

July-Aug 2011

“You Don’t Look Like a Sister”

Lifeline—Nov 1978

A week after Labor Day, 1976, just four blocks from the religious community in which I live, the weekly OA meeting—my first—began.

I sat, listened and attended the newcomers meeting. Then I went home, relieved that no one discovered I was a nun. To preserve my anonymity I did not take a sponsor, but tried to abstain alone. The program does not work that way, I found; eventually, I had a slip.

Week after week, some OA members spoke of how their Higher Power, God, had restored them to sanity. But I, a thirty-six year old woman who had experienced a call to religious life six years earlier and now was in the beginning stages of religious formation for one year, seemed uncomfortable at the thought of professing God as my Higher Power. This, I rationalized, would be imposing God on others. I took literally the suggestion that each individual is to determine the nature of his or her Higher Power.

After one break in abstinence, I took a food sponsor at the beginning of Thanksgiving week, 1976, calling in my food through Christmas. I continued to go to weekly meetings, maintaining my abstinence—and my misused anonymity. But a noticeable change was beginning to take place within and without.

One winter day, a Sister commented on my weight loss. My response was, “Yes, and my whole self-concept is changing.” Then I realized what I had said. I had joined OA just to lose weight, and without my being aware of it, changes were occurring in areas of my life that I did not even know needed changing.

After many years of being self-supporting, I had only partly adapted myself to living in a religious community. The many changes this kind of life requires did not come easily, and I fought many of them. But OA has helped me to transform my thinking. In the middle of a cold winter night, as I struggled to overcome a tendency to self pity, I felt defeated. How vividly I recall that night—lying in bed, tearful, filled with self-doubt—when those words of step three flashed through my mind: *Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.*

I was startled to find that although I had repeatedly heard the twelve steps read during six months of weekly meetings, I had not assimilated their meaning. Now, suddenly, I realized that they were more than just words. “Those steps are *real*,” I said to myself.

I belong to a religious congregation whose spirituality is one of self-surrender, and I began to see a close relationship between both programs of living. Through my practice of abstinence from compulsive overeating, I soon found that abstinence is also an attitudinal disposition and a way of living my religious vocation.

Feeling a need to share my story with other OA members, I gradually “broke my anonymity” within my group to reveal my identity as a Sister. But I was afraid: what if the word got around? Response from fellow members ranged from, “I knew it all along,” to “But you don’t look like a Sister!” Some were surprised, others seemed to feel deceived and many were delighted.

A number of people told me, “I never thought Sisters had any character defects,” or “I thought Sisters had their faith all together.” This honest sharing served to remind all of us that I am first a human being, and that my religious vocation in essence challenges me to dare to live my life more fully and with more “humanness,” as does the OA program.

As people noticed the changes and growth in me, I began to grasp the significance of the second aspect of anonymity: to avoid self-glorification. For a while I was the only OA member in our area from a religious community, and I was aware of occasional subtle feelings of superiority. But, to “thoroughly follow our path” is to learn that I am not entitled to any special status, nor do I have a corner on God. Though I sit week after week among people from all walks of life, I am just one of them, no better or worse; we have a common disease. More than that, I began to discover how much lay people have to teach me about faith in a Higher Power. (cont’d on page 2)

(cont'd from page 1) I became more aware of the fact that this Sister and her God did *not* have it all together. At the same time, I was able to contribute, when asked, to others in their journeying search for God, especially since my formation studies were in providing spiritual direction.

As months passed, I experienced a deeper, more authentic transformation through the OA program. Steps four and five became an essential bridge to this plateau. I realized that while the sacrament of reconciliation (confession) had an indispensable value in my life, I could use it as an excuse for not taking these two steps. It was essential for me to take a searching and fearless moral inventory, and to give it to someone outside the confession framework. The immediate rewards of steps four and five lay in leading me to accept my own humanity, while not justifying my character defects; and in recognizing, once more, that because I am a Sister, I am not automatically exempt from an array of personal shortcomings. The OA program has highlighted this!

Through the sixth and seventh steps, God is gradually removing and transforming some of my character defects, enabling me to see where I have misused some gifts and showing me how these mistakes can be turned around. Amends to persons in my life are coming one at a time.

As I change, I also struggle with the expectations of others. God can and does remove some of my shortcomings, but I am constantly reminded that our program is ongoing, that I am always in the *process* of recovering, so that neither my own nor others' expectations become unrealistic. There are moments of rude awakening when I realize that though I have the program, I am not living, working and manifesting it in my life as fully as I would hope. In such moments I am reminded that I am still powerless, unable to manage, and only God can continue to restore me.

