

Working the **Steps**
One Day at a Time

So Long, Fair-Weather Friend

Special Events

- October 6-8 Region 3 Fall 2006 Convention
- November 18, 2006 Hope for the Holidays Workshop
- HMI Spring Retreat April 27 – 29, 2007 Camp Allen

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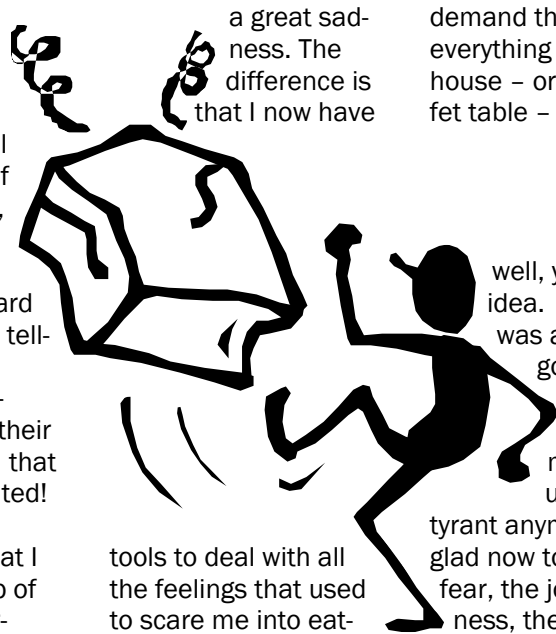
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Coming to an OA meeting for the first time 2 years ago was a terrifying experience for me. This was my last resort. I'd tried diets and meds and self-help techniques, psychologists and white knuckles, all to no avail. What if this, my last hope, failed? But I went anyway. I sat in that room and heard all sorts of people telling my story. They even used expressions to describe their troubles with food that I'd thought I invented! I cried all the way home, realizing that I had found a group of people that understood me. I might be crazy, but I was no longer alone. What a relief. I could relate to someone....finally. And some of them seemed to not only be surviving, but thriving.

I am so glad I felt that fear and went to the meeting anyway. I

am now on a new path. I feel lots of things now that I used to avoid – not just fear. I feel more joy now, and sometimes a great sadness. The difference is that I now have

replaced my old friend, junk food. I truly feel healing from the nutrients my new friend provides. My new friend does not demand that I eat everything in the house – or on the buffet table – or in the,



well, you get the idea. At first I was afraid to let go of my old friend, but I don't miss that unhealthy tyrant anymore. I'm so glad now to feel the fear, the joy, the sadness, the myriad of feelings that I'd suppressed.

Shirley P.

tools to deal with all the feelings that used to scare me into eating. I call my sponsor, I write in my journal, I email friends in the fellowship, I go out and exercise instead of laying on the couch feeling low, and I keep eating the foods on my food plan. I am grateful for the healthy food that has

Riding Your OA Bicycle

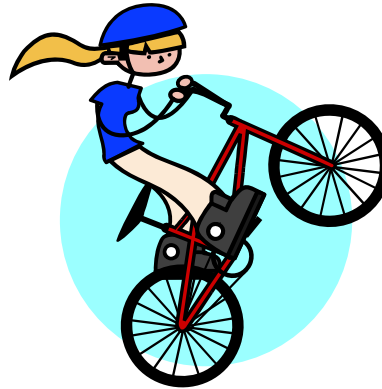
Everyone remembers learning to ride a bicycle when they were young. It was a scary proposition, and we wondered how to master this cool activity that all the older kids were doing. It was completely foreign to us and our instructions were limited (usually a parent giving us a stout push), and then we found that as long as we pedaled we would not topple over.

“This is great fun nothing to it.” we thought. Then there was the complete and utter fear of realizing that we did not know about stopping; remembering to put our feet down was essential but a difficult skill to learn, nonetheless. I always tried to stop near grassy areas or shrubs. I appreciated any cushion I could come by.

During this process we fell from our bikes repeatedly, and we skinned knees, elbows, even broke bones. But we got back on. Kept getting back on, didn't we? We even bragged about our scabs. They were our badges of courage and accomplishment. My favorite quote when I had a terrible wreck when people were watching was, “I meant to do that.”

Then we got better. We learned tricks, even. There were wheelies, jumping mud holes etc. Even after we got good we still occasionally

crashed and, again, we bruised and broke things. More often than not we were more concerned about the bike than ourselves. We never blamed the bike though. Still we kept picking ourselves and the bike up and getting back on. It was important not to give up.



We did all of these marvelous things virtually without any formal or written instructions and usually without much more than a little moral support from a parent. We also endured the ridicule of more accomplished riders who seem to have never had any problems riding a bike.

