



Fall 2022 Newsletter

SOAR 8

Southeastern Overeaters Anonymous Region 8

*Bloom where
you are planted!*

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Bloom ... All year long!

Walking in the park I stopped to say hello to these bright flowers, like kids, clamoring for attention. Petals wide open with curiosity, soaking in the sun, the scenery, and all passersby. More lessons from nature... want a life in full bloom?

- 🍃 Open the petals of your mind - to receive the inspiration, power, and experience God has to offer.
 - 🍃 Dig your roots deep in the soil of spiritual footing, rich with the fertilizer of pain. Grow & strengthen in endurance, character, and experience to share.
 - 🍃 Stand tall with gratitude rather than wilt in self-pity.
 - 🍃 Shine as one among many with your fellows in OA. Together we get better.
 - 🍃 Keep your face towards the sun and seek God for everything you need.
 - 🍃 Bloom (trust) where you are planted and be all God created you to be.
 - 🍃 Work the steps of OA daily in entire abstinence—live life to the fullest!
- Kathy S., Alpharetta, GA*

The views expressed here are those of the authors and do not represent OA as a whole.

Anger, Resentment, and Fear and Working the 12 Steps

I was looking for the connection of these three emotions that kept nudging against my serenity. I looked up the definitions and was surprised that they all flowed together:

Anger is in the present—I am not getting my way now.

Resentment is the past—I did not get my way then.

Fear is the future—I will not get my way then.

I will be the first to admit that I have been a control freak—possibly still am. Sort of the self-will run riot. I had expectations of the world and they were often not met. Just because I wanted things to go one way or my way didn't mean they would or should. This set me up for self-justification and self-righteous anger. The world was out of my control and I was mad about it. I could control the food I was eating but not the result. I went up to over 200 pounds and became diabetic. I cut sugar out of my life and became abstinent. I lost 70 pounds and the diabetes was resolved. But the self-righteous anger, the resentment, the fear? Those continued.

This was when I had to let go of my expectations and realize the world was not all about me. When I stopped deciding that it had to go my way, I could open myself up to truly see the whole situation around me and find my role in it. When I could accept that there were other ways that people could act and situations could go, I stopped being angry.

I had heard that resentments were wishing for a different past. Perhaps one in which I had gotten my way there too. It took longer to realize that people had acted the best way they could even if not always to my advantage. Situations were more complicated than I could have understood when I was younger. I had an easier time remembering my hurts and resentments than the positive times. As I started to let go of how I thought someone should have acted or how things should have gone, the negative memories started to fade and the positive ones now had more room to show themselves.

Fear and the future were rearing their heads too. I don't know what will happen, either in the immediate or more distant future: that has not been revealed to me. This I do know, though. If I keep my attitude of letting go of my expectations and keeping asking for insight and guidance, I will be able to handle whatever will be given me.

That has been one of the greatest gifts of the program. Along with going on four years of abstinence, I have gained serenity. The promises of the Big Book have come true for me. I am able to understand with greater clarity and “intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle [me].”

—Beth M.

I can see clearly now the reign is gone

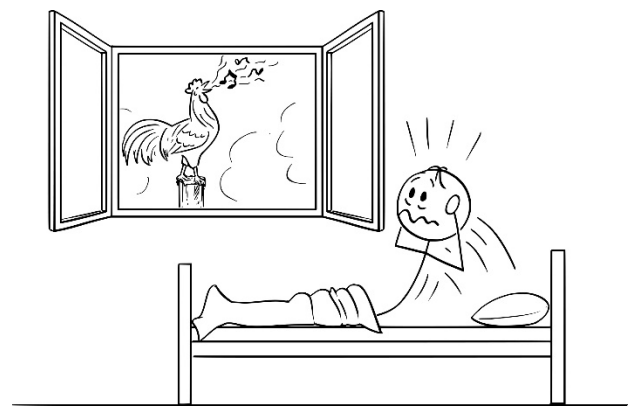
Food was my god. It had me bound! Sitting in bed with the same shirt on as yesterday—or maybe it was the day before that my attire belonged to; no matter—I could not live for today because I had on yesterday’s clothes and tomorrow’s desire to be sane. Pain looked like wearing the same clothes, no longer bathing, and donning a size 5XL shirt ‘n pants. Pain disguised itself as a blank stare, a fake forced smile, and oblivion. Pain was all I knew.

