

## Easy does it (but do it)!

Hello my fellow OA friends!

I hope you all enjoyed reading the Summer 2011 edition of SBS. Words simply cannot describe the buzz I got from seeing it appear on the OAGB website – I'd have never have thought service would give me such a natural high, but it does and I highly recommend it! I'm delighted to say that the feedback to date has been very positive and on behalf of the SBS Publishing Committee, I'd like to say a huge thank you to everybody who took the time to write articles for that and this edition. I have to admit that on both occasions there was an initial lack of response which we found somewhat anxiety-provoking, but with a little prompting (and a bit more faith on our part) you – the Fellowship of Overeaters Anonymous in Great Britain – have done us proud and provided us with another fantastic newsletter, jam-packed with articles demonstrating good, solid recovery and long may that continue!

Nevertheless, here are a few 'suggestions' you might like to give consideration to:

- Why not write an article for SBS following a particularly awe-inspiring OA meeting, workshop, retreat, convention etc?
- You might also like to think about giving the fifth meeting of a five-week month an SBS focus
- Please encourage your sponsees to write articles for SBS, especially whilst they're working their way through the Twelve Steps
- Please don't allow perfectionism to get in your way – your literacy skills don't need to be top-notch as we're more than happy to edit anything you submit

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So, as this quarter's topic suggests: "Easy does it (but do it)!" – please!

Love in fellowship

*Lucy, Newcastle upon Tyne*

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

Share with fellow OA-ers 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**

‘I put my hand in yours and together we do what we could never  
do alone’

**Submissions deadline for SBS Winter issue  
– 11th November 2011. Topics:**

**‘A Family Recovery’  
Step 3  
Tradition 3  
Tool of Recovery: Service**

**REVIEW: write about your favourite OA book  
or pamphlet.**

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.

We also forward published editions of Step By Step to the Lifeline publication team; therefore articles that are submitted to Step By Step may be reproduced in future editions of Lifeline.

*"If you want to change who you are, change what you do."*

## Step 2

*'Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.'*

I have been a member of OA for 8 years but have been out more than in, as I thought I could get my food recovery in another 12 Step Fellowship, and therein lies my insanity.

In December 2010, I had a Bartholin's abscess and my doctor thought I may be diabetic. During this period, I had announced I was leaving my OA group, due to what I know now was a resentment, and returning to my slimming club. I had to have an operation and spent most of December lying on my sofa trying not to eat but not being able to stop: a living hell of food obsession.

I had arranged with an OA friend to go to Cork in Ireland in February so off we went, me adamant that I would go to another 12 Step Fellowship whilst there, not OA, but God had a different plan.

Thanks to the love and tolerance of my friend and the OA Fellowship, I "came to" in that OA meeting in Cork and over the week I spent there, I came to believe that my God could restore me to sanity around my obsession with food.

I found an OA sponsor and became willing and through the gift of

desperation AGAIN I have managed to find my abstinence, thanks to working the Steps to the best of my ability and taking daily inventory and regular Step Tens.

I am so grateful to have God and OA in my life today because finally I understand that NO MATTER WHAT I cannot have that first compulsive bite, just like I cannot drink alcohol. I would say I had relapsed if I had a taste of an alcoholic drink and I know that it is the exact same thing around my binge foods. I CANNOT have a BLT (bite, lick, taste) because it will kill me.

*Jakki  
Tunbridge Wells*

### **I have been a member of OA for almost 12 years, and am maintaining a six stone weight loss.**

I have been abstinent since September 2008. I follow a weighed and measured food plan and have abstained from sugar since November 2000, which was the date of my continuous OA membership. When I first came to OA, I was spiritually dead, emotionally a coward and physically hated myself. Since then, I have grown up in these rooms with the help of others who have gone before me. I am now a sponsor and am still sponsored. I have learned to rely on a power greater than myself, that I choose to call God, who has

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transformed me from a quivering mess into a woman of substance!

My experience of Step Two is that although the aim of the Steps is to have a spiritual awakening and develop a dependence on our Higher Power, I've learned that we can experience an awakened spirit from the earliest point in our journeys, if we are working the Steps as the Big Book instructs us to.

A spiritual awakening is a change of perspective; it means that we view our lives, other people...everything in a different light. We let go of our old ideas!

My sponsor suggested to me early on that I begin to look for signs of my Higher Power in my life. I was blinkered to my God who I now know was showing up everywhere and I continually said that I couldn't see or hear God in my life. I was spiritually asleep.

