

Working the **Steps**

One Day at a Time

We admitted we were powerless over food..

Special Events

- September 11 – Sponsorship Workshop
- October 1-3 - HMI - GBAI Annual Fall Convention
- November 13 – Holiday Workshop

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As I was preparing my food one day, struggling to “get it right,” “figure it out,” and “control it,” I recognized that “control is not one of the promises.” I am, and always will be, powerless over my food, my thinking, and my life. All my attempts at control have brought me to the same place over and over again—loss of control. That’s what all my days of dieting had been about. I was OA’s equivalent to a dry drunk.

There is a power, whom I choose to call God, that can restore me to sanity, sobriety,



and abstinence. I cannot do that myself, any more than I can remove my character defects. Working the Twelve Steps is about learning to accept the gifts of willingness, surrender, sanity, serenity, and humility from my Higher Power. God is doing

for me what I cannot do for myself so that I can carry that message to those still suffering. I can’t keep my program unless I give it away; I can’t give it away unless I accept it.

Voices of Recovery

Jumping to Conclusions is Not an Aerobic Activity!!!!



6 Step Six

My name is Chris and I am a grateful recovering alcoholic, nicotine, cocaine, caffeine, pot, sugar addict, compulsive overeater and Al-Anon. I've been asked to share about step six by a precious aunt who nearly 14 years ago 12 stepped me and saved my life by getting me to Alcoholics Anonymous, on 7/12/90.

Step six for me is the jumping off place. The 12 and 12 says it separates the men from the boys, (women from the girls, whatever). When I did the steps the first time I remember getting to this step and feeling so relieved. The dreadful fifth step was over; the hard work was done. Little did I know it had just begun. For me this is a life long step that I must continue to work. If I don't keep free of my resentments and character defects, I will surely regress to that miserable state of body and mind and want to deaden those feelings with something unhealthy for my body.

Luckily when I first walked through those doors I was miserable enough to want what you had and willing to go to any lengths to get it. I got a sponsor and worked the first 5 step within the first 90 days. I was on a pink cloud. People loved the new me. Everyday I felt better physically and emotionally; I was beginning to have a higher power in my life. I wasn't

isolating and I was sharing and letting people know me. I did steps six and seven in one sitting with my sponsor. We wrote down all my character defects from my fourth step and got down on our knees and said the seventh step prayer. Then my sponsor said it was up to me to not use my character defects anymore and to continue to pray for willingness that they be removed. I still say the 3rd and 7th step daily.

In all my years of recovery I must admit that I am still not perfect. They tell me the only step I have to do perfectly is the first. I still must practice willingness not to use my character defects such as lust, gluttony, sloth, greed, envy, etc., and my biggies - self-righteous anger and gossip. My sponsor says another person may know my character defects better than me. There are some I can't even see. But for today all I have to do is pray and do the best I can. If I work these steps to the best of my ability I will get a daily reprieve from active alcoholism and substance abuse. My Higher Power has also released 80 pounds of excess weight from my body, relieved my co-dependency and allowed me to give up 2 packs of cigarettes a day, 2 liters of diet coke and 2 pots of coffee a day. Yes, I love to switch addictions, anything to NOT

FEEL!

Recently in a meditation I was given this visual picture of recovery. I was imagining myself scuba diving in Cozumel, Mexico. The water there has a very strong current. When you dive you don't even have to kick or swim. You can just fold your arms and let the water carry you past the most breathtaking coral and beautiful fish you will ever see. God painted a very beautiful world underwater. The movie "Finding Nemo" was very like the real thing. Anyway back to my point. Going with God in my life is like letting the current take me. Before program I was always trying to go against the flow. I was exhausted and near death from trying to swim my own direction. Since coming into AA, and later NA, Al-anon, and OA, I've learned to listen to God through others, that little voice in my head and my gut instinct and go with, rather than against, God's will, some of the time. Love to all, and God Bless. Chris C.