What does riding a bike have to do with OA, you ask?

It was completely foreign to any thing we have ever done. It is a scary proposition that often starts with a stout push from a loved one or from ourselves.

We fall off our OA bikes and we bruise our egos and we skin our

self-esteem, and, hopefully, we get back on no matter how bad it hurts. We suffer from being ridiculed by those who do not understand our struggles of the life-saving need to ride our OA Bikes. It all looks so easy to them.

One of the principle differences between our childhood bike and your OA bike is that your OA bike comes with instructions. There are the newcomer's packet, the AA Big Book, and The OA Twelve and Twelve, just to name a few. Let's not forget the telephone list and last, but likely more importantly, OA meetings.

These instructions assist us in making fewer spectacular crashes, and they will help you get back on the OA bike right away.

The OA bike helps us navigate through life's sometimes tough terrain without hurting ourselves. But you have to read the instructions. When you go off course on your OA Bike, are you getting right back on the bike or do you leave it in the garage to gather dust for too long before you try again? I have been known to conceal my OA bike mishaps, and this keeps me from getting back on the bike as soon as possible. This has hindered my progress in working the

(Continued on page 3)

“The OA bike helps us navigate through life's sometimes tough terrain without hurting ourselves. But you have to read the instructions.”

The Only Must

It has been said that “there are no musts in the 12-Step Programs of Recovery.” But, if one doesn't change their playgrounds and playmates their chances for success are a lot slimmer. Now, that is a real must!

Early on in my 12-step program of recovery, I was somewhat determined to keep all of my co-working and drinking buddies. I thought I could continue to go out with them and just hang out with them with no problems at all. To my surprise, that ended up to be only a half-truth, and it wasn't very long before I had to cut them

loose. A lot of the times when we make a decision to do things differently in our lives. . . , we almost insist on our friends and associates doing the same. Well, that's where this program comes into play



'big time', because it has it's own way of fulfilling all your needs: physically, emotionally, and spiritually, (and not necessarily in that order).

And, that's when we are shown how to break

away from friends who are not 100% supportive of what we want and need to do for ourselves. At this time, we will come to realize the fact that our friends and we are not necessarily going to be on the same page at the same time. And, that's when we need to know that it is a must that we do specific things for ourselves whenever the notion hits us. Notion: an old folks term meaning [a quickened thought]. Now if that's selfish. . . so be it! And, that in itself should be the 'cue' that tells us to team up with other people who are trying to do the same identical sort of things that we desire to do for ourselves and get on the good foot of successful recovery.

RJE, Houston, Texas

“new playgrounds and new playmates”

Riding Your OA Bicycle, cont.

(Continued from page 2)
program. As strange as my analogy may seem to you, after I shared it with the meeting I realized that we all crash at some time or another but how we handle that crash determines how it affects us in the long term. What I found was ignoring a crash or failing to share a crash with the group or a sponsor leaves me vulnerable to another crash or vulnerable to leaving the pro-

gram. It was my reality check with how honest I am being with myself and the group.

I hope this share has helped someone. I plan to keep riding my OA bike, getting more proficient with having fewer crashes, and promptly reporting my crashes when they do happen.

Greg, Houston



Willingness Leads To Abstinence

I must be willing to go to any lengths to be abstinent from compulsive eating. What does this willingness look like? There are tools and steps to help me on the path of recovery if I am willing to use them.

I must surrender my food obsession to my Higher Power (God) on a daily, hourly or even sometimes minute-by-minute basis. This includes using the steps and the tools on a daily basis.

At the first meeting I attended, I felt hope for the first time. I saw and heard people at the meeting who were working the program and in recovery. They were laughing and confident and were experiencing an inner joy I could only dream I would someday have. Part of willingness began that day many years ago with attending meetings on a regular basis. When I am at a meeting I experience hope, unconditional love and a connection with others that truly gets me out of my tendency to isolate (even when in a crowd).

Miraculously, what I hear and see at the OA meeting changes the perception I came in with.

I also wanted a sponsor to guide me through working the steps right away. I was truly desperate and had tried many other ways to lose weight. I found someone who had what I wanted and asked her to be my sponsor. She helped me work the first 5 steps before she moved away. I then was willing to look for a new sponsor. God brought me the perfect teacher and sponsor once again. She taught me how to focus on my pro-

gress not my imperfection. In other words, she taught me how to stay in the solution not the problem. I worked through steps 6-12 with her for the first time. As I worked the steps, gradually the desire to eat unhealthy foods diminished and the desire to eat healthy foods increased. She challenged me to establish a support group of 4 or 5 other compulsive overeaters in recovery to talk to when she wasn't available. I have done this in each new place I move to.