Once I began to look more carefully, though, my God was obvious. I noticed my God, particularly in nature, but also in the faces of people I was helping in the Programme, from something in a book that just 'jumped out' at me, even in my own peace of mind. I began to realise that even the changes in me were a sign of a power greater than myself doing for me what I couldn't have hoped to do for myself!

My Higher Power is everywhere, not least 'deep down inside me' as the Big Book suggests. If I will allow my spirit to become awakened by practising abstinence and working the Steps, a fabulous miraculous life awaits me!

If it can happen to me, it can happen to anyone! Love in fellowship.

*Caro*

For me, Step Two can be summarised into:

*-I came  
-I came to  
-I came to believe*

It happened in that order for me: **I came**...to meetings. I sat there and listened. I got hope. I felt love. I was given phone numbers and encouragement. I read the OA and AA literature. I asked questions and tried to listen to the answers and the suggestions. I kept coming back. **I came to**...By putting down the food, even though it was so painful to do so, I slowly let the fog in my mind clear. I didn't even notice the

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

changes in myself: my eyes got brighter; the sounds and sights of nature became more vivid. Family and friends started spending more time with me. I slowly crept back into reality from the fantasy land of food and self pity. I felt more ‘a part of’ rather than ‘apart from’, first in meetings and then in other areas of my life. I woke up. I put my mind where my body was and I started living and not just existing.

**I came to believe...**I took the

time to reflect as I started to work the Steps and someone in the Fellowship on hearing my ‘life story’ said to me, “How is it you are still alive? Don’t you think someone or something has been watching over you, as it sounds to me like you should have been dead long ago?” That question stayed in my mind and I slowly came to believe that maybe, just maybe, even though I hadn’t known it, or asked for it, or believed in it, some Power greater than myself had indeed been guiding and watching over my life and keeping me alive long enough to find OA and, in the 12 Step Programme, to find a way of living that works for me.

Today I am free of the food obsession and compulsion to eat. I am free from the ‘bondage of self’ (for the most part). I can participate in my own life and not just be a spectator. I am abstinent and truly alive.

Thank you to all who have helped me in my journey.

*Anonymous*

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

Life before OA was hopeless; I was hopeless; ‘my story’ kept me in the food; and my food kept me in the story.

I had a huge hole in my life that I constantly tried to fill with food. I didn’t realise that the very thing I

was looking for was inside me all along.

I had no faith, no trust when I first joined, only little old me, all fresh out of willpower and self control, full of self loathing, asking myself, “Why can’t I just lose weight and eat normally? Why am I so greedy?”

Step One – easy. As soon as I heard it said for the first time, I knew it was my truth.

Step Two - I acted as if. I prayed from the first day I joined. I was gifted with abstinence after a week- which I still have 18 months later - by the grace of God.

I came to believe...and now I have **no doubt.**

I hand my life and my will, my food and my weight over to my Higher Power every day. Without question. It is the most important part of my day.

Through the Programme, and living the

Twelve Steps, I have built and continue to build a wonderful relationship with my Higher Power.

I used to worry that my God would leave me and I would return to the hell of overeating, but I now know it's a case of He will never leave me...but I could leave him.

Keeping that conscious contact with God every day ensures that does not happen.

*Barbara, a happy and grateful recovering compulsive overeater.*

## Step Two

If Step One is the 'Admission', then Step Two is the 'Submission'. I had admitted that I had no control over my food; I kept a messy home; hated work; was underperforming in every area of my life; so I was powerless and my life was very, very unmanageable.

Then came Step Two - 'Came to believe that a Power greater than myself could restore me to sanity!' I really believed I wasn't 'insane': I don't hear voices; I am not psychotic or a sociopath; so I felt a little insulted by the statement. The 'Big Book'<sup>1</sup> page 30 states, "No person likes to think he is bodily or mentally different from his fellows." But then I remembered how I'd stolen food from work, how I'd spend a third of my shopping money on crisps and chocolates, how I'd hide the food in my bedside table and wait for my husband

to be fast asleep before I'd devour them. How I would resent and become angry at my children because they got in the way of me bingeing...the list goes on...and I humbled myself to the fact that my actions and reactions to things were not sane at all. Around food, I was insane, and yes, I wanted to be restored to sanity. I didn't want to be stuck in the past any more, or in the future worrying about my inevitable death; I wanted to be present in my own life, a day at a time. So who or what is my Higher Power? I searched for the answer in books; OA; another Twelve Step Fellowship; and books that were not affiliated with any Fellowships, and could not find the answer to the question. Then I realised that part of my insanity was over-thinking, over-examining and making things far more complicated than they have to be.

