



CARRYING THE MESSAGE IN CALIFORNIA, MEXICO, HAWAII AND NORTHERN NEVADA

What's New

OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS ■ REGION 2 ■ SPRING/SUMMER 2013

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The Year of Abstinence Awareness

2013 is the Year of Abstinence Awareness. What is abstinence? "Abstinence in OA is the action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight. Spiritual, emotional and physical recovery is the result of living the OA Twelve-Step program."

For me to abstain from compulsive eating I need to work the Steps, use the Tools, adhere to the Traditions and Concepts and practice these principles in all my affairs. A tall order, but I am a hard case. I need to say Steps 1, 2 and 3 every morning to remind myself that I am a compulsive overeater, that I have this disease and that there is a solution in the Steps. Phew. This gets me on the path of recovery each day. Otherwise, I forget.

If I run into trouble with emotions or food behaviors, I have the Steps and the Tools to help me deal with what comes up. The nine OA Tools are writing, literature, meetings, sponsorship, anonymity, service, telephone, plan of eating and action plan.

My first impulse may be to reach for the food but thanks to this program, I don't have to eat compulsively. I don't have to do it alone. If I make a mistake – and I have made many – I can make amends. I don't have to get into the food and then into that vicious cycle of self-hate, more food and more hate. Thank goodness that with abstinence I have a choice.

I hope you all can be abstinent and stay abstinent, one day at a time. That's all we have. Without abstinence I would not be alive today. With abstinence I have a fulfilling life and a loving marriage of 30 years – a true miracle, resulting from my developing a working relationship with my Higher Power, through the Steps.

May HP be with you.

*Meg H., R2 Trustee
March 2013*

POWERLESS

A Compulsive Overeater in Recovery

Greetings all, from Felina, COE in recovery.

From the get-go, there were lots of concepts I liked about 12-Step recovery in OA. I loved the acceptance. I loved that I felt you understood what I was going through. I loved that you never shamed me but encouraged me gently. I loved the sense of camaraderie and connection. I loved the hugs.

What I didn't like so much was - surprise, surprise - the notion of powerlessness. In fact, I hated it. I did not *want* to be powerless over food - I wanted to be in control! Thankfully for me, I was bloodied and bruised and *knew* that the food (sugar, especially) would always beat me down. That visceral experience of powerlessness provided the fuel for my willingness to do as I was told.

You told me to write down and commit my food, to get a sponsor, to go to meetings, to make calls and do all, to work the steps. And I did. As a result, my obsession with food has been lifted to a *huge* degree. I am still a compulsive overeater and I still use food to coat the nerves on occasion (as I did yesterday!). But it is nothing like it was when I came into program.

And so, as my life has gotten so much better in recovery, more and more things have come up for healing. My HP keeps putting situations in front of me in which I am forced to work my steps.

And as I do, life gets better.

Right now, I am struggling with some heavy duty stuff, namely PTSD from sexual abuse and incest that is making my life unmanageable. I hate, hate, hate that this is my experience right now. I have had enough pain already, haven't I?! Can't I just rest a bit?

Over to you...

- Are you powerless over anything in your life? Food or anything else?
- What is the difference between being powerless and being helpless?
- Do you avoid certain triggers (whether foods or situations) and try to control your experience? How is that different from accepting that you are powerless?
- What do you need to work your steps on today?
- Is there anything else in this share that you identify with or would like to share about? Sharing your experience, strength and hope matters and just may help you abstain today!

In talking with my sponsor this morning, it became clear to me that I had not accepted that I am completely powerless over my PTSD. I have been trying my whole life to avoid and pull away from situations that would trigger it, like thinking that going to a fasting retreat at a spa would "cure" me of my obsession with food. I have been trying to control it. Today I can clearly see that that is just not going to cut it.

I don't have to like the fact that I am powerless, but my own experience proves to me that I am. My whole life I felt that I

"should" be able to control it: I was raised as a good little girl in an alcoholic home where having feelings or being scared was not acceptable. I was supposed to be tough, to be able to "handle" everything that came at me.