The night before had been yet another daunting, isolating night of despair and misery. Now, the birds annoyed me and the sun disturbed my sugar-and-flour-medicated rest. A thought occurred: I had heard four years earlier about a meeting of OA. And then another beam pierced my misery: there was an OA website. I googled and found recovery help. I asked that night for a sponsor.

That was one ghastly February. By March, I was reborn as a woman graciously removing her grave clothes and being replenished by fresh rainwater: the reign of food was done. I became honest—not with thousands, but with one person, with myself, and with that power that I now know to be a power greater than myself. The three of us had embarked on a journey and we were soon accompanied by those I now call family! I changed kingdoms—or queendoms, shall I say—and now I have a host of friends that have witnessed this miracle with me as we have joined hands (or screens!) time and time again.

I have been reborn:

- 🍀 I grace a 1X now
- 🍀 I enjoy giggles, tears, hugs, kisses, high fives, and fist bumps
- 🍀 I speak
- 🍀 I give
- 🍀 I serve
- 🍀 I work the steps
- 🍀 I pray the prayers
- 🍀 I make the calls
- 🍀 I take the calls
- 🍀 I live the principles
- 🍀 I am alive
- 🍀 And apparently, I write.



And none of this would be possible without you. I would still be in the food if the Reign of Food and Terror still prevailed. There are no unfortunate ones—I am here and I call to you: Sweetheart/madam/sir/he/she/they/you. Come: we are not alone.

—Monique F.

Laughs in Verse

There was a girl from Virginie,
Who binged, over-ate, and wished she was skinny.
She was thoughtful and kind,
Keeping others in mind,
But despised herself with a "vengie".

South Carolinie was the place she went to be,
Looking for life unhurried, carefree.
She found OA and her new path began.
On a journey, with fellows, who professed "Together, we can!"

So, she climbed the steps, one at a time,
And developed her spiritual foundation, sublime.
She read, studied, did all the work,
Lost her weight and began to twerk. 😊

—Robin T., OA of the Grandstrand

If You Had Told Me...

If you had told me 10 years ago that I could go between lunch and dinner with nothing in between, I wouldn't have believed you.

If you had told me I wouldn't eat flour or sugar, I would have said, "Impossible!"

If you had said I would be on my knees each morning, asking my Higher Power for help accepting His will and trusting His plan, I would have laughed.

And if you had said that I would be grateful for the willingness and ability to plan my food each day, to weigh and measure my ingredients, to attend 6 meetings a week, to get up at 6am to speak to a sponsee, to stay up until 10pm to give my 10th step to a partner, to make phone calls to strangers, and to write in a journal each day to look at MY character defects, I would have said you were crazy.

Today I AM grateful for the above. Who knew?

—Pat H.

Why I Do Service

When I was new to OA I felt left out, a little like an outsider. Someone shared at a meeting that the “in” crowd were the ones doing service. Most meetings have service positions that anyone can do. Some may require a period of abstinence, like secretary or treasurer, but there are always positions that do not have an abstinence requirement. Service is one thing that kept and keeps me coming back.

I started out small. I would make the coffee (yes, we had coffee in meetings way back when!) or clean up after the meeting. Eventually I became secretary or treasurer. Finally, someone invited me to do service for The OA Birthday Party in Los Angeles. I would never have volunteered because I didn’t think I was good enough or knew enough. But he did. He said to me, “We need someone to be program co-chair and you’d be perfect for that position.” How could I say no after that! After that, I did many service positions at the Intergroup level in two different intergroups. I eventually went on to do service at the Region level and World Service for Region 2 where I was living at the time.

