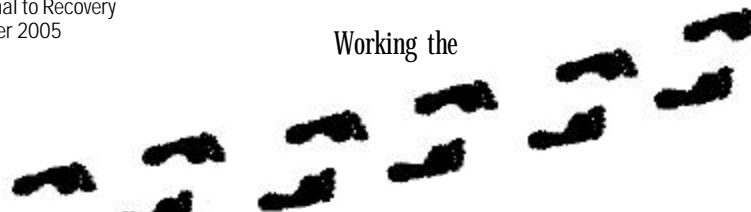


Working the

# Steps

One Day at a Time



## How Have You Evolved As A Person?"

### Special Events

- January 29—  
Newcomers Workshop (HMI)
- February 5—  
Newcomers Workshop  
(GBAI)
- February 26 –  
Sponsorship Workshop
- March 4-6—OA Region III  
Conference/Convention
- May 13-15—  
HMI Annual Spring Retreat

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My experience has been many-sided since joining OA almost eight years ago. There is not a single aspect of my life that is not positively affected by my work in Program.

### Physical:

I came into Program with the sole goal of losing weight for health reasons. Not because of doctors' recommendations; many physicians advised me to "lose some weight" over the years. I came to the realization that there are no old and fat people. I had seen (and still see today) my elderly relatives grow fat while growing old. I didn't want to suffer the physical complications and limitations I saw them suffer. Today, I have been blessed with the release of 40+ pounds while in OA. It is my belief today that I should lose 30 more pounds, but I know that outcome is not in my

hands. I can only do the footwork by practicing all the Tools of this Program.

### Emotional:

I heard a speaker years ago during a convention say that we stop maturing emotionally



when our disease starts. If true, that means I was emotionally 12 years old when I began my recovery. Two failed marriages and many other unsuccessful relationships show me the evidence of that truth. Now, I am in a healthy, emotionally satisfying relationship, nurtured by the work I do in Program. The Promises are starting to come true for me - what a gift!

### Spiritual:

This is the biggest miracle of the Program for me. I had no spiritual life before coming to OA. I was a "devout agnostic," too cowardly to be a full-fledged atheist. After working the Steps with my sponsor, I experienced an event that was later described to me by my sponsor as a "spiritual experience." I laughed when he told me that and said, "I don't have 'spiritual experiences'". He replied, "Well, you just had one, so deal with it!" I know now it was a spiritual experience, the first of a precious few that I've been blessed to have.

I've learned that by working the Steps and using the Tools, OA can help you evolve into a person not focused on the next meal, but into one aware, in the moment, and dealing with life today on life's terms.

Greg M, Houston, TX

## USING THE \*\*RIGHT TOOLS\*\*



When someone tries to build a house, they need tools. They need hammers, saws, paintbrushes, and many other tools. The houses

don't build themselves. No matter how skilled a carpenter may be, they need these tools. The carpenter and the tools are both indispensable for the job.

For those of us in OA who want to lose weight, or even just to control certain unhealthy eating patterns, we need both the "carpenter" (ourselves) and the "tools". Most of us have tried many tools, before and since coming to OA. Let's review some of these:

a) FAD DIETS - A food plan which emphasizes certain food groups or types, and excludes others. Some of these are healthy, and some are not. This is kind of like building the entire house just using a saw. Not really easy, and who can keep that up on an everyday basis?



b) DIET PILLS - Taking medication to control your appetite. I have tried many types of these pills, and

all they seem to do is to make me broke! This is like putting up a frame which will build a big house, but then building with pieces which are too small. You will never be able to make the pieces fit your planned house.

c) WILLPOWER - Trying to control your food choices with your own power. This would be building the house by wishing it into existence. That WOULD be nice, wouldn't it?

d) HYPNOSIS - Another way that people try to control their appetites. I have heard some say that it works for them, but to me this would be like telling the house to build itself. Nice try, carpenter, but I don't think it brings much in the way of results.

