

Hello my fellow OA friends!

Just reading through last quarter's editorial I realised what a 'mixed bag' of emotions it was and I'll warn you now that true to the spirit of 'life on life's terms' this one will be no different!

What a rollercoaster week of emotions I've had! Reading through the feedback from the Ilkley retreat I can safely say that I'm not alone in having had an absolutely AMAZING time and came away on a real emotional high. Immediately prior to that, though, we had received some bad news that sadly a fellow committee member would be unable to attend due to having to go back into hospital. Her physical health has been seriously compromised over the past couple of months, but just as Ilkley was drawing to a close, she took a turn for the worse. Having been lucky enough to have had the privilege of accompanying her every step of the way on her journey in recovery for the past 12+ years, it's safe to say that her recent ill-health has affected me enormously. I'm just so grateful that I was able to 'top up my spiritual bank' at the retreat last weekend because this week I've very nearly had to take out an 'overdraft'.

So the words I wrote in my editorial for our Spring 2014 edition seem to have come back to haunt me as I've clearly been presented with yet another 'growth opportunity' which has once again involved me having to just stand and hurt. Thanks to this Programme, the God of my understanding and some very kind souls in this incredible Fellowship, I've not had to pick up the food over it and yet prior to getting into recovery I regularly binged over the most trivial things.

Wise slogans such as "*this too shall pass*" and, most appropriately, "*let go and let God*" have helped ground me. The May 2014 edition of *Lifeline* reminded me of the latter this week, in particular the article on page 9 entitled 'Sound Bites' which quoted from December 22 of "For Today":

"Inward peace is not easily come by for a compulsive overeater. Stuffing down anxiety and fear with food gives an illusion of calm, but food as an anesthetic has the shortest lifespan of all the addictive substances.

How, then, do I maintain inward peace? The same way I remain abstinent – by giving everything to God: my fears, my worries, my life. I abandon all efforts to control, to force life to conform to my will. And I rest as peacefully as an infant in its mother's arms." [Overeaters Anonymous, Inc., 1982, p. 357]

Very wise words indeed. I've always been told to never underestimate the power of prayer, so I beg you to please remember our OA sister in your prayers and here's hoping that by the time this edition of SBS goes live she'll be sat reading this, shaking her head in disbelief, wondering what on earth all the fuss has been about!

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 Autumn 2014 edition of SBS is Friday, 15th August 2014. Topics:

Step Five "Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs."

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."

Tool of Recovery: Service

Topic: "...and as we join hands, we find love and understanding beyond our wildest dreams."

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

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

Step Four

"Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves"

In 2003 I completed a marathon. (I walked most of it because I was four stones overweight.) Unsurprisingly, I approached this in a compulsive, obsessive way. Before I began my training, I researched everything: I read books; I spoke to people who'd done it; I had a detailed training plan mapped out; I eventually found the right trainers, heart monitor and stopwatch. Then on December 18th, about four months before the race (when I hadn't run, ever – not even for a bus), my husband bravely risked my wrath, and suggested that I just go out of the front door and start running.

My approach to Step Four was quite similar. There is an overwhelming amount of information out there on how to complete it, if you look for it. There is the 'Big Book' way, the 'OA Twelve and Twelve' way, the workbook method, use this form, use that one. I prepared, I read, I thought, I procrastinated, and avoided this terrifying thing I had to do. (Or perhaps I could get away without doing it, and if I still just went to meetings, I would find recovery.)

Then my sponsor suggested that perhaps I should just get on with it. She showed me the Big Book forms, and explained how to use them, but the most important thing was to just do it.

I also really worried about what was a resentment, and where was the line between people who had hurt me, and people I'd hurt. What are the true definitions of self-seeking? Should I put institutions and ideas down? But again, my sponsor very clearly explained to me that the whole point of doing this was to identify and eliminate the blockages to my Higher Power, and therefore the blockages to my recovery. Anything that sat in my head and 'bugged me' should go on the forms.

