

Hello my fellow OA friends!

My recovery has just received an enormous, albeit unexpected, boost as it was a fairly last-minute decision for me to represent my Group at the recent 28th Annual OA National Assembly and Convention. It was a Group effort, too, as due to my husband's shifts, getting me there involved one member babysitting my kids whilst another drove me to the airport! Talk about fellowship in action!

I'm almost too ashamed to admit that it was the first time I had ever been to National Assembly. One thing's for sure – it definitely won't be the last! For those of you who may not feel they're particularly interested in the decision-making processes of OAGB and/or those who may even perceive that it's made up of 'them' rather than 'us' – why not keep an open mind and go along and see for yourselves?

It's always been suggested to me to get right onto the 'middle of the raft' and to 'stick with the winners' (in order to win with the stickers!) and I have to say that I found the National Assembly and Convention weekend an amazingly uplifting experience. For me, to be amongst others who take their recovery as seriously as I do and who are willing to go to any lengths in order to do so is both a privilege and an honour.

Hopefully I can manage to persuade my little family to support me in making this an annual event in future. After all, as my sponsor often reminds me, although my husband and children may not want me to go away and leave them for any given period of time, whenever I top up my 'spiritual bank' at such events, ironically they are the main beneficiaries. Besides, I never know when I'm going to need to tap into those reserves.

One thing's for sure, I will most certainly be going next year in order to support my Intergroup (North of England) in hosting the 29th Annual OA National Assembly and Convention. So, get your woollies on, folks, as we're heading up North to Sheffield next year! I'd like to take this opportunity to extend a heartfelt thank you to Devon and Cornwall Intergroup for hosting this year's Assembly in Plymouth – you'll be an incredibly hard act to follow!

Love in Fellowship

*Lucy, SBS Editor
Newcastle-upon-Tyne*

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We need YOU to submit your shares, stories, letters, artwork, illustrations and poetry.

Share with fellow OAers around Great Britain.

Do some fun service and keep our Fellowship thriving.

Email all submissions to
stepbystep@oagb.org.uk

OR, write to
**SBS c/o OAGB, 483 Green Lanes
London N13 4BS**

**Submissions deadline for the Spring 2014 edition of
SBS is Friday, 7th February 2014. Topics:**

Step Three

Tradition Twelve

Tool of Recovery: Anonymity

**Topic: "...no longer must we each depend upon our own
unsteady willpower."**

**or any topic/Step/Tradition/Tool of your choice; review a
favourite piece of OA-approved literature; or share your
experience of an OA Event/Retreat/Workshop**

Submissions sent to Step By Step are assumed to be intended for publication and may be subject to editing. All submissions become the property of OAGB for publication and copyright purposes. Submission does not guarantee publication. We do not publish stories that contain outside issues or that do not demonstrate recovery through the OA Programme. Please note your contribution may be held and published in a future edition of Step By Step.

Step By Step presents experiences and opinions of OA members. Opinions expressed herein are not to be attributed to Overeaters Anonymous as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement, either by Overeaters Anonymous or SBS.

Please note that in line with the policy 'Guidelines for OA Newsletters' (see <http://www.oa.org/pdfs/newsletterguidelines.pdf>) any OA service body is welcome to reprint full articles featured in Step By Step without permission as long as credit is given to SBS. Authors of articles published in this and any future editions of SBS need to therefore be aware of the fact that their articles may be reproduced in other OA publications.

For more information on the Steps and Traditions, visit www.oagb.org.uk

Step Two: Healing

"Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity"

Sometimes I've wondered whether I really 'fit' in OA. I have never been overweight, never seen myself as a binger, never made myself sick, never lost years of my life to dieting or obsessively weighed myself and really, *really* resisted the idea that I am an addict. I have been reluctant to see it even when I've looked back and remembered stealing money from my parents to buy sweets when I was in primary school, or stolen sweets from the newsagent; rarely went even a day at secondary school without sweets in the pocket of my blazer; stolen food and sweets from places I've worked; raided the cupboards in my mother's kitchen; or used chocolate to quell some of the uncomfortable feelings that arose during withdrawal in another Twelve-Step fellowship.

Working Step One with my sponsor, I realised that the thing I really didn't want to admit, least of all to myself, was that I was unhappy. Unhappy and scared stiff of living and of people. Chocolate had become 'The Great Calmer', a tranquilliser – literally, providing a kind of tranquillity. There wasn't much that couldn't be made better by chocolate - except the 'peace of mind' gained in this way started to come at a cost. 18 months ago I started having 'rage attacks' where I would viciously turn in on myself and rage at myself, full of self-hatred and attack thoughts. These would be triggered by the smallest of things, spending 'too long' on the phone when I was tired, getting just a little 'too caught up in something': in short, breaking one of my perfectionist rules and deciding that I had got it wrong (again).

I tried a romantic relationship and found my mind so foggy that I didn't know whether I was coming or going, and she didn't want to stick around to find out, so I went to OA in an attempt to make the relationship work. Well, it didn't, but I am still in OA and have just shared my Step Two. Putting down the sugar has allowed me, for the first time, to identify with the approach to life of the addict – irritable, resentful, spending most of my time thinking about how good the world would be if everyone else would just do what I wanted, the horrible disease of victim-hood, resenting God and the world for making me work for a living, *me!* Ego and self-will run riot.

I have come to believe that I need to change, after experiences of finding myself in the bath after a day or days of trying my way; exerting my will; becoming exhausted, angry, resentful, dispirited, hopeless, frightened and lonely and in intense emotional pain; when I am broken by my will; where finally I come to God and ask to be delivered.

