

Today

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Tradition Two: For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority--a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

OA's 12 traditions are guidelines for maintaining the health of our program of recovery. The first tradition affirms unity, and the second tradition explains leadership. Prior to joining this fellowship, my experience with leadership was within my family of origin, at school and in my work environments. These experiences taught me that leaders could be supportive, selfless and available, or manipulative, power-hungry and distant.

I remember sitting in my first OA meeting, not understanding the structure and format, but aware that there was one. As my first weeks turned into months, I also remember feeling relieved that this organization had shared leadership that felt fluid, yet dependable. I never viewed any leader in a meeting as "the boss." In over twenty-four years of meetings, I have rarely felt that one personality dominates a group. As our book, The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous reminds us, our program thrives within a "service structure" rather than a "power structure." To me this means that we share responsibility for the maintenance and repair, or tune-up, of our program.

The vehicle for this tune-up is our group conscience. For years, I would leave my regular meetings if a "group conscience" meeting was scheduled right after the closing. (I figured, woo-hoo, short meeting.) The first group conscience I attended made me feel uncomfortable. Something that kept

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me coming back to OA early on was that it was like no other organization that I had been involved in. At this group conscience meeting, however, members were expressing their views on a topic, and voting. This was too much like all the other "hierarchies" of the world. If conflict bubbled up, I had to fight the urge to get up and run. Sometimes the urge won.

A study of all the traditions has taught me about many of my character defects in my behavior in groups. In tradition two, I am reminded that I have the right and responsibility to express my opinion on a group conscience item. When I stayed quiet and fearful at group conscience meetings, I was certain that I didn't have an opinion. What my silence was really saying, however, was "I don't have needs." If I live that belief, I am living in the insanity of the disease.

Group conscience meetings also have annoyed me because I am impatient and impulsive in groups. "Let's just get the job done," has been my motto. What I am really saying, though, is "Let's get this job done my way, and I know how to do it, so stand back." Higher Power's will cannot be expressed when egos are running rampant. Rather, HP can speak through the consensus of the whole group, when every voice has been listened to and respected.

I can't honestly write that a group conscience time is my favorite part of a meeting. I have learned to respect its importance, however. I am also likely to sit through the process, listen to others, and share my experiences. Practicing the principle of shared leadership in Tradition 2 has helped me accept that I have needs and has given me courage to voice them. When I do this and we do this as an organization, we get clear direction from HP.

~Anonymous in St. Louis

Abstinence

My life has changed so much since the day I walked through the doors of OA. I used to live for food, now I live for life. I am so grateful for the practical advice that I have received from OA friends and sponsors. I have accumulated this way of life through the use of the tools, each and every one.

While I have received a tremendous amount of spiritual and emotional recovery, I will share the everyday things that have enabled me to accept the gift of abstinence, one day at a time, for the three years I have been in OA. It's nothing new, just put to use.

How do I get through the holidays? OA taught me to have a plan and stick to it. My abstinence is more important than pleasing my Aunt or other relatives. She will get over it if I don't eat her special dish she made just for me. However, I might not recovery if I do. This disease is fatal.

How do I maintain my abstinence during travel? Traveling is no excuse for me to start my day without prayer, meditation, and journaling. I do that at home to take care of myself; I especially need it in a new environment. I pack my food. Frankly, I don't need to eat out three times a day, ever! It's healthier, cheaper, and I feel better when I pack it. Even if I am shopping at the mall for the day, I pack my lunch and eat it in the food court.

How do I cope with stress without eating? I go for a walk, pray, meditate, do yoga, journal, do a step ten, call my sponsor, call a sponsee, call someone, knit, do something, anything with my hands or heart that takes me away from eating and out of myself.

How do I feel when I maintain my abstinence? I was lucky enough to have a sponsor who gave me permission to never relapse. As a result, I can only compare how I felt before program. I was filled with shame and self-hatred – guess what? – Some days, I still am, even though I am abstinent. The difference for me is that I don't have to eat over it, and I have tools to help me get out of the "stinking thinking." Again, my worst day in recovery is still better than my best day before OA – no joke. I realize now that I don't have to fix my feelings with anything. I didn't do anything wrong just because I feel down one day. The bad ones pass, just as the good ones do.

How do you deal with weight loss or gain without sabotaging myself? I am learning that God is in charge of my weight, not I. I have to trust that as long as I do my part in truth, my body will heal itself. I struggle with compulsive eating (over and under), so it's a real balancing act. In truth, I am still learning, and that's okay.

Other things that make my worst day in recovery still better than my best day before OA:

I start my day with meditation, listening for God. Then I write a "Dear God" letter doing step three with all my worries that I could eat over for that day. Then I read a daily meditation. Before each meal, I sit down and say my prayers, thanking HP for abstinence. Part of my abstinence is not eating anything until I have done that. My husband does this with me even when we're out. He's not a compulsive overeater, but he is also grateful for the program that has saved my life. My abstinence and HP are much more important than what the people in the next booth are thinking. As someone said, "It's none of my business what they are thinking. I pray throughout the day asking for guidance through doing step ten. I have loving people who remind me that I don't have to do these things perfectly, but show up and suit up and the answers will come – Progress, not perfection. I sponsor, do service work that requires abstinence, and continually work the STEPS with two sponsors. I am on step 4 for the third time. The steps keep me honest; as a result, I don't eat over guilt anymore. After reading this, I feel as if I am taking too much credit. I must add, each morning before I get up to meditate, I pray for willingness just to do it. It's not me; it's HP. He gets me started. I must be very clear on that if I am to continue receiving the gift of abstinence.

