I had no control. I was out of control.

I came into the doors of OA and knew that I had to admit my powerlessness over food and surrender to God. He is my only hope of recovery. The beginning was to face what the problem really was. Face myself and recognize what this disease was doing to me. Today, I have a surrendered life that I have to recommit to every day. I follow my food plan, call my sponsor, attend meetings, make phone calls, and do reading and writing every day. The disciplines of this program help me to have a manageable, content life once again, but I don't have to do it alone. I have God and all of you.

Reminder:

Unity Day—Feb 25

Buffalo Retreat—March 30– April 1

Super Saturday—April 14

Leading a Double Life

To me, Step One has two primary components; powerlessness and unmanageability. First, let me talk about powerlessness; because for me that was easy. All I had to do was look in the mirror to see how much power I had over food, or better said how much power I had allowed food to have over me. I was nearly 100 pounds overweight, and very unhappy with my physical appearance. Clearly something wasn't right. I didn't have any control (i.e. power) over food. It was a major part of my life and over the years had become much more than just a source of nutrition necessary to sustain my physical being. It served all sorts of other purposes from attacking boredom to soothing pain and hurt. Clearly, I had relinquished all power when it came to food and eating. Upon entering the doors of OA, that was never an issue for me. In fact it is what brought me to OA.

However, admitting “unmanageability” was a very different story. You see, I had always lived under the assumption that my life was totally under control...except for that pesky food “issue.” I am a vice president at a mid-sized corporation. I have enjoyed a successful career for nearly 30 years, with numerous promotions over that time. I have financial stability, and have been lucky enough to have never experienced an unplanned job loss. I've been married for 27 years, and live in a nice home in a very safe, family friendly neighborhood. I have three children, two of whom are now attending college. I am the picture of responsibility. I work hard, and am very committed to my career. I'm quick to volunteer and known among my friends and co-workers as someone they can count on; someone who rarely says no to a request for help or assistance. I rarely raise my voice, and almost never yell.

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So, I enter OA and I'm handed this book that suggests maybe my life is "unmanageable"! This was a tough concept for me. But, as I really thought about it, and honestly assessed my actions and behaviors, concerning things began to emerge. I was leading a double life. Yes, I was a successful, nice guy and a devoted husband and father (albeit one with an obvious love for food). I truly believe that's how people saw me, but that's completely different from how I saw myself. I didn't like who I was, and I certainly didn't love myself. And I had this "issue" with food. When I was really honest with myself disturbing patterns became clear to me.

As I have heard a fellow OA member put it, my head was filled with "chatter" about food. When I wasn't focused on a particular task at work or in my personal life, I was thinking about food, or losing weight. This "chatter" took many forms. I often obsessed about my next meal, or better put "binge." I looked forward with great anticipation to escaping the stress of my job, and losing myself in a fast food meal. Then, after my binges I mentally berated myself for giving in to temptation; for not having enough willpower to say no to food I shouldn't eat and that I often ate even though I wasn't hungry. Then there was the diet and exercise "chatter." I lived in the "tomorrow syndrome." After each binge, I told myself that it was my last. I'd start my diet and/or exercise program the next day...but of course that rarely happened. In retrospect, this "chatter" consumed a lot of my waking hours.

The other big aspect of my life's unmanageability around food was dishonesty. When it came to food, I was an incredibly devious and dishonest person. Which, looking back on it was ridiculous, since all you had to do was look at me, and it was obvious I had issues with over-eating. But, I put a lot of effort into hiding my eating. I took lunches by myself, so no one

could see how much I ate. If I had a business or social meal, I ate only healthy foods and never finished my meals, only to binge later. I snuck food out of the refrigerator at work, and frequently raided the office candy dishes when no one was around. I grabbed fast food while out on errands and would then bury the wrappers in the garage garbage can so my family wouldn't see it. I'd stay up late after my family had gone to bed, claiming to work, when I was really "grazing" in the cupboard and refrigerator. These are just a few of my many dishonest behaviors around food.

So after some helpful discussion with other OA members I took an honest look at my life and my relationship with food, and it became evident that "I was powerless over food and my life had become unmanageable. I had finally taken that critical first step toward a new way of life.



Hopeless About Losing Weight

I was around 10 years old when I first remember being overweight. I was teased a lot because I was so heavy. I lived with my mother after she was divorced. My brother went to live with my father at that time. I mention this because my brother seemed to control his weight a lot better than I did and is not a compulsive overeater. It just may be that we are born with this eating problem. Living with mom, I learned that overeating made me feel better about painful things.

I have been obese most of my life except for a brief time after high school trying my best to get a girlfriend: however when I did get thin I still felt fat during this time and still had a low self-esteem. My weight would always increase and I would go on a diet only to fail within a few weeks. Without the willpower to stick with it I would gain all the weight I lost and even more weight than when I began.

