

STEP

OVEREATERS
ANONYMOUS®
GREAT BRITAIN

by STEP

Summer 2015

Hello my fellow OA friends!

It is with great sadness that I am writing this - my last ever - editorial for Step By Step. No surprise that my usual 'writer's block' aka that all-too-familiar character defect known as deadly procrastination has not only reared its ugly head recently but actually proven to be worse than ever this time around. I may well be going through some kind of 'grieving process' as far as SBS is concerned as it's played such a big part of my life over the past 4½ years and has helped me to remain focused at times of great loss. However, the time has now come to let go. Part of me will miss it and yet another part of me is relieved that I can now gain back a bit of time for myself in the short term and possibly look toward taking on different service positions in the long term.

Just to give you a bit of history, your current SBS committee produced the first issue of the resurrected OAGB newsletter 'Step by Step' as an online version in Summer 2011. This edition is the 17th such issue. The number of committee members fell from the initial six to the current three (Lucy, Karen and Clare) in December 2012. This team of three has produced the last 11 issues, with Miriam kindly assisting with some initial copy editing of articles from time to time over the last couple of years.

It is at this point that I was really hoping to be able to introduce you to your new SBS committee, however, recruiting volunteers has proven somewhat problematic. We've had a couple of people who've been keen to take over but although we've managed to continue as a committee of just three for quite a while, we're all a bit burnt out to be honest and I would strongly suggest that a minimum of four people is required so that the burden isn't too great. However, I haven't totally given up hope YET, so if any of you do have a burning desire to help out with Step By Step and ensure that it continues to be published regularly, please contact Rachel, Communications Officer, via communications@oagb.org.uk As is sadly so often the case where service is concerned, the lion's share of the work is generally carried out by the dedicated few - I know for a fact that the OAGB Board is having similar problems finding people willing to step up to the mark and step into the shoes of those rotating off in October. So if you're passionate about your recovery and the Fellowship of Overeaters Anonymous in Great Britain, why not consider standing for the Board - please contact Sue via chair@oagb.org.uk for more details.

So, all that is left now is for me to take this opportunity to thank my fellow committee members for all their hard work, commitment and dedication over the past few years and probably for putting up with me and my control freakery at times too! Last but by no means least, I would like to thank each and every one of you who has taken the time to write articles for SBS without which we wouldn't have had anything to publish! God bless you all.

Love in Fellowship

*Lucy, SBS Editor
Newcastle-upon-Tyne*

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

Step One

"We admitted we were powerless over food – that our lives had become unmanageable."

Hi my name is Sam, and I am a compulsive overeater working the OA Twelve Step Programme (using the texts: *Alcoholics Anonymous* and the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions [Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.]*, based in London. Below are my responses to Stepwork writing assignments that my sponsor gave me. My sponsor suggested that I do service by sharing these with OA for publication in OA literature.

To qualify, and for context, I have been abstinent since 2nd January 2015. I have been a member of OA since December 2005, when I got a sponsor and worked through the Steps, and then began sponsoring myself. I have experienced periods of abstinence and relapse since that time. So far, it is my understanding that my periods of relapse provided clarity (and evidence to me) that I had not fully taken Step One, and my desire to stop compulsively overeating was flaky. Hence, I began working the Steps again from Step One in January 2015.

Question: Read Step One in the AA '12&12'. Look up the definitions of 'compulsive' and 'controlled' in the dictionary. How do these relate to me?

My response (at 60 days abstinent):

For me, 'compulsive' in the context of my relationship to food is the 'irresistible urge' I get to eat food. This describes my default setting in relation to food; hence, I am powerless over my ability to control my eating. My irresistible urge to eat food is most evident to me at the precise moment that I am trying not to eat food. Once I give into the irresistible urge - my compulsion to eat -, it is increasingly more difficult to stop eating. For me, eating sugar in any of its forms increases this irresistible urge exponentially, due to my body's physical allergy to sugar. Triggering my physical allergy by overeating and eating sugar not only lands me with the problem of finding it difficult to stop eating; it also rips my self-esteem from me with as much vigour as it would take to rip a rug from under my feet, so I end up believing that I am not worth stopping for anyway.

I understand 'controlled' to be of a behaviour that can be regulated or limited at will. My truth is that my disease has progressed to an extent that I am no longer able to manage, regulate, control or limit my eating behaviour on my own. My eating behaviour is out of my control because my irresistible urge to eat food is stronger than my ability to regulate how much I eat. This made me realise that I am powerless over food – not just sugar in all its forms.