I find myself willing to look for a Power greater than me. And for me I need to look, and look again, and look again, but more than look, I am willing to trust. I am willing by my thoughts, words and actions to trust that I have been made anew. It has happened - I have been made new and I trust that having been brought this far, I will not be abandoned here. It seems to me to be a knife edge I am on, but God tells me I am in a field, a green pasture where I can lie down, lie down in warmth, in love, in comfort and that I am safe here. Even when, as I have once during my Stepwork, binged on sugar again, I found I

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have been safe and held all the way through it, and in the days after. Grace surrounds me like a fine film and somehow I remember that I have been loved my entire life.

For me that Higher Power is the truth that all is well. It is the still, clear knowledge of things as they are. It is the peaceful reality without the mind. It is deep, deep safety where there is no harm. It is love, far away from my idea of love, yet one I know. It is always there when I seek it, never absent or engaged, never unavailable.

Since starting to work the Steps, and without the sugar to fuel it, I have attacked myself less. It still happens sometimes but I know it will pass. My sponsor said about it, "Try accepting that this is how you are feeling." And it was a revelation to me – acceptance.

Some while ago as I was finding my way in OA, I wrote this poem, or perhaps more a vision of the future. I want to share it now. It is called *A Healing*.

The illness cannot stay in my body
It is being rejected, piece by piece.
I have been broken, to be made whole.
And at last
It was harder to hold it in
Than to let it go.
In that moment, fear left me.
God came forth and razed my life to the ground
Gave me nothing, and everything
All fell away, save that which can never fall away
Save that which is all, cannot be described.
The fleeting picture in my mind
Of something that flows through all,
Connects all, binds all and holds all.
Yet will not control,
Will not insist
And will never force.
That just says, "Here is the route: climb it, walk it.
It will never cease to be the way
Yet you will never be held to it
Come and go as you wish
I will always be here
Unyielding, yet un-ending in my welcome of you
You, my son, who has returned to me, welcome
Oh my joy in this, in you
To see you as I see you
To see you open, as I open you."

Meirion T, Manchester

My Higher Power

(written to support an abstinent sponsee considering taking Step Three)

There are lots of options for what our God or Higher Power can be. Luckily, we don't have to get stuck in religious stuff. For me, when I took Step Two, my Higher Power (that which was restoring me to sanity) was my sponsor and my meeting; I knew if I called her each morning and went to meetings, I was abstinent. As I was not going to turn my life or will over to the care of my sponsor or OA, for Step Three, my Higher Power was like the 'Force' from a well-known sci-fi film: a power of goodness to which we can connect and by which we can be empowered to make the right/best choice in a situation; the power that was (and still is) keeping me abstinent, keeping me willing to be abstinent one more day. My idea hasn't really changed that much, though I use the word 'God' mostly now for simplicity's sake.

Someone I sponsored for a while decided upon 'Not Me' as her Higher Power. She still uses that. I really like that. It's simple and there can be no argument with that.

As I couldn't be abstinent on my own (if I could have, I would have!), my sponsor helped me realise it was a Higher Power doing it, and the Higher Power had already proven itself trustworthy: in the fact that I was abstinent day after day. The proof of a trustworthy Higher Power was in the pudding, so to speak!

I don't worry about having a 'relationship' with my Higher Power. For me, I don't have any clue what my Higher Power is, and I don't have a relationship with it, not like a friend or parent or anything. It's a Power that works, and on which I can rely. I don't always feel a closeness; sometimes my understanding is just intellectual. But it doesn't seem to matter. As long as I believe it will work (Step Two), and decide to act on that belief (Step Three), I am pretty much okay. I don't always trust God in the details, but after a bit of trying to do things on my own, I am reminded that life will be better (and usually easier) if I let go of the reins and control. And then I do (let go, that is), and get on with whatever is next (that's Steps Four to Twelve).

So whatever my Higher Power is or isn't, I am grateful it's working for me today (and has been keeping me abstinent one day at a time for 31 years), and I don't worry about the details, and get on with being abstinent one more day.

*Abstinent and grateful
Southeast London*

Tradition Eleven

"Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television, and other public media of communication."

Tradition Eleven is one in which OA goes contrary to the dominant ethos of society. Celebrity culture! Say no more: it was (among other things) measuring myself up against celebrities and judging myself lacking that set me into the life of abusing myself with food (and overexercise and overwork).

But for me it wasn't the glamour girls of the sixties to eighties when I was growing up whom I idolised. My celebrity was an ideal – a perfect all-round-genius female scientist with musical talent thrown in. That is what I thought I should be. The word 'female' is important to me: I feel that in science, women are often in a minority and in my opinion they have to work extra hard to get the same level of recognition as men.

When I read the scientific research that seems to back up my point of view, I was shocked, then amused by the scientists re-discovering Tradition Eleven. They found that anonymity, which Twelve-Step fellowships recognised decades ago as being vital to serene progress in recovery, is needed to protect science and scientists from prejudice (which is just another name for celebrity culture). Their experiments showed that a scientific paper is less likely to be judged favourably by readers who recognise the author's name as female. Research suggests that even female readers give more credence to a male author. And if that's true for scientists, who are trained to be objective when reading scientific papers, how much more is it so for the compulsive eater still in the thick of their disease, newly joined OA sometimes with distorted ideas of what a celebrity is? If I use the harsher word 'prejudice', it's clearer, whether the prejudice is in favour of people who fit the compulsive eater's potentially distorted image of a celebrity (e.g. a slim star who goes public with their OA membership) or against ("that OA member is of a different race, creed, gender, sexual orientation, religion or nationality to me, so OA won't work for me"). Prejudice can also get in the way when the message the newcomer needs to hear, and the one I'm trying to deliver, is:

- (a) I'm a good-enough human being, same as you
- (b) I have an incurable disease of abusing myself with food
- (c) Daily practice of the Steps and Tools as a simple member of OA makes me daily into ME, which I feel is better than being a so-called 'celebrity'
- (d) This can work for you, too.