"Step six for me is the jumping off place"

"must practice willingness"

"go with, rather than against, God's will"



90 Days

I picked up my 90 day chip a few days ago, at the age of fifty-nine. Someone who attends many of the same meetings I attend remarked that I had “gotten abstinent right away.” She is a relapse survivor who has been around the program for awhile, and had celebrated one year of abstinence the week before. She had never seen me at meetings before I took my desire chip on 3/7/04, so was amazed that I had come right into OA and “gotten abstinent” immediately. Well, what she did not know was my previous history in the program. It took me almost 30 years to get that 90 day miracle chip.

“Keep coming back” is one of the most important things we say at the close of our meetings. One of my major character defects is pride. I was never humble enough to keep attending the meetings while active in my disease. After all, if I couldn’t do it perfectly then I couldn’t possibly hang around and let anyone know. I cannot afford to look back with regret, and I don’t advise anyone else to stay away from meetings like I did. I only hope I came back in time to repair/reverse some of the “wreckage of my past” and am able to set an example of recovery for others.

Another relapse survivor asked me what I was doing differently this time. There are numerous rea-

sons why my program is working. First, I took step one – I put down the food. I finally understood that the disease is progressive and fatal, and that I can never play games with it again. The sick love affair is finally over. I am addressing all three aspects of the program to the best of my ability (i.e., physical, mental and spiritual). I started a food plan immediately upon taking the desire chip. After two weeks of attending meetings, listening and observ-



ing people with recovery, my HP connected me with the gentle soul I needed for a food sponsor (as it turned out, she is also my step sponsor). Her response to me when I asked her to be my food sponsor was, “only if you are willing to also work the steps.” Words of wisdom? I said yes, not really knowing what I was agreeing to, but I was desperate and wanted what she had.

Another aspect of physical recovery for me is walking each morning. I started out with a slow, 20-minute daily walk with my dog. It is now a

brisker, 30-minute walk. Oh, I forgot to divulge one very important piece of information – my weight. I estimate that I was about 380 lbs. when I took my desire chip. Have you ever tried to walk a mile carrying that much weight on a 5’ 9” frame? It is not easy, but desperation will make you do the impossible, with a little help from HP. Up until I took the desire chip, I had not weighed on a scale for about five months (since my last doctor’s appointment). During that time I was on a fast track, eating my way through Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year’s, Groundhog Day, Lincoln’s Birthday, each full moon and the days in between. Anyway, my weight loss after 90 days has been approximately 60 lbs. I am a diabetic and eat a balanced food plan each day (weighed and measured) with snacks in between. My food plan is something I can live with for the rest of my life. No more restrictive diets for me. I have found something that works so I am sticking with it.

What else am I doing differently? I am using all of the tools our program has to offer. I attended six meetings a week at the beginning, and now I attend at least four. I email my meal plan to my food sponsor each morning and write a gratitude list. I call people in between meetings. I volunteer to

(Continued on page 4)

“gotten abstinent right away....”

“Keep coming back.....”

“only if you are willing to also work the steps....”

90 Days, cont.

(Continued from page 3)

lead meetings, and agree to lead when asked. I committed to one year as secretary for my home group. I read OA literature each morning and listen for the answers, instead of plowing ahead with my will each day. I am starting to write, write and write more. When I hear people whining



about how they can't seem to get it and are waiting for the miracle to occur, I am hearing the old me – the way I was for years – wanting things to change but not able to give up my drug of choice. I didn't know that I was so afraid, scared to feel and live in the world without sedating myself. I can see now why I wasn't "getting it" – I only attended one or two meetings a week, I did not have a sponsor, follow a food plan, work the steps, and I wasn't about to give up the food. I did lose weight off and on during the early years in the program, but that was not due to any "spiritual experience." I want that transformation now because I need it to keep my abstinence and regain my sanity. So, during the first 90 days I completed steps one through five with my sponsor. She believes in keeping me

busy. I call this participating in my recovery.

