



Shares & Cares

Greater Omaha Intergroup • Overeaters Anonymous

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The Evolution of a Higher Power

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First You were the God of my Childhood. A religious, unfeeling, uncaring God. The God who watched my torments and my shame, who lurked in dark churches and hid behind formal prayers. You were unreachable and I hated You. At my second meeting, I announced that fact into the stunned silence of the group. It took me years to figure out people weren't stunned, only listening. I longed to be heard.

You heard my pain and so You became the God of my Desperation. I prayed to You through gritted teeth when the food was too loud to endure. I held hands with strangers and chanted half-memorized prayers. I got down on my knees because I didn't know what else to do. I tried to forgive the indiscretions of my childhood and wept my frustrations in the rooms of the Fellowship. And gradually my pain began to ease as my ties in program grew.

And so You became the God of my Meeting. Each week I came home to Your arms. The rooms in which I found You were rosy-colored and beautiful! I was welcome at last and all was well. Your voice had a dozen faces but more than a dozen opinions! There was work to be done that I couldn't do alone. I began to crave something more intimate and private.

Thus, You became the God of my Sponsor! Oh wise and wonderful sponsor! I forgave Your goofy assignments and Your laughter at my best laid plans because what You said helped the world make sense. I did service and made phone calls and contributed to my recovery in ways I never had before. Whenever I had a doubt, I could always call You and You had the answer. I began to work the steps. The steps helped me climb higher and get a better view of You.

As I learned to see You better, You again became the God of my Childhood. But this time, I learned to see You for You and not the circumstances in which we first met. I learned that I could reshape my perceptions of You. That I didn't have to be afraid of You because You only wanted the best for me. I found out You loved everyone the same, even the people who had hurt me the most! God, that pissed me off! But it earned my trust too. I renamed You and You became G.O.D. (Good Orderly Direction). I could be safe with You. We learned to hear each other in a new way ... through songs on the radio, through the beauty of nature, through silence. It made me want to know You even more. I made a commitment to You. I gave You my will and my life.

And so You became the God of my Understanding. You can take me being mad at You, redefining You or blaming You for all my troubles. At first I hated you but you could even take that too. You don't provide parking spaces or messages through songs on the radio anymore, but You're happy to take credit for them when they appear. You don't perform miracles, except for the spiritual kind and that's okay with me. You're not afraid to tell me the truth in any situation. You help me know what my morals are and keep me operating inside of them. You are my gut, my intuition, my soul. I know I have a relationship with You because I feel joy in my life. Sometimes it's hard to listen to You when no one else in my life is agreeing with what You are telling me, but I know it's worth it if I do because You want the best for me in any circumstance. You're the rock I stand on when everything else is stormy and uncertain. With You, I know I am okay, no matter what!

-Anonymous

God, grant me the serenity...

My Recovery Now Depends More on the Phone

The better part of 2007, I worked the steps on abstinence and isolation – my tendency to overeat (even small amounts) and my defect of hiding from others whatever is happening in my life. This was a tough cycle of steps, but in recent years, I've had so much recovery from working the steps on specific issues (such as trust, shame, boundaries) that I knew there would be some kind of payoff.

Here's what I got: on the abstinence side, I got a more restrictive food plan that has resulted in the loss of 1-2 inches off my waist and a renewed desire to eat more healthily. But, I also have to plan my meals every day and make a phone call if I decide to deviate from my plan. In other words, if I plan to have a sandwich, salad and fruit for lunch, but circumstances make that impractical (let's say my wife eats the last of the bread for breakfast and there's no time to buy more), then it's part of my abstinence to call before changing

that sandwich to a taco.

Wow, you say, that's harsh. Yeah, it sometimes feels that way. But my former food plan involved often making snap decisions about meal changes that were "event-oriented." I wanted entertainment instead of nutrition. And for me, a compulsive overeater, entertainment is a nonstop thing once I allow it to get started.

So today, I'm making my phone calls. And this also forces me to confront whatever's bugging me and making me want to eat. It gets me out of my head. I would love to tell you that the payoff has been great, but I'm not doing it that consistently yet. I'm still learning to let God help me through others. It's a matter of willingness to use the tools. But I'm doing better at it, and I have seen that by facing my compulsion without fear, it loses its power over me.

Happy New Year!

-Jeff T.

Set Aside Prayer

God, please help me to set aside all the things I think I know about myself, other people, the 12 steps, the Big Book, you, and especially my recovery, so that I can have a new experience with an open heart and mind, regarding myself, other people, the 12 steps, the Big Book, you, and especially my recovery.

Facing Life and Living in the Moment

I've always been a daydreamer. I remember daydreaming when I was a little girl and it has continued well into my adulthood. It has been a way for me to escape from real life and imagine my life how I think it should be or wish it would be.

