



Achieving Recovery During a Global Pandemic

I was a compulsive overeater for more than 40 years without knowing it. During that time, I experienced three lengthy periods of bingeing and weight gain, each followed by an exciting weight loss using the restrictive methods of medical weight-loss programs. In hindsight, the progression of my disease is evident to me now: I gained and lost 70 excess pounds in my twenties, then gained and lost 90 excess pounds in my thirties. In my forties, I just gave up trying, resulting in a gain of 125 excess pounds that I lost in my fifties.

In 2018, the year that I turned 60, I experienced a series of events beyond my wildest nightmares, turning me into a victim, sending me into extreme isolation and back into uncontrollable binge eating. No one could help me. I was powerless over food —

my life had become unmanageable. In January 2019, a dear friend suggested OA. I knew of a colleague who had found success with OA. So I attended my first meeting on February 9, 2019. I came to believe that a power greater than myself could restore me to sanity. I achieved an imperfect abstinence in later 2019, which I remember as being incredibly difficult. But I experienced a profound feeling of peace while abstinent that I was willing to go to any length to get. I made a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God.

Since then, I have thanked God for my horrible trials of 2018, with the knowledge that those events led me to OA. I joined a Step Study throughout 2019, performing my first fourth step and fifth step simultaneously, with other members. This approach was effective for me.

In January 2020, I enrolled in a 15-week spiritual program to improve my conscious contact with God as I understood Him, through regular prayer and reflection. I talked aloud with others in my small group about my experience, strength and hope and I was strengthened even more by the incredulity in their eyes. Several of them wanted what they saw that I had: a personal relationship with God that allows me to rest in His love.

Though I didn't realize it until weeks or even months later, I was gifted with recovery in January 2020: *removal of the need to engage in compulsive eating behaviors.* Just in time for the global pandemic!

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MAI News Available Via Email

Want to receive free, monthly MAI news via email? Send an email to emailblast@oamilwaukee.org with "subscribe" in Subject to receive our "News You Can Use." Include your first name, last initial, and home meeting.

Your email address will never be distributed nor seen by other people receiving the mailings.

MAI Monthly Meetings

Third Monday of every month, 6:30-8:00 p.m.
Martin Luther Lutheran Church
9235 W. Bluemound Road, Milwaukee, WI 53226
Each member group can have two voting representatives. All OA members are welcome.

OA World Service

oa.org

Free OA podcasts featuring OA speakers: oa.org/podcasts/. A podcast is a radio-type show you can download from the Internet to your computer.

A link also is available at this site to get World Service Office (WSO) information.

Spanish OA Website Espanol.@oa.org

French OA Website Francais.@oa.org

Region 5

region5oa.org

Serving Midwest US and Canada

Cocoon Submissions

We want your stories of recovery, poems and pictures, that share your experience, strength, and hope!

Issue	Deadline	Topic
1st Quarter	December 16	Acceptance is the Answer.

Send to cocooneditor@oamilwaukee.org or OAMAI, Attn: Cocoon Editor, PO Box 270054, Milwaukee, WI 53227.

Editor: Louise V.

Editorial Policy

Out of the Cocoon is the *quarterly* newsletter of the Milwaukee Area Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous, Inc. We welcome OA-related contributions from members. Material cannot be returned, nor can payment be made. All submissions must be signed; names will be withheld upon request. The editor reserves the right to make editorial changes and to refuse any article not meeting the editorial policy or that breaks any traditions. Articles may not appear in the quarter of submission. Other OA groups may reprint articles without permission as long as credit is given. The opinions expressed herein are those of the writers, and not of the Intergroup or OA as a whole.

Seeking a Sponsor?

The MAI Twelfth-Step-Within Committee maintains a list of available sponsors and temporary sponsors so newcomers and those still suffering can get direction and support. If you need help finding a sponsor, email 12th-stepwithin@oamilwaukee.org or call 414-259-0640 and leave a message. Provide your contact information, type of sponsor you're seeking (i.e. food, step, temporary, etc.), and any other specific needs.

Available to Sponsor?

Please add your name and phone number to the list so you can help another member. Indicate type of sponsor you are willing to be (see above for ideas) and time of day you are available.