*“If you change your action, your attitude will change.”*

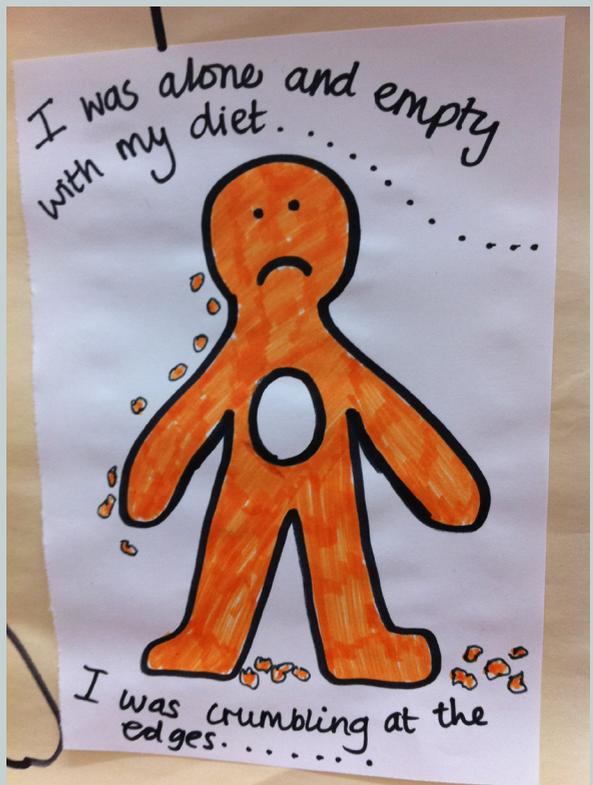
I came to believe that my Higher Power could be anything I wanted it to be and relaxed, and late one night, at a time when I would normally be bingeing, these words came to me: “Non-judgemental, Multi-faceted, Liberal, All-seeing, Loving, Parental, Democratic, Observant, Good Listener, Open Arms, Fearless, Immeasurable shoulders, Guiding, Supportive, Joyous, Welcoming, Absorbing, Omnipotent, Celebratory, Committed, Genuine, Psychic, Empathetic, Respectful, Saviour, Proud Father, Continuous, Encouraging, Nurturing, Holding, Activist, Grounded, Consistent, Resilient, Patient, Kind, Fair, Honest, Firm, Unconditional, Intangible, Tangible, Quiet, Everything, Original, Warrior.”

So I believed my Higher Power had all of those qualities in abundance and I believed those qualities could and would restore me...and I had achieved my Step Two.

Melissa, Sheffield

<sup>1</sup> *The excerpts from the book Alcoholics Anonymous are reprinted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. (AAWS). Permission to reprint these excerpts does not mean that A.A.W.S. has reviewed or approved the contents of this publication, or that A.A.W.S. necessarily agrees with the views expressed herein. A.A. is a program of recovery from alcoholism only – use of these excerpts in connection with programs and activities which are patterned after A.A., but which address other problems, or in any other non A.A. context, does not imply otherwise.*

*Illustration from Newcastle-upon-Tyne workshop  
“We Are The Message”*



## **What do I need a Higher Power to be for me?**

The God of my understanding is not grand and imposing its authority on me from the outside. It is an inward sense I can have that - when I am open and receptive to it - has the power to transform my soul. By putting words to it, I acknowledge its existence in my life. It alone has enabled me to carry on when I allowed it to reach me.

How would I describe this inner feeling? It is a sense of my safety and with that sense, great humour. My God, at last getting through to me, seems to say “See? I was with you all along. When you were frightened, over-eating and fantasising all alone and running around in manic activity, despairing that you would ever find me, I was only waiting for you to pause a moment and be willing to let me in. I’m glad you have begun to now because you need me.” God makes gentle and subtle changes in my heart and in my mind and all the while I carry on with my life quite seamlessly, as before.

From a Higher Power, I need constant reminders. God helps me see my food cravings for what they are – curious alterations and fluctuations in my body and mind, perhaps in reaction to some thought I have had that has excited, disturbed or unsettled me. With God to guide me, I am not afraid,

for I can notice them with no desire to act upon them and let them pass. When a Higher Power guides me to pay attention to my body and mind in this way, I see how impermanent my experiences and responses to life are.