I recall the first years in OA, when I only weighed about 200 to 230 pounds. I would see people in the meetings who weighed over 300 pounds. I remember thinking how glad I was that I wasn't that

big. Well, 30 years later I managed to top that – nearing 400 pounds before I finally surrendered. I am living proof that this is a progressive disease. If you are a compulsive overeater like me, then your future could become like mine did. I was on a torture path, gaining weight weekly and getting crazier by the minute. I won't go into all of the physical difficulties, but I was starting to wonder how I would be able to work and support myself if I got any fatter. And, what if I had a stroke or heart attack and became disabled?

Being a diabetic, I could look forward to possibly becoming an amputee. Talk about insanity – I would ponder

these things while preparing and eating one of my favorite binge meals (i.e., lots of meat, gravy, bread and butter) because that's what made me feel better. I don't know if I feel better now because I can't really feel much yet. But, I am happier and am looking forward to the promises as written in the Big Book.

I acknowledge newcomers, hoping to make them feel welcome because I know what it is like to go into a meeting, afraid of everything, needing to ask for help and not knowing how. It takes courage to ask for help. During my first week back someone stopped me after a meeting as I was headed for the door (leaving as quickly as possible when the meeting ended!). She told me to keep coming back, made sure I had a phone list, told me her name and

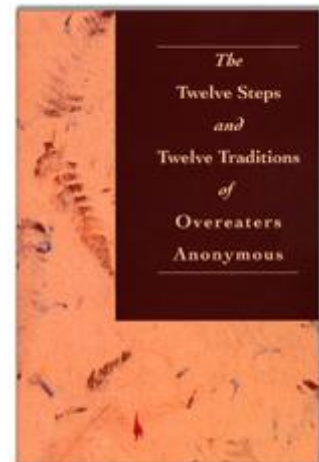
said to call her. So I did. She was out-of-town at an OA conference when I left my phone message, telling her I had been abstinent

for five consecutive days (I didn't have anyone else to tell this great news – at

(Continued on page 5)

"I read OA literature each morning."

"...participating in my recovery."



90 Days, cont.

(Continued from page 4)

least not anyone who would appreciate and understand it). She called me back long distance from her hotel, congratulating me on my great accomplishment. I was amazed. She seemed to genuinely care that I was



“reaching out”

“I have committed to my recovery for the rest of my life.”

“progress, not perfection”

abstinent. She didn't even know me. So, what is the point here? The point is she was willing to work her program, which included taking a few minutes to make sure that I, the newcomer, had a person to call once I left that meeting. This “reaching out” is what makes the program work for all of us. She set the example I want to follow. She extended herself to me and somehow I felt her sincerity. Not easy to do when I hadn't felt anything for years. Having had this experience made me realize how important it is to reach out to newcomers.

My disease and subsequent recovery is the big-

gest deal in my life. Nothing else matters. I am going through the motions, learning to trust and hoping to get some relief from these character defects that are becoming so painfully obvious. I have a lot of “religious” baggage but am determined not to let my negative concepts of a higher power get in the way of my recovery. I don't understand the mystery of addiction, or the mystery of recovery. All I know is that somehow the power of love from other compulsive

eaters is helping to transform me into the person I really am. Because I understand that this is a lifelong process, I have committed to my recovery for the rest of my life. OA is more like a family, not a diet club with a beginning and an end.

I have lived a lifetime of abusing myself with food, money, relationships, sex, etc. It is time to find another way to live in this world. I was so busy with my food addiction and all the behaviors that go with it that I didn't know how screwed up my life really was. Thank goodness I have found people who are willing to help me through this nightmare I have been calling my life.

I am so grateful for finding my way back into the program. A high price has been paid, mentally and physically, due to years of compulsive eating. However, my medical reports are all improving and I have hope. My willingness to work the steps and to use the tools of the program are the only insurance I have to keep my disease in check. I am seeing the patterns of my behavior, and the character defects from which they manifest. I want to be free of the past because I don't want it to continue dictating my actions.