So I did it, and you know what? It took me just a few hours, and the list wasn't anywhere near as long as I had thought it would be. I prayed for about a week, and found a couple more things, but at the end of the three or four hours of actual thinking and writing, I had completed a searching and fearless moral inventory. What a relief!

Then I could move on, and recovery was just around the corner. Now, a year on, I've found a couple of other things to go on the form, and one thing needed further work, but thankfully we're allowed to go back and do that.

So if you're still choosing the right trainers, please, I urge you, just go out of the front door and make a start.

Charlotte O

Step Four

Yesterday my sponsor sacked me! The outrage, anger, hurt and pain confusingly didn't arrive which was a pleasant surprise. But let's backtrack a bit. I've recently started Step Four and I don't like it one bit. I've been pretending but deep down I know I'm frightened. I've taken a number of very

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deep breaths and taken the plunge by writing five pages of resentments. Yey me (I almost high-fived myself on completion) but then came the little voice of self-will in my head saying, "You know all your defects already. You don't have to do this." Shut up self-will - what do you know!?

So I've been stalling. I've been dragging my feet and focusing on everything else in recovery that isn't Step Four; going to meetings, listening to OA CDs, praying, writing in my reflections book (I'm hoping one day to call it my 'daily reflections book'), planning my meals, etc. And slowly, almost imperceptibly, I've started to slip. Just a taste of that and a nibble of this and, "Oh, it'd be such a shame not to just try it" and although I'm happy to say I haven't eaten a trigger food, I recognise now I've been well on my way to a full-blown food meltdown. The overwhelming feeling of needing to eat everything on my plate, of holding my breath (or at least it feels that way) whilst I quickly eat my food lest anyone else dare LOOK at my plate never mind take any, the huge, gaping, painful, confusing void in the centre of my being, all of it was back! I'd started experimenting with food instead of realising I was on a slippery slope.

And then, like a thunderbolt from my HP, I heard on an OA CD something about willpower. I already knew I didn't have any but I never understood why. The speaker explained that as human beings we can only muster willpower when we believe something is wrong or bad for us and that the insanity of our addiction meant that our brains told us that this time, THIS TIME it would be OK. How could we have willpower when we really truly, honestly believed this time would be different? I couldn't breathe. That's exactly what I believed. I believed, despite all the evidence, despite years of yo-yo dieting, despite knowing I am a compulsive overeater, that I would be OK not working my Step Four! What arrogance, what insanity! And my first thought was, "I'll just have a biscuit whilst I get my head around this revelation." If that isn't pure insanity, I don't know what is.

Thankfully I didn't eat that biscuit, and I picked up my blank resentment form, and I filled it in. My first resentment was about my sponsor: plain and simple, I was quite annoyed that she had a life. Not that I don't have my own life but I quite fancied that if she didn't have a life she could devote herself entirely to me and fix me. I'd played the whole scenario out in my head of the drama and tears of her kissing goodbye to her family so she could move next door and proceed to be my personal Guru, which was ridiculous. I knew it was ridiculous. What I didn't realise at the time is that I was using my imagined scenario to poke fun at myself and not take my resentment seriously. When I was honest with myself, I discovered that I was frightened of failing; I was selfish as I really wanted her to walk me through recovery; I wasn't honest about my realistic expectations, which were that I wanted to be able to contact her more often than twice a week at a set time; and I was being selfish in that I wanted more than she could give.

I called my sponsor yesterday at our allocated time of 9pm. I was nervous about sharing my resentment but I did share it, and I also asked for her forgiveness (I'm probably getting a little ahead of myself on Step-work here) because I really felt that I should have been much more grateful and not selfish and frightened. She was good-humoured and gracious and didn't take the resentment personally (which I had worried about) and didn't feel I had anything to apologise for. She said that she was struggling to commit time

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"OA has saved me from a slow death and given me a new life"

each week to me or reply when I texted and that I'd probably sensed her reluctance because she'd been considering giving up sponsoring me for a little while because her life was becoming unmanageable.