Today I am not a little girl. And I am very much powerless. I am not, however, helpless and that makes all the difference. I can work my steps on this, share with other fellows, reach out to others with whom I might identify, and be patient. Just as my Higher Power, to a large extent, has removed my obsession and compulsion around food and sugar, I know that it will also happen in this area of my life. Not on my terms, not on my time, but on HP's.

Thanks for allowing me to be of service. I am hurting right now. But this, too, shall pass. Most

importantly ... I am not alone anymore!

Love and gratitude,

Felina





At the OA Region 2 Convention in Palm Springs, June 28-30, 2013

Is there a better way - and place - to "let go" than with your fellow OA members in beautiful Palm Springs, California? The upcoming Region 2 Convention is your chance to do just that. Join us from Friday, June 28 through Sunday, June 30 at the fabulous Palm Springs Hilton. If you are fortunate enough to be able to come in early and/or stay late, you can swim, sun, spa, hike the trails, hit a local restaurant or two and combine 45 hours of OA with hours of Palm Springs fun.

Do you remember your early days in the program? How much of an adjustment it was and how you cherished the members who reached out to help and welcome you? Well, think about that welcome multiplied by a hundred. You will hear stories from people whose paths you might otherwise never cross. OA members from Region 2 (California, Mexico, Hawaii and northern Nevada), the rest of the country and possibly the world will be sharing their experience, strength and hope.

In the past 20 years of being an OA member, every convention I've attended has left me feeling inspired, energized and ready to take on the world. I encourage you to Let Go of your fears and worries and let the sun shine on you!

To make this an even more special event, volunteer and be a part of the team. To see what's on the program, to register or to volunteer, visit www.aa.R2org!



Lillian M.
Convention PI Co-Chair

HP Helps Us With Our Challenges

Because of the rising cost of health insurance, we decided to change in 2013 from an HMO to a PPO. The open enrollment always comes at the end of the year. As a result, I made a decision to have a lapidus bunionectomy on December 17, 2012.

I knew it would be a challenge to go through the holidays without doing the last minute shopping, food preparation, and so forth. I knew it would be a challenge to allow other people to do the holiday things that were my favorite things to do. I knew it would be a challenge to go from Oakland to the Board meeting in Irvine two weeks later. I knew it would be a challenge to take classes one month after surgery to keep on track for a new career. I knew it

Six more great reasons to come to Palm Springs

1 **A weekend of amazing recovery.** Incredible workshops, **round-the-clock marathon**, special focus meetings, and inspiring speakers!

2 **Fun entertainment on Friday and Saturday nights.** Recovery-related music, comedy and a play.

3 **Beautiful hotel location in the heart of Palm Springs.** Walking distance to shopping, restaurants, the famous statue of Marilyn Monroe and much more! Come early on Thursday night to enjoy the local street fair. (We will also have OA meetings on Thursday.)

4 **Serenity walks and three meditation sessions.**

5 **Great shopping** at the clothing boutique plus amazing silent auction prizes and lots of other fun!

6 **Carry the message.** Registering, volunteering to do service, buying a T-shirt or spreading the word helps *your* program and helps to carry the message to other compulsive overeaters in our region.

would be a challenge to let go of a few favorite things, such as driving my car, going out with friends and swimming. I had to *let go* of my fears, seek my HP's will for me, and turn my will over to His.

I found new freedom in letting go of my old lifestyle, which I had thought I could not live without. My Higher Power has been very gracious. I made it through my recovery abstinently and even released 10 pounds and adopted four new sponsees. I accomplished more than I could have if I had been at work. I kept looking at what I *could* do, not at what I *couldn't* do. I am amazed at how little I know about what I can and cannot do. I am going to do surgery again on the other foot on June 3!

Linda M.
Ceres, CA

Stay in the Rooms and Give Service

My OA journey began when, after three years, I disclosed to my therapist that I had a problem with food. I couldn't stay on a diet for very long, lose weight or keep it off, and I loved my sweets. She suggested OA and I said, "Not another meeting," as I was already attending other twelve step meetings.