e) GASTRIC BYPASS - Some people have surgery to control the size of their stomachs. This is effective, but only when the participants realize that the surgery doesn't ever cut out the addiction. To get the surgery and think you have a permanent solution to your problem is like showing up at the construction site with a brand new tool belt, and thinking the tool belt is

going to do the work for you.

f) EXERCISE - It does help your body use up calories, but by itself it cannot help control your weight. Many find this method to be ineffective, as we seldom can exercise enough to erase our poor food choices. Using only exercise would be like swinging the hammer and wielding the saw with all your might, but finding our construction materials just won't change when the tools impact them.

g) PSYCHOTHERAPY - This is somewhat like hypnotism, because someone is trying to help you get your mind to control your food intake. This can help us with some of the problems which lead us to choose food as a substance, but therapy

alone won't cure your addiction. This is like building that house in your mind, and just leaving it there

as a dream. The dream may get us through some very tough times, but it falls short of a total solution.



(Continued on page 3)

## USING THE **\*\*RIGHT TOOLS\*\***, cont.

*(Continued from page 2)*

None of these tools are completely bad for you. But none are going to be your complete solution. The solution to the problem inside of you is to seek help from Outside of you. You need a Power greater than yourself; something that uses the right "tool" and begins to radically change the "carpenter." As a wise sponsor once told me, it isn't easy, but it is simple.

Overeaters Anonymous offers a different set of tools. Here they are (from [http://www.aa.org/tools\\_of\\_recovery.html](http://www.aa.org/tools_of_recovery.html))

a) **A PLAN OF EATING** - As individual as each member, it is a plan which you make with your sponsor, and which becomes the basis of your abstinence from compulsive overeating. This makes sure that you have the right tools in your belt. It will be up to you to use them in the way that you agree to.



b) **SPONSORSHIP** - Everyone needs advice and support from someone else who has "been there." Sponsors offer their listening ears, and help you become accountable for your food choices. They guide you through the steps. Like a

master craftsman mentoring an apprentice, they are your guide and companion on the Road to Recovery.

c) **MEETINGS** - We gather to listen; to share; to do service. We gather both to learn and to teach. "Together we can do what we could not do alone" This is like a carpenter joining a guild; they band together for the common good. So do we! Keep coming back!

d) **TELEPHONE** - Our "meetings between meetings". We reach out to give support, ask questions, and just greet and be there for each other. This is like craftsmen who so-

cialize on the worksite; sharing the task in a camaraderie which speeds and eases the job for all.

e) **WRITING** - While we work the steps, and/or grow from the changes which come during recovery, writing is a valuable tool to help us express our inner journey. In a similar way, carpenters often record statistics and details of their



progress; it helps them see how each challenge was met, and serves as a resource for future jobs, and/or for other craftsmen.

f) **LITERATURE** - OA members find inspiration, support and instruction in the Big Book of AA, and in OA literature. These resources are a valuable tool for our Program. As a resource, carpenters need blueprints, and often refer to their own manuals when facing a construction problem.



g) **ANONYMITY** - One of the founding principles of OA. It ensures us that what we share stays private, and that we respect each member's right to keep their personal business to themselves. Although craftsmen at a building site do not insist on anonymity, they often work side by side with workers that they don't know well; and only



*(Continued on page 4)*

## USING THE **\*\*RIGHT TOOLS\*\***, cont.

**You need a Power greater than yourself; something that uses the right “tool” and begins to radically change the “carpenter.”**

*(Continued from page 3)*  
 need to know each other’s construction skill set, rather than the more personal details of their family lives.

h) SERVICE - I once heard this defined as “anything we can do to help the meeting run smoothly.” To me, service is reaching out a hand to another OAr. No matter who we are, we have a skill that can be offered for service.

When a building is being constructed, there are many tasks to do, and people of all skills and personalities can all be a valued part of the

team. Each one is needed; each is valuable.

Each of us has a road to travel; a plan to follow; a “building” to “construct.”