If she'd have said that a few months ago I know I would have felt distraught, let down, angry and hurt, but I didn't. I felt overwhelming gratitude for this amazing person who had juggled her life to support me, encourage me, offer me guidance and give me enough room to find my own way. I also felt pride in her telling me and appreciation for her honesty. So there we have it...I've made a conscious decision to do Step Four and my sponsor sacked me, and I know it will all be OK. Things are as they are meant to be and I trust that my HP will guide me in the next part of my journey.

Thank you OA for changing my life, one day at a time.

Sam D, Nottingham

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

I became a member of Overeaters Anonymous (OA) after attending my first meeting on the 26th April 2014, so at the time of writing this piece, I am brand new to the whole concept and movement that is OA. Despite this, I can say that I truly do feel 'at home' in OA. Although my journey of recovery has just begun, for the first time in many years I feel a hope for the future which has been missing in my life for a very long time, and this, I believe, is a direct result of my awareness of OA.

I am a compulsive overeater, a binge eater and a secret eater. This is something which I can now acknowledge as a direct result of attending OA meetings. I have lived inside this compulsive eating disease for the last ten years and it is only now, through hearing other members' stories (and reading all the literature that I can get my hands on) that I am able to see this. I have found attending meetings an invaluable tool and have been able to reach out and utilise the support, help, kindness and love of other sufferers as a direct result of going to as many meetings as I possibly can.

The sentence *"We are all together now, reaching out our hands for power and strength greater than ours"* is a true reflection of the feelings and serenity that I am able to attain through reaching out to other sufferers in- and outside of meetings.

As a child I grew up within a Christian faith and attended church. However, my childhood was not peaceful or calm, and violence and aggression were a big part of my life. As I developed into a young woman, I became very hostile to the world and felt that 'God' was fallible and judgemental and certainly did not care for me. I rebelled against any kind of religion or Higher Power. When I first read about OA on the internet, I was very wary of the Programme and specifically the Twelve Steps due to the element of acknowledging a Higher Power. However, by the end of my third OA meeting, I was truly able to say that OA had allowed me to look outside of myself. The realisation that there is some form of Higher Power running through my life, past and present, which

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has guided me to this point started to make more sense to me. Through OA I have been able to develop the idea of a Higher Power which is personal to me, not defined by doctrine or tradition but a power which is kind, loving and (if I accept it) a guide in all that I do.

When I came to acknowledge this truth, I felt freer than I had done in many years. At the time of writing this, my re-acquaintance with my Higher Power is helping me to remain abstinent between meals and not to eat compulsively on a daily basis. Through a very dear OA friend, I was made aware of the philosophy of 'Just for Today' and this is something which I use every day to help me remember that I am not able to change the past and can only affect my future one day at a time. This insight is something which I find truly amazing as it has allowed me a level of freedom from my disease of compulsive overeating which I have not felt for years, and for this I am truly grateful.

I hope in writing this down, I am able not only to give thanks to each and every OA Friend, but also to provide hope to those who suffer from the disease of compulsive overeating that things really can turn around for the better through the love and support of OA. I know that my recovery might not be a straight path, and no doubt I will have to navigate around many corners in order to keep heading in the right direction. I know, however, that I do not have to walk the road alone and that OA and my personal Higher Power will always be by my side.

All my thanks

Jo

Recovery from relapse

How do I get back from relapse? Maybe it's more helpful to wonder how not to get into relapse in the first place. Remembering I'm powerless over food, my disease, my addiction. How it is cunning, baffling and powerful. Powerful enough to kill. Cunning and sneaky as it twists my mind and I believe its lies.

I got sloppy with my food and my Programme. Not putting my daily quiet time before anything else. Letting my disease tell me I can eat what other people eat. Not even "normal" people but others in OA. If they can eat that, then maybe I can too. Perhaps I'm being too "rigid", too strict with myself? Maybe I can have a glass of wine, some cheese and biscuits after my meal out. Maybe now that I'm at a healthy body weight I can relax a little, live my life like a "normal" person.