And – if celebrity status were ever thrust upon me (show me an OA member in recovery who would ever seek it out deliberately?!), daily practice of the OA principles should (I hope) give me the humility to survive and focus on my recovery and doing my HP's will.

Sheila P

"No longer is there a sense of hopelessness..."

Already in OA but without a sponsor, I found myself in Germany visiting family, on a very strange diet, eating only wholegrains and herbs. I grew super thin and my family were shocked by my behaviour.

I had the *Lifeline Sampler* packed in my luggage, and I read a page every night. It gave me the courage to admit in my own heart that I had a problem with food that my diet couldn't fix. This was confirmed to me when I was tempted away from my diet by a slice of cake at a relative's house. I was incredibly lonely the next day, doing laps at the swimming pool to try and feel 'pure' again and 'get back on track'.

Upon arriving home, I got in touch with a lady doing service for her Intergroup, helping match newcomers and loners with abstinent sponsors. She soon put me in touch with someone, and as soon as I heard this lady's voice, I knew I wanted what she had. I quickly acknowledged not only to myself and God that I had a problem controlling my food, but now, also, to another living person on this planet. I also admitted to her something I'd never honestly shared with another: that I was lonely.

Over the next few weeks I called her every day and she made the following suggestions, which I followed:

- Call her
- Clear strange or confusing foods from my cupboards and those containing sugar or white flour (listed as 'wheat flour') within the first four ingredients
- Commit to one morning per week to do my supermarket shopping and ask my Higher Power for protection while there
- Weigh my carbohydrates, like porridge oats and rice, in dried form, to ensure a moderate portion before cooking
- Include one third carbs, one third protein, one third veg (except for breakfast), a tablespoon of fat and a piece of fruit in each meal to ensure my body gets all that it needs
- Keep my food plan simple but not too simple (we talked about this and made decisions together - I made commitments to her)
- Rotate my daily menus, leaving three clear days before repeating certain foods to keep my meals enjoyably varied and for freedom from food favouritism when making choices
- Pray on my knees

I also took the following actions, in line with her suggestions:

- Committing my menu-plan for the day afresh each morning to her for the next seven weeks and then to God thereafter
- Writing a review of how my food was each day: the success and enjoyability of each meal and what I would do differently next time
- Attending two meetings a week minimum and sharing honestly there, remembering to tell others the good news of my abstinence
- Running decisions to make changes past God via a 'God Box' and then bringing it up with my sponsor or another OA before making any sudden change to my food plan or to my life

- Doing about 20 minutes Stepwork a day (she guided me in what to read and write for this)
- Sharing any feelings that came up during this intense process with other OAs; gathering a network of support around me and using it regularly
- Learning to prioritise my actions to stay abstinent and the eating of my meals above all other activities in my day
- Learning to take an adequate amount of time out in my day to enjoy eating my three meals
- Getting an early night, putting one foot in front of the other, keeping my food simple, keeping my life simple and HOLDING ON

Three Steps later and I began to realise that, rather magically and for the first time in my life as far as I could remember, "No longer was there a sense of hopelessness."

Thank you OA and thank you God for the tremendous gift of my ongoing recovery to this day.

Naomi

How can I explain that I lost 4½ stones with the help of my faith?

(This article was used by a member as part of her PI programme in her local faith community.)

Ever since I could remember, I enjoyed sweet things. I had been well fed as a young child and some would describe me as 'bonny', but I wasn't excessively overweight. As I negotiated puberty, the natural process of growing up meant that I lost any weight I needed to, and like lots of girls my age, I even looked 'gangly' at times. For me, however, and for the average teenage girl around that time, slim was not slim enough and I decided it would be a good idea to try to lose some more weight. The 'thing' at the time was to eat an orange before my main meal and another again afterwards, and then the calories in the middle wouldn't register! So every evening after school I would stand at the bus stop waiting to go home and eat that orange. Again after my meal at home, I would eat the magical orange!

And so began a merry-go-round in the crazy world of dieting and weight loss. Some ideas were hare-brained, some sensible, but ultimately they always ended in failure. All I did eventually was end up heavier than I was to begin with!

I thought I was reasonably intelligent but somehow, I couldn't keep the weight off. I could lose it all right, but on every diet or weight loss regime I would lose weight and then hit that 'wall' and always gain it back! I tried everything - various diet clubs, meal replacements, sweets that were supposed to make you feel full, lemon drinks that were designed to take away the sweet tooth, even earrings that were meant to magically press on a nerve in your ear lobe that would make you stop eating! All they did was make my ears sore! I did lose weight with some, but as I say, ultimately I always gained it back. More importantly, though, as I grew older, I hated the weight and myself for being a failure in the weight loss department. Panic set in.

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"Being in OA is an enormous privilege – many people don't get this chance"

I found Overeaters Anonymous (OA) 12 years ago and started attending OA meetings in January 2000. OA is a Twelve Step Fellowship.

You may have heard of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), a Fellowship that helps people who have a problem with alcohol. Well, OA does the same for people who have a problem with food. Compulsive eaters come in all guises - some overeat, some are bulimic, some anorexic. I haven't dabbled with bulimia but I have tried my hand at starving at times with lots of periods of overeating thrown in. There are lots of 'Anonymous' programmes, depending on what the problem is. OA was first started by a lady who went to a Gamblers Anonymous meeting to support a friend. She sat at the back of the room and listened and essentially inwardly thought, "I don't have a gambling problem, but this 'thing' might help me with my food problem." She had been a serial dieter just like me. That was the start of the OA programme. Our Fellowship has come a long way since then, with the help of God and the Twelve Steps. OA started in 1960: it is now a worldwide Fellowship with over 6,000 meetings. The Twelve Step programmes are all non-profit fellowships and are supported financially only by their members' contributions. Members respect the absolute anonymity of each other.



