

Hello my fellow OA friends!

Happy New Year to you all - admittedly, I'm a bit late for that now - sorry!

It was once suggested to me by an old-timer to review the year whenever it draws to an end and when I completed my inventory at the end of last year it became blatantly obvious that I was still carrying a huge resentment towards the year 2013! Some of you may remember from previous editions of SBS that last year didn't start off very well for me - as it happens, I found myself writing the editorial for the Spring 2013 edition of SBS on the morning of my dear old Mum's funeral.

Certainly throughout the first half of the year I also seemed to be surrounded by others who were going through some really tough times; a lot of them - like me - losing somebody near and dear and others having to battle with major illness etc.

However, whilst completing my inventory I couldn't overlook the fact that whilst attending the 'university of adversity' my recovery had actually taken off as a direct result of what had once again felt like more than my fair share of emotional pain and heartache. Looking back, I have to admit that that has indeed been my experience throughout all my time in OA, i.e. I'm presented with a 'growth opportunity' and I stand and hurt like hell, but I DON'T pick up the food over it - instead I pick up the Programme and run with it! Consequently, I am able to get through the difficult times - not entirely unscathed, but a changed person nevertheless - and usually, for the better!

So, for me personally, 2013 wasn't all bad - in fact, recovery-wise, if I'm entirely honest (and that's what the Programme requires of me), I'm probably currently in the best space I've ever been in and I'm feeling very positive about 2014. The turning point came for me last May at the Ilkley retreat when I not only asked for, but also accepted, help. I'm therefore delighted and feel very humbled that I can now give back what I have been so freely given as I'm on the organising committee for this year's retreat. It's already proving to be incredibly popular, so if you are thinking of attending, please don't delay submitting your registration as we're fast running out of places! It goes without saying that I'm really looking forward to meeting some of you there.

Since writing this editorial as a Fellowship we have recently experienced the loss of our beloved founder of Overeaters Anonymous - Rozanne. Our hearts go out to her close friends and family who can hopefully take comfort in knowing that through each and every one of us her legacy continues to live on.

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 Summer 2014 edition of SBS is Friday, 9th May 2014. Topics:

Step Four – *"Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."*

Tradition One- *"Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon OA unity."*

Tool of Recovery: Meetings

Topic: *"We are all together now, reaching out our hands for power and strength greater than ours..."*

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

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

I have been listening to a speaker podcast by an AA member from Canada who has been sober since 1980. At his first meeting in a Winnipeg penitentiary he heard a quote from a member which convinced him to stay in AA. The quote was, "If you ever have a reason to drink, call me up! If I think the reason's good enough, I'll buy the first one!"

During my diet club era in 2008 I had an awful day and had to weigh in. I had gained nine pounds during the week. I was in need of a primal scream in order to deal with the hurt inside. Of course, back then my only solution was to wish myself thin. Now in OA, though I'm still overweight, my overall health was 'perfect' from the evidence of my last check-up at my local surgery. I was too ashamed to attend the dietician and was discharged after missing just one appointment; however, even they were impressed by my overall health once they received data from my surgery.

Just as, "Don't drink!" is meaningless when dealing with an alcoholic, "Don't pick up that first compulsive bite!" is meaningless when dealing with a compulsive overeater. Our unsteady willpower means that we can't deal with cravings and the urge to slip by simply moving away from food. The only solution for us is to work the Twelve Steps to the best of our ability.

So, if you ever have a reason to eat compulsively, call me up! If I think the reason's good enough, I'll buy you your favourite binge food!

