

Writing Exercise – July 2014 Assembly - Abstinence

Q – How do the OA Traditions help you maintain your Abstinence? Please give an example from your own experience.

RESPONSES

Tradition 7 reminds me that I don't have to accept or use free food or advice that is not good for me. Tradition 1 calls me to remain and seek abstinence each day. I can't become a professional abstainer but I can develop useful daily actions to support my own abstinence and the abstinence of my fellows.

Tradition 3 – The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop eating compulsively. I was not overweight when I came to OA. But I was obsessed with food thoughts. You welcomed me anyway. I now have physical, emotional, and spiritual recovery and abstinence from compulsive eating and from food thoughts. I am so grateful you welcomed me. When I walking, I wasn't sure I belonged here. But I do.

I remind myself what being a member of OA has done for me physically, emotionally, and spiritually (weight loss, sanity, connection with God). Then I look at Tradition 3. I'm tempted to say, "To heck with it all, this is too much work!" The only requirement is a desire to stop eating compulsively. If I were to go ahead and eat compulsively anyway, I'd be consciously, willingly relinquishing these gifts. For today, I don't want to give food that power.

Traditions help me live in and out of the program rooms – the Traditions really help me live outside the rooms. These traditions are guidelines and suggestions. When making a choice in my life, I refer to them or apply them to whittle down my choice list.

By keeping the focus away from any individual and helping me to see the OA fellowship. Helps me to feel I can be open and honest when I am around OA members.

Tradition 2 is particularly helpful. Sometimes I fear people who have, or I perceive as having, some kind of authority over me. If that person and I are in a meal together, it can be intimidating to speak up about my food plan. Then I can recall that the authority in my life is a loving HP so I find the courage to assert myself and speak up to state my needs. I don't like to self-disclose anymore than is necessary. The 12 Tradition about my personal anonymity enables me to speak up about my dietary needs without feeling as though I have to share more information about myself than I feel safe sharing. All I have to do is say, "I can't eat that;" no big backstory is required or necessary. This enables me to be safe, stay abstinent as I interact with a wide range of people.

I am protected by the anonymity in the Traditions, therefore I have the freedom to be honest, open and an active, abstinent member of OA. I also love, love, love there is no governing body.

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We are a living group conscious. This helps me be abstinent because I can't get upset by an "I" program as it is a "we" program. I also like that we have Tradition 7. It makes me feel wonderful that my contributions go to people as far as around the world and that we accept no outside contributions. That was no one is negatively influencing my abstinence.

The Traditions do more than just keep the fellowship healthy. They have applications in my outside life, too. I use Tradition 1 in both my family and work life. I try to determine what the best common welfare is for each and then do the footwork to be a unifying factor rather than the divisive one I used to be. I also use Tradition 5. What is the primary purpose driving my company working to carry that message to co-workers and customers helps me work this Tradition.

Two Traditions that are often overlooked are the 7th Tradition and the 12th Tradition. Without the 7th Tradition I wouldn't be here. There'd be no literature for me to buy, no Intergroup to keep me informed about all the things OA does at a national level and all the resources available for people like me who abhor telephonic one-on-one. The 7th Tradition keeps us in our meeting space even when the rent we pay is considered a donation. The other important Tradition, 12, reminds me that the most important part of this program is the 12 Steps, not the people or the one person I love or hate. It reminds me that no matter what service I do, what length of abstinence I have, or what prestige I have outside our rooms, I am not unique or better than anyone else. In this program I am always a newcomer, working to improve myself and my relationship with God. My higher power is the "most important person" in my life and the principles and tools of OA are the most important activities.

I used to hate when our group study week was the Traditions. I came to OA to lose the weight but stayed for the life it gave me. The Traditions help me live my life both inside of OA and out. It is amazing how practicing these Traditions changes my outlook on life. Placing principles before personalities helps me to accept other people's opinions whether I like them or not.

I have used what I learn from the Traditions in dealing with my relationships with people. I work with others going towards a common goal because of unity in Tradition 1. I stay focused on that goal because of the Tradition about no outside matters to be brought up at meetings. Personal accountability is stressed in Tradition 7. Steps help me deal with the disease; Traditions help me with relationships.

The Traditions help me to deal with relationships. Co-dependent relationships and how to handle situations with others would cause me stress and I would then suppress the feeling with food. People at work had different views about a particular subject. Before program I would

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have crammed my view down their throat. Instead I listened and may not have agreed with their view, but accepted a different perspective. The Traditions have allowed me to be open-minded and that has given me acceptance. I ate because of emotions of anger and resentment in dealing with myself and others. Now I am able to express myself in positive ways.