This is how it works:

I, like lots of our members, had always known that I had willpower. I could name lots of examples, but somehow my willpower was just not there for any length of time when it came to food – and, in particular, certain types of food. I had been able to restrict my intake in my early adulthood, but by the time I found OA in January 2000, I had reached a stage where once I started eating certain foods, I found it very difficult to stop. The sorts of food I had issues with were chocolate, sweets, cakes, biscuits – I now know that it was anything with refined sugar in it. I didn't want to admit it, but I was addicted to these foods. (Other members have issues with other foods, e.g. white bread.) When I found OA, I didn't want to go to their regular meetings, but I realised that I had tried all the diets, and sooner or later I had failed at them all. So when I walked through the door of that first OA meeting, I was desperate. I was chronically unhappy about my weight and my eating.

The key to the Twelve Steps is just that - desperation. The more desperate you are, the more inclined you will be to work through the Steps and build them into your life, as well as abstaining from the substance you are powerless over as an addicted person. I could see that the other men and women that were attending the OA meetings had been eating compulsively and they had found a way to stop – by working the Twelve Steps into their lives.

The Twelve Steps ask us to invite God into every area of our lives and to solve the addiction problem that we cannot solve on our own, and to do our best to do God's will thereafter.

So I attended meetings, asked someone to sponsor me (i.e. help me through the Programme and show me how it works), made a commitment to abstain

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from my trigger/addictive foods and then proceeded to work through the Programme of the Twelve Steps. I won't list The Twelve Steps here (if you are interested you can look them up on the websites that I will give at the end). However, I will explain that the Twelve Steps are a bit like making a big confession. The difference is that the Twelve Steps ask us to look at our *whole* lives, not just the last few weeks or months.

OA is not just for people of a particular faith – it is for anyone who wants to stop eating compulsively. (I have referred to God – others may refer to a Higher Power that is appropriate for them, but for me it is the God of my faith.)

OA, like most of the 'Anonymous' fellowships, uses the instructions for this process of 'working' the Twelve Steps that were first laid down in the 'Big Book' of *Alcoholics Anonymous* (which were originally derived from the tenets of the early Oxford Groups). They are fairly detailed but effectively they start with acceptance of a problem (for me and other OA members: compulsive overeating); handing our whole life (including the problem) over to the care of God; and effectively handing our lives over to God's will. Then we look at all the good and the harm done by ourselves. We look at the *whole* of our lives – what 'baggage' are we still carrying around in resentments? Do we trust God absolutely – or why are we afraid? And so on. We then work through each element and decide how restitution can be made and then set about making it. Every day thereafter, we try to make a commitment to live our lives like that - living God's way, taking inventory (examining our conscience and actions) and setting things right as best we can as imperfect humans.

What happens as a person works through the Twelve Steps is that they eventually just don't want to eat compulsively. Personally, I have a feeling that I just want to nourish the body that God entrusted to me - not to damage it by overeating. Anorexics no longer want to restrict and bulimics no longer want to purge. As I worked through the Steps, I sought advice from a dietician (OA does not give professional advice in this way) and made a commitment to abstain from compulsive eating and I lost that extra weight. I am now 4½ stones lighter than I was when I first attended meetings and, just as importantly, my weight has now been stable for more than five or six years.

The funny thing is that as well as not overeating, I now feel inwardly very healed in every way. It's very difficult to express in words, but I guess I would try to describe the feeling as generally having a sense of well-being that's not like having a party, but is inner contentment in a very peaceful way. I feel a closeness to God that is very real and personal. I still practise my religion, but the Twelve Step Programme and abstinence from compulsive eating has meant that my faith has become what I guess it should always have been - a very practical path to God. It's a fair, down-to-earth and simple approach to life.

I take no credit for it whatsoever – it's the power of God and the Twelve Steps.

So there you are – that's how this person lost 4½ stones through believing in God.

The Twelve Steps and details of OA can be found on the following websites:
www.oagb.org.uk and www.oa.org

Anonymous

Tools of Recovery: Writing and Sponsorship

Since starting in OA about 18 months ago, I have experienced many highs and lows, both because of and despite being in Programme. I have to say, the highs far outweigh the lows, which have generally been due to an over exuberant 'self-will run riot'. I wanted to share my recent experience of relapse because I think it shows how fabulous this Fellowship is and how wonderful sponsors are.

Having recently changed sponsor (I chose one that would be stricter with me – I KNOW what a forceful, bossy know-it-all I am!) I had reluctantly agreed to 'call in' my food on a daily basis to my sponsor for 90 days. I thought this would surely keep me on the straight and narrow. How wrong I was – only two weeks into those 90 days and off the wagon I fell one day, to begin again the next day with yet more unplanned food eaten compulsively. Usually, this would have signalled the rest of the week as one huge eating fest followed, in all probability, by more eating until I went to a meeting (I can only go to one per week) that touched me with the OA wisdom bug again.

But this time I had a secret weapon – or should I say 'Tool'? I had been honest in my email to my sponsor and told her what I had eaten. She had sent two loving and guiding emails and several texts back - by the way, at this point she was out of the country on holiday - which didn't tell me to "get a grip". No, she told me she loved me and she'd been there and could we meet to talk soon.