**Will we choose the right tools?**

~ Donna, from SERENDIPITY – A Twelve Step Newsletter For All - Volume Seven – Issue 1 - January 2005



## Happening Events

**HMI  
 Newcomers  
 Workshop**

**Saturday**  
 January 29, 2005  
 2:00 P.M.—4:00 P.M.  
 Oasis Club  
 5645 Hillcroft,  
 Suite 102  
 Houston, TX

**GBAI  
 Newcomers  
 Workshop**

**Saturday**  
 February 5, 2005  
 2:00—4:00 P.M.  
 House of Prayer  
 Lutheran Church  
 Clear Lake

**HMI  
 Sponsorship  
 Workshop**

**Saturday**  
 February 26, 2005  
 2:00—4:00 P.M.  
 Oasis Club

(\$5.00 donation requested to offset literature costs and to support the Oasis Club – there is no cost to attend)

**713-973-6633**

**HMI  
 Annual Spring  
 Retreat**

May 13-15, 2005  
 Camp Allen  
*Details to Follow*

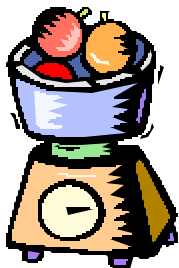
**OA Region III  
 Conference/  
 Convention**

March 4-6, 2005  
 Tulsa, Oklahoma  
*Details to Follow*



## No Matter What

My name is Grainne and I am a compulsive eater. I am abstinent today because I weigh and measure three meals a day from the Cambridge GreySheet, turn them over to my sponsor or another qualified GreySheet sponsor, don't eat no matter what, and make abstinence the most important thing in my life today. I am grateful not to have had to eat compulsively since September 14, 1994, thanks to GreySheet - and the rooms of OA.



The call for newsletter submissions came as I was packing my CDC-recommended traveler's medical kit for my trip in two days to India. I thought it would be fun

to share how I prepare for this two-week trip - and every trip since I got abstinent on GreySheet in 1994. First, I spent the last week weighing and measuring and packing up two weeks worth of abstinent food - then I turned my attention to vaccinations and medical supplies! That's what has kept me abstinent No Matter What these last ten years. Bagged up in non-breakable baggies and bottles on the shelf in my kitchen for the last week have been all the abstinent protein, cooked vegetable, salad-substitute, fruit, and fat that my GreySheet abstinence requires. Yes, it's possible to find abstinent food in India but it's a major risk to my abstinence and interferes with my main reason for traveling there in the first place. It's hard for me to be of maximum

usefulness to my fellow humans when I am worried about getting abstinent food in the right amounts at the right times. So I choose not to do that. Instead I calculate exactly how many servings of each of my abstinent foods I will need and pre-weigh and measure them so I don't even have to take the time while in strange hotel rooms and traveling the trains and planes of India to weigh out my food. Now I can go in a relaxed frame of mind and deal only with the purpose of my trip - after getting my shots and packing my pepto bismol, which I am off to do right now.

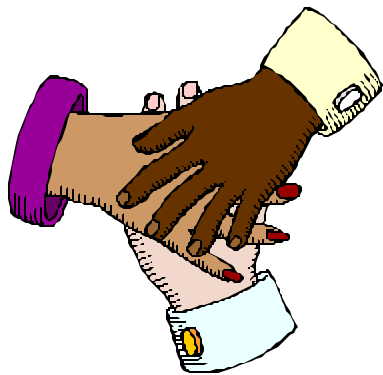
Maybe I will have a chance to submit a report on my abstinent travels in India when I get back on January 22nd.

Grainne M.

**Don't eat no matter what, no matter what, don't eat. (compulsively, that is!!!)**

## Intergroups' Unity

What I love about OA in the city I just moved to is the way the area OA intergroups work to achieve unity. My previous city had the same number of intergroups, but not the same unity. Most of the groups in my new area stress unity first and differences second. Groups will briefly mention one another's concept being different, but not in a condescending way. One group shies away



from using specific food plans.

One group accepts all food plans but favors a

written plan of eating received from sponsors.

One group favors a 90-day concept that strictly follows the OA tools. Sponsors typically give food plans verbally.

I can go to any group meeting and receive good OA regardless of concept. What a testimony for unity!