*Desmond
County Tyrone, Northern Ireland*

I've finally accepted that I am powerless over food

I remember eating a meal. I don't remember who I was with or where I sat in the restaurant but I do remember exactly what I ate and where I ate it. At the time I was yo-yo dieting and in a desperate attempt to lose weight I was on another 'extreme detox'. Because of this, I ordered what I thought would be the healthiest thing on the menu: salmon, steamed veg and rice. Unfortunately it came smothered in a cream sauce. I was very aware of what my friends were eating and felt resentful I didn't order the same but I resolved to eat slowly, calmly, without compulsion and to stop when I was satisfied not stuffed. By a miracle I managed to do this and left just under half the food on my plate. I remember feeling an overwhelming desire to finish that plate of food but I stubbornly denied myself and whilst I was having second thoughts the waitress took my plate away and with that the decision to eat the rest.

You may say that I should be proud, that I showed great resolve in not eating all of it, but that plate of food has haunted me for 12 years. The next day I couldn't stop thinking about it. Why didn't I allow myself to eat it? I felt overwhelming regret, despair, anger and resentment because of not finishing that plate of food. I thought about it, obsessed about it, beat myself up for not eating it all; I even had numerous dreams about actually finishing it and this has gone on for years and years. Well past the point of what a non-compulsive overeater would entertain.

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“Finally, when the food was causing me more pain than the pain it was supposed to take away, in desperation I found this wonderful Fellowship”

Last week, for the first time in 12 years, I realised with sudden clarity that I didn't feel the familiar sense of loss I usually feel when thinking about that particular plate of food. I've wasted so many years of my life obsessing about food, justifying overeating or bingeing because of that one meal, and OA has given me the gift of freedom.

I'm still at the very beginning of my journey. I won't lie and say it's been easy but I've finally accepted that I am powerless over food (*'...no longer must we each depend upon our own unsteady willpower'*) and that by taking the gigantic leap of putting my faith in OA and working the Programme one day at a time, I have experienced serenity, and that is a feeling worth fighting for.

Thank you OA, you are saving my life.

Sam

Unity Poem

Compulsives unite
Let's reclaim the right,
Dignity of choice
Brings freedom - rejoice!
Give it all away and
it will come back to stay
Grace Over Defiance
I'll not be duped by self-reliance
But fill the hole with love not food
And I will improve my mood
Quick fixes will not fix it
I pick up the phone and not that biscuit!
Get off my pity pot
To heal the inner rot
I can only do my best
Higher Power will do the rest,
L-et go and let my God
O-nly for today you cheeky s*d!
V-erify it with my sponsor
E-ven if I 'know' the answer
It's in OA I trust
As only love will transform me (and us)
It really works if I do work it,
Just don't pick up because I am worth it!

Talitha

Notes from OAGB Literature Service

Rozanne died this year. We all owe our recovery to Rozanne, through her vision for a Fellowship offering support and recovery to compulsive eaters. Many of us have visions, but to turn a vision into the world-wide Fellowship of OA that offers us all recovery has taken intelligent, persistent hard work over many years.

For these Literature Service notes, it seems a good time to look at three documents written by Rozanne. Starting from the vision and work of Rozanne, we now have a legacy of the growing world-wide Fellowship to support us, and a growing understanding of our disease and recovery. Some important aspects of this growth are traced in the OA book ***Beyond Our Wildest Dreams (A History of Overeaters Anonymous as seen by A Cofounder)***, which received the Conference Seal of Approval and was published by OA in 1996.

Usually when I write these notes, I aim to keep detached, just describing the literature, leaving you to decide how important and useful that literature may be to you. This time I want to tell you something of my own views and why I think ***Beyond Our Wildest Dreams*** is so important. These thoughts are not necessarily those of OA as a whole, or even necessarily the thoughts of the OAGB Literature Committee. This book is a great aid to my recovery and to my ability to serve OA and help others. First, it gives me examples of the service others have given and how others faced painful disagreements and worked to create the consensus that has carried OA forward.

The book describes the growth of OA. There are three important aspects to this growth: there is the growth in numbers and the spread of OA; there is the very important growth in understanding of our disease, how to recover and how to help others recover; and there is the growth in the supporting structures.

I find ***Beyond Our Wildest Dreams*** a very important book because it shows something of the way OA developed; something of the people contributing to that development; and the ways in which people with different ideas have fed into it.

