

Freedom from Bondage

December 2015

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Overeaters Anonymous Region 5 Convention
September 16-18, 2016

Take The Freeway of Recovery

Sheraton Detroit Airport Hotel
8000 Merriman Road
Romulus, Michigan 48174

Future Freedom from Bondage

March Issue will cover:

Concepts 1-5

1. Unity

2. Conscience

3. Trust

4. Equality

5. Consideration



Send future submissions to
R5NewsletterSubmissions@gmail.com

Perseverance

Keep coming back has worked for me for over six years now. When I don't feel like going to a meeting, that is when I REALLY need to be at a meeting. Working to improve my conscious contact with God - my Higher Power - has been a daily blessing in recovery. -C.J. M

Holiday Coping

Last year before Thanksgiving, our small meeting devoted time for each of us to offer our plans for coping with the holiday. The plans could be as specific as the speaker wanted them to be, and they could include coping with any activities the members saw as important to working their programs physically, emotionally and spiritually.

People found this simple step so useful that they decided to continue it throughout the holidays. Each person in turn reviewed his or her coming week and identified potential pitfalls, then spoke of a plan for coping.

Some plans included:

- Scheduling breaks during long events or outings so you don't get too hungry and allow yourself to make bad food choices.
- Anticipating beforehand the folks who want you to just "take a taste", or who wonder aloud and loudly why you are or are not eating something. The solutions for dealing with this situation varied. That's not the point. The point is to have a plan that you commit to out loud in a safe, public place (a meeting).
- Avoiding special events if they involved food choices that might cause problems. This comes under the heading of "whatever it takes", since a very pleasant social time may have to be sacrificed for serenity.

Even when plans had to change, the act of sharing ideas—brainstorming about problems and solutions in detail, one week at a time—helped people consider what was ahead, be responsible for taking care of themselves and commit in public to having and making choices. The act of public commitment helped. In sharing at the next meeting about how the week went, support was offered anew—no matter what happened—so in all cases self-love continued during the holidays.

-Anonymous, reprinted from Lifeline,
November 1999

Coming Back, No Matter What

Thank you, *Lifeline*, for the many years of service to my recovery since 1977. In 1979 Lifeline published a story called "Visit to a Small Meeting." A woman from an area with lots of meetings visited a meeting that consisted of one member and a tape recorder. The lone member was abstinent, planning her meeting week after week as if there were others. A few months later the same writer returned to this meeting, which by then had acquired one other member. The leader of the meeting was still abstaining, grateful and uncomplaining about the size of her meeting.

When I read these stories, I was living in Baltimore, which had 20 regular meetings. Many OA friends supported my new abstinence. In late 1980 the military transferred my husband to Germany. My husband happily informed me that the paper listed three OA meetings. Twelve hours after I arrived, I set out for my first OA meeting in Germany. It wasn't there! The paper had listed meetings without checking for accuracy. So I started up that meeting again. I discovered there were three OA meeting locations with probably a total of five members, and often we were all eating. The nearest of those was a German-speaking meeting an hour's drive away. Our meetings went reasonably well until the next summer, at which time most members returned to the States to see family during school vacation. That is how I became the only member attending meetings that summer. I was not abstinent, but in company with my tape recorder and my "Big Book," I kept the door open. Knowing what that writer in *Lifeline* experienced kept me coming back.

In the fall people returned to our meetings, and I achieved some abstinence. My abstinence was shaky at best and slowly sliding downhill. By this time I had been in OA several years with off-and-on abstinence. I felt that I would not be able to endure the humiliation of another relapse. (This was in the days before Twelfth-Step-Within and open discussion of the forbidden "R" word.) By keeping the doors open for our meeting, the day came when I got help. A woman walked into our little meeting with that look of serenity that only an abstainer with the compulsion removed could have. I asked her to be my sponsor. If I had let the meetings die, I may never have met that sponsor and begun the 12 years of abstinence I now have. A few years later I became a delegate to World Service Business Conference. I met a delegate from Montana, told her my story and asked if she knew the writer of the *Lifeline* story. She did, and the woman was still abstinent. At the 1994 Conference, I asked about my still unknown writer. It was then that I had the opportunity to write her a quick thank you note, which was hand delivered, to express my gratitude for her story and to tell her how it had helped me. And the circle continues.