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Over the past few years, I have experienced the progressive nature of my disease. December 2014 was the lowest rock bottom I have experienced. I was jittery on the bus while travelling home from work – excruciatingly uncomfortable in the compulsion – until I could calm my nerves with a snack and a drink (fruit and a soft drink). Only then was I able to compose myself enough to cook dinner. Not even eating dinner could fill the hole inside me – the bottomless pit that I experienced as extreme physical hunger would rage on. This discomfort was living hell. I gave into sugar, in the form of wine, then desserts, chocolate, biscuits etc., in the days leading up to New Year’s Eve. The result was a triggering of the physical allergy and relentless mental obsession to get that next fix. I was done. I was ready for a way out.

On 2nd January 2015, I ate three moderate meals and abstained from my physical triggers. I was given the gift of abstinence and through my desperation, the gift of willingness to go to any lengths for my recovery. I got a sponsor who was abstinent. For about seven weeks, every day I went to a meeting, called my sponsor, did my committed prayer and meditation practice, committed my food to my Higher Power: in essence, I used the Tools of the Programme and followed all of my sponsor’s suggestions. I also worked Step One focussing on my struggles with the food since joining OA in December 2005. There is no doubt that for me, the mental obsession, compulsion and physical allergy was far worse in December 2014 than it was nine years before.

During February 2015, within a period of two days, I received news of a Fellow taking her life; and of my sponsor (whose recovery I admired) relapsing into the disease. This news, coupled with having just completed a thorough Step One – in which I fully accepted my powerlessness over the mental obsession that tells me that someday, somehow, I can control my eating to that of a normal person, that tries to lead me to the first bite, which, in turn, fuels the physical craving for more food, put me in a state of terror that this disease would be my demise.

This experience made the seriousness of my situation very real. For the first time for me, this disease was now a matter of life or death. I choose life; and am willing to go to any lengths for my recovery from the disease of compulsive overeating one day at a time. This is evident by me remaining abstinent throughout this fearful time - and testament to the power of this Programme to overcome compulsive overeating.

I am grateful for the clarity that Step One has offered me: I have complete acceptance that I am a compulsive overeater and am powerless over food. This is such as relief as I can give up the losing battle of trying to control my food intake. The solution is entire abstinence from compulsive overeating and from my alcoholic food – sugar - in all its forms; and being able to identify that first compulsive bite, so that I can choose not to take it; and make a call to a Fellow instead. A strict, measured food plan is my Tool to identify the first compulsive bite. I am truly grateful for this clarity.

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Question: Read Step One in the AA '12&12'. Write a declaration as to what the knowledge of Step One can do for me... including the ideas of being open minded, willing to listen and willing to go to any end (lengths).

My response (at 76 days abstinent):

For me, the knowledge that Step One offers me is:

- I am powerless over food. I am a compulsive overeater.
- From this admission of powerlessness, and a desire to stop compulsively overeating, comes the strength to be free from compulsive overeating and its consequences: the mental obsession/food fog; the physical allergy/craving; weight gain; lack of self-esteem – basically a living hell where I never want to be again!
- I have a mental obsession to turn to food that willpower alone cannot beat. I also have an increasing sensitivity to my alcoholic foods (sugar in all its forms) – the allergy of the body.
- The idea that compulsive overeaters almost never recover on their own resources; and that my success in recovery is proportional to my admission of hopelessness in relation to attempts to control my eating.
- I have experienced the fatal progression of my disease. After hitting bottom with the jitters and all-consuming compulsion to overeat in December 2014, I am willing to sincerely work this Programme - not because I am a 'good' member of OA – but because I have a desire to be alive and live my life free from compulsive overeating and its consequences.
- The result of hitting bottom is that I am teachable – open-minded – and willing to follow suggestions of those who are abstinent and in whom, for the most part, the mental obsession and physical allergy has been lifted; and display characteristics of emotional and spiritual recovery by working the Steps and practising the Traditions as best they can in all areas of their life.
- Each day, by praying for the desire to stop compulsively overeating, the willingness to do whatever is necessary to stop overeating will come; and my physical, emotional and spiritual recovery will be enhanced.

By accepting this knowledge as truth for me; and by taking daily action accordingly by using the Tools of the Programme and working the Steps, I cannot fail to recover from compulsive overeating. What an awesome prospect.