I’d always thought of service as a way of giving back. And it was something I was “supposed” to do. What I learned is that I receive way more than I give. I learned how to facilitate a meeting. I learned how to mediate a dispute. I learned that my way was not always the best way. I learned how to respect group conscience and trust God. Often when I shared, whether at a business meeting or one on one with a sponsee, I say just what I need to hear. I’ve learned how to be a better listener.

And one of the best parts of service was getting to know people I would not otherwise know. When I was delegate to World Service, I met people from around the world that I’m friends with to this day. When I moved from one area of my region to another, I volunteered to be on a convention committee and got to meet people from all around the San Francisco Bay area. It helped me acclimate to a new area much more quickly.

When I stopped doing service at Region 2 and World Service, I knew it was time for me to “retire” from that level of service. It was time for others to step up. I didn’t do any service above the intergroup level for 20 years. Then I moved to the Charlotte area, and I knew from my experience that the way to feel comfortable, to feel that I belonged was to do service. So I started attending intergroup meetings. My intergroup didn’t have a Region Rep so I volunteered. At my second Region Assembly, I was asked to be Bylaws Chair and I accepted. And look at me now—I’m the Region Chair!

I do service because it is a vital part of my recovery. Everyone is “qualified” to do service. All you have to do is raise your hand!

—Susan B.



I am Seen

In childhood, I didn't feel seen. My aunts and mom would diet with every new holiday. The first diet of the year was for New Year's. March was "get ready" for swimsuit weather. August was the "back to school" diet. Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas were celebrated with great indulgence and many regrets. The day after Christmas, while eating leftover pie, the new diet was planned to start on January 1.

I remember when I was in 8th grade, one of my aunts got me on the scale and told me that I was at the weight when she used to tell herself that she needed to go on a diet. I asked if I could join their next diet session. Being a nurse, she told me that I was too young. Not to be left out, I started my own diet and lost 5lbs in the first two weeks. When I announced my weight loss at their Saturday morning meeting, I was told that it wasn't fat loss, only water. I was determined and I had a goal to be the skinniest girl in high school.

I committed to eating the least amount of food I possibly could. If I ate, I ate candy or cereal for the quick energy and then would exercise it off. Around others, I would eat the smallest amount. In the era of "no pain, no gain," my exercise routine included waking in the middle of the night for an extra exercise session. I was so proud of my slimming physique, but I craved outside approval. So, I asked a friend and she confirmed that I was the skinniest girl in school. Wanting more people to notice, I wanted to get thinner. I achieved that with full blown anorexia. My family didn't seem to notice or care.

One day, I called my friend to see if she wanted to hang out. She said no because I was too skinny, looked gross and talked about food nonstop. I was devastated. I prayed to God that I would be able to eat again. Slowly, I did start to eat again and stopped exercising in the middle of the night.

I graduated from high school and went to college, where a pamphlet was slid under my door with a checklist for disordered eating patterns and information for counseling. I checked off nearly every box, but I chose to ignore it and proceeded to party. Wanting to be part of the in-crowd, I joined a sorority my sophomore year. It turned out that my sorority sisters were major bullies who proceeded to mentally harass and haze us. Desperate, I was ready to admit that I needed some help and went to the eating disorder group therapy. It gave me the confidence to exit the sorority, move across campus, and start a new life with a more balanced lifestyle.

Immediately after graduation in 1985, I married and had our 4 children as a stay-at-home mom. In early 2000, I became a personal trainer and started working. In 2003, I started attending OA through the urging of a new friend. I was still at a healthy weight and my fellow OAers, expressed that they were a little jealous. In Step 1, I could admit that I was powerless over food and my life had become unmanageable. However, in my twisted mind regarding food, I interpreted the phrase, "We are not a 'diet' club" to mean that I was free to ditch the diet and all restraints around food. I threw away all my OA materials and I started treating myself to fast food and Starbucks. I started to gain weight, but just increased my exercise to attempt to maintain my weight, which got harder and harder.