At Convention 1995 in Minneapolis, I obtained the address of a lone member in Australia. I sent to Australia copies of these stories along with my story. My experience in Germany taught me that willingness and the Twelve Steps really are the requirements to begin recovery. Everything else is extra. Someone did service by writing to Lifeline and helped someone else months later and thousands of miles away. I did service and received 12 years of abstinence. Right now there are other lone members struggling. I hope this story gives someone out there the courage to keep coming back no matter what. If *Lifeline* were ever discontinued, it would be a tragedy for me, because I would lose something that has been indescribably precious in my life.

— B.G., Harmons, Maryland USA, reprinted from *Lifeline*, May 1999

Step 10 - my continuous life cycle.

I get up in the morning, get on my knees, ask God for help, ask what His will is for me that day and to give me the power to carry it out. I then read the daily readings, write my food plan and plan of action, send it to my sponsor, talk to sponsees and call my own sponsor. This is what works for me. Doing the same thing every day - because it worked the day before, I trust it will work again today. I've also been told I can start my day over at any time. I have too. I have almost 12 years of abstinence - it works for me - so I'll continue to work it. I am so grateful for this program and all that it has brought into my life. Just for today, I will follow the same plan! As I have heard, "it works if you work it!"

-Barbara K.

From the Chair

We conclude the Step Principles theme for the Newsletter this year. I could write about Service (Step 12), but that seems like second nature to me...I just keep doing something, anything to make sure OA is around tomorrow (do you?). Perseverance (Step 10) has kept me coming back for almost 15 years now, so I offer some thoughts today on Spiritual Awareness (Step 11).

I didn't realize how precious this principle was to me until last week. We had some minor home improvements being done by outside contractors – they arrived between 8 – 8:30 am for three days last week, finishing by 5:30 each day. This meant we needed to be up, showered, dressed, cars out of the garage, stuff out of their way, etc. by 8 am.

It was only 3 days of work, it's all done now and our home is ours again. However, their arrival fell in the middle of morning sponsee calls. I tried to get up earlier for my own quiet time, but it didn't work out the way I wanted. (Note the reference to 'self'!) By the third morning, I was crying and complaining to my husband, "My life is in disarray! The house is a mess (an exaggeration), and I'm a mess (also an exaggeration)! I don't know what's wrong!!" My husband smiled, listened and kept his mouth shut...there was nothing he could say.

It took the work being completed and the house being quiet again to realize what was really going on – NO QUIET TIME! I always feel centered when I begin the day with prayer, reading, meditation, but I had no idea how much it impacts my overall sense of serenity when I don't have that time. WOW! I'm grateful it only took 3 days to figure this out.

Once again, I'm reminded that it takes what it takes for me to work this program, and now I know FOR SURE that for me, it takes DAILY quiet time. My HP (God) blesses me with serenity and strength to face each day; I prepare myself for that gift by being spiritually aware of His presence, by reaching out to Him before I even know what the day will bring.

No matter what holiday I may be celebrating this year, I am abundantly grateful – for a relationship with God as I understand Him, for knowing what serenity/acceptance/spiritual awareness "feels" like, for waking up today and knowing God is not done with me yet, for my needs being met (and for knowing the difference between my needs and my wants), for knowing how "self" interferes with spiritual awareness, for my body and the state of health I enjoy today because of OA.

I am grateful for all of you...without you, without OA all over the world, I would not be abstinent today or have a fighting chance at abstinence tomorrow.

So thank you God, thank you OA, thank you OA family...you bless me each day! Please stay safe in any travel, stay in touch with your HP and your OA family, and stay abstinent one more day...we are worth the effort of recovery!

Blessings in recovery today,

Denise O.

