
RECOVERY LINES

A Twelve Step Publication of Western Mass Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

FALL 2011

The slip happens before the bite is taken

What would cause a self-admitted compulsive eater, knowing how painful a return to compulsive eating is, to take the first compulsive bite anyway? I'm glad you asked that question.

The Big Book of AA tells us that a drunk/addict/compulsive eater has an incredibly short memory.

We'll pick and choose the parts of compulsive eating that seem enjoyable, and we'll "forget" the inevitable & horrible emotional aftermath that destroys our personal integrity and makes liars of us all.

A compulsive eater who's pretty sure that their life is a mess usually benefits from adding structure into their daily life. But in order to have a chance at recovery, they also need to convert their "desire to stop eating" into a "commitment to abstinence. That takes action, and consistency.

It is not easy, because I must challenge every thought, every impulse, and every feeling that creeps into my mind and heart and tries to get me to eat again. This is counter intuitive for most people.

But the crazy thought to eat comes from there, and my attempts to keep those thoughts in check are a real tug-of-war that most food addicts, without a program and a plan, will lose almost every time.

After I ingest my favorite binge foods, the physical cravings kick in and only make things worse. Trying to NOT eat after that is even more uncomfortable, because the power of the mind to tell us lies, and the ability to rationalize (one of the few things that improves with active addiction) really interferes with making sound decisions, because I am in a state of diminished capacity and no longer "in my right mind".

The longer I stay abstinent, the clearer my thinking (painful as it may be sometimes), and the better able I am to see the cause and effect of my compulsive eating, and how it separates me from my best self, from other people, and most importantly, from my Higher Power, who carries me through, in the end.

I believe that the vast majority of slips come about as a result of a "cascade effect" of bad decisions.

I leave the house 30 minutes before my normal meal time without having a meal in tow.

My hunger increases and now, I need to "find some food", only my options are limited. I end up at a restaurant where getting an abstinent meal is going to be a challenge. Because I'm feeling a little out of sorts, I DON'T ask the waiter whether there's sugar in the dressing, or whether I'll get the portions that I happily enjoy on a less stressful day, or when I'm home. So I eat what they give me.

I end up eating more than I would have, and now I'm in that grey zone, where I have to decide whether to tell my sponsor, or chalk it up as a learning experience, because "I can't be perfect with my food."

If I eat willfully, spontaneously, defiantly, impulsively or without a degree of mindfulness, I am pretty much eating compulsively, irrespective of what and how much I eat. Because I have forgotten that as a food addict, only by being mindful every time I am in close proximity with food can I be sure that my commitment to abstinence is firm, that my intentions are clear, and that the benefits of taking these measures far outweigh the "inconvenience" of having to work a program to maintain my sanity.

So, if I have a plan, if I am accountable to a sponsor, if I deem it important to stay abstinent today, chances are that I will not experience the emotional and spiritual blind spot that ALWAYS precedes the first compulsive bite. And I can properly give credit to my Higher Power who makes it all possible.

Neil R. (Baltimore, MD)

The **Western Mass Intergroup** meeting is scheduled for the 2nd Monday of each month, from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm at the Holyoke Medical Center, Beech Street, Holyoke Massachusetts. The meeting is in the Auditorium Building, Please park in Lot C.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME

Contact Information

Western Mass Intergroup
Of Overeaters Anonymous
Post Office Box 2911
Springfield, Massachusetts 01101-2911
Telephone: (413) 783-4198
Editor: Michele C.
newsletter@oawmass.org

UPCOMING ANNIVERSARIES:

OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS

HAPPY 18th ANNIVERSARY!

Join the Monday Manchester OA meeting in celebrating our 18th Anniversary on
Monday, September 26th, 7pm
St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Anderson Hall
41 Park Street, Manchester

The regular weekly meeting will take place from 5-6pm in the Guild Room

- 2 Guest Speakers
- Refreshments
- Raffle

For Additional Information Contact:

Chuck (860) 847-1444
Angela (860) 523-0575

Looking for Speakers?