Well, one day it's that glass of wine or cheese and a cracker and then the next day, with no apparent warning or forethought, I am sitting in a supermarket car park when I should be on my way to a meeting. On the seat beside me is a bag of my binge foods and once I start I can't stop. I eat, go home and lie down. The next morning I get up and start eating again. For the next few weeks I am in and out of the food. I talk to my sponsor, I go to meetings, I pray. When I binge every cell in my body wants to hide in shame. I feel worthless and disgusting, my self-esteem drains away, my connection to my HP is hard to find. I'm scared I will put all the weight back on.

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"The will of God will never take me where the grace of God cannot protect me"

In two and a half years of abstinence and recovery in OA I have lost 11 stone, found a connection with the God of my understanding, made some fabulous friends and discovered a life beyond my wildest dreams. So what happened? I can't blame life. Life happens. I know I have a map now to navigate by. I know the Fellowship gives me hands to hold through the darkest times. I've stayed abstinent through some of them. Depression, illness, relationships, kids, work, families it's all real stuff on a daily basis and I can let myself be a martyr or a victim and drown myself in self-pity or chocolate or I can breathe, pray, inventory, share and let God be in charge.

Maybe I needed this relapse. I know nothing is wasted in God's plan. Maybe I got smug and thought I was driving this bus. I'm sure that in time "more will be revealed". But I do know the Twelve Steps and OA works, and I know there is nowhere else for me after a lifetime of this disease. And yes it's doing its press ups right next to me. I am grateful for the love and support of the people here who won't let me go. It's a scary place to be and I need you all. I hope I can be there for you too.

This morning I've had my abstinent breakfast and I've spent my quiet time writing this letter to you and my HP. One day at a time I pray to put down the food and to work the Steps and to know that as we reach *"out our hands for power and strength greater than ours"* it will always be there.

Julia

The Lord is my sponsor, I shall not want.
He maketh me to go to many meetings.
He leadeth me away from the fridge and the biscuit barrel
He restoreth my soul, my sanity and my waistline.
He leadeth me in the path of abstinence, serenity and fellowship for my own sake.
He teacheth me to think, to take it easy, to live and let live and do first things first.
He maketh me more humble and grateful.
He teacheth me to accept the things I cannot change, to change the things I can, and giveth me the wisdom to know the difference.
Yea, though I walk through the aisles of the supermarket, I will fear no food.
For Thou are with me, Your programme, Your way of life, Your Twelve Steps - they comfort me.
You preparest a table before me in the presence of my foes: sugar, white flour and anything made of chocolate.
You anoint my confused mind with knowledge, understanding, and hope.
My cup runneth over, with sugar-free drinks.
Surely abstinence and serenity shall follow me every day of mine life (one day at a time).
As I surrender my will to You, I will dwell in the house of Higher Power (as I understand him) one day at a time, for ever and ever (one day at a time).
Amen

Rachel M

Tool of Recovery: Meetings

I have to say I love all the Tools but meetings have to be top of the list. I love meetings, as every time I enter those doors I feel safe. Everyone there already knows my biggest, darkest secret, about which even close family and friends have no idea. I don't need to hide anything; I can relax and be myself. Listening to others sharing helps me immensely and gets me out of that ego, self-absorbed head. It brings me back to reality and lets me see that life really isn't the enemy; in fact it's an opportunity to be enjoyed. I've been coming to meetings for over seven years now and still attend the original one. The familiar faces are still there, and some new ones too. I really enjoy seeing everyone each week, and they have become a second family. Even when my head tries to tell me that I should stay home and miss the meeting, I always feel so much better after going. In fact, I've never come away from any meeting feeling worse. For me, OA is a life saver that I feel very blessed to have found. God bless you all, wherever you are on your journey. It's much nicer walking it with all of you than on my own.

Anonymous

In what ways does the Tool of meetings support my recovery?

For me, the Tool of meetings embodies the principle that I can only keep what I give back. For me, the meetings work best when my state of mind is, "What can I give?" rather than, "What can I get?"

In my earlier days, I binged straight after meetings. So meetings are not what keep me abstinent, but rather, it is how I use the meetings that does. Do I go to meetings to carry the message and to contribute to the group or do I use it to 'dump' stuff and am more concerned about feeling better afterwards? Since I made the decision in Step Three to turn my will and my life over to the care of my HP, I also know that my HP does want me to give back what has been so generously given to me.