Spirituality

Writing Exercise – Nov 2014 Assembly – We Are the Message

Q1 – Overheard at the 2014 Region 5 Convention – “I am a “tapestry” – I have a message of recovery, but I am also the sum of all the other messages/tidbits of wisdom I’ve heard in my years in this Fellowship.” What is your message of recovery? What would you tell a newcomer about you/your story?

The physical recovery in weight loss is a great blessing. However, the spiritual recovery is a much greater blessing. To wake in the morning and look forward to an abstinent and sane day is a gift of this program and living in the steps. I am so grateful to my sponsors, mentors, and OA friends. I draw from their experience, strength and hope. They provide me with the spiritual recovery I need because my higher power speaks to me through them. Find God, HP, through working the Steps. When I finally took Step 1 after fighting so hard, one night I admitted I was powerless and that only God could restore me to sanity. I was abstinent. Now 7½ years later I see that the wisdom of all I had absorbed in the years I was struggling in program all came back to me in that one desperate plea to God. And He removed it for me.

Grey becomes green hope...which explodes into red anger, orange excitement, yellow fear, pink compassion and blue sadness as the feelings emerge through the food fog.

I am just like you....a compulsive eater. I have a physical allergy with a mental obsession. I choose to be in the solution to the best of my ability. Abstinence is the number one thing in my life; without it I cannot have a spiritual connection and the disease becomes my HP once again. The promises do come slowly, diligently and in God’s time not mine. I’ve been granted the gift of serenity and peace and abstinence daily through OA, steps, tools and a spiritual connection. My recovery could not happen until the “perfect storm” tapestry was in place: the sponsor who loved and encouraged the difficult know-it-all newcomer, the 12 step study of Back to Basics which finally told me what work to do, the personal HP who required surrender before giving me with abstinence, service – help others whether you feel secure or not. Keep coming back – bring your body and at some point your head will come. This program gives me sanity so I can live life on life’s terms. I can have plan A, B, etc. but one I do is HP’s plan. I would tell about how to remember being in a black hole and trying to get out but the sides are all wet and muddy. The more I was abstinent the drier the walls got and I was able to get out to see the sunlight of recovery.

Spirituality has gradually become an integral part of my life. It now is second nature for me to thank my Higher Power for big and little things and to pray for help throughout my day. For me, my spirituality has come about via working the Steps. Spirituality began when I admitted my powerlessness over food and the unmanageability of my life and it grows as I continue to work the rest of the Steps.

Working Step 11 means that I set aside times for meditation each day. It is in listening for my Higher Power’s will that I find peace. Besides formal meditation, I also find spirituality in connecting with people and nature. Writing helps me slow down and be with my Higher Power during the day. I am grateful I found OA when I did and that my Higher Power was there when I was ready.

-Nancy L.

What a gift the program has been in my life. I have known God since early childhood, but this blessing of Spirituality has taken my closeness to God to a whole new level. Learning to Let Go and Let God in ALL things has been life-changing. I know now that bitterness, resentment and anger keep me from feeling close to God and they do nothing to harm the people who are the cause of my bitterness, resentment or anger. The best thing I do for myself each day is let go of all of the negative feelings and hold onto the positive power of the Spirit of God.
-C.J. M

I had a lengthy journey to my Higher Power. I grew up believing in God—the punishing. I knew I was never going to be good enough & that if I didn't "behave" I was going to be punished. I believed God would take away or deny me things or people I loved. I lived most of my life in fear and shame.

The "Chapter to Agnostics" quote "sometimes we religious ones found ourselves having a harder time than the atheist or agnostic" certainly applied to me. What really made a difference was working the steps. I prayed, crying every time I felt connection with God. It was painful and hard to continue.

But I did continue because I saw others who were comfortable with their HPs and themselves and I wanted that SO bad. During one meditation things started to click. Suddenly I felt like Spock from Star Trek. I was having a spiritual experience but doing it logically.

My true belief about God is that He is the perfect, all-powerful, all-loving creator of all things. I believe that everything happens in accordance with God's will, that He has a perfect plan and intervenes in daily life. Suddenly I saw how irrational it was for me to believe this and feel fearful and ashamed.