Looking back on all the failed attempts with diets: trying Nutri-System, Weight Watchers, Atkins and Herbalife, it's no wonder that I gave up losing weight all together. My weight seemed to increase whenever I tried to diet. I remember saying to myself. When I get up to 200 pounds I will have to really get serious and make another diet attempt. Then once I got to 200 pounds I said, If I ever reach 220 pounds.... I fought this mind game until I reached a dangerous 309 pounds. And for my small frame size my BMI was 51. Hopeless about losing weight by myself I turned to a doctor's advice on the topic of Gastric By-pass surgery. It was explained to me that I would no longer be able to eat or drink as I used to. I would have to eat very small amounts of food about the size of a pencil eraser or I would get sick or even worse—like bust open

the pouch they make in your stomach.

Knowing my track record with eating binges, this would not work for me. This was my bottom: that hopeless, helpless feeling that nothing will work. I had shortness of breath, knee joint pain, high cholesterol, obstructive sleep apnea, and high triglycerides. I didn't know what to do next. I can't stop overeating and this is going to kill me. I looked up on the internet hoping that I would find a new diet or something, one with some accountability. Then I started reading about Overeaters Anonymous. There was a meeting not too far away so I went.

Wow—I saw men and women who had lost over a hundred pounds, just like I needed to do. I was grateful I found something other than a diet. I knew I belonged there in the first five minutes. I am a compulsive overeater willing to go to any lengths to get what you have. After seeing a nutritionist I got a food plan and I started the OA HOW program.

It's been seven months now in the program. I have lost 30 pounds. My knees already feel the difference along with not having shortness of breath. My attitude has changed. I am upbeat and positive most of the time. I read out of the AA big book and also have started the Overeaters Anonymous brown book to read. I have stepped up to be a sponsor now and I share my recovery with others.



The 17 Year Relapse

I came to OA in 1975 at the age of 18 after I had wiped the frosting off of an entire cake that my sister had made for a friend. I was caught because there were no back up ingredients to replace it. I still didn't admit it and blamed it on my little sisters. I could not stop taking one finger full at a time until it was gone any more than I could stop the sun from rising and I didn't know why. It was shortly after that I came to my first OA meeting.

There was actually a time at our meeting when we wore colored name tags based on if we were abstinent or not that day. We also went by the "gray or orange sheet" for a daily plan of eating. I don't recall the difference any longer but I know that I didn't eat white flour or white sugar on my plan. However, I could eat the whole top of a pizza! At that time I don't recall actively working the steps. I think I just stayed long enough for some physical recovery and then began a cycle of in an out of the program for a number of years. I had the longest relapse when at 8.5 months pregnant and abstinent; my doctor was concerned that I hadn't gained weight during my pregnancy. I told her I was not eating white sugar or flour and she said that "frozen yogurt" would be okay. That's all it took and I didn't get long term abstinence for another 17 years. Apparently it wasn't okay.

I came back to OA-HOW in Burnsville 29 months ago weighing 350 pounds with a big old boot because my heel was falling apart and I was trying to avoid surgery. I'd already had one knee replacement, a bout with colorectal cancer which resulted in major body altering surgery, another knee replacement was imminent, I couldn't fit into booths or many chairs, it hurt to walk or stand for any length of time and yet I believed my life was manageable.

After all, I owned my own business and had been successful at it for years, I had a husband and kids that loved me and I believed I loved myself and life was good. I reflect back here on the story from the AA book called, Crossing the River of Denial when she had all the same things and she "had ice cubes in her drink, so therefore she wasn't an alcoholic because she wasn't on skid row drinking out of a paper bag." Even though she'd been arrested 5 times for alcohol related crimes, she was not an alcoholic. It wasn't until she was court ordered to attend AA meetings for 6 months that she came to believe she was an alcoholic.

I paid my bills on time, I was a good mom, my kids were doing well in school and my husband was faithful. I had become used to weighing over 300 pounds for thirty years, my life was manageable...or so I thought. I started traveling a lot for my job and I couldn't escape the uncomfortable process of boarding a plane, getting to my seat and the quick looks away from me as people saw me coming down the aisle, probably hoping they weren't doomed to sit by me. I'd get my seat belt extension out ahead of time, take off my jacket, get my book out so when I slid in I wouldn't have to disturb anyone again until the flight was over. Then I'd do my best to fit into the space allowed inevitably spilling over on to their space which mortified me each time until I finally faced that perhaps my life wasn't that manageable. Just because I hadn't lost everything, didn't mean my life was manageable.