The good news is that even when I was not abstinent or not particularly well, I could still contribute to the meeting. I could do service and go with the intent of sharing my pain and difficulties for the benefit of others who may be going through tough times too. But the welfare of the group had to be my priority if I was to come out of a meeting feeling spiritually lifted. If I don't feel as good as I wished after a meeting, I tell myself that I am going to my next meeting to give, whatever that is: doing service or sharing with the intention to benefit someone. It is amazing how wonderful I feel afterwards.

In my experience, that has worked 100% of the time for the past five years and I have been five years abstinent! What have you got to lose by trying it for yourself?

With love in Fellowship

Angela, Kent

Gratitude for meetings

I often hear people say that whenever they go to a meeting, they hear exactly what they needed to hear. About three years ago, both of my local meetings were struggling for numbers, and both groups had concerns about how much longer they could remain open. The group members were worried, and we had a number of group consciences talking about our concerns and devising public information (PI) strategies to try and boost attendance.

Then we happened to read a story from the Big Book during one of the meetings which was called 'Acceptance is the Answer'. The story said that if you focus on what's wrong with a meeting, the meeting gets worse and worse; however, if you focus on what's good about the meeting, it gets better and better. We realised that we had spent so much time focusing on our fears about the meetings closing, that we had forgotten to be grateful for the fact that they were there at all.

So during the meeting, after going around the room and saying how we were feeling, we went around again and said what we were grateful for in relation to that meeting, and the OA Fellowship in general. We would share that we were grateful to have a room to meet in, grateful that there were others there to share with, grateful for the comfortable seats and the cheerful yellow walls.

Over the last three years, the meetings have gradually grown, and today they are both thriving, with average attendance of 12-14 people and often more. Going to these meetings and seeing how they have changed and grown so much has been a chance for me to see that the simple suggestions I hear at meetings really can make a difference, if they are put into action.

Caroline M, Eltham, London

I am so grateful to be able to watch a Fellowship grow up around me, one abstinent person passing it on to another. My home meeting these past four years now has 12-15 core members with six months or more of current abstinence, and we usually have another 5-10 people with one to six months of abstinence. Almost every week we are also blessed with one or two newcomers. Some never come back, but they all help us remain abstinent one more week, a day at a time. We always remember we are Overeaters Anonymous and keep the message of recovery focused on recovery from compulsive overeating. We do not try to be everything to everyone, for we share only one common problem, compulsive overeating, and one common solution, the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, adapted for OA.

I remember debates in another Fellowship 32 years ago about broadening the focus, since the Steps work for other compulsions. Thank goodness they decided to stick to their primary purpose to help the person with their affliction who still suffers. They have held to the Traditions and encouraged others to be self-supporting. So today, we can learn from them, and keep our primary purpose clean and clear: carry this amazing message of recovery to the compulsive overeater who still suffers. Thank you, Overeaters Anonymous, for still being there for me today. I accept my responsibility to carry this message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers.

A.G, London

What makes a good Intergroup meeting? or How I try to contribute to making a good Intergroup meeting

First, let me say I seldom live up to these ideals. I get scared that OA will fragment if my Intergroup fails to do its bit, or what I see as its bit, and my way always seems the best way to do any task. My sick motto is, 'Let's get it over and done with', which leads me to anxiety if the agenda items aren't all dealt with decisively.