My Higher Power has enough power with one slight breath to quieten my whole body and mind so I can breathe calmly and contentedly, in freedom from obsession about foods containing certain substances. I need only remember to ask. With God in my life, I have more than ample time and strength and patience to make planning my food every day a priority and a reality, even when life fluctuates and won’t sit still and I need to travel and visit and share and change my surroundings and routines. God helps me to see I must never feel ashamed to put my food planning first.

God steadies me when I experience a sudden ‘flip-flop’ of vertigo when I see how far I have come and fear to fall back again. God quietens me, when I begin to feel overwhelmed by what lies ahead, with the magical mind-set of ‘Just today’, bringing me back to life right now, where a bird twitters and a car goes by. That is all that is happening and in abstinence, in recovery, I can see that ‘this’ - my life - is ‘enough’.

My concept of God is one that guides me to take care of my food and keep myself safe. With loving, gentle guiding hands, I am steered on to a

safe course in life at last and my heart is filled with gratitude for the simple things whose enjoyment I never experienced before: making friendly and relaxed connections with other people; doing a good job; helping somebody. My God shows me what I need to do now and what needs to be left alone to unravel itself in due course, thus I am no longer in a tangle - bored, frustrated or exhausted. Sometimes this means waiting, but my Higher Power waits with me.

I need a Higher Power that gives me frequent reminders to return to my senses during mealtimes: their preparation and ingestion. While I cook, I focus on what I am doing and ask for honesty and guidance. While I eat, the rest of the world as I normally perceive it goes to the background. The priority of my mind is the food I am eating and the way in which I eat, putting down my fork between each bite. Being present with my food three times a day is my primary purpose.

I need a Higher Power that can remind me that any day in which I have been well-fed and abstinent has been a good day. Yes, I was a compulsive overeater, deep in my disease. And, yes, this means I did a lot of dreaming of a wonderful career and fabulous life, while making no progress in building any true foundations. I was too busy thinking about my next snack or how much

my belly flopped over my belt. I was too busy looking at other girls' slim tummies and what was on their plates. I was in too much pain. My head was too full of dense, intense blocked thought.

The God of my understanding can halt in its tracks the fear of others that washes over me today, before it has the chance to steal my true appetite and create false ones. When fear of others and fear of life spoiled my Higher Power connection, the colour drained from my life. My stomach became held in a fearful fist. I lost my connection with myself and my God at mealtimes. I was nervous and didn't know how much to eat, so I looked around me to compare myself to others for an idea of what was 'normal'. No matter how tempting the food and how much I ate, I was never satisfied.

I need a Higher Power that can get me back into the habit of asking God before I make decisions so that I can move forward in my life in safety, content enough to keep my food choices sane and simple. This frees up enough of my time and energy that I can focus on the growth of my recovery, security and independence. I know that I have made a beginning in what I really want above all other things - to be at peace with myself.

*Naomi, Sheffield*

God does not intend for me to be unhappy;  
 God does not intend for me to be embarrassed;  
 God does not intend for me to be fat;  
 God does not intend for me to argue with my friends, family and husband;  
 God does not intend for me to be a dysfunctional mother;  
 God does not intend for me to struggle;  
 God does not intend for me to miss out on fun social times and social memories;  
 God does not intend for me to isolate and feel alone;  
 God does not intend for me to regret day after day.

And I believe this - I really believe this is true, and because of that, I am instantly free if I just hand myself over to Him, day by day, sometimes minute by minute.

I do know that God's will for me is potentially heaven on earth - I just have to let Him in.

*Charlotte, Borehamwood*

#### Tool: Action Plan

My name is Miriam, and I am a compulsive overeater. Since Jan 2010, I am in the habit of emailing my sponsor my combined action plan and plan of eating. I call it my 'Nourishing Self-Care Plan'.

- Step Three (I hand the day's events and the day's food to my Higher Power, out loud)
- Step Ten (daily written Step Ten)
- Step Eleven (usually meditation)
- Fluids
- Exercise
- Deliberate contact with a nourishing friend outside the Fellowship
- Phone off and ready for tomorrow('s work) by 9pm
- Computer off by 9pm (even for leisure surfing)
- Moderate snack

- Eyes closed in bed by midnight
- Breakfast
- Snack
- Lunch
- Snack
- Dinner
- Step Twelve (some sort of service)

I use the tool of my 'Nourishing Self-Care Plan' by typing it the day before or in the morning, and later I put beside each item in block capitals what I actually did/ate.

My definition of abstinence is not 'sticking to the food/action plan': it is 'refraining from compulsive eating or compulsive food behaviours'. The 'actions' listed above are things which I have found helpful in preventing compulsive eating in myself.