Most importantly, it has shown me that OA is constantly growing and developing, and that even painful tensions and mistakes can teach us.

There are two quotes from other OA literature that, for me, underline this point: the first is from the ***OA Handbook*** section 21, *How Do We Apply the Twelve Traditions Through the Group Conscience?* The second is from the pamphlet ***The Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*** in the section on Tradition Two.

These refer to group decisions, but in my experience the same principle applies throughout OA: not just to the decisions, but to the tough business of arriving at them.

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"We have to live this life forwards, but it only be understood backwards"

"A group must find a group conscience. An OA group is a collection of individuals, each one of whom may have a good idea or valid viewpoint. Group conscience, however, is a collective effort in which the OA group tries to understand a problem and develop a solution."

OA Handbook for OA members, Groups and Service Bodies.

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"Not all our group decisions will be wise and practical. We do make mistakes. Then we must look for better answers to the problem. In time we are likely to see that we have learnt and grown from our mistakes."

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These two quotes can make the whole process seem easy, but it can be a tough, frightening experience. All of us are on a journey of recovery from a disabling disease; where someone else holds views very different to ours, we can feel threatened. For example, that person may have a different understanding and practice of abstinence, and those differing views may appear to threaten our recovery, or even appear to threaten OA, and so risk endangering the support OA provides.

When I came to OA, there were a number of members who did not believe in abstinence. One of them said to me, "What if God wants you to be fat?" Their ideas troubled me. This forced me to think clearly about why I disagreed with them and think more deeply about what abstinence meant to me. I came to see that they defined abstinence as sticking to a particular food plan; I came to understand that abstinence is freedom from compulsive eating, and that a food plan may be an aid to that freedom.

Another example I remember was when people with anorexia first came into OA. What I learnt from this is that the disease is not overeating, but that there is a deep disease of which overeating and undereating are manifestations. This understanding has certainly helped my recovery and made me better able to help others. But the process of getting there was often painful.

What are the things in this book which have helped me most? I have been shown something of OA's thinking about the nature of our illness and how that thinking developed. I have come to understand how to grow in recovery and how to help others grow in recovery. It has given me a much deeper understanding of the programme, and a deep realisation that this growth in understanding is continuing. Even here, the principle in the quotes I give above applies.

As we each face our disease, grow in recovery and work as sponsors, we contribute to this developing understanding. Our own understanding of our disease and recovery is given to us, and it places upon us the responsibility to pass on all that we have been given.

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Rozanne's book charts the growing understanding of our disease, and the growing understanding of how to recover from it. One way to begin to see this development may be to follow all the references to *abstinence* listed in the index.

Even just the titles of two of the chapters – *The Spiritual-Psychological Controversy* and *Abstinence and the Carbohydrate Controversy* – help indicate something of how our current understanding has grown and deepened through creative controversy.

The legacy we have inherited from Rozanne and the contributions of many others have brought us this life-saving Programme. This is not a completed process, it is a growing, developing understanding.

As I see it, my own responsibility is to contribute to this. I have been given so much from the past; I owe to Rozanne's legacy what I have learnt and the recovery that I have. I have added my own understanding, practice and recovery to what has been given to me, and now my responsibility to future generations of OA is to pass on all my experience.

In every meeting there is a Seventh Tradition collection: we accept that this is crucial to enable our home group, intergroup, OAGB, Region and OA world-wide to function; and without OA how would this development of understanding be built up and passed on? How would we gain and maintain our recovery? It seems to me that my contribution must also include passing on to others all the understanding and support I have been given.

My reading of the book ***Beyond Our Wildest Dreams*** has certainly increased my depth of understanding of the OA Programme.

There are two booklets that we sell, both by Rozanne. The first is an OA historical document. ***I Put My Hand in Yours*** is a reprint of the first programme guide to OA, from 1968. In 1990, a brief introduction was added explaining that it is a historical document and listing which points are still as relevant today.