If it is true that God created me it stands to reason that He created me the way He wants me to be. Perfect God could not have made a mistake in creating me; and His plan is flawless and inevitable. All-loving God would not maliciously make me broken. It also stands to reason that my life is full of purpose not punishment. I may not understand but God does. Furthermore if it is true that God controls everything, even intervening in daily life, then it stands to reason He knows my choices and the reasons for them. It is not a matter of shame or punishment & fear.

This opened up a whole new world for me. I now love myself, not perfectly, but sincerely. While working on fully embracing my realization I wrote a meditative chant that I share below. I am now grateful as well as happy, joyous and free. Thank God for OA!

God I know you love me
And I am good enough
For you created me
And are infallible
Without malice
I thank you God
-Amber M.

From the Trustee

Intergroup and Group information

Unfortunately we have lost one intergroup, 16 affiliated groups, and 29 total groups since Feb of this year. If you are aware of any major discrepancies between your records and those on the website, please let me know and we can check the information by intergroup number.

WSBC 2016

I look forward to seeing both experienced delegates & “Green Dots”, at WSBC May 2-7, 2016. The first set of Conference edocuments is available on the Conference page at <https://www.oa.org/worldserviceevents/worldserviceconvention/>. Key documents include the delegate registration form and instructions, sample motion forms and instructions, tentative agenda, chair’s letter and getting ready for Conference.

Carrying the Message Guide

OA’s newest guide—Carrying the Message—has suggestions about what to say and not to say when speaking to someone about OA for the first time. With more than two dozen tips, this free guide can help you find the words to tell others how the OA recovery program has made a difference in your life. Download Carrying the Message at http://www.oa.org/pdfs/guide_to_carrying_the_message.pdf and be inspired to follow the OA Preamble: “...to carry the message of recovery through the Twelve Steps of OA to those who still suffer.” Carrying the Message will soon be available as a pocket card.

Ask It Basket Questions

Two issues have come up in our region recently. First only OA literature can be used or promoted at an OA meeting or an OA Service Body. Tradition Six is clear that only OA approved literature be displayed or used at an OA meeting. Use of unapproved literature implies endorsement of the philosophy of the author.

“Whenever an OA meeting displays or sells non-OA approved literature it implies that OA endorses the philosophy of whoever wrote that piece. OA approved literature reflects the experience of many members of the Fellowship whose recovery is strongly rooted in the twelve steps and twelve traditions.” (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, p. 154)

The second issue is quoting, opening, or closing with prayers that are not suggested. The only OA approved openings and closings are the Serenity Prayer (short version), Third Step Prayer, Seventh Step Prayer, and the OA Promise, (I Put My Hand in Yours). These are the suggested openings and closings recommended by the world wide group conscience of OA at WSBC (1993a). To quote other prayers that are clearly religious in nature implies endorsement of that religion, (Tradition Six). To quote anything other than these may inhibit someone from finding the Higher Power of their understanding. We are spiritual program not a religious program.

New Literature

Taste of Lifeline is now available for purchase at our bookstore at <https://www.oa.org/> or call 505-891-2664. The ebook is also available. This is a new Board approved book of collected stories from the pages of *Lifeline* magazine. It has more than 100 personal stories, *Taste of Lifeline* is by OA members writing about their challenges and recovery and how they work the OA program.

BOT Meetings

The most recent BOT meeting was a joint meeting with the Region Chairs held Aug 20-22, 2015. Much was accomplished including work by joint committees on “Working all Twelve Steps” and “Carrying the Message”. **Phone workshops continue on “Working all 12 Steps” presented once a month** The Board of Trustees, Virtual Services Committee, and Region Chairs are continuing the series of phone workshops on the Steps. They are held the second Sunday of the month at 2PM Central time. The phone number is: 424-203-8405 and the access code is: 925619#. The past workshops are available as podcasts at <http://www.oa.org/oapodcasts/>

Trustee on the Road

I’m available to present talks on Abstinence, Strong Meetings, Service, Traditions, and Concepts. My expenses are covered by WSO. Just let me know when you would like to have me come visit. I am honored to serve as your Trustee. Feel free to contact me if I can be of service.