The very day she got back from her holiday, my sponsor and I met and my bingeing stopped. For today, one day at a time, I remain abstinent. I also remain two stones lighter than I was when I came into Programme. Without giving service such as writing this article and sponsoring, people like me wouldn't be able to deal with our illness. Thank you to my sponsor, my previous sponsor and to all sponsors out there in this wonderful Fellowship. My heart is yours.

Anonymous

Why write, why not!

To write is right for my recovery
Pen to paper starts the discovery

The honest words on the page
Help me move on to the next stage

Plan, review or a list to do
If I can commit then so can you

A text a day keeps the munchies at bay
Mail five, and I will stay alive

A shopping list or a plan of action keeps me well
It's not a chore and the results are swell

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Commit to discipline, share my life
Confessing my defects helps me be a good wife

A journal, a diary, a 'post it' too
So long as the method is right for you

God, sponsor or a fellow OA
Always happy to read what you have to say

Shame and guilt just melt away
Helping me to live in the day

Private and secret my little world
Just think of the abuse I have hurled

Uncover and tease out the cause of my dis-ease
Stepping the problem will help me feel at ease

To write my thoughts and feelings down
Once I start I can go to town

Intelligent and eloquent some words are posh
If they're flowing from my mind, I'm not in the nosh

If shy with the writing I start simple and small
Before I know it I'm having a ball

These words on the page came from my God
Being in Fellowship means I'm not on my tod

Abstinence and Steps keep cravings at bay
There is nothing more I need to say

I'm well for today in body, spirit and mind
I pray the solution I continue to find

Thanks for the chance for me to write this
It's my first poem, so don't take the 'p*ss'

Courage to do what is new to me is recovery
Happy, joyous and free - what an awesome discovery

No longer alone with members to help
All I have to do is loudly yelp

Service for you and service for me
The Programme just helps me be

If you're dragging your feet, don't be a dope
The message I share is one of great hope

*Love and peace
Suzi, Northwest xx*

Notes from OAGB Literature Service

OAGB updated website

As you will have seen, the new OAGB website is now live. We believe the shop is much easier to use; we do hope that you find it easier and a pleasure to use. As we use the shop, we may well find some minor improvements to make it even easier to use.

Recent literature

For Today Workbook

We are now stocking the *For Today Workbook*. It has the same format as *The Twelve-Step Workbook*, but at 197 pages it is a thicker book than the latter, which has 109 pages. The *For Today Workbook* costs £13.00.

About OA

We are now selling the OAGB printing of *About OA*. It is a far more useful document for Public Information (PI) in this country. Under the heading *Where can I find OA?* it first lists all the contact information for OAGB, followed by the contact information for OA worldwide (WSO). It costs exactly the same as WSO printing: single copy 20p, packet of 25 £4.50.

OAGB Journal

We have just received the second printing of this very useful Tenth Step Workbook. We had to do the second printing so soon because the Journal has been selling so well.

Keeping OA literature up to date

All OA literature is reviewed roughly every seven years. OA has a Strategic Publication Plan; this lists the literature to be reviewed in each of these seven years. There is a committee of the Board of Trustees who read through and discuss the literature up for review each year. Most often, no changes are needed; but where there are changes, what happens next depends on whether it is Board-Approved literature, or Conference-Approved literature.

Changes to Board-Approved literature can be made by the Board of Trustees. Where any change to Conference-Approved literature is suggested, a draft of the suggested change is made, and that draft is brought to Conference.

Another way literature can be changed is when Conference votes to change a policy (as recently happened with changes to the Preamble). Usually what will happen in that case is that any literature containing the changed item will be changed when it is next printed. Until the item is reprinted, an addendum is included with all copies.

The Preamble appears in many pieces of literature. You may have noticed that when you order literature a copy of the revised Preamble is included.

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Notes on some less familiar items

There is a short item called ***To Parents and Concerned Adults***. It is similar in size and format to *Fifteen Questions*. It has thirteen questions designed to help a concerned adult recognise warning signs of compulsive eating in any young person for whom they have responsibility. Then it gives basic information about OA. *To Parents and Concerned Adults* costs 40p.

What if I Don't Believe in God? This short pamphlet looks at different ways in which OA members relate to and use the spiritual OA Programme when they have no belief in God. Each section starts with some general remarks, which are followed by descriptions from various members about how they work the spiritual side of the Programme, while not believing in God. There are a number of different approaches that members have found to enable them to work the Programme and get freedom from compulsive eating. *What if I don't Believe in "God"?* has eight pages and costs 80p.

The Fourth Step Inventory Guide. This booklet starts with four sections to help us approach Step Four:

- Introduction
- An Approach
- Delay Tactics
- Taking Inventory

Then there are sections on each of the following:

- Pride (10 pages)
- Fear (4 pages)
- Anger and Resentment (8 pages)
- Sex (5 pages)
- Honesty (5 pages)
- Negative Thinking (2 pages)

Each of these sections is set out in the same format as the *Twelve-Step Workbook*. That is, in each section there are a number of pages, and at the top of each of these pages a number of questions designed to help us see our faults related to the subject of the section. Then beneath the questions there is space for us to write as we come to recognise and our various faults of pride, fear etc.

This booklet is A5 size, with a stiff card back. It has 38 pages and costs £5.50.

An important note about OA literature

Remember, all OA literature is created by OA: that is, by individuals and committees carrying out every stage of the drafting, working to produce a consensus of our understanding of the disease and the Programme of recovery. To enable you to get the literature to support your recovery, OA members give their service; but there are costs in its production. These include financing the systems which enable us to work together to create the literature, and paying the staff at WSO who carry out what we OA members ask them to do.

(continued on page 15)

"Jump open-handed into the void"

If you buy your literature from anywhere outside OA, any surplus from that sale is lost to OA.