I have been abstinent for over a month with a 5½ pound loss to show for it. This has been one of my longest and best stretches of abstinence since being in OA. The interesting thing about this abstinence is that the daydreaming has come roaring back. The daydreams have been so intense at times that I have unconsciously stopped whatever I was doing (including walking up stairs) because I became immersed in them. I have come to realize that when the food was taken away there was still a part of me that didn't want to deal with the real life that had been "smoothed over" by the food. As a result, I subconsciously resorted to

daydreams to avoid dealing with life.

I don't want to avoid life anymore. I want to experience every moment, good and bad, because I now believe those experiences are what make life worth living and enrich it. It isn't always easy but it is life. When the daydreams start I remind myself that if their content is meant to happen it will because my Higher Power will always take care of me and bring to me what I need. If it doesn't happen

then I don't need it and I'm wasting my time wishing for it to happen. I also remind myself to "live in the moment" because if I don't life will pass me by and I won't experience everything it has to offer.

Facing life is scary. I don't know if I have the strength but then I guess I don't need strength, I just need to rely on my Higher Power. Thy will be done.

- SJTD

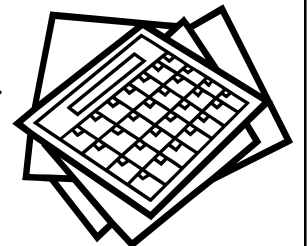
Mark Your Calendar ... Upcoming Intergroup Meetings

- Monday, February 11, 2008
- Monday, March 10, 2008
- Monday, April 14, 2008

Come Join Us for the Business Side of O.A.

**6:15 p.m. at Unity Church
3424 North 90th Street**

BABYSITTING AVAILABLE!!!!



...to accept the things I cannot change,

Recovery Mathematics

I woke up feeling so alone. I wondered, why am I feeling this way? I'm on Step 9 and I've been making my amends ... aren't I suppose to be feeling happy, joyous and free by now? I dragged myself out of bed and started to plan my day. It's a nice day for January. Should I go for a walk? Maybe I should do the last of my Christmas returns? The list of possibilities swirled around and around in my already overworked brain. I stay in my head most of the time. Restless, irritable, discontent — it always comes back to these 3 perfectly descriptive words. What I needed was a spiritual connection, a good dose of "heart" — perhaps this would lead to some direction and guidance for my day. Prayer, meditation and a good cup of coffee was in order!

It didn't take long before the water works started flowing. I had so many things I was feeling yucky about. I won't bore you with the long list but it all comes down to this — SELF PITY! My meditation revealed the need to get out of myself and be of service to others. The thought "newsletter" came to mind ... so here I am. For those of you who don't know, the newsletter

has been short on articles. I think we actually missed the normal newsletter release because there were no submissions. Ever since I've heard this I've been thinking, "nobody seems to care about OA anymore." This OA program is lacking in this-and-that and this-and-that. But did I stop what I was doing and write an article? No. So, here I am today, writing and sharing.

What is the point of my submission? I'm asking myself that very question. I guess it's this — participation is the key to harmony. If I stop "thinking" and start "participating," my life gets a whole lot better and happiness, joyousness and freedom reign supreme. I can be a mental hopeless tragedy one minute and then HP reminds me to think of others and take action in my life and the sun starts shining and the birds begin to sing. Self pity breeds despair. I sit and think and stew about all that is wrong with my world. I take inventory of what others need to be doing differently. All the while, I don't want to do anything but dwell on the hopelessness of it all. That, for me, is my disease. Prayer and meditation opens

the door to my HP — add a healthy dose of willingness and I'm writing this article, hopping in the shower, making one OA outreach call and before you know it, I'm participating in this thing called life.

Self pity makes me a victim to life. Participation and reaching out to others gives me a life worth living. Here's the formula: Focus on what I don't have + Focus on what I think is wrong with others in the world = A huge hole in my being, with despair and hopelessness that engulfs me. Or, instead, I could apply *this* formula to my daily living: Prayer and meditation + Willingness to follow directions + Being of service to others = Gratitude and peace. The thing is, my way doesn't work. I must be willing, one day at a time, to do things differently. It is a hamster wheel of willingness day in and day out. I am thankful to all those who have shared the solution with me.

Oh, and before I close this out — I think it is quite humorous that after making 3 amends I think I should be 100% happy, joyous and footloose-fancy free. I always want to put forth minimal effort and get

Your turn! Journaling Topics:

1. How has the concept of my Higher Power evolved through the course of my recovery?
2. Which tools play a strong role in my recovery? In what ways can I better utilize the remaining tools in my recovery?
3. In what ways do I avoid dealing with life? Do I rely on my Higher Power at these times? How can I rely on my Higher Power more?
4. Do I focus on what I don't have or on what I think is wrong in others? What is the result in my life of such focus? Do I pray and meditate? Am I willing to follow directions and be of service to others? What gifts might these things bring to my life?
5. Am I waiting for my weight to change before loving myself and living my life? What can I do today to embrace the recovery that God has given me?

the courage to change the things I can...

