

Writing Exercise – November 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?

I have a new life. I had been close to this weight in my past but I considered myself fat. I was restricting my food and dieting...it didn't last. My weight gradually crept off with my ??? and dependency. Now I am eating 3 meals a day nothing in-between, working the steps, have a relationship with HP and have new friends. I am not alone anymore.

I came to OA via other 12-step groups, and my message is that unless I deal with food, I will eventually relapse in the others. I am also bipolar II and this affects my recovery, but the Big Book (How It Works) says I can recover if I am honest. For me practice and action are essential. I need to work with my sponsor on a daily basis, attend meetings, make sure I take time with the God of my understanding no matter what, read, telephone, etc., even though I “don't feel like it”, because feelings lie. I have to practice so doing those things is automatic, without thought.

I have to remain teachable. I have to face my fear and trust another member of this fellowship. If that person lets me down, then I have to trust someone else. I have to go through this process until I have told someone my whole life story because that is where the freedom comes from...telling my story.

My tapestry had areas that were either black or white. After arriving in OA I was able to introduce colors – new colors I learn about (by?) reading, writing, sponsoring and hanging around the program.

I was and am a garden variety compulsive overeater. What struck me at my first meeting was that I was told I had a disease, it wasn't my fault and that something outside myself could restore me to sanity. I also heard that I could do it one day at a time. Over the years in my physical recovery, I have had many different food plans, but they have all been plans. It's not a diet and calorie club. Emotionally, I have grown from a teenager who was always a victim to a much more mature adult. Spiritually I recognize that though I may be closer to HO at some times than others, it's always me that moves, not HP. It's just how I live my life.

OA never leaves you; you leave OA. The door is always unlocked and open...all you need to do is come into the room. The hardest part you have just done – admitting that you have a problem and walking into a room full of strangers who love you.

Weight loss is my gift, not the goal. Abstinence is my gift, not my goal. My goal is to seek out, admit, resolve and forgive or make amends for my past hurts, disappointments and character defects. I have to use the tools to work the steps in order to address what's eating me. I can't

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just think about it or study it. I have to act. I can't cherry pick what tool or step. I can't beat myself up over my powerlessness. Fighting with the food means I have to start back with that first step.

Keep coming back – learn how to be honest – face the shame – pray, pray, pray – be willing or pray for the willingness to explore your Higher Power. Face the fear.

My message is abstinence is key. Without abstinence I cannot practice sanity in any area of my life and also I would not be in recovery. My life without recovery and living in my crazy insanity is a scary and unhealthy tapestry. My life with abstinence and OA and working the 12 Steps creates a beautiful tapestry woven with hope, faith, peace, serenity, joy and love for myself and others.

My message of recovery is that no matter where your feet have lead you in life - thru valleys, over mountains, OA and the 12 Steps can heal every wound, every loss, every pain and bring you the Peace you have searched for your whole life. Give it your all. Work the Steps. Hold nothing back. Reach out your hands to take in theirs and you will never be alone or lost again. This program works – for me it was a healing of the scars in my heart and on my wrists. It healed my life of abuse, my life of rape, my life of widowhood – I know there is nothing, nothing OA and the 12 Steps and this Fellowship cannot heal. NOTHING! I am grateful for all eternity.

My first sponsor used to remind me after Intergroup that “we’re all sick people”, that along with the slogan “first things first” keeps me going in the right direction. I love how the Traditions weave themselves together to help form that tapestry.

I’m abstinent, and I put abstinence first no matter what. Work the Steps...all 12 Steps, quickly before the willingness is gone (a gift of desperation). Carry the message – we are the message. Be a sponsor, have a sponsor. Do service...service carries the message.

When you look at me, there is so much more than you see. I have been hiding so very long. Hiding under layers of fat, layers of clothing. Hiding, protecting myself. Now that I’m in recovery, I have allowed myself, with God’s help, to come out from under the protective covering. So please, look beyond what you see on the outside and look to the inner parts. There is the message. There is the true self. If you take time to study the tapestry of me, you will see a scared self, a healing self, and a hopeful self. The scared self is small and needs extra time before she can come out from under the covers. The healing self is stretching, yawning, filling up more space, reaching towards others. The hopeful self is smiling, asking questions, and sharing hugs.

I am a compulsive eater. I will always be a compulsive eater. For today, I am recovered as it says in the Big Book. There is a solution. It is the 12 Steps. Get a sponsor and take the Steps. It will change your life.

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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 7 ½ 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 gifting 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.

Q2 – What message/tidbit of wisdom about recovery have you heard *from others* that has become a part of "your tapestry"?

I rely on a HP for food security one day at a time.

Do the footwork and leave the rest to God one day at a time.

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I can start the day over at any time.

Use virtual meetings.

Keep coming back.

Don't leave before the miracle happens.

Trust God, clean house and help others.

All I can do is the best I can one day at a time.

When I judge others, I'm moving away from HP.

Stay inside my own hula hoop.

It's the Steps stupid!

Take what you can use today, store the rest.

Every person's share has a message that I can relate. If not, then was I really listening?

I cannot eat some foods I like, but I don't have to eat anything I don't like.

Everything! I knew how to eat, starve (for a while), hate myself and my body, and not have any true friends. Through the 12 Steps, I have learned to be honest, open and willing.

There are no new ideas. Keep coming back.

Service is critical to our program of recovery.

Be honest.

No half measures.

Learn to love myself.

Learn to live one day at a time.

Service carries the message.

Abstinence is the most important thing in my life without exception. Without abstinence, I have no life.

What have I done to advance my recovery? What am I doing to help others recovery?

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“That is not my circus and those are not my monkeys.” I know now that I am not in control of others and I do not need to try to manipulate anyone. I need to continue to work on myself and my own issues NOT others.

Not my circus – not my monkeys (when I have the desire to control things over which I have no control)

Believe your beliefs and doubt your doubts.

The mantra I live by – “Folks are about as happy as they make themselves out to believe.”

You have a choice whether to binge....a window to choose HP or food.

Be gentle with yourself.

A sponsor can be anyone except yourself. I went through a period of sponsoring myself and started being obsessed with food thoughts. Recently I changed sponsors as I seemed to again be sponsoring myself. I need someone who puts their own abstinence first. I need someone who will challenge me to work my program.

Pray “Let this be enough”. I’ve experienced that God always makes it enough of whatever I need...I just need to remember this phrase.

Honesty, open-mindedness and willingness

Let Go and Let God

PUSH – pray until something happens

SLOW – spiritual connection, read literature, outreach, writing (from Lifeline)

Pause, Pray, Proceed

My head is a dangerous neighborhood; I dare not go in it alone.

Love and tolerance is our code.

In terms of resentments – “bless them, change me!”

In terms of minding my own business – “this is not my circus and these are not my monkeys.”

Gossip is like slitting a feather pillow with a razor and trying to get the feathers back.

I am an ego-maniac with an inferiority complex.

Nothing happens in God’s world by mistake.

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Steps are so I don't kill myself, Traditions so I don't kill someone else, Concepts so I don't commit genocide.

What it was like before for them reminds me where I have come from.