That was in 1989. At my first OA meeting, it was suggested that I purchase copies of the AA Big Book and AA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, which I did. I attended OA meetings from 1989 to 1996. I am a slow learner, but the program was planting seeds that would develop years later. I never considered myself a compulsive overeater – I just had a problem with food.

In 1996, I left the OA rooms for four years after both my dad and my best friend from high school died. I couldn't cope with these losses and with my feelings. During those four years, I really got to see my disease in action. I have heard it said that OA ruins our ability to eat normally and enjoy food again. I was miserable. I gained all my weight back and more. My mother was aging and I was helping her out. Those were painful years, mainly because my eating was out of control. I knew what I needed to do but was unwilling to commit to the OA program.

In March of 2000, I was driving home from my mom's house. It was pouring rain and I was

stuck in traffic. I was in so much pain, which I thought was due to what I was going through with my mom. I cried out to God, "Please help me!" And I heard the words, "7:00 a.m., Saturday morning." I said, "No, not that early in the morning."

I thought it was all about my mother, but it was really about me, because I was going crazy. I returned to that 7:00 a.m. OA-HOW meeting, looking for sanity. I knew that was the only place I could experience it. I got a sponsor in three weeks and started working the steps. I ate weighed and measured meals with no sugar or

white flour. I weigh and measure because my switch to knowing how full I am is broken. This helps me to be sane around my food.

I followed the guidelines but always thought I could eventually eat like a normal person again. It took me a long time, through many slips and relapses, to admit that I was a sugar addict and powerless over certain foods.

During the years I was struggling, I developed a mantra: "Stay in the rooms." I felt if I couldn't do anything else, I could still show up at a meeting. I may be eating both before and after the meeting, but for one hour or more I was abstinent and hearing about program.

I will have two years of back-to-back abstinence in April. Today, I find that food is a non-issue for me. I eat my three weighed and measured meals and then go about my day. This is a miracle, as food was on my mind every waking hour for most of my life. My program feels much stronger because I am working all the steps, using my tools and giving service at meetings, Intergroup and Region 2.

I never thought that I would be a Region 2 Rep, as I didn't want to deal with the business aspect of OA. I am finding the Assemblies very informative and supportive of my program. I am part of the Twelve Step Within Committee and I get to be part of carrying the message to those who still suffer. All this service helps me to remain abstinent and balanced. I have learned so much about myself and about handling the difficulties that arise in a day.

I am so grateful that I stayed in the rooms. "Don't leave before the miracle happens."

Maureen H.

Young People Committee

The Young People Committee is continuing to work on the goals set at the Fall 2012 Assembly.

- We have reviewed the current literature available from World Service for use in our efforts.
- We are reviewing online resources from other regions for ideas with which to move forward.
- We are targeting educational institutions and creating plans to provide guest speakers and literature at school sites.
- We are reaching out to Alateen for experience, strength and hope to aid with the dynamics of working with youth.
- We are looking into creating a blog to communicate with teens about eating issues, since young people are very engaged with technology.

We look forward to our continued work at the next R2 Assembly.

Val T., Chair

Willingness to Go to Any Length

I have been plagued by headaches for many years now. Last fall, my new neurologist told me of an old medicine that might give me some relief. I was eager to try it. We started with a low dose and increased it each week to a maximum of 100 mg per day. My headaches lessened in frequency and severity, which was a blessing.

Unfortunately, the drug greatly stimulated my appetite and I started to gain weight. Over a period of three months, I gained 20 pounds and I was just stunned. It took me a while to realize that the pill was the culprit. I am a 10-year veteran of OA, very active in service, and I thought I had gotten beyond being done in by food cravings. I was so wrong!

I saw all my OA progress – abstinence as well as physical, emotional, and spiritual growth – going down the drain. I came home from a long road trip and started looking at what I could do. First, I got off the drug that increased my appetite. Second, I did a bit of research and came up with a radically new meal plan. Instead of my original “meat and potatoes” plan, I am now blending fruits and vegetables with dairy or soy for protein, whenever possible. When eating out, I stick with chicken or fish. I have lost the weight I gained by following the food plan I was led to by my Higher Power.