In meal planning I had to consider that I live as a member of a community. I was able to commit a food plan which would permit me to choose to eat from whatever was served each day, and not ask to have special food prepared for me. My experience has been that there is always sufficient food from which to select—take what you want, and leave the rest.

A more delicate and complex matter was learning to achieve a balance between responsibility to the work of my community and service in OA. I am sure that the degree to which OA is effective in my life can only be measured by the quality of my relationships in my daily community life with my Sisters. What this means is that the recovery in OA is not attained at the expense of the primary commitment in my life. On the contrary, I have found that each greatly enhances the other, so interrelated are they. There is room—and need—in my life for both.

Overeaters Anonymous has helped me far beyond my expectations of recovery on the physical, emotional and spiritual levels. I have shared my experience in the hope that other men and women in religious callings who are struggling with compulsive overeating will consider OA. A religious vocation does not make me spiritually above any person or program. Indeed, the full development of my vocation depends on the extent to which I am able to integrate my daily actions into my work.

Overeating, along with isolation, anger, resentment, jealousy, boredom, self-pity and so on, is only a symptom of a deeper longing to be filled instead with the goodness of God. A constant reminder that I am powerless over compulsive overeating keeps me mindful that only a Power greater than myself can continue to restore me. Scripture often tells us that God, not compulsive overeating, has filled the hungry with good things. Prayer has a value and importance in my life. OA has made me even more aware of the fact that I must always seek knowledge of God's will for me.

I am a compulsive overeater, a human being and a Sister who is recovering thanks to Overeaters Anonymous and the help of my Higher Power whom I choose to call God. Come, let us step along together—neither behind nor ahead of each other, but side by side.



Literature Selection: VOR, Feb 28

“Real humility about our character defects carries with it acceptance...”

~OA 12 and 12, p. 61

One of the most wonderful gifts I have received in this program is accepting and even loving myself. This new attitude has made it possible for me to take an honest look at the make-up of my character.

In Steps Six and Seven I have learned to deal with my character defects. I know now that I don't have to identify myself with my faults; I can make a mistake but that doesn't mean I am a mistake.

I can take responsibility for mistakes and character defects by being honest (and not judgmental) with myself and by asking my Higher Power for love and guidance and to help me surrender them to Him/Her. The change in me, which indeed does occur, has shown me once again that the secret of success lies in surrender.

For today I can ask my Higher Power for awareness of myself, along with the willingness to surrender and to let me be as I am supposed to be.



Lifeline—May 2009: “To Newcomers”

I am grateful for my 30th day of abstinence, which falls on my 38th birthday. I could never have asked for a better birthday presents than the gifts I'm discovering in OA.

When I began OA, I had no clue what the program entailed. I only knew it revolved around a Higher Power and compulsive overeating. I knew I was spiritual, introspective and overweight, but was I a compulsive overeater? That was yet to be determined. At the first several meetings, I listened quietly as others shared their stories. I felt I didn't fit in because my overeating was different than most, although I could relate to the feelings involved after abinge.

I continued going to meetings and gained a deeper understanding that food is not my issue. It's one of the objects I've used to suppress my thoughts and emotions. My illness allowed my self-destruction to repeat many times. I became comfortable in my uncomfortable world of isolation and overeating, hiding under my excess skin.

It's freeing to find a place where I have Steps I can take, work I can do and people who understand me. I'm already discovering a new, happier and more peaceful life. I'm grateful to all those in OA who have reached out to me, welcomed me and accepted me the way I am.

The recoveries I witness in the meetings inspire and motivate me to continue my abstinence. While I am focusing just on today, at times I secretly fast-forward to a day when I, too, can provide guidance, love and support to others.

By using the tools of meetings and phone calls, I've heard some quotes I will continue to use throughout my recovery. Every day I mentally recite, “If hunger strikes, remember you will not die before your next meal,”; “if you crave a binge food, remember you've already had enough to last the rest of your life and be grateful for what you've already consumed” ; “never look one of your binge foods directly in the eye”; and one of my favorites, “when it comes to facing your binge foods, leave it for those who can actually handle it.”

For the first time in my life, I'm excited about the possibilities my future holds. I'm blessed to have accepted the gifts of Overeaters Anonymous.

- Tina S., Cold Spring, KY

When weaving a blanket, an Indian woman leaves a flaw
in the weaving of that blanket to let the soul out.