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Question: Read Step One in the AA '12&12'. Have I taken Step One? Is it solid? How do I know that I took Step One and that it is solid?

My response (at 77 days abstinent):

By admitting that I am powerless over food – that my life in relation to this powerlessness over food is unmanageable - the problem is removed from my hands. I am no longer responsible for solving it through my own willpower. What a relief: a load off my shoulders. All that is suggested is that I surrender to a plan of eating, and use the other Tools of the Programme while working on the Step that I am on. Instead of wasting my efforts on futile attempts at trying to control my eating, I am free to live a life of purposefulness; and turn my mind to being of service to others – what a beautiful spiritual gift.

In accepting my weakness and all its consequences, I experience the humbleness that supports abstinence.

I understand and have experienced the two-fold nature of my disease: the mental torture of insane thoughts that fuel my compulsion to overeat; and the physical allergy that just craves more – the proverbial itch that can never be scratched.

Using my own resources, I have been defeated. I know that there is no fight left in me to beat this two-fold beast. This tells me that, yes, I have taken Step One. How do I know that my Step One is solid? I no longer have a desire to try to control my eating: I accept that this is outside of my control. Instead, I surrender my eating to my Plan of Eating and my Higher Power each day. The result is abstinence, freedom from compulsive overeating one day at a time.

The very day my sponsor posed the questions to me of, *"How do I know that I have taken Step One and how do I know that it is solid?"*, I was placed in a situation that provided me with the evidence for my response.

A colleague offered me one of my alcoholic foods (chocolate). I replied with a, *"No, thank you"*, to which he enquired whether I was sure I wouldn't have any. My calm and certain response was, *"No, thank you. I don't eat sugar. I am a compulsive overeater and a member of Overeaters Anonymous. Sugar gives me cravings, so I choose not to eat it."* During the conversation, it was also appropriate to mention that I no longer drink alcohol because it is ultimately sugar. He replied with a, *"Wow, that sounds serious,"* and proceeded to send me a link to a web page listing alcoholic drinks without sugar. For a brief moment, a spark of interest was ignited in me as I read the information. Then I abruptly stopped and closed down the page – that ship has sailed. I have enough experience through relapse that tells me that alcohol (sugar) ultimately leads me back to the food. I have already made the decision to let alcohol go and have prayed to not look forward to including it in my Plan of Eating in the future, so that chapter is closed to debate.

I have taken Step One and it is solid because I no longer want to experiment with substances that may or may not trigger my disease; and I no longer have an overwhelming sense of shame around the truth that I am a compulsive overeater.

Sam, London

"...as it is, life is hard; when I am bingeing, it is twice as difficult"

"Your Heavenly Father will never let you down!"

Abstinence means I have to stay away from eating certain foods and certain food behaviours. I believe in and accept the OA definition of abstinence, including '*working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight*'. Abstinence in the OA definition is an action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviours. My compulsion is triggered by eating certain foods (especially sugar) but it is also the crazy, powerful, mental obsession which seems to live in my head and can be sleeping quietly, then wake up like a raging mad thing with a life of its own. What I've learned in OA from the '*Big Book*' [*Alcoholics Anonymous*] is that only a spiritual solution can help relieve me of that mental obsession or the crazy person in my head.

When I am abstinent, that crazy voice is quiet and I am walking towards recovery, rather than away from it. I feel peaceful. I like myself and how I look and feel in the world. I feel comfortable in my own skin. I feel at home and I belong. Abstinence means that there is hope that the voice of insanity and food thoughts will quieten down and my recovery will get stronger so that I'm able to feel safe again.

When I'm not abstinent it is my nightmare like Dr Bob's [*Alcoholics Anonymous, Third Edition, 1976, pp.171-181*], I feel shame, misery, hopelessness and self-loathing. It feels like a big fat dirty secret. And I am full of fear that I will die from my disease. I know that when I slip, abstinence is not the most important thing in my life. In that moment, food is. That is real insanity. When food becomes my God. That food is worth more to me than health, happiness, peace of mind and life itself. Worth more than connection or intimacy, more than a relationship with other people and my Higher Power. Food matters more than love. That is my madness.

But it's not what I want or how I want to live today. I want to actually **live**. To have serenity, to be useful, to be able to think clearly, not to be in a food fog. I don't want to be acting like a mad woman. I really have got tired of it.