My friend Rusty calls this willingness to go to any length Step 0. Only with the help of my Higher Power, the support of my sponsor and my OA family have I been willing to give up that pill and eat in a new and different way.

Michael D.
R2 Publications Coordinator

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OA Newcomer Testimony

Growing up, our home was full of love and laughter, as well as rage and tears. My parents fought, my brother harassed me sexually, and I felt very alone. When we gathered for dinner, however, everyone seemed content, and so I began to associate food with happiness.

After my parents divorced when I was 12, I ate food to quiet the raging storm inside my soul. I learned that food, even for a moment, rescued me from my pain. Though I was grateful for the brief periods of peace, I was ashamed. I hid, sneaked, lied, and even fantasized about food. I have been eating to comfort and numb my broken heart ever since.

Until 30 days ago, that is, when I walked into an Overeaters Anonymous meeting. I thought I would discover a new diet and we would all deprive ourselves and suffer together! What I found was a group of people who were telling my story, and I heard hope and recovery from the insanity that was consuming me. For the first time in my life I don't feel alone, I have real hope, I have freedom from the obsession, and I have a growing intimate relationship with God. I am peeling away the layers of pain and resentment, and I am learning new ways to cope with life. I have found joy, peace, and self-love beyond what I ever dreamed possible, and this is only the beginning!

Melanie H.
Modesto, CA

2013 World Service Convention



Theme

Recovery to Rock Our World

Dates

August 29-September 1, 2013

Venue

Cleveland Marriott Downtown
at Key Center
127 Public Square
Cleveland, Ohio

Registration is now open!

Register online at oa.org.

To receive the latest Convention updates, please email conventioninfo@oa.org and give your name, state/country and email address.

For those who don't know,
Cleveland is near Akron!

Surrender Is an Unconscious Event

In 2011 I moved from New York to Santa Cruz and began a new life. Two months after my arrival, I started going to OA meetings and four months after that I became abstinent, eating three meals a day with nothing in between. The insanity that I had lived with for more than 50 years – the bingeing, the constant grazing and the endless preoccupation with food – began to lift. I was in the pink cloud of my OA honeymoon.

Abstinence was easy for about a year. I ate healthy, moderate meals, released about 50 pounds, worked the Steps, became a spon-

sor and gave service at meetings and at Intergroup. During this year I increased the distance that I could walk from one block to a mile and a half. I stopped using the cane that I had not been without since 2008. I had a spring in my step. I was happy. Life was good.

What happens when the honeymoon is over? Everyday life intervenes and the real work begins. And so it happened about a year into my abstinence. I started having little slips. Nothing major, not every day, but my abstinence was not as clean as it had been.

Thanks to this program, I did not consider myself a failure. I forgave myself and got back to my abstinence. Over the ensuing months, however, the slips became more frequent and I had a few out-and-out binges. I learned that my disease is a very sneaky creature – one misstep can open the floodgates.

I was in a familiar place, one that I had experienced on all of my diets, when I would give in to the cravings, throw up my hands and once again let the compulsive eating take control of my life. I didn't know what else to do. However, this time was different. I still didn't really know what to do, but I had my OA program and my

Higher Power. Relying on what I had often heard in meetings, I went back to Steps 1, 2 and 3. I reconfirmed that I was powerless over food, which made my life unmanageable; I reconfirmed my belief in a higher power who could restore me to sanity.

But when it came to Step 3, turning my will and my life over to God, I was stumped. I realized that I hadn't really surrendered when I worked on Step 3 the first time, and that now I wasn't *willing* to surrender and I didn't know *how* to surrender. I puzzled over these issues and I prayed about them as well. From the book *Overeaters Anonymous* (the brown book), I knew that surrender is an unconscious event. Still, I wanted to understand. I wanted to *know*.

