

Annapolis Area Overeaters Anonymous Fall Newsletter 2024

Dear Fellow OAers, There has been a lot of news recently about the impact isolation and loneliness is having on our mental health and even our life expectancy. In short, having solid relationships in our lives helps us live happier, longer, and healthier lives. This is especially significant to overeaters like me. My disease is one of isolation in addition to other things. Like it says in Step One of our 12 and 12, “my life was unmanageable, I hid, and I ate”. I don’t think I am alone.

“When you take your hand out of a bucket of water, there’s no hole” is something I’ve heard and repeated many times. Early in my career, I worked on large construction projects where turnover was constant. Friends came and went – enduring relationships were rare. People left and they weren’t missed. My non-work relationships were often the same. My siblings were years older than me, my cousins lived long distances away. To see my grandparents when I was young meant piling in the car and driving for three days. I have few memories of my extended family. I had friends in school – but few were close enough for the friendships to endure. I can count the number of childhood friends I’m still in touch with on one hand with fingers left over. And even in these few instances I’ve gone decades without being in touch. Food was my constant companion. Food was the language of love. Food was there for me when I wasn’t there for anyone else. My relationship with food was the only one that counted. When I became truly aware of the nature of my relationship with food I was at my bottom. I was led to the rooms and found my tribe. OA has given me a place where I truly belong.

Life is really trying to get my attention this summer and putting my responsibility to maintain healthy relationships front and center. I’ve recently lost two family members and one of my wife’s cousins. My character defects conspire against me. Maintaining relationships is work and I’m frequently lazy. I am also prone to procrastination. My disease is always telling me that I’m bothering people if I reach out. This applies to 12th step calls, family, and old friends. **“But I’m too weak. I’ll never make it!”** *Don’t worry, we have all thought and said the same thing. The amazing secret to the success of this program is just that: weakness. It is weakness, not strength, that binds us to each other and to a Higher Power and somehow gives us the ability to do what we cannot do alone.*

(Our Invitation To You)

Our fellowship gives us tools for life including how to maintain these life-giving relationships beginning with that concluding paragraph from our invitation. *Continued in next column. . .*

Together we can do what we cannot do alone. Without relationships there is no together and there will be no fellowship.

I’m striving to do better – to stay in touch and to value the friends and time I have left more highly. Thank you to everyone in the rooms. You make my life better. I hope to repay in kind.
Mark V.

Annapolis Intergroup Chair 2024



OA Releases New Public Information Video and Web Page

Public information and professional outreach (PIPO) committees throughout the OA Fellowship have new tools to carry the message to the still-suffering compulsive eater who is searching for a solution. “OA has your back” is a new public service announcement (PSA) video that depicts the range of problems with food that compulsive eaters might deal with and shares that OA offers support and recovery. A new PIPO web page brings together the primary resources offered by OA world service.

OA has your back PSA video

“OA has your back” is a 75-second video formatted for streaming on the internet. Additional versions, such as a 30-second version suitable for online advertising, and a 60-second version formatted for broadcast television in North America and South Korea and more will be made available. Copyright oa.org

<https://oa.org/news/oa-releases-new-public-information-video-and-web-page/>



**TELL THE
NEGATIVE
COMMITTEE
THAT MEETS
INSIDE YOUR HEAD
TO SIT DOWN
AND SHUT UP.**

I WAS KILLING MYSELF WITH FOOD

When I first started in Overeaters Anonymous, I read the 12 steps with the group and my mind immediately went “*Oh HECK no! No way I’m doing this! I’m out of here!*”

At 350 lbs., (this was my weight after gastric bypass surgery) my therapist told me I had a serious problem and she couldn’t help me unless I went to Overeaters Anonymous. So, I reluctantly found my first meeting with the hope of finally losing the weight and keeping it off once and for all. In my sick mind, I believed her demand was a punishment rather than a life preserver thrown out to save me. I thought she **wouldn’t** help me instead of seeing it as she **couldn’t** help me. It was years later, when I no longer had therapy with Linda C. that I finally realized she literally **COULDN’T** help me without the necessity of this incredible program.