Between meetings I make phone calls. Phone calls get me out of my mental obsession, poor me syndrome, food thoughts, negativity, etc. Just reaching out by phone is another form of surrender.



There have been times I have gone down the list of numbers and called several until I found someone available to listen. This included talking to someone I did not know. I also enjoy receiving phone calls and I always leave a message.

Reading OA literature daily is very important to me. In the early days of my recovery, I took the For Today Book and pamphlet "Before you take that first compulsive bite" with me to family gatherings and celebrations and found a place to read it (even if the bathroom was the only place I could be alone). I also had phone numbers of people to call for strength.

I have a plan of eating that has developed as a result of working the steps, prayer for guidance, and suggestions from those experiencing recovery. A part of this plan is not just what I plan to eat that day, but when, where, and with whom. One of the most difficult challenges for me has been vacations and changes in my schedule. I have written down my food and called and committed to a specific food plan during those times. I do not feel deprived, because I choose to eat healthy foods. I do plan to eat foods I enjoy and I don't agonize over it at length (to me this is more mental obsession). I also do not beat myself up over imperfect abstinence. For me abstinence begins again the next moment, not the next Monday.

Prayer and writing are powerful tools I use daily. At times, I write my prayers in my journal. I also take notes in my journal at meetings to help me remember the ideas that I found personally helpful. Writing or typing my step work is a very cleansing, wonderful adventure into spiritual, emotional, and physical healthiness.

Using all of these tools to help others is another very important facet of recovery for me. Service includes speaking, sponsoring, calling, greeting newcomers, writing and emailing others, praying with and for others, attending meetings, volunteering to help with major projects such as retreats, etc.

My life today is truly better than I could have ever imagined.

Judy Russell

"I must be willing to go to any lengths to be abstinent from compulsive eating"

Easy Does It

It was in the latter half of the 1980's when I lost my original abstinence. I really had it all together. My compulsion to overeat had been lifted right out of me, and I didn't quite know how to act.

During those times life was simply wonderful. I automatically got up, ate an abstinent breakfast, went to a meeting, and had lunch with some of my OA friends. Oftentimes, I ate dinner with a group of members from either OA or AA in the evenings. It took a great deal of time for me to realize that the everydayness of leading that sort of life was not what could be called normal. I had a spouse and three children.

When I came upon that realization, that's when I recognized the fact that I didn't even know how to bring my program of recovery into the walls of my own home. And that was when all hell broke loose. The first thing that suffered was my

abstinence. Trying to eat with my family was very difficult. I didn't know how to do that. So I just got angrier, and angrier, and pouted my way back on a lot of the weight I'd lost.

Upon entering Overeaters Anonymous on December 30th of 1980, I got off to a real good start. I immediately grasped the program with all the fierceness of a drowning woman, and I did extremely well for a long time. Originally I lost 82 pounds. I came from a size 22 or one size fit all (or, one size fits most) down to a size perfect size 12, and even some 10's. I just didn't know what to do with myself. I could actually go into any department store and just go to the rack of 12's and select whatever I desired.

Today I have come to know and understand that this program of recovery is meant to be worked within an individual and then be brought into one's family. That is

if you plan to stay within said family. I surely understand what the 'pink cloud' of the program consists of today, because when one once reaches that particular 'high' within the program: One never wants to come back down to earth and live and act as one once lived.

As of this date I plan to become a responsible enough adult, to leave my relapse period, and I'm looking forward to taking little baby steps within these my twelve-step programs, and really practicing the age-old saying of AA which is: Easy Does It!

RJE, Houston, Texas



“taking little baby steps within these my twelve-step programs, and really practicing the age-old saying of AA which is: Easy Does It! ”

There are only two times to go to a meeting—when you want to and when you don't!!!

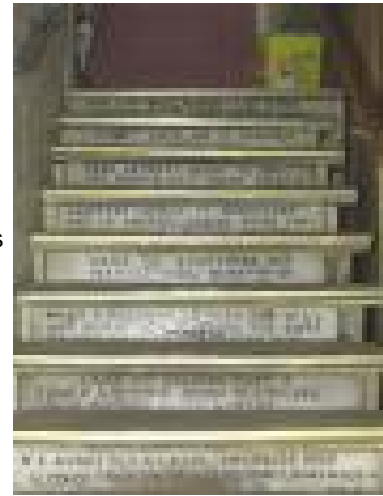
**Margaret Mitchell wrote the first chapter of Gone With The Wind 71 times.
KEEP COMING BACK!**

I Am Willing To Do What Needs To Be Done To Be Abstinent

In one of my daily spiritual readings, I found this quote: "...only becoming conscious of old and unchosen patterns allows us to change them, and even so, change, no matter how much for the better, still feels cold and lonely at first - as if we were out there on the edge of the universe with the wind whistling past our ears - because it doesn't feel like home. Old patterns, no matter how negative and painful they may be, have an incredible magnetic power, because they do feel like home."

