

## March 2015 Assembly Writing Exercise – Lifeline

**Lifeline Topic: Meeting Inspiration – Share your favorite meeting moments and best ideas for meetings full of fun, love and recovery.**

I like the coming together and being able to laugh – knowing that it is real and not a cover for other issues in our lives.

My very first meeting was a recovery event. I went out of respect for the person who invited me – not because I thought I needed it. Silly me! In less than 20 minutes of hearing the speaker share on the spiritual help that was in OA, I knew I needed this program. That was 2 ½ years ago – I’ve been abstinent and in recovery and filled with joy.

Being a member of meetings with small attendance, I love hearing a new interpretation of concepts - another “aha” moment. It seems when our literature is read out loud, it becomes more usable in my life. I love newcomers, but the meetings with the “usual suspects” are always full of a bit of teasing and grinning about ourselves. The meetings with laughter are my favorite. And when newcomers are in attendance, I hope they know our serious illness can become joyous in sharing.

Years ago, our Intergroup hosted a “Recovery is Fun” night with games, a raffle and sharing. One person said she found “prayer and meditation” worked well for her!

When I first came to program I wondered what my life would be like. What would I do for fun? How could I fit in with the fellowship? Would I ever eat at a restaurant again? I attended a meeting on Friday nights. It was a small group about 5-8 people. After the meeting, the members went out to a local restaurant for fellowship and dinner. I admired their ability to do this together and could not imagine myself ever going out with them after the meeting. Eventually, I thought I’d try it and I went. I was scared I didn’t know how to order food from the menu. But that summer, every Friday night, I went out with the group and learned how to enjoy fellowship in recovery with and order food abstinely from a menu. For this I am eternally grateful.

Freedom from Bondage means “never” having to say I’m sorry for compulsive overeating or compulsive food behaviors. Knowing and accepting that I have this disease frees me from guilt and self-recrimination. Thank God for OA and my program of recovery. Having this illness is no one’s fault, especially not mine!

My very favorite meeting moment was when a friend of mine had this epiphany and was so excited he couldn’t wait to share. Like a little kid in class, he raised his hand and begged to be able to share. When the meeting leader recognized him, he blurted out, “You know, nobody has ever died from hunger between meals. I think I can do this!” I will never forget the silence in the room as this sunk in. Just awesome...I think my friend got abstinent that day.

## March 2015 Assembly Writing Exercise – Lifeline

I love the skits, especially the “Rotation of Service” skit that I first saw given by the Region Chairs at WSBC.

My favorite meeting moments are the ones that include laughter. Yes, Recovery and Abstinence are serious topics and my 1<sup>st</sup> priorities in life, yet recovery has allowed me to see the lightness in life as well. There is much love, hope and understanding in meetings and in the fellowship. It is when we can laugh at ourselves or with each other that the light at the end of the tunnel of progress grows brightest. Be open, honest and share the hope with each other!

Several ideas come to mind:

- We have a basket full of slips of paper with slogans, prayers, steps, quotes from literature on them; we pass it and each person takes one. We time 5 minutes for reflection then each person reads theirs, comments, open sharing then we go to the next one.
- A panel of 3 guests on a step, topic, slogan, etc. then open sharing.

I cannot think of one moment but several moments over the years. The most fun for me has been attending convention, retreats and business meetings. I love meeting new members in different capacities. I’ve also enjoyed fellowship events – we meet once a month called “Joy of Recovery” to make crafts. Another is our group gathers once a month to put flyers up in our area and then we play board games. It’s been great.

**Lifeline Topic: Changing Relationships: The New Normal – How have your relationships changed in recovery? What role did accepting your addiction for yourself play? What is your “new normal”?**

I find that I don’t have to believe comments said of me, that no matter where I am at, I am okay. I am able to trust my intuition (gut feelings) about people, places and things.

“Accepting” is one of my favorite words in the OA lexicon. So many good things flow from it. Accepting that I have a disease that is physical, emotional and spiritual leads me to the 12 Steps and a relationship with the greater power who restores me to sanity. Identifying and accepting my character defects leads me to trust the greater power to love me as I am and to trust the greater power to remove them. In accepting myself as I am, I learn to accept others as they are and to accept that whatever healing they may need to do is between them and their greater power and is not my responsibility. Acceptance! It’s such a relief!

## March 2015 Assembly Writing Exercise – Lifeline

I never considered “what is best for me” when asked to volunteer or participate in service. Now I selfishly ask the question to myself and I give myself some breathing space by saying, “Can I get back to you tomorrow on that?” If necessary, I can contact my sponsor and discuss the situation. Often I hear from my sponsor, “Do you think it’s time to back off from any new service?”

My new normal (I love that phrase) is not putting food thoughts and food behaviors before any- and everything. It is having a plan that is constructed by my Higher Power and being willing to follow it by His power and not by my own.

Accepting my addiction resulted in me taking responsibility for my own actions. The victim role fed my addiction to food so nicely, but learning that I actually do have choices if I put my faith in a Higher Power meant I could choose the relationships I did & did not want to be in. I also could take ownership of my part in relationships and be willing to change. That led me to setting healthy boundaries and developing healthier relationships. My “new normal” is facing everything with the help of others and my Higher Power and choosing to follow the light.

I’m still married to the same man after 43 years! Without program who knows? I might have killed him (and me). Now we are happily married and he supports me and my program. He is even keeping the “home fires” burning while I’m away from home giving OA service.

This is where the rubber meets the road. As a disease of isolation and deep loneliness when all of a sudden thrust into life – here comes people! From cashiers to lovers, the challenges are great. First, I had to meet myself. Put down the food. Face my life through the steps. Create a relationship with HP, my sponsor and my groups at first. Then taking those principles out into the world of work, family, partners, and children. The “new normal” are these principles learned in OA and applying them to those I love and meet.

My M.O. was to expect people to know what my needs were and to take care of me, while I took care of everyone else. If I experienced a headache, I would wait for someone to suggest I take a pain reliever; if my feet were cold, wait for the suggestion to put slippers on. Now as Tradition 7 applies to me as an individual, I ought to be fully responsible to care for myself and my obligations. I take responsibility for my well-being and for the roles I fill and commitments I make.

My relationships are so much better in OA, including the relationship with myself. I’m still learning how to be emotionally mature but I’m learning how to accept my feelings and not eat over them. Feelings are not facts – they are just feelings and that’s okay. My new “norm” is learning to live life on life’s terms to the best of my ability, to love myself and others, and to always keep my side of the street clean.