*Miriam*

**“The new ninth  
Tool of Recovery  
greatly increases  
my chances of a  
serene, happy,  
useful day...”**

## **Action Plan**

I've just typed out the 'Action Plan' Tool script from July's Lifeline, so that part of it can be put onto a card for use in a newcomers' meeting. It really is an excellent Tool, to my surprise after all the discussion reported to us from World Service Business Conference. It just shows the power of Tradition Two, or rather, our Higher Power when Tradition Two ("...there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience...")<sup>2</sup> is observed. The words in our Twelve Steps and Traditions book are proved right: "...a better solution often arises from the workings of the group conscience than from any proposal the group's leaders are able to come up with on their own."<sup>3</sup>

Our Step Ten, quotes "For Today"

saying "Repetition is the only form of permanence that nature can achieve."<sup>4</sup> This was my experience long before OA. I lived by a rigid plan of action which included systematically underfeeding myself. I broke it, by bingeing just often enough to keep myself alive and out of treatment, or by throwing morals and good sense out of the window in inappropriate 'loving' pursuit of another person's favour. It got me through two university degrees and into a job. Actually, my present plan is superficially similar, except that it has been informed by the Twelve Steps and by loving myself instead of hating myself, and 'doing what's best for me', which includes prescribed exercises. I break it only when following it would not be best for me. I try to prepare in my Step Ten for times when there are good reasons for needing more, or less, food or exercise, or at different times than are in the plan - often because I'm ill, travelling, or attending meetings or conferences. I don't skip the exercises unless I can't do them (they need clean floor space!).

Making a plan depends on priorities. I can't set or stick to priorities when I'm hungry, as I've proved to myself often. For instance, if I get hungry while I'm shopping, I fail to buy things I need because "it's too expensive" or "there'll be a better one in the next shop" or "I'll make do without"; or I'm seduced by 'Reduced' on a price label into buying something that has to be 'squeezed' into my

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food plan. Sometimes I end up with a bag that's harmfully heavy, even when I've shopped to plan. At weekends, when I have unstructured time, I find the back of an envelope the best place for writing a list of things-to-do. My aim is to throw the envelope away at the end of the weekend because I've done everything on it, or marked with an "X" the things I'm not going to do because I've realised they're unnecessary or unrealistic.

My doctor told me I had Vitamin D deficiency, so I've changed my plan to sit outside in the sun for 15 minutes at midday while I eat lunch (this is a real treat!). My dentist took out one of my teeth, so temporary food and shopping plans were followed while I could eat only mush. My mother decided she didn't want us to go on holiday at the time I'd booked and the way I'd planned, so we stayed in a cottage with young children instead of camping quietly with just midges for company. This was hard to plan for (and live), but I took my Step Ten and a 'Lifeline', got up early to use them every day, did my exercises, stuck to three meals, let the meals come when the others wanted, and matched their portions. I used the principle of an Action Plan, even though the practice was a patchwork. Most of my Step Ten entries said "Thank you, God, I did OK today". After writing that, I could turn over in my bed and sleep, a gratefully recovering compulsive eater.

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<sup>2</sup>The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, Inc, 2002, p.119

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.125

<sup>4</sup> For Today, Overeaters Anonymous, Inc, 1982, p.204

## **A few minutes to plan my day...**

Hello everyone, my name is Ann and I am a recovering compulsive overeater. I have found that taking just a few minutes every morning to write a speedy Action Plan - the new ninth Tool of Recovery - greatly increases my chances of a serene, happy, useful day, free from the debilitating effects of compulsive overeating. For my recovery, this includes a short list of my three meals: breakfast, lunch and dinner; roughly what time I will be having them; also other areas which keep me in three-fold balance, such as exercise, speaking to nourishing friends, fun!; Step Ten; short prayer and meditation; and any other actions that I feel may help the day along with a flourish. This really is a short process for me and I find a huge difference when I don't take these few minutes to plan my day. Well, that seems short and sweet (as is the result of this new ninth Tool)! Definitely one of my best habits.

*Ann, Rawdon*

## "Our Message"

When I first came to OA I was at rock bottom  
The person I'd once been was all but forgotten  
Filled with confusion, hatred and loathing  
Fitting into not much of my clothing.  
At the first meeting I found some hope,  
A solution that would enable me to cope.  
Following the steps one day at a time  
Would help me to get my life back in line.  
Listening to my Higher Power's will for me  
Would take me where I wanted to be  
And carrying the message would have me  
Happy, joyous and free.