Pandemic Tools in Overeaters Anonymous

The COVID-19 pandemic has given me a deeper appreciation of taking life and recovery one day at a time. I did not suspect in March when I first started hearing about the virus that it would disrupt my life and daily routines so much and for so long. Even more challenging for me, this crisis is open-ended. We don't know when it will end and what life will look like on the other side.

In that respect, the pandemic is like life itself! I have used a kit of tools old and new to maintain abstinence and a reasonable facsimile of sanity during the past six months. My morning readings include *For Today*, other daily spiritual books and several pages from the Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book. In my prayers I have tried to follow the program literature suggestion of thinking about the day ahead and asking for help and guidance with the decisions and challenges I see in front of me.

Since I am now working from home full time, I've been able to form the habit of a daily walk in the morning before I start work, often listening to an OA podcast during the walk.

Before the pandemic, I had never heard of Zoom. Today, I not only know how to use it, I serve as the admin for several meetings. My motivation was selfish: I wanted to make sure there would be meetings I could attend online. But now my service helps me connect with many OAers. I also set up an email group to send out a weekly reminder about Zoom meetings on this side of town. During a time when we all depend so much on technology for our recovery, it's important to reach out to members who have limited skills or access to tech. Gratefully, I have formed new OA friendships with people I have met only online through meetings. I even started a Sunday evening meeting on Zoom that I hope will continue virtually even after we go back to in-person meetings. Several OAers and I have wondered aloud what possibilities we might have in the future for hybrid meetings: In-person meetings with an option for people to join in by phone or computer.

Talking on the phone is not my favorite tool, but I have called or texted fellow OAers to make wellness checks.

It is much less awkward to do that during a pandemic. I connect daily with my sponsor, usually via email or text. With his help I've made an adjustment to my food plan, though I think that's more an issue of maintenance than pandemic.

One of the four horsemen of this pandemic routine is boredom. Many days can feel the same. That can create opportunities for food to call even louder, or for my disease to demand incredible excitement from food. So working my program, connecting with others, and having an action plan for life and recovery helps me stay abstinent one day at a time.

~Jim H.



Literature and Writing Tools to Start my Day

Everyday I write my perspective on the day's passage in *Voices of Recovery* and send it to several OA members. I am a firm believer in utilizing the tools, and in this case, Literature and Writing help me start my day.

August 20

Abstinence is a country whose beauty and variety I could not have imagined in my most indulgent dreams." *For Today* p. 70

In my youth my priorities were different than they are today. I wanted to stop bingeing so that I could keep off the weight I'd lost on a diet. When I was introduced to purging by using a laxative, I was no longer gaining back a lot of weight. But the emotional upheaval I experienced with every binge was full of shame, fear, disgust and self-loathing. To make matters worse, I never told anybody about this practice of mine. It was my secret.

Nowadays, my life is quite different. Food and diet obsessions are gone, along with the turmoil of bingeing and purging and the subsequent self-loathing. I sigh a big sigh of relief. I live in the beautiful land of recovery, and I abstain from compulsive overeating. Thank you, HP, for your help.

August 23

"Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him." Step 3 - Simple but hard to do, especially since I'm used to determining what I'm going to do next. But if I'm going to live this program and be the message of recovery and abstinence, then I do as Step 3 states, and I must turn my will and my life over to His care.

For me, what makes this easier to do is talking/praying to God throughout my day. My prayers include asking Him to guide me to His purpose for me and to give me the knowledge and the power to carry that out. He does. And once I know His purpose for me, the next right thing follows naturally.

September 3

"... fear is a four letter word for procrastination.. God is the engine; I am the caboose." Before program, I would procrastinate about getting things done, feeling fearful that I could not do the task at hand perfectly.

And it had to be perfect. So I'd put it off. An example would be assignments while I was in graduate school. I'd stall until the night before they were due, and then I'd write through the night and get them in on time at the very last minute. It was a nerve-racking way to live.

Now I know there's a better way to live. I've asked for God's guidance. And God has relieved me of my perfectionism character defect. One day at a time. I do my work ahead of time, and I don't lose any sleep over it. Happy joyous and free.

September 10

"I do this by calling program friends, attending meetings, and reading the literature."

