



## HMI Conducts Survey – Forms Renewal Task Force

Thanks to the 86 members who responded to the recent Houston Metropolitan Intergroup (HMI) OA Renewal member survey!

The survey was conducted for four weeks between November 17 and December 17, 2007, on the OA Houston website and through printed copies.

Through the survey, HMI hoped to learn how it could work with Houston area OA groups to further promote and strengthen OA recovery and encourage OA service in the spirit of the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions – while improving its services to area OA groups.

### Survey Conclusions

One major conclusion derived from the member survey was the need to develop an Action Plan that would address the core needs identified in the survey, particularly:

- Regular participation in groups
- OA guidelines for meetings
- Ways to improve meetings
- OA sponsorship

- Use of food plans
- OA service
- Outreach to current and lapsed members
- Community outreach

### Task Force Formed

At its March 8, 2008, Board Meeting, HMI formed an OA Renewal Task Force to consider the results of the survey and develop an Action Plan.

We don't want to let our efforts die there. Using the results of the survey, we must now pull together to develop an Action Plan to implement what you have said you need. We need the maximum number of volunteers who would be willing to provide this service.

the OA Houston web site. Please join us in this service.

*For an executive summary and complete detailed report of the HMI OA Renewal Survey results, visit [www.oahouston.org](http://www.oahouston.org).*

## Around Town

OA Renewal Task Force Organizational Meeting

Sat. April 5, 2008  
2 -5 pm

OAsis Club  
Houston, Texas

Heart of Texas Intergroup  
12 Steppin' to Recovery  
Region III Assembly and Convention

April 4-6, 2008  
Austin, TX

2008 HMI Spring Retreat  
Camp Allen 4/25-27, 2008

Watch the [OAhouston.org](http://OAhouston.org) website for upcoming workshops and events.

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The first meeting of the OA Renewal Task Force is to be held at the Oasis Club on April 5, 2008. Future meetings times and locations will be posted on

## A Spiritual Path

Letting go of the idea that there is a God or a personal God was frightening - but honesty is critical to my recovery.

The idea was frightening, because there is no doubt my recovery relies on OA - a twelve-step program of recovery with a "Higher Power" defined in Steps and Traditions as "God" - "Him", "He", or "Himself"?

Returning to OA from a 7-year relapse in November, 2000, with body badly burned by 100 lb weight gain, I was agnostic, but knew that being honest and open-minded were important to recovery.

Was I now risking my healthy weight or the sanity I had obtained from "acting as if"?

First, I learned I am not alone! I heard a variety of ideas and beliefs held by OA's membership when proposals to remove gender references and replace them with God resulted in lively and fascinating discussion at the 2007 World Service Business Conference. Next, I began reading literature on the topic of God, including OA's new book *Seeking the Spiritual Path* (includes atheist shares) and the OA pamphlet *What if I Don't Believe in God?*

As a result I learned new ideas and concepts and came to be in awe of the mystery of being; not needing to narrow the enormity with what could only be my limited definition. I accept what is and live in gratitude.

With humility, I surrender to practicing the OA program

knowing I am not a God! I let that practice take me where it will.

A grateful, recovering compulsive overeater,

-Christine Willis, TX

### Honest Look at What I'm Doing

- ☀ Do I have a sponsor - one who has what I want?
- ☀ Do I give some form of service?
- ☀ Am I working the program beyond Step 3?
- ☀ Am I still trying to diet, i.e. manipulate and control my food and my weight?
- ☀ Do I have a personal concept of a Higher Power that works for me?

- From *For Today*, page 54

## The Healing Power of Reciprocity

One of the most healing aspects of the OA program for me is the non-professionalism expressed in Tradition Eight. The mutual caring and sharing in the OA

Fellowship have helped to open me up and enabled me to speak honestly with another human being for the first time in my life.

My first sponsor seemed very strange to me when I met her at my first meeting. She spoke honestly about her struggles and her defects and how the principles of the Steps and Traditions helped her with them. I recognized something in her I wanted, even though she seemed to have more problems than anyone sitting around the table.