These tendencies lead me to control the meeting, whatever my nominal role (as rep, officer or simply observer). I can try to overcome them, however: here are my thoughts on how:

1. I print and read the agenda pack and try to spot the silly or awkward questions I need to ask, then email the officers beforehand, so as not to harass them just before or during the meeting;
2. I discern which Intergroup business items need input from my group and get group conscience time to get that input;
3. I get my group doing Tradition Seven so it supports the Intergroup financially and I can go to Intergroup meetings with more contributions than just my talking;
4. I get to Intergroup on time and after enough abstinent food and drink to keep me going throughout the meeting and beyond;
5. I use any breaks for the loo and rest, not continuing the arguments;
6. I am patient when Intergroup procedures seem to be dragging on, but quick to point out when the meeting has been diverted or could be shortened;
7. I welcome newcomers to the Intergroup and help them to follow the Traditions and Intergroup procedures;
8. I don't allow myself or others to be, 'jumped on' into taking on service positions 'off the cuff'. Every service position is subject to Tradition One, "*Our common welfare should come first*", and Concept Nine, "*Able, trusted servants, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are indispensable for effective functioning at all service levels.*" Everyone has the right and need not to feel pressured into taking a service position without time to: do Step Ten on their feeling about the Intergroup meeting that day; consult their sponsor, group and family/friends who might be affected by their taking on the commitment; and really getting in touch with HP;
9. I never believe that, just because I have promised the Intergroup I will do a certain task, that I will magically overcome those deep-seated character defects that, from past experience, would prevent me from doing that task; or I don't try to force my HP to remove a character defect before HP thinks I am ready to have it removed;
10. I put my hand up rather than shouting out when I want to speak;
11. I know my Robert's Rules of Order, but discern when they should be set aside;
12. I listen to the Preamble and other opening readings rather than having a panicked shuffle through my papers;

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"Bring your mess to your sponsor and your message to the meeting"

13. I remember the minute-taker, so I speak clearly and succinctly; if I'm taking the minutes, I write them up promptly while I can still remember things I haven't noted down;
14. I uphold the officers: think charitably of their motives; forgive their lapses; do not resent them for not turning up or resigning; read their reports; thank them at the end; but do not flinch from having them stand down if they breach their abstinence requirements, however much that hurts me or inconveniences the Intergroup; hand them over to HP.

Intergroups are full of real, broken people, and their business includes facing outwards on to the real world. I don't think I would have got or kept the recovery I have without both the trials and the wonderful people I have met at Intergroup meetings.

Anonymous

Interview with Suzi – the soft and hard sides to chairing the North West Intergroup (NWIG)!

I was thrilled to be asked some questions regarding service beyond group level. I spent a few days reflecting and as our recent meeting was yesterday, decided to write tonight.

I became the chair because someone suggested that I was already doing the role. I agreed that was the case, took a courage pill and said, "OK then!" There were only four of us at that meeting and it was November 2010.

The simplicity of another having faith in my ability empowered me to put aside any fears and give it a go. That philosophy has carried me through with many tasks and service in OA.

Back in 2010, NWIG was small and not strong but the love, support and continuing encouragement from a long-timer kept me focused on the unity of the Intergroup, putting aside my ego that I could fix it!!

We started with workshops to strengthen recovery and make the Intergroup visible to groups. Things have been simple and tailored to the needs of meetings in the North West.

Currently, North West has 13 meetings. Over the time I have been chairing, many new meetings have started which we have supported and many have closed.

The nice side of being in a role for a length of time is consistency and a real sense of belonging, plus personally knowing the IG reps for all meetings. I still get a little worried before meetings and now accept that as positive, showing I care deeply about doing the job to the best of my ability.

I always get the courage to admit errors and ask for help! It has taken three and a half years to know what needs to be discussed in which meeting.

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The hard side is dealing with character defects, such as frustration when people do not do things as I would, and learning to accept different ways of doing things. I have learnt if I do not know what to do, do nothing and ask. There is always help available and no judgement for not knowing.

For myself, the highlight was when we adopted NWIG bylaws simply adapted from WSO suggestions - we had procrastinated for ages!! Change can be slow but the Board works well and all meetings support the Intergroup. Yesterday's meeting had visitors with positivity and enthusiasm for PI (public information) work and sponsorship commitments.

This November, my four years are up as chair and I shall happily do another role, just not on the Board! I believe I shall be doing service beyond Intergroup level in the future, excited at the thought of being around members with more years of service and abstinence than me (abstinent since September 2007). I need to see and feel the hope of long-term recovery.