Yours in Service,

Linda J., Region 5 Trustee, Region5Trustee@gmail.com

Service

Service has been such a blessing in my life. My service in my early days in program kept me coming back week after week. My areas of service increased as I thought I was beginning to understand more, but I still feel like I don't know that much some days. Fortunately, I am never alone when I take on a new and challenging service position. There are always others who have gone before me who are more than willing to help. Service is critical at every level of our fellowship. We can be of service in so many ways, beginning with being abstinent and helping others to see that recovery is possible with God's help.

-C.J. M

Service has been a real game changer for me. Initially I did service in order to keep myself going to a meeting regularly. If I was the one with the key then I HAD to be there or I would be letting everyone down. It worked. I consistently did service in one way or another at the group level, kept going to my meetings week after week and started to find recovery. As I found recovery I started to WANT to go to my meetings. I enjoyed doing service and started to see it as giving back some of what I had been given instead of just a commitment to keep me going to meetings. I did not move into doing much more than this until I finally became a sponsor. I was SO happy to finally be able to give back in this way! Becoming a sponsor made me realize just how much more recovery lay within giving to others rather than taking for yourself. I spent my whole life putting others first while ignoring my own needs. I thought that was the right thing to do. Wasn't I being selfless?

However, looking back it was all about me. I needed people to like me and acted as a doormat. Thoughts always in my mind were "I'm the MOST selfless." "I'm the BEST person." Except of course for the fact that not doing anything to take care of myself wore me down terribly. So I ate. But now I discovered a new way of giving service. I WAS taking care of myself and also giving of myself. This was a new and wonderful experience. There was no resentment, repression or fatigue. Instead there was joy, energy and growth. Giving of myself gives me so much more than I ever give. It still amazes me. Where once I made outreach calls thinking "Who would get my problem? Who do I feel comfortable sharing with?" I now think "Who needs a call today? Who might be helped by an outreach call right now?" I have been given SO much through OA and now when I give back I get even MORE! I guess that's what they mean when they say that "this is a selfish program"! -Amber M.

**The only thing we
take from this world
when we leave is
what we gave away**

Service is slimming
So they say
Service at every level
It's the only way
Service is abstinence
Every single day
Service is chairs or keys
Come what may
Service is meetings
Here or far away
Service is helping others
Without pay
Service is working
And it's A-OKAY
What is your service
For your OA?

-Sue W

"Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends – this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives." Alcoholics Anonymous 4th edition pg. 89

This 12th step promise in the Alcoholics Anonymous 4th edition has been my reality for several years. Shortly after my first miracle of having a spiritual experience and being gifted abstinence May 15th, 2009 my first sponsor guided me to serve others in OA. She'd ask me to pick up members that needed rides to the meeting, chair the meeting, encouraged me to start sponsoring and attend meetings at intergroup.

Service work has been instrumental in my growth and now has woven its way into the fabric of my very being. These are some of the growth opportunities and rewards that I've experienced over the past six years:

- 1. Less selfish – focus on 7th step – be of most usefulness to my fellows**
- 2. Diminishes worry – I stay too busy to be concerned with life problems for too long – learning to live life on life's terms**
- 3. I stay connected to others in OA and it helps me to practice reaching out, making phone calls and I get to meet new OA members from all over.**
- 4. I'm never alone in doing service work – if I need help – I ask, which helps teach me humility**
- 5. I can focus on what I can do to help those that are still suffering with overeating in and out of our groups by keeping OA alive and thriving**
- 6. I enjoy taking on new challenges – it's scary and often I have no idea what I'm doing – but I tackle it with God and OA mentors (those who have gone before me in the service position). It feels good when I learn new things and grow.**
- 7. Service gives me a lot of gratitude to my recovery, OA and God**
- 8. It also helps me with being patient and letting go and letting God**
- 9. I remember that God is in our groups and group conscious – I may not always get my way and it's okay – I'm learning how to grow up emotionally**
- 10. And as always – tradition 12 – "placing principles before personalities" helps me to keep coming back to serve at all levels.**

It's by no mistake, I feel, that there is a whole chapter in the Alcoholics Anonymous book on working with others. Service is slimming, but oh so much more. Sometimes it still amazes me that OA members are not arm wrestling to do service work at all levels. I pray for the day that OA members say "YES" to service.