Because I Deserve Better!

When I came back to Program in January 2006, I wore a poncho that I had crocheted myself, which was incredibly too large for me and had large holes in it, by design. I did not own a winter coat because I was unwilling to go coat shopping, as I was convinced that it would be a fruitless, disheartening endeavor, just like it always was when I was a child. I knew that the sleeves would be way too tight and I would feel ugly and look like someone had stuffed me into a heavily insulated sausage casing. So I just wore my holey poncho, a scarf and some gloves. That was it. All winter.

That first meeting back, I also wore the only pair of work pants I owned. They were black. I'm not sure what top I was wearing, but I know that my hair was dirty and my teeth had not seen a toothbrush for a few days, at least.

As my sponsor and I began to work together and as winter progressed, she at one point asked me where my winter coat was.

"I don't have one."

"Okay. So when are you going shopping?"

"Shopping?" I said, in the same tone I would use to say, "You want me to wrestle an angry grisly bear?!" I was not planning to spend any money on myself until I weighed 220 again! (I was at 320 at that point.) Hence, no shopping for a winter coat. Then she found out about the pants. Same question—when was I going shopping?

"Oh, I'm waiting until I lose some more weight."

Then she reminded me that I wouldn't want my child to have only one pair of pants. I would feel like a bad parent. I had to admit that was

true. And she asked me why it should be any different for me. I went out and got some new pants. It felt so good.

Why *should* it be any different for me? Don't I deserve to have clothes that fit, that I feel good in? Whether it's a new bra, having more than one pair of pants or decent clothes to wear to work, don't I deserve that? For years, the only reason I bought new clothes is when I had to — because my place of employment, which has a professional dress code, would threaten to fire me if I didn't come to work properly dressed.

Waiting until I weighed less was part of my disease. I hid out and ate more because I felt disgusting and not like someone other people would want to be around. I was putting off a fuller living experience.

What am I really telling myself when I decide to wait until I'm thin before I'm valuable enough to be properly clothed? I'm telling myself that I'm no one at this weight, that I'm not valuable enough to have a coat. In my world, at this time, only thin people deserved to have winter coats and more than one pair of pants, not to mention clean teeth and hair.

Hmmm. That sounds a bit unmanageable. Where have I heard that word before?

Working the steps has changed my life! These days, I don't come close to getting fired because my clothes are too tight or too loose or inappropriate. I not only have a winter coat, I have THREE pairs of pants for work plus a pair of jeans, and I plan to get another two pairs for work since there are five days in the work week. I have cute tops and a skirt with sparkly things that I absolutely love, as well as a lighter coat for spring and fall and some sweaters. WOW! When it's time

to get dressed for work, I look forward to it because it's kind of fun to wear clothes that fit and look good on me. And I haven't lost 100 pounds by any means. This process of recovery started before I'd lost any weight in OA.

I also found out that I didn't have to go through this process alone. So I asked around and found out some great places for plus size women to shop. I had to have an OA friend go with me to ensure I would spend money on myself and to help me pick out things that I would not have picked for myself. My OA friend even had a coupon for me to use. We went shopping and there were even sales. It was like God was helping me. We had so much fun. It wasn't a bad experience in any sense.

So if you are wandering around thinking you need to wait to lose weight before you get some clothes that fit, if your clothes are stained, torn or just don't fit and you think you don't deserve better, remember, that is your disease talking, not your HP. Your HP wants you to love yourself and value yourself AT ANY WEIGHT. Your HP wants you to start RIGHT NOW. Remove the clothes that don't fit from your closet — toss them or sell them, whatever works. Get rid of the clothes you hate but put up with anyway. Same goes for the ones that you're waiting to fit into again. Believe me, clothing manufacturers across America are constantly making more clothes just for you!

Don't make your weight into your HP. It doesn't decide whether you're a valuable person or not. It is just a number and it changes. It shouldn't run your life.

My HP loves me at any weight, and I should learn to do the same.

-Sheila N.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Saturday, February 9, 2008: Love 25, a Lincoln Intergroup Event. 9 a.m. to noon, registration begins at 8:30 a.m. Come for speakers, raffles and more. Suggested donation \$5.00. Westminster Presbyterian Church, 2110 Sheridan Blvd. (26th & South St.), Lincoln, NE.

June 27-29, 2008: Region IV Convention: "We Have Ceased Fighting—The Hidden Promises." St. Louis, MO. For more information, call (636) 326-2914; email admin@oaregion4.org; or visit www.oaregion4.org.



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submissions to:
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**Next deadline:
April 1, 2008**

...and the wisdom to know the difference.
