



NOVATIONS

NORTHERN VIRGINIA OUTREACH INTERGROUP

April, 2006

REFLECTIONS ON STEP FOUR

Step 4

Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Tradition 4

Each group should be autonomous accept in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole.

Fruit:

Courage

Promise:

No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can help others.

4th Concept of Service

The Right of Participation ensures equality of opportunity for all in the decision-making process.

"Many of us had lived our lives up to this point with a secret feeling of shame" (Step 4, OA 12&12)

Shame was a huge part of my binge eating. I was ashamed of being fat, of not being able to control my eating, and of not being able to lose weight. It wasn't until I got into my 4th step that I could really take a hard look at all that shame. I realized that mostly, it wasn't from things I had done. Mostly, I was ashamed of the anger I felt towards others, especially my family members. I found out when I got abstinent, that I had A LOT of anger, and I had never truly felt it before. I had stuffed down my anger with food and turned it into shame at myself for bingeing. The 4th step inventory gave me not only a way to see that, but also a way to cope with the anger I discovered.

The 4th step I did on my father is a good example. I had a list of "grudges" against him a mile long. My mother is an alcoholic who got sober when I was about 12 years old. All the time she was drinking, my father buried his head in the sand. He had failed in a thousand ways to be a parent. All I could think of was how angry I was at his selfishness, his utter, unapologetic selfishness. As I started to write out each grievance in my 4th step inventory, I steamed over all the ways I had been damaged by his character flaw. But also I started to see that it was the same flaw in each item on the list and rather than selfishness, it really boiled down to his inability to confront his own emotions and respond to them. (contd p. 2)

THE FOURTH STEP

When I came to OA, I was scared of doing my 4th step. A "searching and fearless moral inventory" of myself sounded scary. I now realize that if I am not willing to take and complete this step, my recovery and abstinence are in jeopardy.

My fears and insecurities helped to keep me in my food addiction. Until I came into OA and was graced with recovery, I did not realize how much FEAR motivates me. Often I act or react in a certain way because one of my old buttons is pushed. I often did not even know (contd p.3)

April, 2006

STEP FOUR — JUST DO IT!

The fourth step loomed large for me when I first started program. I was terrified to take a good long look at my life—all those dark little corners and closets had a lot of gremlins hiding in them. And on top of that I knew that once I took the fourth step that I'd have to take the fifth step and that REALLY scared me. It was bad enough having to examine myself under a microscope, but to have to share the details with another person filled me with dread. Luckily there are three other grounding steps to take before the fourth step.

And I am here to say that after much procrastinating on my part (because, after all, I wanted to do the absolute perfect fourth step), my sponsor lovingly suggested I *just do it!* She suggested I try not to judge what I was writing, but to simply review the facts of my life so far. When I finally began to

write it all down it took several months and I filled a binder with all my fears, resentments, assets, etc. just as the AA Big Book recommends. But what a relief to finally drag all that stuff out of the basement and bring it to the light of day! I had been hiding so much I had been ashamed of for so long and it took so much energy to keep it hidden. It finally became easier to tell the truth than to work so hard to hide it from myself, let alone my Higher Power, or another person.

What I got to see as a result of taking the fourth step is that I am human and I've made lots of mistakes and I've said and done many things that I am not proud of—but I learned that I am not irredeemable. This program gives all of us another chance (and another, and another...) to live with clearer heads and lighter hearts. What a blessing.

--Anonymous

REFLECTIONS ON STEP FOUR contd from pg. 1

Wasn't that just what I was doing when I was binge eating? The 4th step guide I was using asked me to pray for him "as I would any sick person." As I went through this process item after item after item, I started to really feel sorry for him and my prayers became truly sincere. I realized this was his nature, he had been consistent my whole life. He didn't set out to be a failure to me as a father, he just didn't have the skills necessary for the task.

I realized the only way for me to let go of this resentment for my own recovery was to accept him as he is, "to accept the things I cannot

change." Now, I don't expect him to act differently, and I don't make myself vulnerable to this character flaw. Thus, I avoid taking on new resentments that could lead me back to the food.