In 2008, I gave up my career as a personal trainer. Most of the personal trainers, including myself, were obsessed with food. Granted, I just had enough sense to not teach my clients crazy diet and exercise plans like my fellow trainers did. I figured if I tried a new career, I could get away from the pressures of being thin and have more peace with my body.

Thinking a career change was the ticket to peace with food, I got into the self-storage business as a manager. The stresses of all types of people suffering every possible low in life and 24/7 responsibility drove me to the food. Every drive-thru called my name. Whenever I am over the top stressed, I crave mountains of frosting. After work, I had to stop at the local Publix to get a huge cupcake piled high with frosting to lick like an ice cream cone all the way home. I was getting more and more mad with food by the day. I didn't go back to OA until 2012, when I began working the steps with a sponsor.

After losing a little weight and completing the 4th step, I left OA thinking I was good. Yet I continued to gain an average of 5+ lbs a year with my daily fast food binge feasts. For dinner, I would eat 3 or 4 plates full of food. At night, I would binge watch my favorite tv shows and stuff my face until midnight. During the holiday season of 2020, I decided to bake all my kid's favorite holiday cookies. The truth is, all the cookies and treats were for me. I was going to celebrate with full on vengeance. Immediately after the gifts and guests had left, feeling bloated and ignoring the scale, I mentally started to gear up for New Year's Day. I was euphoric and I believed that I could erase the past and start over in the new year: 2021 was going to be my year. I had quit the storage business and was ready for something new. Firstly, I was going to lose the weight with an exercise program and reducing my food intake. I was feeling great and trusted that this new diet would be the key to my true happiness.

Unfortunately, on April Fool's Day, king of fools that I am, I tripped down the stairs, slammed my knee into the wall and fractured it in three places. My new diet and exercise plan was changed to knee rehab and relearning to walk. My family brought all my meals to me for two months straight. The portions were moderate and the meals nutritious. However, I was very aware that I was not in control of my food and became more obsessed. I turned to OA online and committed to my sponsor that I was ready to surrender. I finally admitted that I was powerless over food and I accepted the fact that I have a disease. The only hope of having relief from the food obsession was to turn my life and my will over to a higher power. OA gave me permission to create my own higher power that made sense to me. The God of my past was a harsh, critical, damning kind of God. To get abstinent, I had to discover and surrender to a new HP that loves me unconditionally. I use the OA tools on a daily basis to help me work my program one day at a time. I have accepted that this disease is an isolating disease. To stay abstinent, I go to numerous meetings each week where I feel safe and can share my heart. I am learning to walk a new path where I serve and sponsor others. I have OA friends who know the struggle and share the hope to live a life that I couldn't even begin to imagine. My relationships with family, friends, my HP, and myself have all been enriched. The miracles keep coming. As Roseanne says, "We are all together now, reaching out our hands for power and strength greater than ours, and as we join hands we find love and understanding beyond our wildest dreams." Now, I am seen.

—Melissa E.

Thoughts on Tradition One

Tradition One: *Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon OA unity.* The words "common welfare" and "unity" certainly didn't mean much to me when I was a practicing compulsive overeater! As my recovery progressed, however, I learned and re-learned that it isn't all about me. Rather it's about the fellowship of Overeaters Anonymous. What Tradition One means to me is that the welfare of the group has to come before my own desires, opinions, and ego; I have to trust the group conscience and realize that the will of the group is far wiser than I am. In OA, I am learning how to disagree without being disagreeable, how to listen and not judge. Going to meetings these past 31 years has saved my life, and would you believe it, none of those meetings was perfect! Part of my recovery is learning to look for the good instead of criticizing or complaining. We all have something in common in OA: a problem with food and the spiritual solution found in the Tools, Steps and Traditions. I can help create a safe and welcoming atmosphere by putting the welfare of the group ahead of my own personal agenda. In this small way I can ensure that OA will be around for the next newcomer who may literally be dying for recovery. —T.S., Bradenton

Routine and Motivation

Two and a half years ago, I had been shocked out of my comfort zone by COVID. It really rocked my world—especially since I had just retired and love to travel. I became an enforced homebody due to quarantine and so forth. All of the in-person activities I had enjoyed switched to virtual. Thank goodness for Zoom—it kept me active in my various 12 Step fellowships, giving me meetings throughout the day, as well as a way to connect with sponsors and sponsees.