As our relationship grew, her candor encouraged me to become more open and honest, and I decided to share my Fourth and Fifth Steps with her. When I struggled to tell her something that I thought was so painfully, shamefully unique to me, this woman reassured me that I was not alone by recounting a similar episode from her own experience.

My ego didn't like it. I wanted to be unique. I regarded her mutual sharing as a one-upmanship. I thought she was just unwilling to recognize what a special individual I was. But, I gradually came to see that I needed this reciprocal dialogue. Not only did I learn that my life and problems were not unique, but I learned to accept them as part of my humanness. I began to heal.

Through our relationship, I learned to relax and be myself. I felt accepted by her in everything I said and did. I felt free from judgment and condemnation. This was a first for me. And it was so eye-opening to witness someone who did not pretend to be perfect, but who rather used spiritual principles to grow through the problems in her life. She modeled a whole new way of living.

When my sponsor moved, I couldn't lean on her anymore for strength and reassurance. God was taking away my crutches so that I would come to rely only on him. I finally realized the truth of what my sponsor had been saying: I had to give of myself and carry a message of hope to others if I was to keep my own recovery.

I was scared at first, so I worked the Steps on my fear. I found another sponsor. Again, God led me to someone who unselfishly and caringly gives of herself. And, as I grew, I began to sponsor others. I've found that I need the benefits to my own program that only service – unselfish giving-can provide.

So when someone says, "Oh, you helped me so much just by listening," or "I'm glad to hear that you felt the same way I do," I know it is our Eight Tradition in action.

*-Reprinted from Lifeline,  
August 1997*

## Hiring a Temp as Higher Power

Ten years ago, after having maintained abstinence in OA for several years, I was diagnosed with insulin-dependent diabetes. I used to say that this is when my life crumbled and fell apart. I was bewildered about why God would give me, a person with eating disorders, a disease that was all about food! I was outraged at God for giving me such a complicated and devastating condition, which I felt I didn't deserve.

Soon, clinical depression increased my suffering. I flailed about, trying to cope with a new way of eating and a foreign lifestyle centered on my health, rather than pursue my career and live in the promises of OA. It wasn't long before God and I were not on speaking terms. I felt angry and betrayed.

When I'm not on speaking terms with my Higher Power, I can't work a successful program, and I lost my abstinence. I could not ask for help from a God I thought had forsaken me. In hindsight, I can see that I could have made better choices to maintain my program and conscious contact with a Higher Power. My biggest mistake was assuming God should give me what I wanted, rather than what I needed. My second mistake was not looking around for a temporary Higher Power with whom I could converse until God and I had worked things out. I could have read the chapter "We Agnostics" in the Big Book (Alcoholics Anonymous, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., pages 44-

57) and taken its advice. But I did none of these.

Since I received my diagnosis, I have regained long-term abstinence and strengthened my relationship with God. How? First, I forgave God for smiting me with what I perceived to be a curse and for playing what seemed to be a sick joke on me. I accepted what I could not change. Second, I realized that without God in my life, things would only become worse, like relapsing into anorexia and binge eating. Third, I decided to take a step back and learn what God was trying to teach me by giving me diabetes. My diabetes helped me put food in its proper perspective, forced me to confront certain relationship problems for which I needed to make amends, introduced me to people who would become very important in my life, and opened up job opportunities that have become my life's passion.

Contracting diabetes cleared the decks for me. It made me appreciate how important health is, that life is a gift and that God has a plan for me over which I have no control but is in my best interests. Now I serve as a power of example to my sponsoree and to others in the program who are going through hard time, because I speak from experience when I say you Higher Power always has your best interests in mind. Maybe that's another reason God gave me what seemed like too big a burden for me to carry: God wanted me to carry the message to others. Isn't that what program is all about?

*-L. F., Boston, Mass (reprinted  
from Lifeline, Nov 2004)*

## Shall We Dance?

It is a strange feeling, the waiting – to become a sponsor that is.

It started when my sponsor and I decided it was time for me to make myself available to be a sponsor to others. I will never forget those first few times I wrote “Yes” in that column below the question, “Can you sponsor?” I felt so nervous and such trepidation. What if someone saw my “Yes” and asked me to sponsor? Was I really qualified?