*Poem from Newcastle-upon-Tyne workshop "We Are The Message"*

### **When I came to OA in February 2011, I was miserable. I had suffered from depression for**

**years** and was in the midst of another relapse from that illness, which had led to being admitted to a psychiatric hospital. I had no God in my life, weighed 20 stone, was a dress size 26, and had various health issues. I had tried all number of diets, and had reached target weight at diet clubs twice, only to put all the weight back on, and more.

I began working with my sponsor and became abstinent on 20th April. Since then, my life has changed in a way I never thought possible. My depression has lifted, and I have a sense of inner calm I have never experienced before. My obsession with food has disappeared. I now weigh just under 16 stone and I'm a dress size 18. And most importantly, I now have a Higher Power in my life, an all-loving, guiding presence, and I believe it is God who has given me my life back and delivered these results.

The ninth Tool 'Action Plan' was introduced shortly after I came into

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Programme, so it wasn't until I heard some shares at the Birmingham convention on the subject that I really thought about using it. When I sat down to look at what I would include, I listed all the actions and things I did to work the Programme and stay in recovery. These came under three headings: Food, Sponsor & Stepwork, and Actions. Under Food, I detailed all aspects of my food plan, including: trigger foods; managing portion sizes through weighing and measuring; working towards a healthy body weight; when I need to contact my sponsor; and guidelines

for eating out. Under Sponsor & Stepwork, I listed the agreements I had with my sponsor around timescales for step work; regular and honest communication; and reaching out to others. And under Actions I included all the regular things I needed to do to keep focused on the programme: attending a minimum number of meetings a week; a thorough nightly Step Ten, reading the Big Book or OA literature; time with God; and service. The list was long, and I realised I didn't need to make an Action Plan - I already had one!

I now think of this plan

as a commitment to myself, and to God, on what actions I will take to remain in recovery. If I ever feel my abstinence is becoming hard work, or I'm losing my focus on OA, I can look at these points to identify anything I need to direct more attention to or reintroduce. My Action Plan has also been useful in sharing experience with others, and for working with sponsees: it's easy to answer questions when it's all written down! My Action Plan will continue to grow and develop in the Programme as time passes, just as I hope I do.

*Laura McC, Glasgow*

## **How to meet God in the kitchen or 'Easy does it...but do it'**

This is a story of how it took me until I was 45 to clean my cooker. I grew up in a house with a coal burning Aga – a top and bottom oven, a right and left hot plate, full stop. It therefore took a leap of faith and a fierce home economics teacher to face down normal cookers; those ugly contraptions with controls and dials should have come with a health warning, as far as I was concerned.

I don't wish to appear disloyal to my parents but the sadness which befell my mother when she moved about the kitchen and thought no-one was watching, and the way she taunted my father for being a human dustbin, were difficult for me growing up.

I took cookery 'O' level to try to meet Mum halfway and learned how to pack a basket of ingredients every Tuesday, enjoying the way this activity brought us together,

but puzzled at how quickly Mum's interest waxed and waned.

Later, after my sisters had left home, she showed me how to put a bit of yoghurt in a basin with a pint of UHT milk, add a spoonful of dried milk and a pinch of baking powder, and leave it in the bottom oven overnight. How I relished those uninterrupted breakfasts, ensconced in my favourite place by the Aga, wielding my bone handled spoon and making my way through the entire basin while it was still warm, leaving just enough to magically manifest more the next night.

When I too became a student and cookers were turned off, yoghurt-making became a thing of the past. Then Mum died and any food ritual she might have played a part in was replaced by more sophisticated but increasingly degrading ones. I found myself accepting hospitality and then moving on time and again, through places as diverse as Brighton, Bologna and Beijing, never facing the fear of my own apparent insatiability until I washed up with an identity I could finally live with: ill, unemployed, 40 and fat.

Here, in a council flat on the outskirts of what I considered a dead-end city, amongst people I thought my inferiors, I acquired a

gunked-up cooker. It didn't occur to me to make it shine until I'd been forced through my sister's suicide to confront whatever it was that was making me so unhappy. I found OA and was helped through the most intense period of grief by the joyful enthusiasm of those around the table for their newly or well established abstinence from troubling trigger foods and the Programme that made that possible.