Spending most my life believing I was a victim was easier than admitting I was my own worst enemy. I used my abusive childhood and failed marriage as an excuse for others to take pity on me. My daily thoughts were fueled by bitterness, anger, resentment, fear, hurt, and negative beliefs that threw me into major depression and a slow suicide where I consciously chose to die eating myself to death. This behavior impaired every relationship I’d ever had – including the one with myself. My sick mind and broken spirit spent a lot of time judging myself and others as defective. I saw myself as trash as I swallowed tons of food to stuff down mostly sorrow and frustration. I focused solely on the faults or mistakes of everyone around me. There was no way I was going to admit that I too made the same mistakes and had the same defects of character as every other human being on the planet. These things were “everyone else’s problems.”

Angry at my therapist, I kept attending the meetings and attempted to find a sponsor. The first three individuals I worked with “fired” me. After those failed relationships, I developed the attitude of “I don’t need a sponsor!” Kicking and screaming, I kept going to the meetings because it was a condition of continuing my therapy program. I didn’t really want to die. I just wanted all the pain to end.

A friend who also struggled with a different type of addiction invited me to another 12-step program. It took her at least 3 different invitations before I finally agreed to join her on a Tuesday night. It was there that divine intervention happened. A darling, highly intelligent woman by the name of Jean K. said she would be my sponsor and she never gave up on me. This woman, in a blink of an eye, reached out to me and freely offered her wisdom, strength, and hope. Her method of attraction was the first time anyone I wasn’t related to or “paying for their time” ever offered to be with me and help me through the difficulties of life.

We started working the steps. First, I had to want to get rid of my addiction to food. I didn’t know how I could give up the food but wanted to lose weight and have a better life as the program promised. Second, I finally heard that God alone could fix my problems. Third, I could see that the God of my Understanding was not all fire and

brimstone but instead, unconditional love, grace, mercy, joy, harmony, and acceptance. My aching broken spirit began to mend and I started to come alive.

Doing my 4th and 5th step with Jean K. gave me my “AH HA” moment and was the miracle that changed my life forever.

I wrote about: 1) Who Hurt Me? 2) Who I’d hurt? 3) What was the exact offense? 4) What was my part in all of it?

The typical emotions churned through my head as I put to paper the accounting of my life to that point. As I verbally shared the “the worst parts of Colleen” with Jean and my Higher Power, the feelings of fear, shame, guilt and remorse were even more intense as I spoke openly for the first time all the things that weighed me down. Jean patiently listened and didn’t react to my dirty deeds until the very end of the 2-hour inventory. She then thanked me and told me she loved me. I was SHOCKED! This person – a stranger - knew the worst parts of me and loved me nonetheless. For the first time ever, I felt relief, that I finally fit in, and that someone really cared. The question “what was my part in all of this?” finally helped me see **my nasty attitude filled with stinkin’ thinkin’** was making me miserable and hard to get along with.

As I continued to work my program, I discovered I was no better and no worse than anyone else and was just another “Bozo on the bus” of life’s rollercoaster journey. After doing the 5th step, I knew I was not my experiences and intense feelings but rather, a beloved child of my Higher Power.

Though my desired outcome of a sleek, slender, sexy body didn’t happen as I’d planned, I’d had a spiritual awakening and my body also started to recover. The most wonderful change was in the way I **thought** about me, other people, and life in general. Any time I complained about the day and how “this person did this to me at such and such a time” etc., Jean K. would ask me to say 5 good things about myself. At first, I struggled to think of even 3 things let alone 5 gifts given to me each day. Over time, I was able to see everything as a blessing including the trials that gave me chances to develop greater strength and patience to get through the hard times. My meager list of blessings grew to be a life filled with abundance.

Jean loved me like no one else ever loved me. It was through her that I felt God’s unconditional love, found a desire to go to meetings and join her church. (Jean invited me to become a member of her congregation). She would reach over and hold my hand during the sermons. I didn’t know just how precious our time and work together was until she passed away in 2023.