The introduction to the original document contains Rozanne's promise, *I Put My Hand in Yours*, that many of us repeat at the end of our meetings.

(Don't forget, we sell pocket cards containing the promise *I put my hand in yours*. These are also included in the *Newcomer Packs*.)

The original document has five sections:

1. Preparation For Starting A Meeting
2. The OA Meeting
3. Sharing Of Responsibility
4. Daily Help For A New Way Of Living
5. You Are Not Alone.

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"I can't think my way into right actions, but I can act my way into right thinking"

For the 1990 edition, Rozanne also added a postscript that includes the words:
Let us pass that strength on to the newcomer who walks through our door.

The second booklet by Rozanne is ***Anonymity: The Meaning and Applications of Traditions Eleven and Twelve***. This consists of four articles originally published in *Lifeline*:

1. The Promise Of Privacy
2. The Initial Confusion
3. In The Public Media
4. Our Spiritual Foundation.

Kathleen, Member of OAGB Literature Committee

Interview with Lucy, SBS Editor

How and when did you become editor of SBS?

As has so often been the case throughout my service career, I was approached by another OA member towards the end of 2010 as to whether I might like to consider reviving Step By Step. We then went on to hold our first committee meeting in January 2011 and brought SBS back to life in the summer of that year.

What has been the highlight of your editorship of Step by Step?

Seeing the Summer 2011 edition go live on the OAGB website for the very first time – no words can express the level of excitement I experienced at that moment! It was like all my Christmases and birthdays had come at once.

Would you like to go on to do service beyond SBS in future?

Definitely! Only God knows where it'll next take me. I get so much out of doing service and it has helped me remain focused and get through some really very tough times with my abstinence intact.

Is there any succession planning afoot?

As a committee we have all been actively working on SBS for over three years now. OAGB recently decided that those serving on subgroups should rotate out after a maximum of five years, so by the end of next year at the very latest we will need to hand on the SBS baton to a new committee – if nobody comes forward, sadly SBS will cease to exist again! We will be discussing how we go about this at our next few committee meetings, so if in the meantime you do feel that it is service that you would like to be considered for and feel able to do, then look out for information regarding recruitment planning in future editions of SBS and/or drop us a line via stepbystep@oagb.org.uk.

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This service – like with us – could be done by a single OA Group, or it could maybe be rotated by Intergroup. Failing that, as the work can be done online, a future committee could potentially be made up of individual OA members from all different parts of Great Britain who, due to their varying locations, never get to meet face-to-face as a committee. The options are endless. All I would say is that service to SBS isn't difficult – a good working knowledge of the Traditions and dedication is what it really takes. Like with anything that's worthwhile doing, it just takes a bit of time and effort.

What would you say to someone considering submitting an article for SBS?

Please don't let your character defects stop you! If you're worried about your grammar or ability to spell, please don't – we'll correct it. If you're not particularly computer-literate, just handwrite your article and send it to the OAGB postal address c/o SBS.

Sadly, if nobody submits articles, we won't have anything to publish and SBS may once again have to be shelved. As you'll probably notice, this edition is a particularly 'slimline' version because we just haven't had the submissions. Quite often we get an influx following the email reminder of the deadline, but that simply hasn't happened this time around. *We are but trusted servants, we do not govern* – you decide if you want SBS to continue being published. By not submitting articles, in a way you're actually deciding you no longer want or need SBS.

What do you most enjoy about working on SBS?

I like the fact that this service keeps me firmly grounded in the 'middle of the recovery raft' rather than teetering around the edges, in danger of falling off. I love the camaraderie involved and never cease to be amazed by what just three dedicated, hard-working individuals can manage to pull off when they work together closely and in such a civilised way, too! And I love the fact that we bring the Fellowship of OA in Great Britain together.

What brought you to OA originally?