After a year of on/off abstinence, my sponsor suggested I get down on my knees and clean my cooker. I ummed and aahed until I realised she wasn't going to agree that really I deserved a new one, regardless of cost. The slogan 'Easy Does It...But Do It' came to my aid then, floating up from somewhere as I applied Brillo pad to at least half a decade of grime. The result: a cooker I can be proud of, even if it is a bit battered, and food that I don't feel I have to apologise for, which my son enjoys quite unashamedly.

Although in the early days of abstinence, still I rejoice in the one identity that I longed to eventually be able to tack on to that unfortunate string of adjectives that had become me: healthy, happy mother.

*Lisa W*

“Easy does it (but do it)!”

## **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.”*

I think that Tradition Two is one of the most important Traditions. I know they all have their place, which is what makes the Fellowship so strong, and I am a huge believer that when Traditions are breached, or not stuck to 100%, it can spell bad news for the group. After all, this is why they are here in the first place. Like the Steps, each and every Tradition is paramount. Tradition Two, though, really stands out for me, as it means that every group member is equal and, for me, it was probably the first place that I felt on an equal footing with everyone else. It felt alien at first and I assumed that people chairing the meetings were in charge. I soon learned otherwise and because of this Tradition, I felt acceptance possibly for the first time ever. Having my opinion heard and not belittled is amazing and this Tradition has helped me to have the confidence to speak up during Group Conscience in a safe, non-judgemental environment.

It does not stop there, though.

Because of this Tradition, my confidence was built up and now in my everyday life I feel I have a valid opinion and will voice it. I don't just sit there and feel ignored or build resentments against people simply because they do not know how I am feeling.

I was lucky enough to be able to help start a new group with other members of the Fellowship. I can honestly say that because of this Tradition, it went smoothly, and even when there were minor hiccups, our Higher Power guided us through and the path became clear. When we started the meeting, the venue was not the greatest in the world, and during every Group Conscience, a new meeting place was the topic of discussion. All we had to do was trust, though, and when the group was more established, an amazing new venue became available. God found us a perfect meeting place when the time was right and boy, did we appreciate it!

I believe the reason the Fellowship is so strong is because there is no hierarchy: each and every member is the same and has the right for their voice to be heard. This is a gift all in itself.

*Anonymous*

## Literature Review

*'The Tools of Recovery' by  
'Overeaters Anonymous, Inc.*

This leaflet details the Tools of Recovery that we can all use on a daily basis to guide us and help us in our recovery. The Tools are: a plan of eating, sponsorship, meetings, the telephone, writing, literature, anonymity, service and an action plan.

Regardless of where you are when you first come in to OA, whether you are an overeater, undereater, anorexic, bulimic, or a mix of all the above and more, the Tools apply to each and every one of us. They are free and easy to use.

When I first came into OA, I was fearful, nervous, self-conscious, confused and lacked trust. Being told at every meeting I attended that I needed to use these Tools gave me the confidence to start to incorporate them into my day.

A plan of eating is a truly personal thing. It took me a long time to understand this; that I couldn't just eat what that person or this person ate. I wanted to be told what to eat but reading about this Tool and continuing to plan my food, on a daily basis, gave me the strength to find a plan of eating that now really works for me. From a sane plan of eating came abstinence. The much sought after abstinence I wanted so much is a gift I receive on a daily basis.

At the beginning I was too scared to talk in meetings, never mind telephone someone or ask anyone to

be my sponsor. Seeing it written in print that these were things I needed to do reinforced what I was hearing from well people in the rooms. I had to find someone who had what I wanted. That was easy. She had brilliant recovery and a cracking sense of humour. Sponsorship was and is the key to my recovery. Telephoning other members felt harder. It still does. "Am I bothering you?" "Are you free to talk?" Yet if I reflect on how I feel when I receive a call from a fellow OA member, I know these doubts and insecurities are unfounded and I have come to realise the telephone is a powerful Tool.

Ever get the feeling you would rather slope off and get into the warmth of your own home rather than 'drag' yourself to a meeting? Ever felt toxic and embarrassed after another binge and can't face telling the meeting about it? Ever thought it'd be a good idea to go food shopping when you're really hungry and tired? Me too. But I have come to know that these are the times I need to get to a meeting. I have heard many opinions about how many meetings we 'should' attend each week. I would say that the more meetings you can attend, then the stronger the message of recovery you will hear. But it is all a 'bridge to normal living'. All the leaflet tells us is that a meeting is a gathering of two or more people and that they enable us to share our experience, strength and hope. I have found fantastic recovery, real dear friends and had to become honest as a result of attending meetings. No matter how grumpy I am beforehand, I always feel better after a meeting.