If you buy your literature from OA, any surplus from the sale remains in OA, helping continue this work in support of your recovery.

If you buy your literature from OAGB Literature, not only are you supporting the production of the literature that aids your recovery, but you are also able to buy your literature in this country, (including small orders of only two three leaflets) without high shipping costs.

And if you want all the work you do to make OA known in this country to be productive, then you need the pamphlets you distribute to give information about OA in this country as well as about OA in the U.S.A.

So, we suggest that you buy your literature from OAGB Literature, and we will continue to work together to give you a good service.

Kathleen, Member of OAGB Literature Committee

Interview with Emma, former Treasurer and now Secretary of OAGB's National Service Board

What has been the highlight of your first year as Treasurer of OAGB's National Service Board?

Definitely the Assembly this year in Plymouth. It was great to see so many people who had made the journey down to the South West and it ended up being a very relaxed experience - much more so than some Assemblies I remembered on my previous time on the Board.

What drew you to become Treasurer?

I was Treasurer on the Board in the 1990s and then on Region 9 for a while in the early 00s. I suppose I was just opting for what I knew. Now I am Secretary - which is a role I've never done and feel totally unsuited for - but that is the beauty of service, I think: it takes us out of what we believe to be comfortable and normal for us.

Would you like to go on to do service beyond NSB in future (or have you already)?

I was Treasurer for Region 9 between 2000 and 2003 and very much enjoyed travelling around and meeting other OAs from around Region 9. Most notably I remember visiting Iceland - a very interesting experience. I have no current plans to repeat this - but one never knows!

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What would you say to someone considering standing for the Board in future?

I would say it is definitely hard work - the internet and use of email communications is the biggest single difference for me between being on the Board in 2013 to being on the Board in 1996. As a Board, we communicate much more in between meetings now. To me, service is the thing that kept me in OA this long though (23 years); I'm not sure if I would have stuck around if I hadn't been involved. It helps me see that it stops with me (the responsibility for the message of OA being carried) - no one else is going to do this job for me. This is our shared responsibility, whether we are in our group/intergroup/NSB etc. I think we all play an equal role in this.

What did you most enjoy about October's National Assembly?

I think the Question and Answer session - only because I was most involved in this and was worried we might run out of things to say - but it all went very well, so then I could relax for the rest of the weekend!

What brought you to OA originally?

My 'A' Level results were the final straw, and of course being a compulsive overeater, but I knew this very well for a long time and had OA's number for at least six months before I rang it. But my exam results were pretty devastating for me at the time and it was that which tipped the balance I think.

What are you most passionate about in the Fellowship/your recovery?

Well, two things: in the 'Big Book' it says, "Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program..." [*Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th ed., p. 58] I needed something to give myself and my life to. And of course this idea, "Together we can do what we could never do alone," [OA Promise] - service is a manifestation of this really. It is clear that on my own I am not really capable of doing anything!

As we know, service aids recovery. What other benefits have you found from any service you have given?

It is not separate from recovery, but to me the best part about service is the connections you make with people outside your own group, intergroup etc.

*Emma
Secretary, National Service Board of OA Great Britain*

"Getting stuck means you are in between surrenders"

28th OAGB National Assembly and Convention

I went to the National Assembly and Convention in Plymouth this weekend. It was a fantastic experience, my third one now, but I must say every year it's a massive emotional and spiritual shake up. It's part of why I go, of course, but it is a bit like childbirth - you forget the raw, bloody and painful bits!

I bought one of the CDs on sale there and it was definitely a Higher Power moment when I got in the car and realised I had bought the same one as I had last year... oops! The scary thing is that what I obviously thought needed attention in my recovery last year is still the same this year, i.e. realising that I had a spiritual prod and have done absolutely nothing about it for twelve months. A few things specifically caught my attention this time, mainly 'honesty', and I find, if I am honest, I come up short on that front.

I also realised from the sharing on the 'Big Book' Promises that even though I am on Step Twelve, I really need to revisit Step Nine because I don't feel I was thorough and painstaking with it. I still owe amends and the only thing stopping me is, well, *me*. That's my HP prod, and I know I need to attend to this if I want to move forward in my recovery, rather than this weird side-stepping I seem to have been doing for a while.

I'm incredibly grateful to my fellows who enabled this spiritual shift this weekend and this year I'm going to take action, work on my honesty and take on some more service - like writing a piece for Step by Step, for example!

Anonymous, Plymouth

OAGB CD Service

The OA CD service is run by volunteers as service to our Fellowship. It is our own unique UK service with shares, 'Big Book' studies, workshops and retreats recorded by members. Many people find them a useful tool in recovery in the car, at home or in meetings.

National Assembly and Convention Plymouth 2013

4 CDs @ £3.00 each plus p&p

Heart of England Convention 2013

5 CDs of shares on Steps Ten and Eleven

Ilkley Retreat 2013

5 CDs of shares

Please email OA Tapes of Recovery via juliar967@gmail.com or murraytjh@aol.com for an order form and more details.

Beyond Our Wildest Dreams...

It's been three days at home after the National Assembly weekend and I'm pleased to say that I am still going round with a grin on my face. In the 18 years I've been in OA, I have been to 11 or so Assemblies, and other conventions, workshops and Region 9 too. They are always special, and I come home with renewed energy to refresh my Programme and Step up a bit.