I don't do it perfectly, but when I feel an old resentment re-surface or I develop a new one, the 4th step is my tool for examining it. And from my experience, I have confidence in the process. I know it has spared me years of pain I would have felt from dealing with people in my life had I not found it. I thank my HP for the wisdom of this program and for the sponsors and OA members around me who have helped me do it right. - Ali

On the web at:
www.oanova.org
Hotline Phone:
 703 823-NOVA (6682)

"..we have learned that delaying the fourth step until we feel we can do it 'perfectly' only delays our recovery."

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous

April, 2006

FOURTH STEP contd from pg. 1

I was lying to others because I was lying to myself. My self-deception was huge and kept getting larger as I kept turning to the food for comfort.

I must also remember that the 4th step is talking about a complete inventory which includes my assets. It is so easy for me to become marred in my liabilities and to not see my strengths. Yet, there is a complete person inside of me which I need to acknowledge.

As I near the end of taking my 4th step, I look with excitement and nervousness to the next steps. If I go back to step 3, I will remember that I made a decision to turn my will and live over to my God. He will provide for me. (Anon)

OA PREAMBLE

Overeaters Anonymous is a Fellowship of individuals who, through shared experience, strength, and hope are recovering from compulsive overeating.

We welcome everyone who wants to stop eating compulsively. There are no dues or fees for members; we are self-supporting through our own contributions, neither soliciting nor accepting outside donations. OA is not affiliated with any public or private organization, political movement, ideology or religious doctrine, we take no position on outside issues. Our primary purpose is to abstain from compulsive overeating and to carry this message of recovery to those who still suffer



WHEN IN DOUBT, LEAVE IT OUT.

SERVICE IS SLIMMING.

GO TO MEETINGS.

PICK UP THE PHONE BEFORE THE FOOD.

WHAT IS INTERGROUP?

Intergroup is a clearinghouse through which meetings & members can communicate quickly and efficiently for the purpose of OA business. Intergroup operates a 24 hour answering service (703 823 6682), maintains a local meeting list, publishes our monthly newsletter *Novations*, educates the public about OA, keeps the World Service Office informed of meeting changes, and plans events such as marathons and retreats to help keep our community strong. And of course we have a lot of fun doing it.

We also interact with other intergroups and Region 7 to bring our members news of additional special events and meetings outside of Northern Virginia.

Each meeting may elect a member to represent them at the monthly Intergroup meeting. All members of the fellowship are welcome. Intergroup has tons of opportunities for service! The Special Interest committees of Intergroup are:

- Communications Within
- Publicity/Communications Without
- Special Events
- Intergroup Operations

Everyone wishing to participate and lend their time and talents to these committees PLEASE join us at the next intergroup meeting.

Intergroup meets every 3rd Saturday of the month from 10a to 12p at the Hope Lutheran Church, 4604 Ravensworth Road, Annandale. Next meeting: APRIL 15TH, 2006 Come Join Us!!

NEW MEETING!!!

Steps & Literature/Discussion Meeting

Fridays, 1:10p-1:50p

New York Avenue Presbyterian Church

313 New York Avenue, NW

(2 blocks from Metro Center)

To submit a story on the Step or Tradition of the month, a slogan or any aspect of your recovery, please email the editor at mfs3@verizon.net by the third Wednesday of the month.

All articles are welcome!

April, 2006

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A MAN IN OA?

Hi! My name is Kevin; I am a grateful recovering compulsive overeater.

My first thoughts about writing this were: I hate to write! What could I possibly have to share or write about? But then I reflected on the fact that writing is a tool of the program which gives me insight into my addiction and in this case also has the added benefit of giving service.

My disease doesn't discriminate by sex, race, creed or color. It also goes into overdrive the second I think I am better than you. I can easily compare your recovery to mine. But when I reflect on the tradition to place "principles before personalities" I am forced to look at each member of our program as a "recovering person" who walks beside me on this journey to a fuller life experience...male or female.