**Respectfully submitted by:
Kim B.
Racine, WI
USA**

<u>www.oa.org</u>	<u>OA Podcasts</u>	<u>R5 Resources</u>
<u>The 12 Steps</u>	<u>Breaking Out of Relapse Video</u>	<u>Find a Meeting</u>
<u>The 12 Traditions</u>	<u>Body Image Project</u>	<u>R5 Assemblies</u>
<u>The 12 Concepts</u>	<u>Virtual Workshop on Step Ten</u>	<u>Donate to OA</u>
<u>Region 5 2016 Convention</u>	<u>PIPO Funding Request</u>	<u>R5 Forms</u>
<u>R5 Board & Committees</u>	<u>R5 Intergroups</u>	<u>WSO Events</u>
<u>Region 5 Calendar</u>	<u>R5 Links</u>	<u>Lifeline</u>
<u>A Step Ahead Newsletter</u>	<u>Submit to R5 Newsletter</u>	<u>Get OA Literature</u>

Announcements & Service Opportunities

*****HOLIDAY MARATHONS*****

Sun Dec 7	Hanukkah	The miracle of recovery
Sat Dec 12	12th Step-Within-Day	Reaching out to others
Thurs Dec 24	Christmas Eve	The OA family traditions
Fri Dec 25	Christmas	Surprises of working the OA program
Sat Dec 26	Kwanzaa/Boxing Day	We are not alone
Thurs Dec 31	New Year's Eve	Celebrating freedom from compulsive eating

The Holiday marathons start at 8am ET after the 6:45am ET Sunrise meeting and continues until midnight every hour throughout the day around any regularly scheduled meetings.

Phone Bridge is 712-432-5200, Pin Code is 4285115#, 8am ET (-5:00 GMT) to midnight

Make sure your group info is up-to-date!

Update your group's meeting details and secretary contact info by going to Edit a Meeting at oa.org. First search your meeting; then click "Edit Details" to update your group's information. WSO uses your info to keep Find a Meeting current so that members can locate a meeting in their area.

The Breaking Out of Relapse video created by the World Service Twelfth Step Within Committee is now posted online.
[To view click here](#)

As members of OA we have a lot to be grateful this holiday season. Please consider making a special holiday contribution to OA of \$10 to help support carrying the message. For virtual meetings please use number 82278 when you contribute. MAIL to: WSO P.O. Box 44020 Rio Rancho, NM 87174-4020 or [click here](#)

PIPO

Is your Intergroup doing professional outreach? Are you getting the OA word out to those still suffering? Do you need help funding these efforts?

Region 5 has \$500 budgeted for Public Information/Professional Outreach. Please contact me to request funds.

You need to include:

- 1)What you plan to do
- 2)The amount of money requested

Thanks ,

Lynn H

lynnhilly2@sbcglobal.net

Tune into monthly virtual workshops on The Importance of Working All Twelve Steps.

Available for free download now: [Step Ten](#). Learn more about working Step Ten, which is associated with the spiritual Principle of perseverance, and the value of continuing to do a daily personal inventory.

Join live 2nd Sunday each month, 3-4 p.m. EST. For instructions, see Datebook Calendar on oa.org. Or, to listen anytime, go to the Podcast page on oa.org. Groups and service bodies are encouraged to use these podcasts in meetings.

Also available: podcasts on "Step 0" & Steps 1-9.

**BODY IMAGE
SEXUALITY
RELATIONSHIPS
& RECOVERY**

Send your story in for a new publication OA is developing. How has recovery affected your body image, the decisions you make for yourself, your sexuality, your relationships, etc. Submissions due by 01/31/2016. Email your story to info@oa.org with subject line "Body Image". Click [here](#) for more info.