I remind myself each morning that I have been damaged by the destructiveness of addiction. It has been a family affair for me. My life was shaped by my father's alcoholism, my mother's co-dependency, my ex-husband's alcoholism, my son's alcoholism and especially my own food addiction. I can no longer trust my thinking and actions so must be receptive to the guidance available to me through the tools of the program. Because compulsive over-eating distorts my reality, my continued abstinence is the most important thing in my life. I am learning to be human, not-super human, and satisfied with progress, not perfection.
Cathy K.

Step 8

This is the Step that we are working on this month at the 10:30 am meeting. After the Meditation, we are asked to write a good bye letter to the foods or food behaviors that cause us pain, and keep us from recovery. I want to follow up on what I also heard at an open AA meeting: it is not the food, it is the behavior: the old thinking that gets me in trouble. Dear compulsive, self-destructive person: I want to say good bye to Fear, Anger, Resentment and Denial. I want to become a Victor in my



giving up my old thinking, whatever that used to be before I made the decision to work the Steps in my life. I want to be able to speak to people about my feelings, when they act in a hurtful way, without making it a destructive confrontation. If they choose to see it as a confrontation, I want to be able to deny them the ability to upset me

life, never again to be a Victim. But this involves

or confuse me, to not hold resentments, and allow them to be. To convey to them that I am myself, and that in my world, they have the freedom to be themselves, without "winners or losers", cruelty and idiocy. I must give up my own anger and fear, when I first recognize it as such. And this will free me from acting out of anger and fear, and protect myself from those who do. Irma M.

“good bye to Fear, Anger, Resentment and Denial”

Workshops—Put These on Your Calendar



Sponsorship Revealed: A workshop Saturday, September 11, 2-4 p.m.

Hope for the Holidays: A special meeting to help prepare for the season Saturday, November 13, 2-4 p.m.

For more info contact : Greg M at 713-666-1306

Both workshops will be held at the Oasis Club, 5645 Hillcroft, Suite 102

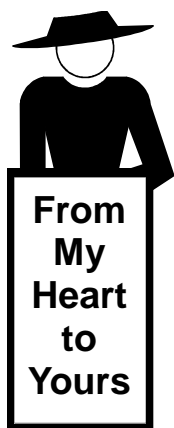
Telephone Meetings

Please be aware that OA World Service has Telephone Meetings. Call: 641-594-7500 during the following times:

Day	Time	After dialing, 641-594-7500: Use Below Code# to Access Meeting:
Sunday	7-8 pm Houston Time	#79822 ("OA 12/12 Step 1-3" Meeting)
Monday	7-8 pm Houston Time	#79822 ("Speaker/Sharing" Meeting)
Tuesday	7-8 pm Houston Time	#59002 ("Speaker, For Today" Meeting)
Thursday	7-8 pm Houston Time	#135103 ("Speaker/Sharing" Meeting)



This is a great way to have a meeting, even if you are sick, or for whatever reason can not get to a "face to face" meeting. All you pay for is the 1 hour long distance call.



Hi, my name is Melanie, and I'm a recovering compulsive overeater and relapse survivor. (Hi Melanie). I am also the new editor of the STEPS newsletter! I would like to take a few minutes to introduce myself to you.

I became a member of Overeaters Anonymous on New Year's Eve, 1985. I planned to get "skinny" and get the heck out of dodge! I would have assured you that I would be graduated long before 17 years had passed! Today, instead of whining, "I have to do this all my LIFE?" I am grateful that I have my WHOLE LIFE to do this deal!

I weighed in at 200 pounds, after a lifetime of diets—losing, gaining, losing, gaining—maintaining was not a word in my vocabulary! I was at a loss—dieting didn't work anymore, and instead of losing the weight I had gained during my second pregnancy, I was gaining.

Well, I could talk for hours about the whole process (and probably will as we go along—the name of this editorial should probably be:

More Than You Ever Wanted to Know About Melanie J.) But the short story is that although I fought it, and had extreme denial, something in me knew that OA was the last house on the block for me. Though I had a hard time thinking these people could teach me anything about God, I believed God had sent me here, so I worked the program wholeheartedly, got abstinent, and lost about 60 pounds. I was abstinent for about 7 years, maintaining the weight loss, as an active member of OA in Oklahoma City (and editor of the newsletter).