I claim abstinence and recovery from this disease. I want it more than anything because without it, I have nothing, and my life gets smaller and poorer. It is the ultimate form of self-harm. Death by inches, one bite at a time, physically, emotionally and spiritually. I want to be well and to echo Dr Bob, '*Your Heavenly Father will never let you down!*' [*Alcoholics Anonymous, Third Edition, 1976, p.181*].

JR

Step Two

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

Question: **Read Step Two in the AA '12&12'. Write on how Step One and Two come together in my mind.**

My response (at 78 days abstinent):

For me, Step One is the honesty that 'I can't control my eating' and Step Two is the hope that maybe 'God (or something other than myself) can' and the humility to be open to this help.

Step One is accepting the truth that I can't control myself (both my thinking and physical reactions) in relation to food. As a result, I experience my life as being unmanageable – a constant internal battle. For so many years I had been stuck, frustrated and fighting to control my eating excess with various weight control measures, from dieting to exercise. I was a sick person stuck in the insanity of trying to eat like a normal eater: denying the truth that certain substances were keeping me in the disease. Step One offered me relief, when I completely accepted that I have an illness called compulsive overeating; that I have a hypersensitivity to certain substances that cause physical cravings when I take them into my body; and that on my own knowledge and will, I am hopeless and my mind is defenceless to beat the disease (the mental obsession and physical allergy). For today, the lingering thoughts (obsession) of 'maybe, someday I will be able to control my eating' have been smashed. I am a compulsive overeater, and today, I know this to the core of my being.

Step Two provides me with hope of a solution to the problem that has defeated me most of my life. This is such a relief – I no longer need to 'suffer in silence' or 'battle it alone'. For me, Step Two is about humility – accepting help with my problem whether that be from a sponsor by following their suggestions; or attending Twelve Step meetings and listening with an open mind; reading Twelve Step literature with an attitude of 'I don't know what is best for me, so I will surrender to the sanity and experience of the authors'.

I see my surrender to the Tool of a Plan of Eating as a Step One and Two activity. Step One showed me that I can't trust my sick mind with the food, so I surrender my eating to this plan each day; and the result is sanity around my meals, one meal at a time.

Today, I do believe in a Power greater than myself. That Power has worked a miracle in my life. I have been given the gift of abstinence – freedom from compulsive overeating – for the past 78 days. This is the miracle, for which I am truly grateful – one day at a time.

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"God, please get between me and the food today, so that the food does not get between me and You."

Question: Read "A Vision for You" in the Big Book. Demonstrate the effectiveness of OA from your personal experience and from what you have observed in others. Use a very free definition or translation of a Higher Power. Could what you have experienced emanate solely from you and if so, why did it not happen before?

My response (at 80 days abstinent):

Step One has shown me that through my attempts to eat like a normal eater (mostly driven by a desire to fit in and not be/feel like the odd one out of my social group; also because of the shame I carried as a result of my inability to control my eating), failure to control my eating and weight became more inevitable. I know now that this progression is a characteristic of an illness that I have called compulsive overeating. My relapses into the food showed me that I was clinging onto a notion that somehow, someday, I would discover a means of controlling myself around the food. I was living in a fantasy – full of denial – secretly wishing for the day when I could 'have my cake and eat it too'! This desire to fit in socially and denial of the truth to myself that I am a compulsive overeater, and that sugar in all its forms is an alcoholic food for me, led me to rock bottom in December 2014. I was restless, jittery and discontented, fuelled by physical cravings and plagued by the mental obsession for food to zone me out of life.

Now, with a strong desire to stop compulsively overeating, I followed my sponsor's suggestion of praying to be free from looking forward to the day when I could eat like a normal eater. OA has helped me shift my mindset and uncover the dishonesty (or denial if you wish) I had with myself and others. I now see the destructive nature of my thinking when it comes to food. The miracle I have experienced is ownership of the fact that I am a compulsive overeater; and total surrender to a Plan of Eating one day at a time. Today, I have awareness of the consequences of my attempts to eat like a normal eater; and with a sane mind, I choose abstinence – one of the beautiful gifts that daily working of the OA Programme offers. For today, I have no desire to pretend that I am a normal eater – for me, the risk of relapse and a lower bottom is too high. For today, I am Sam, the compulsive overeater. What freedom in that gift of truth and acceptance. The evidence of the effectiveness of this Programme is that I have been abstinent for the past 80 days, and for the most part, the obsession and compulsion to overeat has lifted. This miracle is not solely of my doing. My part is that I showed up to meetings and took action by asking a sponsor how they got well. This willingness was God-given – it propelled me to keep coming back, despite the shame of my relapses, and to wholeheartedly follow the suggestions given to me by my sponsor. Through practising prayer and meditation, my truth was revealed to me and the miracle of abstinence occurred.