18 years ago, my home group was part of a consortium who arranged the Assembly in Rochester, Kent (that was the start of what went on to be Kent and Essex Intergroup after I moved to Plymouth). As a relative newcomer, I was given the task of reading inspirational passages from "*For Today*" at each break in the proceedings. Just before lunch in the middle of reading, I was overcome with emotion, and I welled up and started to snivel and become incoherent. Something made me stop (guess it was Higher Power) and I took a deep breath and said that I wouldn't apologise for my tears, that I'd just let them fall. As I finished the reading I felt a tangible warmth and empathy from the whole room. At the end of the day, someone who had shared in the afternoon came to thank me, because it had enabled them to overcome their reticence and share in front of the whole Assembly.

Over the years I've learned that tears usually come when I'm sharing at large gatherings, so I need to have a tissue or two to hand. By last Sunday morning I knew I'd need a little more. I kept my breakfast serviette - glad I did, because the fellow-feeling with every speaker was overwhelming. Someone once tried to tell me that if I cried at someone else's share, then it was from self-pity. I never believed it then, and I know now that it springs from sharing our recoveries, gratitude for what we have in the Programme and pure joy of knowing that "Together we can..."

So how shall I put into words what I feel about the weekend? I love words, but this ex-grammar school girl, who left at sixteen in the fifties, can get a bit precious about structure and spelling. My HP has been throwing suggestions my way all week. On Sunday evening I fell asleep in front of the TV. When I woke up, some music awards were well under way. The hip hop category was announced and several different rappers began to wish the awards a Happy EIGHTEENTH Birthday, and I realised that they were having such fun breaking the rules of scansion, rhythm and rhyme, that I decided to write a...RECOVERY RAP.

Come on down and join our dance...Enhance the fun you feel...Tho' your toes be achin',...Heart breakin', this weepin's part of deal...This ain't no pity party - These tears are tears of Joy! Oh boy! These tears are tears of Joy!!

This feelin can't be bettered...unfettered, new freedom rocks the floor...The door to life is open, no mopin', join us on the floor...This ain't no pity party - These tears are tears of Joy! Oh boy! These tears are tears of Joy!!

So each time that you're sharin'...carin' is what's fine...For each a great discovery..."Recovery is mine..." This ain't no pity party - These tears are tears of Joy! Oh boy! These tears are tears of Joy!!

...and so on...add your own...

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"You don't need to be afraid anymore, but it is perfectly OK to be nervous"

As it's gone midnight I'll stop there. I still have a grin on my face. Already saving for next Assembly... so hope to see you in Sheffield in 2014. Come on and boogie!!!

Margaret

Snippets from 28th OAGB National Assembly and Convention

Oh, what a fab weekend we had at the National Assembly and Convention! I would encourage anyone who can possibly factor in a weekend away next year to do so. It is far from just business. It is 'Twelfth Step Within' in every minute - folk sharing and carrying the message by being the message. Next year we will be in Sheffield.

As I attended the various sessions and workshops and listened to the shares, I wrote down some snippets that touched me. They are in no particular order!

I need to mention that I feel an overwhelming sense of gratitude to my group. I 'came in' and got good recovery - because you carried the message of OA to me. I owe you and also all those I have met along the way a huge debt.

My sense of gratitude to my lovely local group was overwhelming that weekend. I cried quite a bit - tears of gratitude. I have a solution - thanks to you. You gave me 'the baton' that made the difference and encouraged me and lots of others to pick it up and run. My grateful thanks to you and God.

Snippets

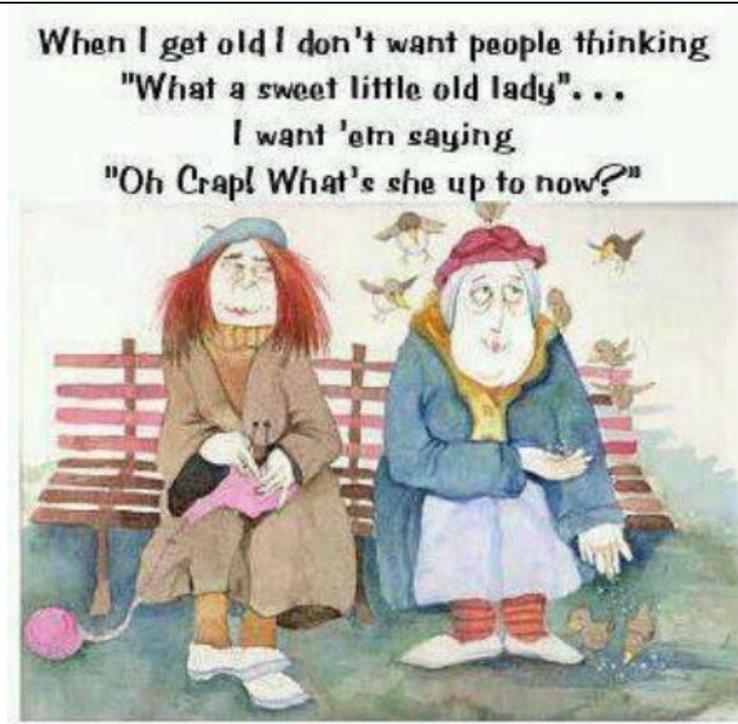
- Seven months in and working the Steps - loves the new Daily Journal
- Scotland has 19 meetings and they had 14 reps at the National Assembly - the furthest to come and yet the biggest representation!
- "Submerge your ego for the good of the group" (Rozanne S, Cofounder, Overeaters Anonymous)
- I have to act my way into a new way of thinking - I cannot think my way into a new way of acting
- Dancing - keep on with the passion
- The best thing about recovery is that you get your feelings back and the worst thing about recovery is that you get your feelings back!
- Feelings are not facts. I am not my feelings.
- Debate - shall I have one of those? Shall I or shall I not?
If I am debating something, the answer is, "No, don't do it!"
It's the same with buying - I can always go back afterwards if I really feel it was God's will!
- Denial is: "If I don't weigh myself, I don't know..."
- I want to be well enough in my head to "wear purple and run my walking stick along the railings..."
- Tighten my food plan