My slipping and sliding from abstinence continued and one morning, after praying for guidance, I remembered "act as if." Ah! I didn't have to understand surrender! I could just act as if! That same day, I got the message to create a food plan for the day, write it down and follow it, which I did. The second day, after I finished eating my allotted food for dinner, I got the thought to have a little bit more. My disease was ready with the justification for this small addition to what was on my food plan. Reaching for the dish, I heard, "This is what being willing and surrendering means. God gave you his plan for this meal. You want to take back control and change it. Surrender means letting go of control and following what God wants you to do."

I withdrew my hand from the dish, got up from the table and moved on to the next right thing. I didn't think about food again until breakfast the next morning.

**Marion
Santa Cruz, CA**

Report From the Twelfth Step Within Committee

Committee Goals

- Assist groups in the region in providing a safe space for those trying to attain abstinence as well as for those still struggling.
- Assist groups with resources and ideas for relapsing and struggling members.
- Ask R2 Board to increase the budget for booth costs from \$50 to \$100. **COMPLETED.**

Current Projects Underway

- Identified committee member to be responsible for keeping the Relapse/Recovery Speaker list updated. List has been submitted to R2 Vice Chair.
- Develop a plan to offer support to Intergroups with R/R meetings, events and issues.
- Develop a monthly "nugget" for submission to newsletters in the region. One has been sent out in January. The February one will be out soon.

Agenda for Next Assembly

- Organize an information booth for the yearly R2 Convention to address R/R in the region.
- Develop new goals.
- Discuss ongoing committee efforts.
 - Update from Fall 2012 Assembly

What's New From WSO

2013 is the Year of Abstinence Awareness

Look for articles and stories on abstinence in A Step Ahead, Lifeline, and in this newsletter.

Useful Literature on Abstinence

Available from oa.org

- A Commitment to Abstinence
- A Plan of Eating
- Dignity of Choice
- Maintaining a Healthy Weight
- Recovery Checklist
- Before You Take That First Compulsive Bite, Remember...

- Think First ...
- The Abstinence Book

Meeting Abstinence Checklist

- Are abstinent sponsors recognized?
- Is the definition of abstinence included in the meeting format?
- Is there literature on abstinence available for purchase?

The Index for the OA Twelve & Twelve

The [index](http://www.oa.org/pdfs/1212Index.pdf) for the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous is available for free download at www.oa.org/pdfs/1212Index.pdf.

New! Expanded Spanish Literature Offerings

The WSO has expanded its Spanish literature offering with the following items.

- *Sólo Por Hoy* (For Today) #984S/US\$9.50
- *Guía Para El Inventario Del Cuatro Paso* (Fourth-Step Inventory Guide) #491S/US\$4.50
- *Los Miembros De OA Vienen En Todos Los Tamaños* (OA Members Come in All Sizes) #110S/US\$1.25
- *Apadrinando Con Los Doce Pasos* (Sponsoring Through the Twelve Steps) #220S/US\$.75
- *A La Familia Del Comedor Compulsivo* (To the Family of the Compulsive Eater) #240S/US\$.25
- *Al Adolescente* (To the Teen) #280S/US\$.60
- *Damos La Bienvenida Al Hombre Que Desea Dejar De Comer En Exceso Compulsivamente* (To the Man Who Wants to Stop Compulsive Overeating, Welcome) #290S/US\$.50
- *El Libro de Trabajo de los Doce Pasos de Comedores Compulsivos Anónimos* (The Twelve-Step Workbook of OA) is now available as an e-publication. This is a PDF download with unlimited space in which to type your answers to the questions. #992SV/\$5.00

WSO Strategic Operations Plan

At WSBC 2013, we will be creating a new plan for 2014-17. The main focus for 2014 will be Our Primary Purpose. What is our primary purpose? The Board of Trustees came up with these answers:

- To abstain from compulsive eating and to carry the message to those still suffering;
- That recovery from the devastating disease of compulsive eating is possible through working the 12-Step program of OA;
- That getting and staying abstinent is possible;
- That we recover spiritually, emotionally and physically;
- That we learn to practice the principles of this program in all our affairs;
- That we have a responsibility to be the message;
- That in recovery we are happy, joyous, free, well and whole; and
- That we can stay abstinent through all circumstances.

How would *you* define Our Primary Purpose?