I have countless examples of how the OA Traditions help me maintain my abstinence on a daily basis. One recent example involved me writing an article for an online news publication that highlighted my weight loss. The article was filled with direct mention of the OA fellowship because I credit OA for my physical recovery. I had the presence of mind to run the article by a few 12-step friends and I was reminded of Tradition 11 and grateful for it. I revised the article, took all direct mention of OA out, and the article was published. Other Traditions that help me tremendously are 1, 2, 10, and 12. I'm also starting to take these Traditions with me in conducting relationships with others outside the fellowship as well.

The Steps keep me from committing suicide; the Traditions keep us from committing homicide. The Traditions provide a safe environment where God is in charge, and our welfare comes first. We are not pleasing stockholders or pushing anything or anyone with the guidelines offered in the Traditions. Here I feel I can just BE ME, and learn to reach out to others.

The Traditions are part of the Big Book which states our program is a design for living. I think that Traditions 2 and 12 have been crucial in maintaining my abstinence. (I know my abstinence is not my own; God is in there with me, and a friend reminded me so is all the fellowship and the program.) I need them all plus Tradition 2 – at times I have struggled with OA. I couldn't give myself an out or my disease an out when the only authority was God as I understand Him. That God was the/is the ultimate authority. Tradition 12 – anonymity – provides me with safety and though not always maintained by others (mine has been broken), for the most part it gives me freedom to share who I am and talk about the same I still can and often carry about having this disease. And when I've been hurt, betrayed, whatever hurt that has been a product of an OA relationship/meeting, I can remind myself that our program is based on placing principles before personalities. And that anonymity being a spiritual foundation – somehow this too is a gift – maybe saying that anonymity and respecting and upholding each other's is bigger than any of us alone.

I remember Tradition 4 – autonomy. I see it as a personal goal. I am building a place to live. So it is my goal to get finished to shower at home and keep my food there; I am almost there. Financial security is an issue. I worry about the future and must get ready to make my work successful other than my day job. I find I can only do so much in a day so I have to focus on basic needs. The 4th Tradition of autonomy helps me do this.

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The OA Traditions keep me in touch with the ‘heart’ of OA – to bring relief to those of us who suffer with this compulsive eating disease. They remind me that abstinence is possible and there is a framework upon which my sobriety can rely. There is an assurance of safety knowing that there is structure & order to my place of safety. I can have confidence that a great many people before me & currently are the “watchdogs” of this organization, which has played such a tremendous role in my recovery. The 12 Traditions are the foundation on which we build a sober & sane life.

“Our primary purpose is to carry/spread the message.” When I do this by sharing my experience, strength and hope I find my abstinence becomes stronger. I meet with a group of women for breakfast before our Sunday morning meeting. We share all aspects of our life but especially we laugh together and give each other hope. We problem-solve, we discuss HP, we talk about healthy food plans, etc.

I study the Steps in the Big Book of AA. OA Tradition 3 – the only requirement for “membership” is a desire to stop compulsive eating. But to recover, the Steps have a number of ‘musts’ as part of their explanation. I ask myself and others, “Do you want to recover or just be a member?”

Tradition 5, our primary purpose, helps me to remember that I have to give it away in order to keep it. And attraction rather than promotion helps me to focus on being an example rather than preaching to people about how good our fellowship is. The unity principle helps me to remember not to gossip; we are here to help each other. Lastly, ‘principles above personalities’ helps me to deal with the different personalities and to look beyond the person’s personality to the principles they stand for. I follow some of these principles and learn from the rest.

And finally:

1. The guidelines help reduce conflict. Less conflict makes for more peace. Peace helps abstinence.
2. They keep God first – a reminder that abstinence comes from keeping God first.
3. Carrying the message to other compulsive eaters who still suffer reminds me where I was and where I am now, and that I don’t want to go back to where I was.
4. I keep the focus on OA, the Steps, and abstinence by not getting distracted by supporting outside enterprises.
5. I may develop resentments towards outside contributors that want to have more of a voice, more influence. Resentments make abstinence more difficult.
6. Promoting OA could distract me from my program.

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7. Anonymity keeps me safe and keeps me from gossip. Gossip can lead to resentments or can distract me from my program.