The crap that went on in my head, the mental obsession of the disease was not even something I was aware of until I'd had a few months of abstinence. I look back on it now and wonder how I got anything accomplished with the voice of addiction screaming inside me all day and all night. I learned again when I came to program that I have a physical disease and a mental obsession that kept me going back for more food

when it had nothing to do with hunger. Now I understand why I couldn't stop with that frosting. As far as the spiritual part of my addiction went, I had long ago quit praying to my Higher Power for help in this arena, it never came. Instead of praying for God to take away my food obsession, I prayed for a nice person to be seated next to me on the plane. I had given up on God; I figured I didn't really deserve it with asking too many times already. I loved my profession though and was trying to get through this part to get to the fun part of my job and so I suffered through it.

When I came to OA again in 2009, every story was relatable whether it was three minute pitch or a story from the big book. Every reading took on new meaning. When I saw the sponsor line and all those people that were abstinent day after day for years, and many of them had lost over 100 pounds, I dared to hope for the first time in many years. I kept coming to meetings until I wanted to be there. It was at least eight weeks before I grabbed on to a day of abstinence. I have lost 161 pounds since then. I look significantly different these days. I get that this program is based on attraction, not promotion so am careful how and when I talk about it. I wait to be asked and am happy to talk about it but careful as to not cram it down anyone's throats and lightly talk about it as an invitation. Many tell me they are proud of me. I quickly respond each time that I am grateful that I am able to do this one day at a time. I am so thankful to all of you in this program who are doing this with me, sharing your experience, strength and hope. I appreciate the humor that comes from being able to laugh at ourselves in our common disease. Miracles are happening to me each day and although the weight loss is amazing, working the 12 steps is making a huge difference not only in my life, but in the lives of the people that I love. Let's keep going forward together just one day at a time.

Name Changes!!!!

On December 10th the Intergroup changed the names of two of our standing committees and gave them explicit objectives to reach out to those who suffer from compulsive eating. The purpose of this change is to clarify with whom the committees are connecting.

The former Intergroup 'Public Information Committee' is now the 'Professional Outreach Committee'. (POC) The POC informs professionals about OA's program of recovery so they may acquaint their patients and clients with OA and to develop creative and productive ways of effecting cooperation without affiliation.

The POC informs people in the health and human services community, clergy and educators and Represents OA through exhibits etc at local professional trade shows.

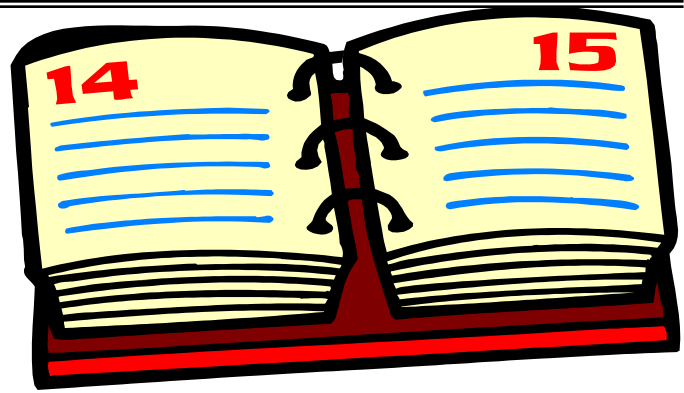
The former 'Outreach Committee' is now the 'Public Information Committee'. (PIC) The PIC informs the general public about OA in order to reach out to the still suffering compulsive eater.

The PIC informs the local community through the media; including local newspapers, radio and television; interprets anonymity guidelines to media representatives; informs those involved personally with practicing compulsive eaters, such as family and friends; represents OA at public events such as Gay Pride Festival, Women's Expo, fairs etc.. It also assists groups and members within the Fellowship to find ways to more effectively carry the message, gets the word out through public venues such as public libraries and public transportation and assists groups in planning open meetings.

Piqued your interest? Perhaps HP is calling you to serve on one of these committees. Contact Brenda at 651-408-5681.

February Society Pages

The February Society Pages will focus on Step 2, "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." and will be sponsored by the Chaska meeting. Although one meeting generally sponsors each newsletter, we welcome articles from anyone. Please indicate if it is okay to print your name with your article and email your contributions to Sherry M at smccrank@hotmail.com by Saturday January 14 . Thanks!.



Mark Your Calendar

Saturday January 7	Website Deadline
Saturday January 14	Unity Intergroup Meeting
Saturday January 21	Newcomer Meeting Society Pages deadline
Saturday February 11	Unity Intergroup Meeting
Saturday February 18	Newcomer Meeting Society Pages deadline
Saturday March 3	Website Deadline

More information available at www.overeaters.org

Conference Dial-in Number: (218) 339-4600

Participant Access Code: 468702#

Details of the telephone system and keypad options;

<http://www.overeaters.org/conferencing.html>

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