



# Novation!

NOVA Outreach Intergroup  
July 2004

## Service & Recovery

Service has always been a critical part of my recovery. When I came into OA in 1983, a small group of us started a Friday night meeting for bulimics and anorexics. I was in charge of the literature and therefore had to be at the meeting every Friday. That bit of service kept me in the rooms even while I was in the food. Eventually I found recovery and was granted the gift of abstinence.

In one of the readings it says "Abstinence is our greatest service." That is so true. Just being abstinent can be a service. I remember going on a trip after I had been working the HOW program for a year. I called ahead to the resort and found out they served lots of salads, chicken, steak and baked potatoes as well as other foods that I needed. But I was nervous about weighing and measuring my food around strangers. But I packed my cups and scale and trusted.

Once there, I became pretty comfortable weighing and measuring. When questioned about what I was doing, I was surprised how easy it was to say "I

am on a doctor's food plan". People's reaction 9 times out of 10 was "I really should do that too."

The moment when I realized abstinence was my greatest service was one day after lunch one of the servers came up to me and said "Are you in OA?" I replied that I was and she said that she had tried it years ago but had gone back out. She had seen me weigh and measure for 4 or 5 days and wanted to know more about my program. We talked for quite a while about OA and she recalled how much better she felt when she was going to program. I don't know if she went back, she said she would, but it just showed me that one never knows how just working the program can help another person.

Anon.



## Tradition 5:

Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers.

## **Any Service, No Matter How Small**

During my early days in OA, the idea of doing service seemed overwhelming. People who led meetings struck me with awe. They seemed so confident. I sat as far back in the rooms as I could and I prayed for invisibility. What miracle rescued me from isolation and strengthened my commitment to recovery?

Early in my first months in OA, I often wanted nothing more than to go home after work, close the door, and be alone. However, that was my binging pattern before OA: leave work, hit the grocery or convenience store or drive-through, get home, lock the door, turn on the TV and eat. Therefore, I developed the habit in my first days in OA of going straight to meetings from work, even if that meant arriving at meetings a few minutes early. It kept me out of trouble. Very often, the meeting leader would thank me for coming early, confident that he or she had been afraid no one else would come. Many evenings, the remembrance of these quick conversations got me into the car and into a meeting.

Once I started going regularly to OA meetings, something in me changed. I knew I needed to hear as much as I could about other peoples' recovery. I needed to believe that if it could come true for them, it could come true for me. I also needed to hear about the tools. And, at many of the meetings, I

was handed something to read. A simple service, but difficult at first. I actually had to leave my chair, walk to the front of the room, and read something off a sheet of paper. I was quite frightened by having to do this - even though in the professional world, I performed quite a lot of teaching and public speaking! I could not imagine how I would ever have the nerve to volunteer to take a service position. But I happily put chairs away after meetings

A few months into OA, I worked with a sponsor who had the literature service for her home group. She asked me to back her up as the substitute literature person. One week I grew increasingly tired and discouraged about my life. The old longing for isolation called to me and of course I wanted to eat. But my sponsor was out of town, and I had the boxes of literature in my car. I remembered how important that literature was to me as a newcomer and I thought: how selfish it would be to deprive someone else of literature just because I was tired. The longing to eat vanished, and so did the selfish instinct to isolate. As "The Promises" say, self seeking was indeed slipping away! I went to the meeting. The miracle of service had saved me.

Today I thank my Higher Power that it wasn't part of his plan for me to recover in isolation. I thank HP for all the phone calls, the hundreds of friendly smiles bestowed so generously by fellow OAers, the warm hand squeezes after

our concluding prayers. Day by day, meeting by meeting, phone call by phone call, I emerged gradually from the isolated interior prison in which my shame kept me. Putting chairs away, reading out loud, making and returning calls, sending and answering emails, giving smiles, setting out the pamphlets: these small services are the seeds from which our fellowship grows. These may be small services, but recovery is no small miracle.

Lynn K.

### **Sponsorship and Service:**

To be a "talking Partner" to another OA traveler is a big service we can do for ourselves and for the sponsoree. I will tell a little about my experience and give a summary of the OA pamphlet **A Guide for Sponsors** which tells us why, when and how to be an OA sponsor.

I came into OA 30 years ago and wanted the diet that worked. I got a food sponsor and took off the weight and left the program and thanked the sponsor. Then for the next 15 years was on again off again. I did take the forth step with a co-sponsor. In the 90s I decided to get serious about this being a three-legged disease and started with a nutritionist, a step and food sponsor and started getting some long-term abstinence. I could not have done it without a talking partner/sponsor or sponsorees. It is a program that gets better when I give it away and when I am willing to listen to someone else's recovery and what worked and did not work; it keeps me out of the Pity pot, overreaching and building up resentments. All those lead back into compulsive overeating. Currently I am sponsoring 5 members. Three are local and 2 are by e-mail.

They keep me honest, open and willing to live my program and turn the rest over to my Higher Power.

A sponsor is basically a talking partner. A sponsor has something you want. A sponsor is another OA member who shares their message to the best of their ability. A sponsor can work the steps and/or listen to your food. As a sponsor I listen, I support and I understand. I am not a doctor, lawyer, therapist or dietician. I need to sponsor to reinforce my recovery and keep me from isolating. I also need to give back what I have gotten. I can become a sponsor anytime. I share at my level - there is no perfect sponsor. When I am asked to sponsor I discuss expectations and lay the groundwork for sharing. Are we going to talk daily, at a certain time, for how long, what if it doesn't work? The clearer our expectations are the more we will get out of this relationship. It is best to be abstinent so I can have clarity and listen with an open and clear mind and heart. I can sponsor by mail, fax, phone, e-mail or in person. Whatever is necessary.

I learned how to sponsor by being a sponsoree. I was taught by example. Just do it.

Gail, Arlington Sunrise

This July issue of Novation is sponsored by the NOVA Intergroup leadership. Naturally the topic is "Service." Speaking of service, special thanks go to Kristin K. who has served as editor for two years. She did a great job. She is now moving on to new adventures in her life. Best wishes, Kristin. I get to be the interim editor for this issue and will turn the reins over to Mary Frances, who has graciously agreed to serve as editor, who will begin with the September issue. Yea! I'm sure that she will welcome articles. You can reach her at 703-379-0863 or via email at: [mfs@his.com](mailto:mfs@his.com)

**STEP SEVEN - Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.**

*Dear God,*

*Please remove my shortcomings right now. Oh yeah, but return them to me when I need them to protect myself.*

I remember asking this of God early in my OA journey. In continuing on my OA journey with God, I have learned that I have changed and must change in order to be abstinent, sane, and healthy. With positive changes I can not keep the character defects and shortcomings of the sick person I used to be. I know what humility is and I am very humble to God for my wonderful life and OA fellowship.

Step Seven taught me the difference between humility and humiliated. I no longer have to be humiliated or allow anyone to humiliate me. However, I can be humble and the best person God intended me to be.

My better new prayer starts like this now.

*Dear God,*

*I humbly ask that you remove my character defects and shortcomings because I have no use for them in my new life. You are my protector in all my affairs.*

Pia



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**Service Opportunity:**

NOVA Outreach Intergroup is searching for a group to sponsor the September/October workshop. This workshop topic is Sponsorship. This topic should include the new pamphlet "Dignity of Choice". The workshop will be at least three (3) hours, preferably on a Saturday afternoon. Dates not to be selected are September 4, 5, and 25.

If your group is interested in sponsoring this workshop please contact Pia at (703) 669-2548.

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