



NOVATION!

NOVA Outreach Intergroup January 2004

FOCUS ON STEP ONE

We admitted we were powerless over food -- that our lives had become unmanageable.

When I first came to OA someone told me that I had done the First Step by walking into the room. By doing that I was admitting I couldn't do it myself, that I was asking for help. It sounded great at the time, but for me it couldn't have been further from the truth. For me coming to Program gave me hope that I would gain the control that I was looking for so long. I didn't get what it truly meant to be powerless over food. I mean, it's food. I thought - "It's just _____ & _____. How could I be powerless over that?" But still I needed help--that much I knew.

After 14 months of abstinence I found out the hard way just how powerless I was over food. Face down in a box of sweets and food being delivered almost non-stop to the door--the lights off, the curtains drawn, not answering the phone. And the months that followed trying to get abstinent again. The time spent lying to myself, to sponsors to everyone. Cunning, baffling and oh so powerful!

I didn't stop coming back. Finally one day I asked someone else to be my sponsor. I gave up pretending I was abstinent. I admitted just how powerless I was. I couldn't do it anymore. The pain finally got to be too much. Not only had I hit bottom--it felt like I had been dragged across it as well.

Today I'm abstinent. I gave up doing it my way. I got a food plan from my doctor. I try to do

each day what my sponsor asks me to do. I read a lot from the big book. I call him everyday. I pray and meditate. I go to meetings. I use the phone and the rest of the tools. Most important, we are working the steps. I'm getting my life back.

Anonymous



MORE REFLECTIONS ON STEP ONE

"Only through utter defeat are we able to take our first steps toward liberation and strength."--AA 12 & 12, STEP 1, P. 23

Before I came into program, I knew something was wrong with my eating. I had embarrassed myself enough in public that I had begun to set certain rules. I would avoid certain foods in public because I knew once I started eating I would keep eating no matter what--I would take too many pieces initially, I would dab up the last crumbs, I would fight people for the last piece. I knew if I started eating these foods, inevitably I would look across the table or the room and see someone staring, shock in their eyes at my behavior.

So I had rules about eating certain things out in public. Actually, now that I look back on it, this was the beginning of program for me. Because I knew there were certain foods I could not eat sanely. It was the beginning of identifying that something was wrong.

I was not really healthy and self aware, however. I didn't see myself as fat, even though I weighed over 200 pounds. I felt I was perfectly capable of losing weight, I just couldn't always do so when I wanted to. Like many compulsive overeaters I had lost weight successfully in the past. Numerous times. I was like the old joke about the smoker who said that they had no problem quitting smoking; they had done it many times. None of my methods were working any more, however.

What I thought was that I must have some sort of allergy that made me vulnerable to certain kinds of foods. And something about that allergy also made me crave the very foods that were bad for me. If I could just get into starvation mode again, I reasoned, I would be all right. I alternated between starvation and bingeing. The only step I had taken was my attempts to have these binges in private.

In the back of my mind, I thought something was terribly wrong with me. I should be able to control this problem, I thought. I felt so alone with the problem, because I was the only one with my secrets. At other times I ignored my secret eating patterns because I thought no one else had it.

When I read the OA literature, however, when I heard you all sharing in the meetings, it was a revelation because I realized I was not alone. When I could stand and say I was powerless, it was a big step. It meant that not only was I saying that I had this secret problem but that my life was unmanageable. My solutions were not working.

It was a big step for me to relinquish the control of my own private solutions, but the reward was peace of mind within a fellowship that has guided me through 60 pounds of weight loss and which continues to inspire and support me. Once I turned all my private solutions over to my Higher Power and began acknowledging my powerlessness in the safety of these rooms, once I saw how unmanageable my way had been, I was able to seek the safety of my Higher Power and release the attempts at control which had tormented my life.

--Anonymous



A NEW PERSON INSIDE AND OUT

I've been obese since I can remember. I always knew that was what I was: an obese child, an obese teenager, an obese grownup. As such, I

suffered scorn all my life. Even my own father made fun of me. I did not like what I saw in the mirror, and I didn't like my inner self either. I was always acting or trying to imagine what people thought about me. And I always came up with the same answer: they thought I was fat and stupid.

I was an average student; I got married; I had children, and I managed to make everybody think that I was all right. But I was not. I was miserable and the only thing that made me forget my misery was to hid and eat til I almost passed out.

There were periods of my life when I managed to lose weight, but it never lasted more than a few days or maybe a few hours. As soon as I reached my goal, I managed to put it all back and a little more.