~Martha Graham

Galveston OA Newsletter Jan 2009 "CONTROLLING"

More Inaccurate Thinking Patterns (Seventh in a Series)

There is a distinction between control and discipline that I think I am beginning to recognize.

When we think of controlling, most often we think of controlling others. We realize we are powerless over people, places and things, so we strive not to be controlling. But I don't think we apply that to our food. I know I find myself attempting to control my food, my eating, and my addiction to compulsive eating. It occurs to me that this is playing God, attempting to do what I cannot do. I think of the Serenity Prayer. God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change (God's part), the courage to change the things I can (my part), and the wisdom to know the difference.

In realizing there is a difference between control and discipline, I am responsible for creating an eating plan and using discipline to follow it. This is not control.

When I take over God's job and attempt to control my food I am not remembering I am powerless. I am the power. I will do it myself.

When I see a new diet in the latest magazine and I am lured in thinking "I could do this, I'll bet it would work and I can lose X number of pounds by X," I am into control.

When I made a chart of what I weigh and what I will weigh and begin weighing every day, excited at the thought of fitting into that pair of pants, I am into control again.

When I forget to plan when going out to a party or gathering where there is food, thinking I'll just let this be my meal and eat whatever I want this time, I am into control, not discipline.

When I am in the grocery store, hungry and not being mindful, throwing this and that into my cart, I am into doing it "my way." I am into control.

It never works. It is truly "self-will run riot."

My part is practicing discipline, having an eating plan, calling my sponsor, being conscious and aware, setting up safe guards ahead of time, following my plan one day, one event at a time, asking for God's help because I know I am powerless. I have a disease that is cunning, baffling and powerful. I cannot control it, but I must remember my Higher Power can if I will but "Let go and let God." Let me remember.

~ The Editor

Literature Selection: VOR, Aug 1

"As long as we have not forgiven people for harms they have done us, we will find it impossible to make sincere amends to them for our side of the conflicts."

~OA 12 and 12, p. 71

For me the essential element in Step Eight is forgiveness. Until I learned how to forgive I could not even see where I was at fault.

I was not aware of the deep resentment I had against my parents for the abuse I endured as a child. My insecurities, fear of rejection, and low self-worth were all a direct result of suppressing those feelings. I began to truly search my past, and the old memories of abuse returned. As I examined them, hate, humiliation, and deep rage boiled out of me in floods of tears. I knew I could not forgive these wrongs myself, especially where my own defiance was often at fault.

It suddenly occurred to me to pray for a "spirit" of forgiveness. Gradually a peace enfolded me. Forgiveness came, and with it came complete deliverance from those damaged feelings. From that moment, I was healed. Once the miracle of forgiveness occurred, the amends happened naturally.

Literature Selection: “Seeking the Spiritual Path”—“Complete Confidence in God”

People generally speak of faith in conjunction with religion and spiritual emotions, as a belief in an unknown happening, emotion, or state of consciousness. Faith in conjunction with the OA program begins with Step Three, but can be found hidden in all Twelve Steps.

Making a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God is an act of faith. I came to believe in a power greater than myself through the Twelve Steps. OA has brought a new commitment to my life. I’ve found complete confidence in this organization, its beliefs, and its principles. This commitment brings me to faith in my Higher Power. OA has brought me a deeper understanding of my own religious beliefs and has increased my awareness of my spirituality. This creates a bond between my faith in a Higher Power and my OA program.

I found faith in the belief that my Higher Power would allow me to feel my emotions safely if I did not stuff them down again with food. To feel my emotions, sometimes for the very first time, was a step in faith, moving me into recovery.

~Step One gave me faith that I could find help for my unmanageable life by admitting I was a compulsive overeater.

~Step Two contains faith as a commitment to believe in a Higher Power.

~Step Three, as an action of turning over my will, is the ultimate act of faith.

~Step Four’s inventory requires faith in my ability to look into my past honestly.

~Step Five is a leap of faith in confiding to another person my past transgressions, sins, and fantasies, and all of my actions, both good and bad.

~Step Six has been the trickiest Step in faith for me, where I had to act as if I were entirely ready to have my defects removed. How could I be sure? Faith.

~Step Seven is a commitment to work together with my Higher Power to overcome my character defects. The deal is that my Higher Power will remove my defects, and I commit, in faith, not to take them back.

~Step Eight teaches faith that God can rectify the faults of my own making, as I become willing to make amends.

~Step Nine, when I make my amends, holds faith that God can help others accept my apologies.