"There is a bit of good in the worst of us and bit of bad in the best of us; we are all children of God and we each have a right to be here. When I complain about me or about you, I am complaining about God's handiwork. I am saying that I know better than God." That's what it reads on page 449 of the Big Book. My Higher Power guides me to embrace this program and everyone who enters the rooms (when I let Him, of course). And to take it a step further (pardon the pun), step 12 challenges me to carry the message and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

As a member of OA, the most important thing for me to do is to be abstinent each day and to work the steps to the best of my ability. When I do that, I can not but help to do God's will in my life. And for me that is to ask, "Were we kind and loving to all?" If I can answer "yes" to that question honestly, then (and only then) can I say that I am becoming more of a "Recovered Person" in the rooms who happens to be a man.

TRADITION FOUR

The principle of this tradition is autonomy which allows each meeting to set up its own format, guidelines and focus. But what all OA meetings, no matter where in the world they are, have in common is "Every group operates in an atmosphere which promotes recovery from compulsive overeating through the twelve steps and twelve traditions." (*The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*)

What does "affecting OA as a whole" mean? The OA 12 & 12 says that any group not using the Steps and Traditions would be "misleading compulsive overeaters about the OA program and harming the Fellowship as a whole". Meetings that do not follow the traditions bring discord to the Fellowship. The traditions insure continuity, safety and anonymity.

In 1988, the Board of Trustees decided not to register any OA group that placed "special requirements on its members." But in keeping with the idea that each group should be autonomous, also stated that meetings can establish their own requirements for speakers and leaders because this does not restrict anyone from "membership in OA." As Tradition Three states — "the only requirement for membership in OA is a desire to stop eating compulsively."

The OA 12 & 12 asks some questions regarding tradition four:

- ◆ Does our group feel there are only a few right ways of doing things in OA?
- ◆ Does our group always consider the welfare of all of OA in making group conscience decisions?
- ◆ Do we stop to consider that our groups attitudes and actions will mold many newcomer's first impressions of OA as a whole?
- ◆ Does our group practice all the traditions in our group conscience decisions? *Anon.*

April, 2006

*NORTHERN VIRGINIA OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS***12 STEP WITHIN MARATHON**

Been Slippin' n Slidin'? Struggling to get/stay abstinence? Toying with your food plan?

On the brink of relapse or in relapse? Want to avoid a relapse?

You are not alone. Most importantly, there is hope.

Join us as we share our experience, strength and hope about recovering from relapse and some of the warning signs of relapse to help prevent a relapse.

When: Saturday 22 April 2006, 1 - 5 pm

Suggested Donation: \$3

Where: St Paul's Lutheran Church 7426 Idylwood Rd Falls Church, VA

Speakers, workshops, open sharing. All are welcome whatever your eating disorder or whether or not you have had a relapse. Relapse is not contagious...Recovery is! We cannot fight this disease alone...together we can experience the miracle of recovery everyday, even from relapse.

For more information or to volunteer, please contact:

Bret S. 703-887-4237 - bretodat@email.toast.net

Amy A. 703-204-0181 - angelicma@aol.com

**WELLSPRING RETREAT**

The Washington DC Area OA Sixth Annual June Retreat Summer Solstice Weekend

June 16, 17, 18, 2006

Wellspring Retreat Center Germantown, Maryland

Accommodations are cabins in the woods, each with kitchen and lounge. Each room has a twin bed and a bunk bed. Blankets, sheets and towels are provided. Meetings are in the Wellspring Center Main Lodge. We prepare and serve our own buffet meals.

Cost is \$99 per person for two nights' semi-private lodging, meals (3 on Sat, 1 on Sun).

Registration begins Friday at 6:00 p.m.

Contact: Cheryl (301) 785-3808

Editorial Policy: The opinions expressed in *Novations* reflect those of the writers and not Northern Virginia Intergroup nor OA as a whole, or the Editor of *Novations*; nor does the publication of any article imply endorsement. The editor welcomes any and all contributions, and reserves the right to edit all articles. To submit articles email Mfs3@verizon.net



PRINCIPLES IN ACTION

Examine how you can apply this month's Step principle (courage) to your life. List three (3) actions to enhance its use in your life and then implement them. Reprinted from *Lifeline*, August 2004

April, 2006


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THE TWELVE STEPS OF OVEREATERS ANONOMOUS

1. We admitted we were powerless over food, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Make a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, ourselves and another person the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to compulsive overeaters and to practice these principles in all our affairs.