After those first few times, though, I began to feel differently. I began to feel some embarrassment about writing “Yes” when I saw many others writing “Full.” Of course, I took it personally. It must be that there is something *wrong* with *me*.

“Everyone else gets asked to sponsor except for me,” my disease said. “I must not seem recovered enough to help anyone!”

That good old self-centered thinking kicked in. Thankfully, I soon caught that character defect and put it on my inventory. To complete my 10<sup>th</sup> step, I gave it away at a meeting. It felt good to let go of that negative thinking, remembering that everything that happens in this universe is not about me. It also helped me remember that my HP has a plan for me that does not necessarily happen on my timeline.

Sponsorship – and waiting to become a sponsor – was a new opportunity to grow in the program.

As time went on, I began to realize that this felt a bit like the middle school gymnasium dance experience. Back then, I stood on the side of the dance floor, hoping someone would pick me, would ask me to dance. Afraid to seem too eager, I averted my eyes, trying not to make eye contact with folks that might be “available” for sponsoring. I felt paralyzed by my fear that I would be asked just as much as that fear that I would not be asked. I was afraid if asked, I would prove to be a clumsy partner – not knowing the steps or taking them too quickly and too slowly. In all of this, I forgot to consider the fear someone else might feel in asking me. Until... someone did.

A relative newcomer sat next to me at my home group a few months back and asked, “Are you still interested in doing some step work with someone?”

“Absolutely!” I exclaimed. (I think I even blushed when I realized how eager my response was.)

“Whew,” she sighed. “I am so glad that is over. I was so afraid you would say, ‘No.’”

She was afraid *I* would say, “No.” In that moment, my HP helped relieve me of the bondage to self, recognizing again how exposed we are in

this program. In all facets of OA, whether in being a sponsee, a sponsor, sharing partner, or service representative, we are given the opportunity to be human and vulnerable and to take risks. One of the most special ways this happens is in the sponsor and sponsee relationship.

So, my sponsee and I have had the chance to dance together for several months. And, guess what? Sometimes I have felt like I did not know the steps. Sometimes I have taken the steps too fast or too slow. But every step of the way, my sponsee and I have been guided by the love of our respective HPs and have become grounded in a loving friendship. Each time we work together, I hope it strengthens her program. I have no doubt that it strengthens mine. I know that, today, I dance a bit differently to the music of life and OA. That’s because I have learned so much about myself and this program from a new partner who had the courage to ask me to dance. I also learned that I can be more proactive about finding future partners. With the guidance of my HP, in the future I will keep my eyes open for sponsorship opportunities and remember how challenging it was for me to ask my sponsor to work with me. As one of the OA slogans reminds us, our recovery requires we take such risks, because:

**“If you don't take a chance,  
you don't have one.”**

-Rachel S, Houston

## WHAT IS HMI?

HMI, The Houston Metro Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous, is a cooperative venture between the various OA groups in the Greater Houston Metropolitan Area. As each OA group is autonomous, HMI is not a governing body, but a service body, whose purpose is to support the OA groups and members that it serves.

As each group contributes to HMI with the service of its members, as well as financially, HMI is able to support the Houston OA community in ways that are beyond the scope of any individual OA group. These services include:

\* A telephone answering service with a listing in the local telephone directory. This important service allows both members and the general public to contact OA for meeting lists and information about OA. Our Houston phone number is 713-973-6333.

\* Publishing meeting lists with the locations, times, and contact individuals for the various local OA meetings.

\* Sponsoring regional conventions, workshops, and similar activities.

\* Publishing our local OA newsletter, "*Steps*".

\* Providing for the local availability of OA literature. Newcomer kits are provided to new members at no charge.

\* Publishing our local OA Web site, "[OA Houston](#)".

\* Sending delegates to Regional and National Conventions to represent the Houston Membership.

\* Cooperating with the [Oasis Club](#) to provide a dedicated OA facility for Houston. The Oasis Club is a separate "corporate entity" which HMI assists financially by renting the HMI office space from the Oasis Club.