— C.M., Phoenix, Arizona USA, *Lifeline*, September 2004

## God Help Me.....

I am a grateful, recovering, compulsive overeater AND grateful to be ALIVE. The other night I was fixing my food for breakfast and lunch the next day and I had already eaten dinner so I didn't have any food left on my plan for the day. I had put some dressing on my salad and there was dressing left in the lid so I just compulsively slurped it up with my tongue. As I held it in my mouth, I thought, "Anita, you have already had your weighed and measured meal and THIS is NOT part of it." I said, "God help me." and He did. I walked over to the sink and spit it out. I am amazed at the depth of willingness I have today. Any time ANY thought enters my head, no matter what it is about, food, school, money, sex, vacation, my kids, WHATEVER, I say "God help me." Yesterday morning on the way to school I stopped at Starbucks to get a coffee and on the way in, I tripped on the curb and fell, full frontal, face down on the concrete. As I lay there just collecting myself to see if anything was seriously

**Any time ANY thought enters my head, no matter what it is... I say "God help me."**

hurt, while rolling parts of my tooth around with my tongue, I immediately said, "God help me." A man asked me if I was all right and I was, except for my missing front tooth. I got up, looked in my mirror in my car and decided that the snaggle-tooth, redneck Mama look was not really for me so I called in sick that day. The miracles that followed that day are so incredible. I went home and had not eaten my breakfast yet because I was going to eat it when I got to work with my coffee. I was afraid to put ANYTHING in my mouth but I am diabetic and I had already taken my meds and my blood sugar was dropping. I was already going into the shakes, eating is RAVENOUS. You have to get your blood sugar stabilized RIGHT NOW. I got my fruit out and my cottage cheese and ate it very gingerly but ravenously. I knew I could not have any-



thing more, and I was about to pass out. I just sat in the chair with my head back and eyes closed and said, "God help me". I have NEVER

been able to NOT compulsively eat once I get the shakes. This time, with God's help, I just sat there and rode it out. Then I called the dentist and was able to get in at 8:30 that morning. I was in the chair for 4 hours while he x-rayed and we discussed what to do about my tooth. When I left, I had a temp cap and the incident had affected 6 teeth. The bill I got was for \$2978, of which my part was \$1496. I just said, "God help me." This morning I just got a call from the insurance lady and it is covered by my medical insurance rather than my dental insurance which is what I had to pay \$1496 of. On my medical insurance, it is covered 100%. WOOHOOO!!!!!! Is God good or WHAT? Man, I am sooo thankful.

Anita

## Mary's Prayer

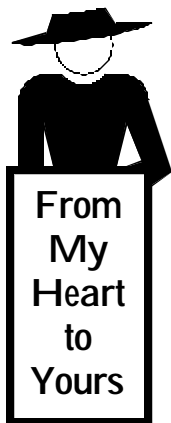


I'd like to share with you a prayer I encountered in my meditation book. This was a grandmother's gift to her exceptional child-grandson: My wish is for all those work-

ing the path of a 12 Step Program, to see themselves in God's eyes, the way our Higher Power sees us, whatever we call or wish our Higher Power to be. In OA Peace, Irma

### Mary's Prayer

I am the place that God shines through.  
He and I are one, not two.  
He needs me where and as I am,  
I need not doubt, not fear, nor plan.  
If I but be relaxed and free,  
He'll work his plan of love through me.



Wow, New Year's Eve was my anniversary—I've been a member of Overeaters Anonymous for 18 years! I never would have

dreamed I would/could be a part of ANYTHING for that long! When I first got here, all I wanted to do was get "skinny" and get out of here. But, I've changed my mind—I'm here for the long haul. OA is the last house on the block for me, and though I've done this program in all the ways there are to do it—enthusiastically, barely, abstinent, non-abstinent, overweight, thin, happily, in frustration—the only thing I can say I've done consistently is to "keep coming back." I'm so glad that the only requirement for membership is the desire to abstain from compulsive overeating, and I'm so glad we don't ask that question at the door, because there have been times I've clung by my toenails – thankfully, God has continued to hang on to me during those times. God and the fellowship. You know, I really wanted to do this myself, just me and God. Or me and God and my church. I really would have liked that—without all this STUFF—like meetings, literature, phone calls, STEPS, - just pray, and have God zap me thin. He could do that, but he has never seen fit