And then I got well. I thought, "maybe I'm not really PHYSICALLY addicted to sugar; maybe since I'm so spiritually and emotionally fit, I can handle some sugar!" So, I tried it, while actively working with a sponsor. And you know what? I DID it! I handled some sugar! Wow, that was great! I decided to handle a little bit more. That went well, so I tried a little more, and you're probably ahead of me. I handled it so well that I ended up in a gradual 3-year relapse, with a weight gain of about 30 pounds. DARN! Maybe I was really addicted to sugar after all!!!

Well, someone confronted me and suggested I choose a well-known "nazi" sponsor, and I was willing to do it! I asked her to sponsor me, and she said yes, and I immediately got abstinent again. It was great! I had several slogans I lived by: 1) don't eat no matter what, no matter

what, don't eat; 2) nothing can make me eat; 3) eating because of a situation or emotion makes as much sense as deciding to paint my fingernails because the sun has set. I lost the 30 pounds, plus ten more, and was actually slim, for the first time of my life! I LOVED it!

Well, during the next couple of years I went through a nasty divorce, married an alcoholic, and moved to a town with a very DIFFERENT OA structure. Their meetings weren't "convenient" (I was went from having a choice of two different meetings a day within 15-20 minutes of my home and work—to two meetings total in a week, though they were only 5-10 minutes away.) I complained about the meetings, and didn't connect with the people, and guess what happened? Another relapse! This one was really bad - 3 years and 70 pounds!!! I nearly gave up this time; wondering if I had already used up my quota of recovery. That I had thrown it away twice, and God wasn't going to give it to me again. I FORCED myself to go to meetings and say week after week, "I'm not abstinent, I'm not abstinent," wrenching my guts out to say it, but knowing it was my only hope....

Well, I'm out of room! This is going to have to be an ongoing story—stay tuned next newsletter, for part 2 of my story! (if you're depressed, notice my introduction for some hope, or call me or email me.) Melanie J.

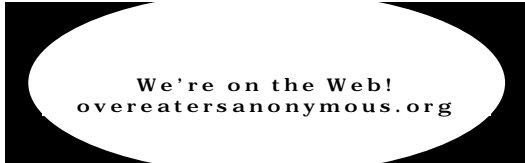
To be cont.....

**"I have to do this for the rest of my life????
Nah! I have my whole life to do this!!!"**

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Overeaters Anonymous

STEPS is an official publication of the Houston Metro Intergroup (HMI) of Overeaters Anonymous. STEPS actively solicits comments, suggestions, and contributions from all OA members. Manuscripts cannot be returned, and the editor reserves the right to edit for style, punctuation, etc., but not for content. Send your contributions to: Editor, at HMI address above or email the Editor at mjenkins@velaw.com (weekdays) or jandmj@awesomenet.net (weekends). Opinions expressed here are those of the writers. They do not represent OA's official policies. Take what you need and leave the rest. Feel free to use ideas for your own area newsletter (giving proper source credit).

Cravings

Sometimes when I don't eat at my prescribed meal time and I feel intense physical hunger, it seems as if my stomach and mind *decide for me* that it would be OK, just this once, to eat foods or food quantities not in of my plan of eating. I know this is a lie, but I consider doing it anyway. (Those thoughts are remnant of the days when I felt I had to eat when I was hungry, else, so my sick mind told me, I might die!

Sound funny? Many with compulsive eating know precisely that feeling). Today I have the tools of the program to help me make the decision to not take that first



compulsive bite. Today I choose to not revert to that addictive way of living. I choose to reach out and take healthy action, not destructive action, to help me through such tempting moments.

I know now it is up to me to make the little decisions, to do the next right thing, to stay abstinent.

Thank you H.P., thank you OA sisters and brothers, thank you sponsor, for always being there for me.

Anonymous, Houston, TX