The following people are willing to speak at your meeting, sharing their experience, strength and hope of recovery in Overeaters Anonymous. If your meeting has specific requirements to speak, i.e., length of time, length of abstinence, etc, please inform the person at the time you ask him or her to speak. Please tell us *if you would like to add/remove your name to/from the speaker's list.*

Beth B.	Sunderland	413-584-0238	John L	Connecticut	860-818-1964
Carol C.	Pelham	413-256-3754	Kathleen	Monson	413-267-3869
David	Westfield	413-579-5101	Kathy	Windsor, Conn.	860-688-5697
Dawn	Southwick	413-569-3495	Linda C.	Longmeadow	413-262-4873
Deb	Connecticut	860-623-8501	Maria S.	Windsor, Conn.	860-688-3535
Ellen	South Hadley	413-534-0000	Marie	Hatfield	413-247-9254
Epi	Amherst	413-549-8421	Mark C.	Pelham	413-256-3754
Francine	Great Barrington	413-822-4141	Michele C.	Northampton	413-561-5471
Gwen	Chicopee	413-592-6869	Phyllis	Longmeadow	413-567-0762
Jeffrey	Holyoke	413-386-7541	Robin	Feeding Hills	413-789-1396
Jess	Longmeadow	413-531-9354	Sarah K.	Amherst	413-549-0266
Joette	Springfield	413-781-4070	Sara	Easthampton	413-230-8565
John C.	Westfield	413-454-8180	Sue	Holyoke	413-536-5904

Editorial Policy

Recovery Lines is the quarterly newsletter of Western Mass Intergroup. ***The deadlines for copy are March 15 for the spring, June 15 for summer, September 15 for fall, and December 15 for winter.*** Materials sent to WMI cannot be returned nor can payment be made. All submissions to the newsletter must be signed and when published will appear with first name and last initial unless otherwise requested. Names will be withheld upon request. Recovery Lines reserves the right to edit all submissions for length and clarity. Other OA groups may reprint without permission. We ask that you cite the writer and Recovery Lines as your source. Courtesy copies of reprinted articles are appreciated. The opinions expressed are those of the writer, not those of Western Mass Intergroup or OA as a whole. Please address all submissions and correspondence to Recovery Lines via e-mail to newsletter@oawmass.org or by mail to Recovery Lines, Western Mass Intergroup, Post Office Box 2911, Springfield, Massachusetts 01101—2911.

A Note on Healthy Service

I have been praying a lot about service in my meditations as of late. Fortunately (or unfortunately, jury is still out) I was thrust into service very early on in my OA journey. I saw the inner workings at the intergroup level and it was intimidating. It was also amazing to see the hard work and dedication people showed for the good of the fellowship as a whole. I jumped in head first and started on committees. It can be very rewarding. I feel good when I help others, I feel wanted and trusted, something that doesn't happen outside OA that much. But I soon realized in some ways I traded one compulsion for another. I wanted that good feeling all the time, but I was also feeling resentment, especially if someone had something negative to say to me. That is definitely a character defect of mine.

I need to go back a little. When I came into program, my first abstinence was to end the very destructive behavior that was causing serious physical harm to me. Then about a year into that I was mentally and spiritually ready for a much more specific food plan to continue the physical recovery I needed to arrive at a much healthier size. Around that same time, I began to have serious health problems. I stepped away from my HP for awhile, asking why me. I was scared about what was to become of me, and my service took a back seat to depression, as did my program. The service I did do was so important to me, I had a hair trigger response to anyone who questioned me or said anything that in my mind translated into criticism. Of course I never said it to them, as fear of confrontation is another defect, but my journal got a pen full.

While I was home in pain, I had a lot of time to really think. I realized that the MOST important thing in my life is my recovery. I was reminded on a recent trip it is very important "to put the oxygen mask on myself before assisting others". If I am not committed to my OA journey, I am depleting my energy for other people, places, and things and not receiving anything in return. That also leads to hard feelings and resentments towards others that don't deserve it, and probably have no idea where it is coming from.