There is a quote in one of the OA readers that talks about how repeating things become pleasurable and then the chains begin to bind us to habits (both positive and negative). I've found this to be true in my life and had an awareness around this two weeks ago. I developed a routine on Sundays that included an OA meeting on Zoom, followed by my meditation group on Zoom, and sometimes I might attend a spiritual presentation on Zoom as well. Those were great routines. But two Sundays ago, I realized that Sunday had become a day where I had literally no contact with anyone. So I began heading out to some various activities on Sundays to be with people and begin to break that sneaky defect of isolation. What a difference it made—getting up, getting showered and dressed, makeup and hair, etc. I felt that sense of connection.

I share all this with you in hopes you and your intergroup might consider hosting a virtual or in person convention/assembly for our region in 2023. Right now, we are experiencing a "drought" of volunteers from our Region. Please consider praying for the willingness to help host a convention/assembly in 2023 and beyond. It will help break us all out of the habit of "isolation" and bring us together to form a community that I so desperately need. With much love, Melissa H, Vice Chair, & Elrod, Blind and Deaf Pug and Assistant to the Vice Chair

African American Medical Professionals Learn about OA

I had the opportunity in August to give service at a Public Information/Profession Outreach (PIPO) event sponsored by my intergroup. The Greater Atlanta intergroup registered me and three other fellows as attendees at the National Medical Association meeting held in Atlanta Georgia.

The attendees at the NMA were African American physicians and medical professionals. We carried the OA message by distributing literature, communicating the OA message to attendees and other exhibitors, and attending many of the presentations. At a presentation on Women's Healthcare, I was given a brief opportunity to share my experience, strength, and hope, and to add the OA program to their list of available resources. My short presentation was well received, and the physicians seemed eager to receive the pamphlets. Some stated that they hadn't known about OA.

Some of the doctors talked about the disparities between African Americans and Caucasians in health care. For example, one of the physicians from the Wound Care Institute stated that African Americans make up 13 percent of the population, yet account for 60 percent of amputations due to diabetes. According to his research, many of these amputations are preventable.

Participating in this PIPO event had a profound effect on me. I am an African American woman who was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, and many other health issues, before I found OA, and my higher power used OA to save my life. I have been in recovery for 22 years and today, I have reversed my Type 2 diabetes and many other health problems. I have physical, emotional and spiritual recovery. But without OA, I could easily have become one of those amputees that physician spoke about. Thank God I am healthy today, thanks to OA.

I am so grateful to give back by carrying the message, at this event, in the rooms of OA, and through other forms of service. Those of us who live this program don't simply carry the message—we **are** the message. —Ann G, Atlanta, GA

In Memoriam: Charles Aloiso

We are sad to report that Charles Aloiso, former Region 8 Chair, passed away this summer following complications from Parkinson's disease. Charles was a 35-year veteran of OA, and over the years gave service in many positions in his local groups, the Atlanta Intergroup, SOAR (of which he served as Chair), and as a World Service Trustee for Region 8. He traveled the world, generously sharing his recovery with others, often in demand as a speaker. Many found recovery from their compulsive eating addiction with his inspiration, guidance, and intense passionate commitment to the Twelve Steps. He will be greatly missed.

**Miami-Dade and The Keys Intergroup
Welcomes you to the VIRTUAL
Region 8 Assembly & Recovery Convention**

**Celebrating the Solution:
A Weekend of Light & Love**

October 21, 22, & 23, 2022

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