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Another Tool that took me a while to pick up was writing. The leaflet tells us that putting our thoughts and feelings down on paper helps us better understand our actions and reactions in a way that is often not revealed to us by talking or thinking about them. It has been true for me that often whatever I start to write about develops into what I needed to write about. It is yet another powerful Tool. Try it! Then pick up some literature and see what others have written about their recovery. There are many OA books available and I know that reading a piece of this literature calms me, clears my head, inspires me and gives me the identification I seek.

Anonymity is a Tool that guarantees we place principles before personalities. In my words, it means I am free and safe to share on whatever I need to share without the fear of people outside the rooms finding out. That was so, so important to me in the beginning. I found it hard to trust anyone and I needed that Tool and Tradition to help me trust again. It has also taught me respect for others. I take this program seriously and this Tool helps me do that.

The final Tool in the original leaflet is service. It tells us that any form of service, no matter how small, adds to the quality of our recovery. That service might be bringing the milk for tea and coffee, putting out chairs, clearing up at the end, taking on a role in the group such as treasurer or secretary; it might be sponsorship or phoning

a newcomer. Service has kept me well. I must be honest and tell you that I haven't always taken on service willingly; I was too shy to offer at the start and too ill to offer at points. It has been my experience that any service I've done, no matter how insignificant I felt it was, made a significant difference to my recovery. Service within a meeting made me feel involved and part of something. Sponsorship has enabled me to give back a little of the wealth of goodness that has been given to me, and increase my own recovery hundreds of times over.

The last Tool, recently added, is an action plan. As the name makes clear, it requires us to take action. It is an individual action plan and may need some time and thought to develop, possibly with the help of a sponsor or someone else in the Programme. What is great about this Tool is that it requires us to have a look at our own individual needs and recognise where we need to and can make changes. This Programme requires us to take action. If we don't act, then nothing will change. However, an action plan makes it seem manageable. It gives us clear steps in what can feel like a confusing mess of ideas and thoughts.

This leaflet, 'The Tools of Recovery', tells us the actions we need to take in a straightforward and easy to understand format. It tells us what to do on a daily basis or in times of difficulty. Pick up the Tools today!

*Laura, Newcastle upon Tyne*



Poster from Newcastle-upon-Tyne workshop "We Are The Message"

Any comments, suggestions or ideas for future editions? Send SBS an email at:

[stepbystep@oagb.org.uk](mailto:stepbystep@oagb.org.uk)

# Calendar of Events

*Workshops, conventions, and other OA happenings...*

DATE	EVENT	VENUE	CONTACT
Saturday 1st October 10:00 to 16:00  Coffee and registration: 9:30 – 10am	"Let God, Let God" A step 3/11 workshop.  Includes guided meditation.	Friends Meeting House 126 Hampton Road Bristol, BS6 6JE	For tickets or more info, please contact : Sarah: 07810 452 194 sarahonthesevern@ hotmail.com or Alice: 07531 705594 <b>Sponsored by OA West of England Intergroup</b>
14th - 16th October  Friday 19.30 to Sunday 13.00	"Depth and Weight: Beyond the Food and the Emotional Havoc"	Noddfa Retreat Centre Penmaenmawr, North Wales LL34 6YF	sianrault@aol.com, 01248 680654  <b>Sponsored by Conwy OA group</b>
21st - 23rd October  Friday 17.30 to Sunday 12.30	OAGB National Assembly 26th Annual Recovery Convention  "Living in the sunlight of the spirit"	Hilton Metropole Hotel, NEC, Birmingham	Barbara: 07740 645 401 Valerie: 01273 890 445 Alan: xxamukxx@ hotmail.com  <b>Sponsored by NSB, Heart of England, South Coast and Kent and Essex Intergroups.</b>
Saturday 19th November 10.00 - 16.00	"For by this time, sanity will have returned"  (Alcoholics Anonymous p84)	Belli Centre, St Peters Church, Weald Road, South Weald, Brentwood, Essex, CM14 5QJ	Margaret: margesimpson@talktalk. net tel: 01634 250494 Helen: helenpreston97@ yahoo.co.uk tel: 07914 404055  <b>Sponsored by Kent and Essex Intergroup</b>

## *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](mailto: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.)

Buy your PRINTED copy of SBS at the OAGB National Assembly this October in Birmingham. Limited stocks. Get them while you can!



SBS NEEDS  
**YOU!**

Email all submissions to  
**[stepbystep@oagb.org.uk](mailto:stepbystep@oagb.org.uk)**

*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.*