Today, now that the bulk of my health problems have been resolved, I feel honored to have been given a second chance at a new and amazing life by my HP. I am moving closer to Him every day. I have also started a healthier, more specific food plan a few weeks ago, and the results are remarkable!! I feel stronger, have more energy, and my mind is so much clearer. I want to close this article by sharing my summarized thoughts about "healthy service". These thoughts are mine alone, and do not reflect on OA as a whole.

Service is a truly wonderful gift I not only give but receive from as well. I am fortunate enough that with my job, I have a lot of free time to make commitments. It does make me feel good to give to the Fellowship. I can never pay back all OA has done for me. However, with my new found clean abstinence I can recognize some of the pitfalls. Too much, too soon was not the right decision for ME. I need to pray and reflect how that service will impact my life, family, and job, good and bad. I also need to ask myself, why do I want to do it? I need to have positive, healthy reasons for that decision. I also need to respect the full seventh tradition, self supporting (not only for OA, but my own self support) and rotation of service as well. When the time comes to hand it over to someone new, I need to let go and trust that person or persons.

I hope people reading this will be encouraged to perform service at any level, especially if you haven't done so yet. Everything from carrying the key, setting up or cleaning up at your meeting, or visiting intergroup to be a rep or working on the various committees can be beneficial to you and to OA. Our fellowship needs everyone to pitch in a little, so a small few don't need to pitch in too much.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I hope your journey is filled with, love, hope, and recovery.

Much Love,
An OA Sister

TUESDAY MORNING LIFELINE MEETING NEEDS YOUR old *Lifeline* magazines

The focus of our meeting is to read through the stories of a Lifeline magazine and share on what we read. As we tend to talk more than we read, we are behind in our issues. This is a good thing because now you can share your magazine with those less fortunate. When we finish with an issue we donate them to libraries and healthcare offices.

**We meet Tuesday 9:30 - 10:30 am at
St. David's Episcopal Church
699 Springfield Street, Feeding Hills, MA 01030**

Questions? Call Rose O. 413-788-4584

Importance of Meetings and Service in Recovery

I would like to share my answer to question 20 in *A guide for Sponsors*, Appendix A: "Read *The Tools of Recovery*. What is the importance of giving service in OA? What is the importance of meetings? How are they both part of the road to recovery?"

Service is fundamental to the operation of OA as we are self-run and self-governing. Whatever needs to be done, we do ourselves. We must do service in order to carry the message to the still suffering overeater. Service is a way to say thank you to OA for all it has done for me. I must and want to continually give away what I have been given. For me service is a privilege. I am grateful for any opportunity to serve OA as it is so magnificent an organization. It has led me out of misery and degradation into a life of joy, creativity and love. It has made me into a desirable and admirable human being and my joy is enhanced by helping others find their best selves. There is no other way for compulsive overeaters than OA and I am compelled to do everything I can to see that OA lives on.

Meetings bring us together to share and help each other. While we are in that room, nothing exists but our common problem. It is the only time and place where this very vital attention can be given to our recovery. Our conversations consist of no other concerns or activities. Meetings are absolutely essential to our recovery. There, we do not judge or feel judged, wrong or foolish. Our disease is real, but only other compulsive overeaters know this wholeheartedly and know what each other feels and needs. Only in this place can our loving God be felt for here we remember without interference that He is our one authority and makes Himself known in our group conscience. If we are to recover, we must meet and spend as much time together as possible.

They are both part of the road to recovery in the way they are intertwined. Service given enhances and furthers our individual recoveries and keeps OA alive. Service received furthers an individual's recovery and provides him or her with the help that needs to be passed along. There is much service that goes into comprising a meeting, giving all the opportunity to serve. Service is our reason for being and nowhere is it more obvious than at an OA meeting.