I soon learnt there are no 'us' and 'them', only 'we', and it is a privilege to be a trusted servant.

Thanks.

Suzi, NWIG chair and contented anonymous member of OA

Shame in a name

I've just got back from the World Service Business Conference (WSBC) in Albuquerque. I was there for seven days of workshops, committee work and meetings (both business and recovery).

One of the motions we discussed over there was a survey to ask groups whether they wanted to change the name of Overeaters Anonymous. This was proposed by the Auckland Intergroup and part of their rationale was to be more inclusive of other eating disorders that people in the rooms experience. But also what came up was that people in OA can be ashamed of being in a Twelve-Step Programme called Overeaters Anonymous, and that this might put some people off coming into the rooms.

I do identify with that; at times I've said I'm in a Twelve-Step Programme for people with eating disorders because I've felt embarrassed to say I am an overeater, wanting to make excuses for our name.

Even though I've been in OA for six years, and been abstinent since July 2008, maintaining a seven and a half stone weight loss in all (six stones in OA), I can sometimes wish it was called something more innocuous. This is very much part of my 'disease', wanting to control what others think of me. I'm very much a compulsive overeater, but even at my heaviest I would rather you not know that.

In the end it was voted by about 4 to 1 not to conduct the survey. This seemed to be for a few reasons: the \$8,000 it would cost; the low response by groups received from WSO (the motion needed 75% group approval to pass); that OA has some name recognition; that as a Fellowship, what would we rename ourselves that hadn't already been used? Also, that people with other eating

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"ISM = Incredibly Short Memory"

disorders often have some form of overeating as part of that, and that people without the overeating can still find us and find recovery in the rooms.

The outgoing Region 4 trustee spoke at the farewell dinner on the Saturday night. She shared about how important OA is to her and her life. A couple of years ago, when looking for a job for the first time in 20 years, she was writing her CV and decided to put in her OA service history, which is not a break of anonymity. All the service she had done at Region and WSO level was included, and she made sure her new employers knew that occasionally she would have to take a day off to attend Board of Trustee meetings. I find that a truly inspirational example.

OA is incredibly important to me but I can still be quite secretive about it in certain circles. I'm not saying I'm going to tell everyone I meet through work that I'm in OA but it does tell me I don't have to feel ashamed and no longer need to make excuses for myself, my weight, or my disease. I am trying to work an honest Programme!

Jacqueline, London



South Coast Retreat

26th–28th September 2014 at Ladywell Retreat and Spirituality Centre, Ashted Lane, Godalming, Surrey, GU7 1ST

Throughout the weekend there will be workshops and meetings on the theme, which will take a look at 'Surrender' and Step One. There will be time for meditation, personal reflection and socialising.

The Retreat and Spirituality Centre is an oasis of peace and tranquillity set in stunning countryside in the heart of Surrey and within easy reach of London and the South East.

All rooms are available as single, full board at a cost of £135 (includes an administration fee). All meals will be vegetarian and there will be sugar and white flour free catering options.

Arrive from 4pm on the Friday and depart no later than 3pm on the Sunday.

If you would like to attend the retreat, please email southcoastretreats@hotmail.co.uk and you will be emailed a booking form to complete.

Calendar of Events

Workshops, conventions and other OA happenings...

DATE	EVENT	VENUE	CONTACT
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
Fri 26 th to Sun 28 th Sept 2014	South Coast Retreat – “Surrender – what have you got to lose?”	Ladywell Retreat and Spirituality Centre Ashtead Lane Godalming Surrey GU7 1ST	southcoastretreats@hotmail.co.uk Sponsored by South Coast Intergroup
Fri 17 th to Sun 19 th Oct 2014	29 th Annual OA National Assembly and Convention – “Living The Serenity Prayer”	The Copthorne Hotel Sheffield Bramhall Lane Sheffield S2 4SU Reservations ☎ 0114 252 5480 quoting OAGB171014	oagb.na2014@hotmail.co.uk/ ☎ 07597 180 753 Sponsored by OAGB <i>Further details via</i> http://www.oagb.org.uk/nsb-payment/

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.*