In my first OA meeting, I was unable to accept that my body was powerless against the insatiable cravings of food and the oppressive non-stop thoughts about eating, and that my life was unmanageable. Today and with the help of a new sponsor (sent to me through what could only again be more divine intervention), I fully accept the reality of my disease and hand the reins and my food plan over to my Higher Power who knows the best way for me to get through each day. Though my program is not perfect, I see *Continued on Page 3. . .*

I was killing myself with food continued. . . .

great progress from the person I was back then to the calm, peaceful, happy woman I am today. I'm still working on the desire to have a sleek, slender, sexy body and am now down to 265 lbs. But the greatest gift of all is the new attitude to make my dreams happen.

Written By Colleen L., (2024) a grateful, recovering member of the "disordered eating club."



Some thoughts about life...

The word life has an interesting structure – the letter "l" is tall, the letter "i" is short, the letter "f" is tall, the letter "e" is short. The point is that the word is its own definition: life is a series of ups and downs!

The Twelfth Step tells us to "...practice these principles in all our affairs." As I go through my life, I encounter all kinds of ups and downs. With the help of OA, it becomes easier to accept them and handle them. But sometimes old messages hit unexpectedly, and I react out of fear or anxiety or self-protection.

That's OK, because Program has taught me to acknowledge my humanness. The difference now is that I understand that I am still working my Program because I can pause, breathe, and select how I want to react/reply/respond. What a gift!

Now I can live my life fully and positively, thanks to OA.

June 2024

**Stop being
ashamed of how
many times
you've fallen,
and start being
proud of how
many times
you've got up!**

Step Ten (Courtesy of MaryAnne K, Cleveland)

- Let's go over our day...how am I improving?...where are my weaknesses? Always add the positive.

Step 10 suggests that we continue taking a personal inventory and promptly admit our mistakes. No mistakes? Better look again!

-This step is a tool that helps us to be straight about what's really happening in our lives and to make immediate amends when we see that we are wrong. Step 10 is crucial to the continued improvement of our interpersonal relationships, which in turn makes it easier to abstain from compulsive overeating. We maintain our willingness to admit where we are at fault in a conflict, and we are also willing to forgive when someone else made a mistake. We do not have to fall back on the unsatisfactory consolation of excessive eating.

Many of us find it helpful to practice the Tenth step at the end of each day, going over our actions and our attitudes during that twenty-four-hour period. However, for others it works better to begin their day by taking their inventory from the day before. Neither is wrong or right. Whatever works. So first, was our abstinence cleaner? Did we refrain from criticizing the people we live with? Did we make a useful contribution to someone else's day? We review where we made progress with the program and where we got off track, considering how we may repair any damage we may have done and how to avoid the same mistakes tomorrow. We congratulate ourselves for our positive actions and feelings and we reaffirm our relationship with a Higher Power.

-Many folks use the alphabet to take the tenth step – A...E...I...O...U and Y:

A: Abstinence?

E: Exercise?

I: What did I do for myself that day?

O: What did I do for One other?

U: What did I do for Unity?

Y: Yes, I will pass it on!

-Other people talk about using the 4 G's: what was Good about today, were there any Gifts, how about a list of Gratuities, and what are my Goals for tomorrow

-At any hour of the day, if we are getting upset or feel that our abstinence is being threatened, it is time to stop and take a quick inventory. This is the spot check. What's going on? If we are angry with a co-worker and feel our serenity slipping away, we don't have to wait until we hit the ceiling (or our colleague!) before we stop to think. We are not responsible for what someone else does, but we are responsible for our reactions. We have a choice as to how we will act in a given situation. If we're upset, that is our problem, and we need to deal with it. Is our anger out of false pride? Just let it go.

-However we decide to use step 10, we have a program which offers a plan of action when something is wrong. This is one of the reasons we can be grateful that we are recovering compulsive overeaters.

-We are all together...it's a WE program. And we find joy and peace.

**WHAT
CONSUMES
YOUR MIND,
CONTROLS
YOUR LIFE.**

Recovery and Service

Giving service has been a huge part of my recovery. As they say, in order to keep it, we need to give it away. In giving service, I have a responsibility, not only to myself, but to others. This has helped me maintain my abstinence and learn healthy coping skills to deal with life.

I have been involved with my local intergroup, the Philadelphia area intergroup (PAIG) for the last three years since I became abstinent. I have also sponsored others and shared my experience with others. Each time I go through the steps with a sponsee, I go through them myself. During the pandemic, I helped with hosting Zoom meetings. This helped my recovery as I had to show up at every meeting.