This is how I got to 253 pounds and a lot of suicidal thoughts. This is how I came to OA in January 2002. I had been in OA ten years before that, but I didn't really get it. It had just been another diet.

Now I know I'm in the right path--God's path, not Delia's path. I wake up each morning with hope. I've had many days of serenity and nothing feels better than that. I know what I have to do to have peace, and I'm willing to let God show me his way.

I'm a new person inside and out, and I thank God, the 12 Steps, and my loving OA friends for that.

Delia



GRATITUDE

I am writing this on December 20, in the midst of the holidays. But the topic does not refer to a holiday celebration, or family things.

Compulsive eating is my addiction--food my drug of choice. From early childhood I can remember being a sad, lonely child turning to food for comfort. To this day I can remember the comfort foods of my childhood, though a lot of years have gone by.

Ultimately I married, and when that marriage didn't work out, I turned to food. That old addiction. Ultimately I came to weigh 270 pounds and my physical health was adversely affected. I was pretty miserable with the marriage, with my weight, with my life in general.

In my late 20s I lost 80 pounds in a weight loss program, and, after the marriage had disintegrated, I lost more weight for a total of 100 pounds of weight loss. I spent the next ten years trying to maintain. In the end, I was not successful, and the weight was coming back on.

I learned about OA after the weight began to return. I was totally demoralized, very depressed, and I hated myself. I was desperate, didn't know what to do or where to go for help. Could this organization called Overeaters Anonymous help me?

The meeting I walked into was in a church basement and it was at the end of 1977. Don't really remember any of what was said that night. My impression was that people were honest and open--they weren't afraid to say things I wouldn't be caught dead saying out loud, although I'd certainly THINK them. And I remember specifically the leader came up and gave me a hug! I've never forgotten that.

The main things I picked up on in this thing called OA were tools, steps and people saying, "If you want what we have, you need to do what we do." But you know, the folks I watched and admired were happy, they were serene, they seemed to be acquainted with "working the steps." I came to want what they had so I stuck around. Gave a lot of service, got involved, got abstinent, that sort of

thing. Began to feel a LOT better than when I walked in that church basement the first night.

It's no longer 1977.....it's the next century, and I'm having health problems. In fact, can no longer drive my car. But I still need to get to OA meetings. Some very kind friends in program take me to meetings. What a blessing that is, to be able to get to some face-to-face meetings! For the other meetings, I now have a computer and attend online meetings. I find I can even give service at the online meetings. Giving service is essential for my program.

What am I grateful for? I'm grateful that all the years people were in and out of program, I kept coming back. In fact, I'm grateful that my Higher Power brought OA to my attention in the first place--Thank you Higher Power!

I'm grateful that I have a computer because it wasn't long ago that I didn't. And I'm grateful for the online meetings. And my abstinence--SO grateful for my abstinence. Thanks so much, HP. It's something to guard and cherish and thank HP for daily.

--Anonymous



LET'S HEAR IT FOR MEETINGS!

I've been around OA for several years now. I go to 3 or 4 meetings on a regular basis. I know most of the people there. They fit into my schedule. It's pretty comfortable. It seems to work pretty well.

The other day I went to a meeting that I had never been to. In all my years of OA I had never made it to this particular meeting. It was great. I saw some folks that I knew, others that I had never seen before. They did some things differently than I was "used to". Nothing radical mind you--just different.

It was neat--it was fresh--it almost made me feel like a newcomer again. I've decided that working pretty well isn't good enough for me. I want to shake up my program, wake up my abstinence. We are so lucky in this area to have so many meetings to choose from, yet most of us (me included) only go to a handful. And I've never really been to a bad meeting. Some are better than others, but I've also seen meetings evolve over the years. Is it possible that meeting I didn't like the one time I went to it two years ago has gotten better? Haven't I?

I've decided to give a few more meetings a chance to see what they offer. So maybe I have to drive 20 minutes! Maybe I don't get to stay home that night and watch the West Wing. Anyway--I invite you all to join me make the rounds. Even if you just check out one new meeting this month and one next month, what's the worst that could happen? You might get abstinent? You might help carry the message?

--Anonymous



INTERGROUP NEWS

December's IG meeting had a very good turn out, considering the holidays!

There is interest in holding the Unity Day event with DC/MD in February and our own annual Promises meeting in March. Dianne F. and Kate are working on these events; contact them to volunteer.



SUPPORT NOVA IG

We meet the third Saturday of each month at 10 am at Immanuel Methodist in Annandale, Heritage Drive, near Route 236 & the Beltway. This is the place to get new Where and Whens, NOVATION,

and the latest flyers for retreats. Come see what you have been missing.



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