In addition to experiencing the effectiveness of OA in helping me to abstain from compulsive overeating, I have also observed its effectiveness in other Fellows. What I have noticed is that once a person becomes abstinent, their face and eyes change – it's like seeing the dark cloud of burden or worry being lifted to make way for peace, presence and radiant possibilities.

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I have seen compulsive overeaters transform from trembling, emotional wrecks to those whose recovery is an inspiration to me. They are present, purposeful, grounded, boundaried, honest, and most of all: abstinent and very grateful for that gift, one day at a time. The principles of the OA Programme are embedded in their lives, and are a way of life for them. They are living the OA Programme one day at a time and display gratitude for the life that the Programme, the Fellowship and a Higher Power have given them. They have a new constant in their lives: a solid friend in the form of a Higher Power of their understanding. We are so blessed.

Sam, London

The Power of Words and Walking in Recovery

I am grateful that I was able to attend an OA retreat in Ilkley in May 2015. I attended this retreat last year when I received a tremendous amount of healing and my Higher Power was faithful again this year in providing the opportunity for me to go. This year the title was 'The Twelve Principles of Overeaters Anonymous'. As the weekend went on, I listened to what I believed my Higher Power was saying to me, sometimes through others and sometimes on my own in meditation and prayer.

Two Principles are important to me: Step Three *"we learned **faith** as we made the most important decision we had ever made, the decision to trust God – as we understand God – with our will and our lives"* [The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, 2002, p.104], and Step Eleven *'we learned the principle of **spiritual awareness** as we turned our attention to the practices of prayer and meditation'* [The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, 2002, pp.105-6]. God has taught me so much by becoming a member of OA almost two years ago. I became religiously active years before I became a member of OA. I have learned though OA I cannot do this journey by myself: healing will only come through community as well as the Steps and Principles. All of the Principles have been very helpful and it is good discipline for me to keep coming back to them.

I have become more aware of the power of words since I became religiously active almost 23 years ago. When I joined the Fellowship in 2013, I had lost three stones on a diet but I was frightened of putting the weight on all over again and fed up with how much I struggled with food. I had prayed and prayed over the years but it took me years to admit I needed help and God provided this help through the Fellowship. I have learned through my faith how important it is to speak positive and healing words about ourselves, even when we don't believe it.

My abstinence is sporadic; it is not perfect. I wanted a glimpse of how it would feel to lose the desire to eat compulsively, I had prayed for this and I believe I had an experience of this at Ilkley. I also realised I am going to have to work for it. By this it means receiving in faith (Principle behind Step Three) what I don't already have. Abstinence is there, I just need to receive it.

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"Are you nuts?! (Not Using The Steps)"

The healing has already happened. All I need to do is claim it, and this means I need to proclaim it. I need to confess it with my own mouth. My Higher Power encouraged me to start seeing myself as recovered; to start saying this even when I can't see the results, even when I think I have failed. I had already admitted I was powerless over food and admitted to my sponsor and to others that I am a compulsive overeater. Now I am going to keep claiming healing, to start speaking about myself as though I am already healed. This means I am now going to proclaim myself as a 'recovering compulsive overeater', and looking forward to when I can call myself a 'recovered compulsive overeater'.

Sometimes recovery seems to be elusive: I can perceive it in others but not in me. It is hard to be positive sometimes. I have struggled with over 30 years of dieting. Faith of accepting what we don't see and having a spiritual awareness are so important in knowing we are not on this journey alone. I know I have a journey ahead of me but I have faith that recovery is not impossible and it is time to speak positively about myself and accept healing because HP **wants** us to be healed: it is up to me to walk in it.

*Love in Fellowship
Alison, Recovering Compulsive Overeater*

Steps Eight and Nine

"Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all."

"Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."

From the day I read the Steps, I was pleased at the prospect of Steps Eight and Nine. As a people-pleaser I do a lot of apologising, not even always for things I've actually done, or things I genuinely regret having done, but because I needed to ingratiate myself with my listeners.