to do so, and I think I know why. If he gave me an instant, miraculous recovery (which is well within his powers), I would be in recovery. Me, just me. Period. That's as far as it would go. I believe he sent me to OA, and has kept me here, because of the way 12-step programs work. For me to get recovery, I have to ask someone to help me. That enables that person to stay in recovery, and builds a support system that helps both of us. THEN, in order for ME to stay in recovery, I have to help someone else, and the growth is multiplicative, not merely additive. Many, many people can be encouraged in recovery from just one person working the program by asking for help and giving help. SOOOOO, though at times I'd still like to do this the "easier, softer, way," I'm here for the long haul. I hope you are too.

One thing I've noticed lately is we have so many different ways of working this program, so many different food plans, philosophies, etc., and they all work in some form or fashion, as long as we stick to the tried and true principles of working the 12 Steps and Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous as adapted for Overeaters, surrendering to a Higher Power, and using the tools of the program. It seems to me that although I believe God and the Steps provide me the recovery I so long for, the tools are what keep me motivated to WANT that recovery! I have this amazing ability to be in denial and compartment-

alize my life—over here I'm really working on a relationship with God, and taking care of myself with quiet time, vitamins, exercising, calling my sponsor, etc., and at the same time I can be bingeing and telling myself the two don't counteract each other! I think it's what they call "insanity!" It reminds me that "rigorous honesty" is what is necessary for recovery. I HAVE to get honest about my body and what is good and bad for my body. Someone uses this food plan, someone else uses none. I have to do what is right for MY body—how do I figure that out? I ask God to show me; I talk to my sponsor; perhaps, I even talk with a nutritionist or doctor. And I do some trial and error. If I can be totally honest, I will come up with a plan of eating that is just right for me, even if it is not like anyone else's. The freedom of this program is I don't have to do it just like someone else. I listen to other people, perhaps I try their ideas, and then I take what I like and leave the rest. But I have to be HONEST, first, and last, and in between. And, boy, is that HARD! But what rewards come from it—how wonderful to be at peace within ourselves, to know that we are walking what we're talking, that we ARE what we LOOK like, that we are taking care of ourselves truly, in every way possible. (Progress, not perfection, of course.) Well, my friends, here's to honesty and abstinence and God and OA!!!

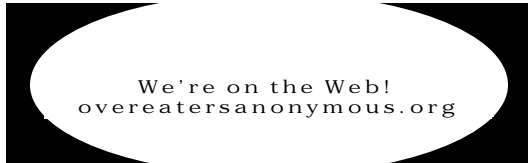
Melanie

**God...**  
**Fellowship...**  
**Steps...**  
**Tools...**  
**Keep coming back.....**  
**Rigorous honesty.....**  
**Progress, not perfection..**  
**Abstinence!!!!!!**

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Overeaters Anonymous

## Accomplishment

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).

The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous. He has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves. *Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous*  
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The one thing that I am absolutely certain of today is that our Creator, God, lives in my heart and works miracles in my life daily. The biggest miracle, I believe, is having an awareness of Him, and knowing that He is in control of all that happens in my life. His power is infinite. If I were not aware of

God, then I don't believe I could work this program. It is the realization that God can accomplish anything that is helping me to work daily toward achieving my goal of continued abstinence and a changed attitude regarding food.

I cannot change what's in my heart, but God can. I cannot, of myself, break lifelong habits, but God can motivate me to change. I cannot forgive myself all the pain I've inflicted on myself and others while suffering from this disease,



but God can soften my heart, and help me to forgive by letting me know that He forgives me. There is nothing that I can't accomplish when I take God's hand and let Him lead me

\*\*\*\*\*  
ONE DAY AT A TIME ...  
I will let God guide me into an ever-deepening relationship with Him so that I may accomplish the great feat of arresting my compulsion to overeat. Recovery Meditations ~ Accomplishment ~ One Day at a Time ~ December 15, 2004