The HMI Monthly Business meeting is the second Saturday of the month at the [Oasis Club](#), 5645 Hillcroft, Suite 102 at 10:00 AM.

Every group is encouraged to send a representative.

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**REMEMBER – SERVICE IS SLIMMING!**

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Do you know your HMI Board ?

- All voting members of the Intergroup shall elect by a majority vote the following: **Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Recording Secretary, Treasurer, Parliamentarian,** and **Historian**, plus any officers deemed necessary by the HMI Board. Elected officers shall be referred to as the HMI Board.

- An HMI Board nominee shall have, at the time of election, a **one year current abstinence/recovery, be working a Twelve Step program, have completed the fifth step, and be active in HMI a minimum of four months within the last six month period.**

Your current Board is:

**Chairperson – Joey H**

**Vice Chair – Open**

**Secretary – Rachel S**

**Treasurer – Charlie M**

**Parliamentarian – Charlie M**

Congratulations to Rachel S. Charlie M. for your recent elections and thanks to all the Board for your service!

Are you interested in serving in a role in HMI? We currently have the **Vice Chair position open** and are looking for volunteers to fill that role.

The term of office is one year and some of the responsibilities include:

- *Filling in for Chair in the event of absence, incapacity or inability of the Chairperson.*

- *Chair Workshops*

Thanks to everyone who has picked up the roles while this position is vacant and if you are interested in being the Vice Chair, please stop by the HMI meeting.

## Writing Opens the Door to Life

Writing is a very big part of my program. When I first came into program, I was taught that I should write down my food before I phoned it into my sponsor. I knew I needed structure around my food. Writing it down made me stop and think, "IS the food available or on a wish list?" It taught me to make sure I had in the house what I committed.

As I progressed in the program, the food was put in its place and life started to happen. Without my binge foods, my feelings were very hard to deal with. Again, someone suggested writing about what I was feeling. It was very hard for me to do because I grew up in a house where we were taught that anything that happens couldn't be talked about with each other or outside. Even the thought of writing down my feelings made me feel like a traitor to my family, and this was many years after leaving my parents' home.

When I actually started to write, much of what I wrote opened up my mind and heart. When I got to the fourth step, I was petrified but I trusted the program. I had opened up and trusted that it was the next thing I had to do. I just didn't know how to start. I was fearful of not doing it right, or of leaving something out. My sponsor impressed upon me that God would, if asked, guide me to help see what I needed to.

Since I was still living my life, there would always be other times of awareness.

She told me there was no wrong way to write the fourth step. Doing it was the most important action to take. I did it, and have done many more fourth steps over the years. Every one has left me a little more aware of who I am and what I need to do to go forward through my more than twenty years in OA. Sometimes, in pain and fear and other times I just feel I'm stuck, the tool of writing frees my insides so I can have a life on the outside.

- J.B. Massachusetts OA  
North Shore IG, "Sharings"

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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 [oahoustonnews@gmail.com](mailto:oahoustonnews@gmail.com).

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).

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## "We" Program

OA is a "we" program. I realized this when I studied Step One: "We admitted we were powerless over food — that our lives had become unmanageable."

Like many other compulsive eaters, I lived a life of isolation, and my feelings shut down. I lived with rationalizations because I couldn't control my eating. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't reach my goal of self-sufficiency.

Coming to OA brought me out of isolation and into recovery. The continued support of OA groups is vital to my ongoing recovery. Because compulsive eating is a fatal, progressive disease, the good of OA as a whole is a life-and-death matter to me.

According to Tradition One, "It is every member's responsibility to protect the OA spirit of unity and mutual support" (The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, p. 111). Just as I take responsibility to work the Steps, I must take responsibility to do what I can for OA as a whole.

Anything, no matter how small, that chips away at the Traditions that are the firm bedrock upon which my recovery is based can hurt my daily reprieve from this disease. I need to remember that.

- A.I., London, Canada, Reprinted  
from *Lifeline*, February 2007

*Today I have a  
chance and a  
choice.*