So I was not afraid of doing either of these Steps; but as Step Four progressed, I became aware that most of my Steps Eight and Nine would not be about compulsively apologising, but making living amends. Many of the people on my Step Eight list are part of my everyday life and at the sharp end of my increasingly apparent defects of character. Apology without improvement might be better than nothing, but it's not sustainable. Eventually my victims will run out of patience with me, which is not going to lead to lasting and fulfilling relationships. Not that there is no place for apologies in Step Nine, but I need to accompany them with (yet another) Step Six/Seven on the relevant character defects.

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Step Eight in the OA '12&12' also contains a reminder of the need to prevent resentments from taking root and growing; see, too, the *Big Book [Alcoholics Anonymous, Third Edition, 1976, p.64-5]*. Pray for the people involved, both books (and a good many others) say. I find that resentments are sometimes subtly disguised as worry about someone or about what they are doing or going to do, for instance if they are ill or are doing something I think is wrong, even if it doesn't affect me directly. Politicians and world leaders get into this category when they act in ways that scare or offend me. This is frequent, because I am a perfectionist control freak, and nothing short of global happiness my way will satisfy that part of me. I've found that I have to pray for the politicians and world leaders, too, and for the people around them, often, as the *Big Book* says [p. 67], suggesting to my Higher Power that they are "sick" and need help and love, however incapable I am of providing either to them directly. The act of prayer hands the problem over to my HP, where it belongs, and right away (or until the next news bulletin!) I feel calm and better disposed towards the world and its leaders. On the other hand, unfixed problems that I feel I should be fixing leave me feeling undeserving of my food, which is good news for my disease of anorexia. It's Step Eight time when I find myself fantasising about confronting, or even assassinating, a political leader, whether he or she is in my local Council or on the other side of the world; because I'm on the way to harming myself.

Sheila, Reading Friday

The Rhythm and Beauty of Maintaining

On off, in out, up down, black, white
To be the same day by day used to fill me with fright

The grace of a Power greater than me
Helps open my eyes to be able to see

The gift of abstinence frees up my mind
To be able to deal with whatever I find

I follow my eating plan without defiance
Listening to my God with full reliance

To weigh once a month is truly divine
Surrendering and no longer tempted to whine

Food, body image and weight all in their place
You can see my recovery all over my face

My God loves me just for me being ME
Tuned in and my day will be Thy will led, allowing me to BE

The addict within is easier to ignore
This is something I have come to adore

I look, hear, see, feel, touch and taste: all senses are heightened
My trusting of outcome is truly increased, no longer feeling frightened

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"Nothing tastes as good as abstinence feels"

My prayers are real and relevant for the day
No longer worrying about how and what I say

Meditation is coming more naturally and easily to me day by day
A stone held, a flower smelt, a bird heard, no substance on board to get in the way

My attitude is now one of love, awe and gratitude
No longer self-centred or grumpy and in a bad mood!

Surrender to life just as it is, keeps controlling at bay
Accepting and knowing the right things to say

Friendly deeds get done with lots of grace
The interest in others is genuine and face to face

Faith in a Power grows bigger and bigger
I really don't care if anyone has a snigger

A trusted servant in all I do is the aim
My street clean with no one to blame

I serve my God, recovery, family, friends and Fellowship as a rule
With grace and willingness, no longer the stubborn mule

The message of the solution I am proud to share
If needed I will use words with a flair!

Nine Tools are used, each one most days
To work with a sponsee helps me continue to praise

I belong to OA and want to give back the love I am given
To help others is God-led and I feel driven

Consistent, honest, open and willing
Threefold recovery being top of the billing

No longer obsessed, happy to pick up the phone
Repetition is the only form of permanence that I own

If you want what I have, you can too
Just ask and I am happy to share with you

I am what I am, you are what you are
My hand in yours and we will go far!

*Love and thanks in abundance
Suzi, North West xx*

Interview with Pam, outgoing NSB Literature Liaison Officer

1. What drew you to stand for the National Service Board originally?

Service has always been an important part of my recovery. My first sponsor encouraged me to move out of the comfort of my home group and to mix with members who had more recovery than I had. I found this really inspiring. I went from Intergroup Rep to plucking up the courage to go onto the Heart of England Intergroup Board. I served for eight years in a variety of roles, including being WSBC and Region 9 delegate, and my final position for the last two years of my service was Chair. I had a year off but really missed giving service beyond group level and with the NSB urgently needing new members, it was a no-brainer really. I have a completely new life thanks to OA and I feel very strongly about giving something back to the Fellowship in return.