In a nutshell – desperation! I felt as if I'd tried and tested all the diets that were available to me at that time; I'd had a certain amount of success with most of these, but couldn't ever sustain the weight loss and I would always return to bingeing and regain all the weight I'd worked so hard to take off, plus a whole load more. By the time I found OA I had completely lost the ability to control my eating and/or my weight. I was the heaviest I'd ever been, with no end in sight and, quite frankly, I was terrified as to where I'd end up.

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"Perseverance is the hard work you do after you get tired of doing the hard work you already did"

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

Commitment. When I joined OA I made a commitment to myself to get well, whatever it took. Over time, service became a big part of that, so if I'm ever asked to do something in the Fellowship and I feel that I have genuine capacity to take it on – whether that be sponsorship, a group service position, SBS etc. – I will do it to the best of my ability and for the full term that I have committed to. I am absolutely passionate about this, so much so that it has a flip side in that I am quite intolerant of those people who agree to take on a commitment, but who don't seem to understand the true meaning of the word, i.e. it is a willingness to give your time and effort to something that you truly believe in.

What other benefits have you found from any service you have given?

Over the years I think I've filled all of the service positions within my Group – some several times over! I've also been an Intergroup Officer in another Fellowship as well as being part of a convention committee for a few years too. I'm currently on the committee organising the Ilkley weekend retreat and thoroughly enjoying that – it's serving as a good forerunner to the part I will play on the committee responsible for hosting this year's National Assembly in Sheffield. All these things serve to keep me out of mischief and well entrenched in my Programme of recovery. As always, the benefits I reap from doing service far outweigh the time and effort I put in. I still get quite a buzz from doing service and I hope that never changes, because presumably the day it does is the day I'll stop doing it, and I sincerely hope that day never comes.

Lucy, SBS Editor

Heart of England Intergroup Convention 2014

Welcome to the run up to the Heart of England Intergroup Convention 2014!

The theme for the convention is Step Twelve, Spiritual Awakening, Sponsorship and Service.

We are really looking forward to planning lots of great meetings and workshops. If anyone has any ideas or feedback from previous conventions we would love to hear from you.

The website has been updated ready for next year:

<http://hoeconvention.org.uk/index>

You can now download the new 2014 flyer from the website here:

http://hoeconvention.org.uk/downloads/HOE_2014_flyer.pdf

You can also book directly with the hotel here:

<http://www.hilton.com/en/hi/groups/personalized/B/BHXMETW-GOA14-20140711/index.jhtml>

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We have increased our room allocation this year but it is still very advisable to book early. The hotel generally does not take any money from your account until the event.

Attending the Convention is a great way to forge links with fellow OA people from across the UK and even further afield, and it doesn't matter how little or for how long you have been involved, you will be welcomed.

Much love in Fellowship

Sue, Member of The Heart of England Intergroup Committee

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)

Calendar of Events

Workshops, conventions and other OA happenings...

DATE	EVENT	VENUE	CONTACT
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
Sat 22 nd Mar 2014 2.00-4.30 p.m.	Workshop – <i>"Abstinence is the most important thing in my life without exception"</i>	Sale Moor Methodist Church Northenden Rd corner of Worthingdon Rd Sale, M33 2DG	Suzi ☎ 07876 152 630 Sponsored by North West Intergroup
Sat 29 th Mar 2014 10.00 a.m.– 4.00 p.m.	Workshop – <i>"A time for growth"</i>	Hinde Street Methodist Church 19 Thayer Street London W1U 2QJ	Jacqueline ☎ 07966 501760 Sponsored by South and East England Intergroup
Fri 16 th to Sun 18 th May 2014	Ilkley Retreat – <i>"We 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 23 rd to Sun 25 th May 2014	Back to Basics Big Book Study & Workshop	Noddfa Centre Conwy Road Penmaenmawr North Wales LL34 6YF www.noddfa.org.uk info@noddfa.org.uk	oaconwygroup@hotmail.com Text 07876 152 630
Fri 11 th to Sun 13 th July 2014	14 th Annual OA Recovery Convention – Step Twelve, 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.)

*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.*