I have held positions in PAIG such as newsletter editor, Region 7 rep, World Service Rep, and currently retreat chair. This has helped me meet more compulsive eaters outside of the Phili area and helped me learn more about OA and events outside my area. I have heard speakers from all over the world when I attended World Service. Being in these roles have not only helped me to maintain abstinence but also to grow spiritually. Everyday, I am learning more about myself and who my

Traditions: they DO count

‘Reading the Traditions week, maybe I can skip this meeting.’ But no, the Traditions are the backbone to the Program. And sometimes I need to get a backbone.

-Tradition 7 states “Every OA group ought to be self-supporting declining outside contributions.” The Spiritual Principle is Responsibility. I have the responsibility to myself and others by donating money to my local intergroup to help carry the message, by opening a meeting, volunteering to read the Steps or Traditions, and/or being the speaker getter. Service is sanity. And I have the responsibility to take care of myself; very few people are entirely self-supporting unless they are hermits. Do I talk to myself the way I would like my Higher Power, a friend, or my significant other to talk to me? I have a committee of one ricocheting around in my thoughts. And do I get out of me myself and I by calling other Fellows to ask them how they are doing? What Tools of the Program can I use that maybe I’m afraid of? Here’s looking at you, iPhone 11 that weighs 6.63 ounces. How about writing down your feelings; in black and white; they cannot be dismissed. And what about Tradition 8. “Overeaters Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.” The Spiritual Principle is Fellowship. The Overeaters Anonymous organization hires appropriate professionals--accountants, media coordinators, experts in internet security, and attorneys who are fighting copywriter trolls. And to apply it to myself, the Fellows I call may not have professional initials after their names, but they have PhD, post doctorates, in recovering from the disease, working the nine Tools, and practicing the Steps in their everyday life. Finally, or maybe a beginning: I may need to seek my own version of special workers in the form of outside help. We can “employ” anyone, anything that helps us live the Program.

So next month we’ll read the tradition of the month—Tradition Nine. Go read it now and get a sneak preview of the best book in the world. Cindy 2024



Annapolis Area Overeaters Anonymous Meetings

Time : Sunday @ 5:00 PM
Type : Speaker/Literature
Group # : 49836
Contact : Bobbi
bobbi@rothweb.org
443-694-0292
Until further notice this meeting will be conducted via Zoom.
Meeting ID: 857 0836 2015
Password: 956705

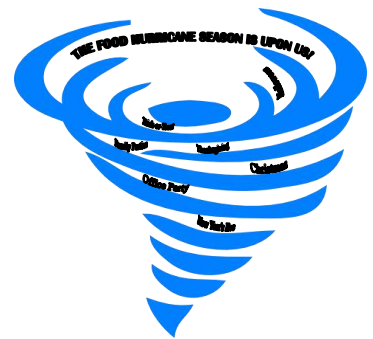
Time: Sunday 6 PM
Type: Face to face
Woods Memorial Church
611 Baltimore Blvd,
Severna Park.21146 Room 152
Enter door on side of building closest to Baltimore Annapolis Blvd. Walk to other end of hallway.
Contact person:
Mary Kay 443-251-8507

Time : Thursday @ 11:00 AM
Type : Literature —In person meeting
Group # : 24077
Contact : Bobbi
443-694-0292
Address:
Calvary United Methodist Church
301 Rowe Blvd., 1st floor, Rm. 105
Annapolis, MD

Time : Friday @ 6:00 PM
Type : Leader's choice literature.
Step or Tradition last
Friday of the month
Group # : 17204
Until further notice this meeting will be conducted via Zoom.
Meeting ID: 710 282 660
Password: 026377

Time : Saturday @ 7:30 AM
Type Face to face
Contact : Kathy
(410)-919-8688
Group: thus far unaffiliated
164 Club
2016 Industrial Hwy
Annapolis, MD

Time : 11:00 AM Tuesday
Type: Face to face
Contact; Debby Z 301-641-0384
Fairview Library
8120 Southern Maryland Blvd.
Owings, MD
Calvert County



Stop being ashamed of how many times you've fallen, and start being proud of how many times you've got up!