I refuse to live in the home given to me by the

unchosen abuse of my mother's relatives. I will work as hard as I honestly can on the spiritual tools of the 12 Steps, using the 8 tools of recovery of this Program, to dig out and eradicate those old, unchosen patterns. I will ask for courage and strength through the fellowship of the Program, that I may become the best of myself, that I may become my



best friend, and help myself to live a joyous, useful, productive and serviceable life, prosperous

and abundant. The life that was meant for me, and that I lost to my compulsive overeating for so long. Not anymore. Not now, not ever, one day at a time!

Regards, Irma M.

"I will ask for courage and strength through the fellowship of the Program, that I may become the best of myself"

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I went to an AA meeting the other day and they were reading from the *Grapevine*, the monthly maga-

zine of Alcoholics Anonymous. The story talked about two kinds of Insanity. The first was Insanity A, which was the kind of insanity we had before program—the obsession, the craving, the compulsion, and the slavery to do what we so strongly did NOT want to do. This insanity can be described as doing the same thing and expecting different results. There is also what they called Insanity B, and this was to find out what works and then not to do it! Unfortunately I have had periods of both kinds of insanity! Insanity B can result in Insanity A!

What works? Going to meetings, talking to my sponsor, praying, studying my OA and other spiritual literature, making phone calls, doing service, working the Twelve Steps, and being committed to not taking the first compulsive bite. Interestingly enough, if I start letting down part of the discipline of using the tools to help me work the steps, I start

dropping the ball in the other areas, also. In the *Grapevine* article, when people wanted to know what to do to get sober, they were told to not drink, go to meetings, and be grateful, showing it by prayer. I'm wondering how often I hear go to meetings, be grateful and don't eat. I wonder how often I share that with other people.

I love going to AA meetings and I highly recommend them—alcoholics have a commitment to their sobriety that we often lack. They know their disease is life-threatening—they have experienced the devastation that alcoholism causes. I think sometimes that because overeating is more sly and subtle, we often minimize it's destructiveness. I know I do. I know it's very easy for me to think that overeating isn't a big deal, that I can eat this little bit and it won't affect me that much. After all, they don't give DUE's!!! (Driving While Eating). You don't go to jail for eating and driving. Though perhaps we should. I have heard people tell of wrecks they had had while they were searching for that last bite of candy bar that fell into the floorboard. How many people die of this disease but their death certificate says something else—heart attack, diabetes, suicide, the list goes on and on and so many of these deaths stem from overeating.

But unless you're anorexic or bulimic, the death usually comes slowly and it's easy to be in denial that it's progressive and fatal.

So, what do we do? Well, I really enjoy being sane. I really do! I hate the feeling of being insane, whether it's Insanity A or Insanity B. Actually, when I first came to this program, I didn't think I WAS insane! I heard you all talking about being insane, and I thought, "well, yeah, I can see that y'all are insane, but me, I'm just fat. That's my only problem." But then they told me the definition of Insanity A—doing the same thing and expecting different results, and I thought of how many diets were going to be "the one" - this is going to be it—the magic diet, the time when I lose all my weight, get rid of all my fat clothes, and then of course go back to eating the way I want to, and keep all the weight off! And how many times did that work? You know the answer. It never worked. It never will work. What works? Go to meetings, be grateful, work the steps, use the tools, and don't eat! Don't eat no matter what, no matter what don't eat. If we do these things, we will probably have very little of Insanity A OR Insanity B! Here's to Sanity!

Have a wonderful, abstinent day,

Love, Melanie

"don't eat, go to meetings, pray, work the steps, use the tools"

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Overeaters Anonymous

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Why Are We Here?

We are here to listen - not to work miracles. We are here to help you discover what you are feeling - not to make feelings go away.

We are here to help you identify options - not to decide what you should do.

We are here to discuss the Steps with you - not to take the Steps for you.

We are here to help you discover your own strength - not to rescue you and leave you

still vulnerable.

We are here to help you to discover you can help yourself - not to take responsibility for you. We are here to help you learn to choose - not to make it necessary for you to

make difficult choices.

We are here to provide support for a change!

Anonymous, re-printed from SOAR newsletter