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

If they meet the requirements, have discussed it with their sponsor and want to enrich their recovery, then grasp the opportunity with both hands. It is an amazing experience and a privilege to be working with a group of people with so much recovery. Yes, I found it very scary to start with, but all newcomers to the Board have a mentor to help and guide them. There was always someone who would check my work if I asked and this helped to build my confidence. I was worried I would be given a position I couldn't do, such as Communications Officer for which my IT skills are limited, but to my relief it wasn't like that. The Chair talked through the available positions and asked me which I thought I would be comfortable with. Even though I knew nothing about the Literature Service apart from being a customer, it seemed an interesting role and one I thought that perhaps I had some skills I could transfer from my workplace to the position of Literature Liaison Officer (LLO). Being on the NSB has given me the opportunity for my recovery to 'grow' for which I am very grateful.

3. Which of your roles on the Board have you most enjoyed?

I have been Literature Liaison Officer since I joined the NSB 3½ years ago. With so few members on the Board, there is not the choice of available people to rotate the roles on a regular basis. I have loved being LLO and working with a team dedicated to spreading the message of OA through the sale of literature. I feel I have been so lucky in being able to take on this role. There have been a lot of changes in the Literature Service over the past couple of years, i.e. the shop on the new website and the taking on of a storage unit to store the literature, which means we have been able to begin printing more literature in the UK. As there are only five of us on the Board, many of us have had to 'double up' on roles and I had the opportunity of also being the NSB Region 9 representative in Belgium and Poland, which was a great experience.

(continued on page 15)

"Try not to look at the door that's just closed 'cause you might miss the one that's just opened"

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

I have not really had any aspirations to give service beyond OAGB and having recently retired, I think I will leave that to the 'youngsters'!!! However, I can't imagine my OA life without giving service, so I will help whenever I am able to. As well as being LLO, I am also the Print Liaison Officer on the Literature Committee, a role I am able to continue with for up to another four years, so my connection with the Literature Service will continue. I also might help out on an Intergroup sub-committee if help is needed.

5. What brought you to OA originally?

I had never heard of OA and after a 30-year career of compulsively overeating and trying every diet/diet class in existence, I saw a small notice in our local free paper (I still have the cutting) mentioning an OA group in Cannock. The writer had written a few sentences which I could completely relate to and from despair I felt hope. I telephoned the number straight away, spoke to a lovely lady who told me her story (practically identical to mine) and went along to a meeting. That was over 16 years ago and I have never doubted that OA is where I belong. I have been abstinent for about 15 years. I truly believe it was a 'God job' and I will be eternally grateful for the miracle of my new life.

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

My abstinence, the Programme and my Higher Power. To me they are completely entwined, as I couldn't have recovery without them. I couldn't be abstinent or work my Programme without my HP. Abstinence has brought me sanity (well, at least most of the time!!) and a clear head, with food in its rightful place. I have a wonderful new life which I would not have without the OA Programme. I am also passionate about giving service because there is no way I can give back as much as I have gained within the OA Fellowship. Finally, the Literature Service. When I first came into the Programme, I bought all the books and soaked up the contents, desperately wanting the recovery I read about in the pages. They are an important part of my life but then I accept the fact that I am biased!!!

Pam, outgoing NSB Literature Liaison Officer

Calendar of Events

Workshops, conventions and other OA happenings...

See <http://www.oagb.org.uk/up-coming-events/>

DATE	EVENT	VENUE	CONTACT
Fri 16 th to Sun 18 th Oct 2015	30 th Annual OA National Assembly and Convention 'Acceptance; Physical, Emotional & Spiritual'	The Village Urban Resort Pinehurst Road Farnborough Business Park Farnborough Hampshire GU14 7BF	Farnboroughna2015@ gmail.com Hosted by South Coast Intergroup Sponsored by OAGB
Wed 28 th Oct to Sun 1 st Nov 2015	OA Region 9 Assembly and Convention	L'Enclos Rey 57 rue Violet 75015 Paris France	contact@2015.oainfos. org http://www.oaregion9.org Sponsored by Region 9

We hope you have enjoyed reading Step By Step over the past four years. If you're sad to see it go and feel that you might be in a position to give service in order to ensure that publication continues, then please email Rachel, NSB Communications Officer at:

communications@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.*