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- Don't eat food which has refined sugar in the first three ingredients
- Abstinence is first, last and in between
- What daily actions do I take to maintain this recovery?
- Gratitude versus anxiety
- It's vital that I am honest, not noble. It's as noble as running away from a rabid dog. The dog is rabid - it's vital!
- I need to keep the drain pipe clear for the power of God to flow
- If you were working your Programme better, maybe this feeling that you don't like wouldn't be there!
- The person that has been abstinent the longest is the one who got up earliest that day
- Weight is just a number - it isn't equal to what is going on in my head
- Would I always be unhappy with what the scales say when I weigh myself?
- On my knees. First thing in the morning. Do I connect with the 'Big Guy' upstairs?
- If the day isn't going well, I need to ask myself, "Did I connect well with my HP this morning?" then go away and find a quiet place to pray and spend time with God
- If I fill my life with too much service, then there is no space for me and my HP. I don't want to build a wall
- Questions for each of the shares to cover:
 - How long have you been in Programme?
 - How long have you been abstinent?
 - Define your abstinence
 - Outline your physical recovery - weight loss/gain?
 - Outline the daily actions that maintain your recovery
- Struck by our beauty - I am beautiful and so are you. We are battling a dreadful, dreadful disease...It's the least glamorous disease, and yet we get on and take the action and do recover
- Gratitude is a physical feeling that's at my core all the time - not saying that I am always happy. But gratitude is physical energy that's always with me. Because all the 'crap' has gone from my head
- I don't want the disease to win so I just have to take the action
- If I start to believe that I am doing you a favour, then I am in serious trouble with myself, and I am in serious trouble with God
- Gratitude and actions every day make me feel as if I am not depressed any more

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"We obsess about what we want to control (and can't!)"



Anonymous

Noddfa Weekend Workshop on "Following the Directions of the Twelve Steps"

I was nervous before I went to this retreat. It was only the second time I'd been to one. I felt a little like a newcomer again. When I first started going to meetings, I was resistant to everything new, especially meeting new people. I had plenty of friends. Why would I want any more?

I felt that I knew plenty of OA people now. Why would knowing any more be of help? (Obviously my first thought was for myself, not for the others there!)

Despite my misgivings, we made a somewhat arduous journey to Wales. The workshop was looking at all Twelve Steps through the 'Big Book'. We started work that evening.

Although we were tired, the others in the group all seemed relaxed and welcoming. As we began the work, the feelings of hope and happiness began to emerge, just as they did when I read the 'Big Book' for the first time.

We worked through all the Steps during the course of the weekend, revisiting some favourite passages and also some I had never paid much attention to.

It was suggested that we take a longer break in the afternoon so we could take advantage of the sunshine. I walked in Noddfa's wonderful, curious grounds as well as to the beach. I wasn't able to appreciate the beautiful surroundings when we had arrived in the dark.

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Saturday evening concluded with people sharing some of their Step Nine experiences. Thank you to everyone who shared. It was an honour to be part of it.

The facilities and food were both lovely. I was also very appreciative of the sessions starting and finishing promptly (with plenty of coffee breaks).

Needless to say, all my initial reservations were shattered. I learned a lot and met some great people whom I hope will become friends. I'm now working my Programme with renewed vigour. It has even spurred me to write! I now have a new approach to my Step Eleven review at night too.

I urge anyone who is in two minds about trying a retreat to do so. Don't resist for as long as I did.

Rachel

The Benefits of Abstinence



Contentment
Clear Head
Comfortable Quietness
Energy Clarity
Physical Wellbeing Slim
Purpose Emotional
Belong Spiritual
Connection
Healthy Body

Anonymous

Calendar of Events

Workshops, conventions and other OA happenings...

DATE	EVENT	VENUE	CONTACT
Sat 25 th Jan 2014 1.30 – 3.30 p.m.	Workshop – What are your recovery dreams for 2014?	Room 2, Brunswick Methodist Church Brunswick Place Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7BJ	Karen ☎ 07977 395 013 Sponsored by Newcastle upon Tyne Group
Fri 21 st to Sun 23 rd Mar 2014	Pleshey OA Retreat – Focus on Willingness and Humility	House of Retreat Pleshey Chelmsford Essex, CM3 1HA	Sam ☎ 01296 681 747 ☎ 07773 165 327 danteandsam@btinternet.com Vanessa ☎ 07725 461 805 Sponsored by South and East England Intergroup
Fri 16 th to Sun 18 th May 2013	Ilkley Retreat – "We <i>absolutely insist on enjoying life</i> "	The Briery Retreat Centre Ilkley West Yorkshire LS29 9BW	oanorthofenglandevents@ hotmail.co.uk Karen ☎ 07597 180 753 Sponsored by North of England Intergroup
Fri 11 th to Sun 13 th July 2013	14 th Annual OA Recovery Convention – Spiritual Awakening, Principles, Sponsorship & Service	The Hilton Birmingham Metropole Hotel NEC Birmingham B40 1PP	contact@hoeconvention. org.uk Rosie ☎ 07800 525 646 Hosted by Heart of England Intergroup

Publicise your OA event for free!

Let SBS know if your group or other service body is organising a workshop or other OA event that you'd like advertised on this page. (Just send an email to stepbystep@oagb.org.uk with details of the date, event, venue and a contact number and/or email address, stating which registered OA group or other service body is sponsoring this event.)

Any comments, suggestions or ideas for future editions?

Want to advertise a new group?

Send SBS an email at:

stepbystep@oagb.org.uk

(please don't simply reply to the OAGB emails)

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