~Step Ten bears the faith that a continued inventory and journaling will help me grow strong and hold the Twelve Steps in my heart.

~Step Eleven brings faith that I can meet my Higher Power with joy in prayer and meditation.

~Step Twelve is faith that I can share and help save others from the pitfalls of our disease, with God’s help.

Gratitude is the final aspect of faith. Without gratitude, faith means nothing. Without recognizing the wonderful accomplishments of my Higher Power, I could easily slip back into my ego and self-centeredness, believing that I accomplished all of this on my own. Thank you, Dear Sweet God, for allowing me to share my faith and belief in you.

~Florida USA



Say Yes to what belongs to you,
and let all else go.

~Alan Cohen

Ask Anna Nimity

Dear Anna,

In 12-step programs, what is meant by “Two-Stepping”? Does that mean you just take Steps 1 and 2 and stop there?

Possible Two Stepper

Dear *Possible*,

That actually could be one interpretation. The original meaning refers to the sense of complacency some members feel once they achieve sobriety, which results in a willingness to accept ONLY the first part of Step 1 (powerlessness over the substance) and the first part of Step 12 (carry the message). Either way, the cure for this is repeated at almost every meeting:

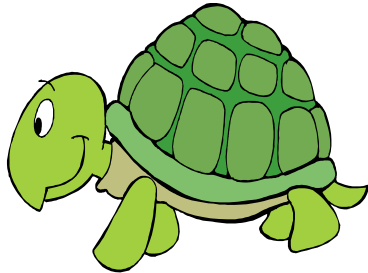
“It works if you WORK it!”

Yours in OA service,

Anna

**MYRTLE THE
TURTLE:**

I am powerless
over food, not
powerless over
footwork!



Aug-Sep Big Book Reading List

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| 16. 364-368 | 1. 44-49 |
| 17. 258 | 2. 50-57 |
| 18. 171 | 3. 182 |
| 19. 535 | 4. 328 |
| 20. 289 | 5. 458 |
| 21. 407 | 6. 86-87 |
| 22. 494 | 7. 474 |
| 23. 338 | 8. 219 |
| 24. 432 | 9. 544 |
| 25. 122-129 | 10. 30-37 |
| 26. 129-136 | 11. 37-43 |
| 27. 544 | 12. 535 |
| 28. 208 | 13. 486 |
| 29. 553 | 14. 104-113 |
| 30. 58-63 | 15. 113-121 |
| 31. 63-71 | |

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Next Intergroup Meeting: Aug 9, 2011 @ 6:30pm
Intergroup Office, 7701 E Kellogg Dr Ste 635

All are welcome!

www.oawichita.org

**Mid-Continent Intergroup
Combined Treasurer’s Report May-Jun 2011**

Checking:

Beginning Balance (May)	\$1020.57
Donations (\$1027.70)	
Step Study	\$ 90.00
Monday 7:30PM	\$ 369.00
Monday AM	\$ 40.00
Wed BB	\$ 42.00
Friday Noon	\$ 17.00
Sat AM	\$ 31.70
Sat PM	\$ 60.00
Sharathon Transfer	\$ 308.80
Anon	\$ 32.00
Independence	\$ 37.20
Expenses (-\$1097.76)	
Phone (Apr19-Jun18)	-\$104.80
Rent (Jun and Jul)	-\$520.00
Publicity Expenses:	-\$ 18.00
Sunflower Ad	(-\$18.00)
Deb S. (Rep Reimb)	-\$146.16
RegIV donation	-\$154.40
WSO donation	-\$154.40

Publicity Budget = \$300; \$88.27 remng

Net (Donations minus Expenses) \$ -70.06

Ending Balance (Jun) \$ 950.51

MID-CONTINENT INTERGROUP OFFICERS

(Terms are 2 years in duration, and are limited to 2 consecutive terms per position)

CHAIRPERSON:	Deb S.	316-734-6790 (1st term, '09)
VICE CHAIR:	Laura L.	316-684-5904 (1st term, '10)
SECRETARY:	Mary M.	316-619-8140 (1st term, '08)
TREASURER:	Gay L.	316-260-5945 (1st term, '09)
LITERATURE:	Barb H.	316-733-2136 (2nd term, '09)
PILOT EDITOR:	Kirsten W.	316-214-9144 (1st term, '09)
PARLIAM.:	Mary G.	316-652-8689 (1st term, '10)

All officers are willing to lend an ear for your concerns, comments and questions! Please thank them for their generous