~A very grateful recovering compulsive overeater, taking it one day at a time!

LIVE (Lots of Interesting Valuables for Everyone) Auction

One of the ways that we raise money to help meet the expenses of the Bi-State Area OA is the LIVE auction held at the conference each spring. **We need your help.** First, we need items/baskets to be auctioned. If each meeting put together a basket, we would have 57 baskets to auction. I know that often a group of people or a single person put together a basket, a vacation spot to visit, books, and other wonderful things. Let's overflow those display tables.

Please take this opportunity to help support support Bi-State Area OA, and remember, after we get these wonderful baskets, we need people to come and bid. Let's make this LIVE auction the best ever. There is also a great opportunity to give service, so come work on the auction team. Please write or call me: Judith Wells, 3412 Oxford, Maplewood, MO 63143, (314) 645-6593.

Help Your Phone Lose Weight

I hear a lot of people talk about how their phone weighs at least 300 pounds. Making an outreach call doesn't have to be that bad. Before I make a call, I think about how much I like it when someone calls me. I feel happy that the person chose me to call, I never feel bothered. Then I remind myself that I don't have to have some gigantic conversation. It can be as short as " hi, how are you? Such and such worked for me today, blah, blah, blah, bye!" Just like everything else, outreach calls take practice Make one for starters, and go from there. You can also use someone's answering machine to

confirm your abstinence if no one is home. I regularly leave my sponsor a message saying that I am not eating (fill in the blank) today.

~Tamara H.

Volunteer Opportunities

OA Office

The OA office is always in need of volunteers. The office is open 3 days a week – Mon, Wed, and Fri – 9:30 am to 12:30 pm. If you could work one day a month, it would be **greatly appreciated.** The job includes – showing up – answering the telephone – returning calls from the answering machine – and sharing your program with anyone you speak to. If you can help out at the office, please call Barb M at (636) 724-2419.

Answering Machine

I love receiving calls from people who would like help finding meetings! Do you like getting telephone calls? If you would like to considering having your name and number on the answering machine recording from our office, please call me. I'd like 2 volunteers from both MO and IL. The recording will specify to call up to 9:30 pm. Thanks for your support
Ruth E. (314) 878-7488

March's newsletter will include articles on Step 3 and Tradition 3. Thanks to all of you for continuing to share your experience strength and hope with our BiState. Send your contributions via e-mail to StlouisOAtoday@hotmail.com

Heard at Super Saturday (November IDEA Day)

Abstinence is a worthwhile struggle.

Step Three is the lynchpin of the program.

Stop doing what you "feel like" doing.

Nothing helps your spiritual life like giving up an addiction.

Lack of humility is the biggest obstacle to abstinence.

It's part of God's plan that I am inadequate.

Self-pity is a trigger food.

Be aware. Think before you eat.

This is the wrong time of year to let the disease out.

Luckily food doesn't kill us quickly – we get time to recover.

I seem to have a broken switch in me – I don't know when to stop.

Powerlessness means that when I'm about to take the first compulsive bite, I don't realize that I even have a chance.

After each meal, I pray and ask God to make me satisfied with the abstinent amount I've just eaten.

~Karen

Service Vacancies

- 1 Trustee
- 2 Region Reps
- 2 World Service Delegates
- Cassette
- Public Information
- Twelve Step Within
- 2005 Retreat

WANTED

Guest Newsletter Editors

The newsletter chair is looking for a committee.

If you are interested in being a guest newsletter editor, please contact Dawn S (see back of Where & When for trusted servant phone numbers) or send an email to the newsletter address.

Writing experience not necessary. Access to a computer is a must!

Reminder

Where & Whens will be published monthly. Each meeting is responsible for making sure there are enough copies at the meetings. If you need a copy, stop by the office or email the office, & we'll send you one.

New Meetings

No New Meetings

Upcoming Events & Business Info

February 26: Unity Day

9:30-3:30

St. Joseph Hospital – Kirkwood
(Carondelet Room-West Entrance)
525 Couch Avenue

Sponsored by St. Louis Bi-State Intergroup

March: Open

April: Convention

April 8-10, 2005

May 21: 9:30-3:00

Esic Baptist Church

1000 Esic Dr., Edwardsville
Sponsored by Sunshine Group
Edwardsville

Oct 14-16

The Big Book Comes Alives for OA
Madison, WI

Contact: leslie63@tds.net
Sponsored by Madison Intergroup

To schedule a Super Saturday or other event, contact Ginnie H at (636) 723-0658. Any flyers for OA events submitted for dissemination to meetings or for publication in the newsletter must have received approval by the St. Louis Bi-State Area BOT (ask any BOT member).

Editorial Policy

As suggested by WSO guidelines, newsletters are to be a forum for experience, strength and hope. We encourage and give top priority to original material written by members of this Intergroup.

We reserve the right to edit any and all articles submitted for publication. Submission of article or flyers does not necessarily guarantee publication.

Opinions expressed are those of the writer and not necessarily that of the St. Louis Bi-State Area Intergroup or OA as a whole.



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Region IV website: www.oaregion4.org