Thanks to HP, I'm in recovery and have 36 years of abstinence. This is nothing short of a miracle. I know because I couldn't do this alone. I tried on my own and failed. My part in this is to continue to pray and ask Higher Power for abstinence and recovery, and He does bestow those gifts to me.

I know, however, that I must also do the footwork. If I'm not taking action, it doesn't work. For me, the footwork is comprised of following the steps, practicing the principles in all my affairs, and utilizing the tools. My favorite tools are meetings, to which I go to 7 a week; and the telephone for texting, calling, and reading emails. I also do some reading of the literature and some writing. But meetings and the telephone are my faves. This way, I'm focused on my program most of my waking hours. Thank you God, for these gifts of abstinence and recovery, and for the OA program and all my OA sisters and brothers, including each of you.

September 15

"In the meantime, the quality of my life diminished..."

I had been compulsively overeating ever since I was little yet big enough to grab sweets off buffet tables and open the freezer and steal frozen treats. I was preoccupied with thoughts about food and how I was going to get more.

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My Aha! Moment: Faith and Trust in a Higher Power

After reading the *Voices of Recovery* August 28, I sat down to write for a few minutes, and had one of those Aha! moments.

I am the person who did not trust my Higher Power to relieve me of the compulsion to overeat. I was in a long, painful “in between” place in my recovery; one foot in and one foot out. I did not trust that God would “carry me through” my fears. So I continued to overeat, “just a little bit” every day, setting up a no win situation of feeling shame and not trusting – it was painful. Where had my faith gone?

Because I was grazing each day, (‘just a little bit’) I was numb all the time. I didn’t feel my feelings, I just had a little something to help me not feel my feelings. The saddest part about numbing out my feelings through compulsive eating was that it blocked out all the feelings – the wonderful feelings, the scary feelings, the shame feelings, the happy feelings. So I was missing out on a lot of happy feelings, which I didn’t consider when I was compulsively eating.



Beautifully expressed by the author “it was easier to believe that God was too busy to care what I ate than to believe God grieved every extra bite I took.”

WOW! My lack of faith was astounding. I was not even “acting as if” or trying to reach out to other OAers – just blocking it all out, still going to meetings and giving service. But no sponsor, no outreach phone calls, no writing, no action plan. It was astounding that I continued to go to meetings, but I did, because I guess, underneath, somewhere, I believed that it could work for me as I had seen it work for others. I was talking the talk, but definitely not walking the walk.

I turn my life over to the CARE of God, and then act as if I trust that God will not let me suffer – but will help me see what is actually there for me, what it is that I am truly craving – and it’s not food at all. It’s the spiritual CARE, the love and caring of people in the program and people in my life. It’s LIFE without the cravings, the insanity of compulsive eating. I can put down the excess food and eat for nourishment by asking God to help me and trusting that the help I need will be there for me. As my faith and trust in a Higher Power grows, my disease subsides. Isn’t that a miracle?

~Terrie S.

Achieving Recovery During a Global Pandemic

From front page

In recovery, suddenly I stopped cheating on myself behind my own back. I no longer sought those bites, licks or tastes of favorite foods. Suddenly I was able to resist and reject foods that I did not want to eat because they are not on my Plan of Eating.

Then the pandemic brought isolation and threatened to disrupt my spiritual growth and recovery. In pandemic isolation, I prayed only for knowledge of His will for me and the power to carry that out. Quickly, I was moved to give Service daily from my home in a variety of ways. Soon, Service became the most important tool in my program. But, I benefitted more than those to whom I was giving service. I lost seven pounds. And, for the first time, I felt stronger than our stealthy disease. I was amazed! And, ever so grateful to HP.

Working the Steps: A Labor of Love

The Labor Day Marathon, Working the Steps, A Labor of Love, was presented by the Milwaukee Area Intergroup weekly Monday morning at 8:30 am Big Book meeting. Broadcast on Zoom, the meeting was very well attended. A record eighty-eight attendees from all parts of the nation participated.

Three speakers were featured. The first speaker shared about her journey through the first four Steps. The second speaker spoke about her life in terms of Steps five through eight. The final speaker discussed her life and the benefits of following Steps nine through twelve.

Positive pitches were exemplary of how well participants could relate to each of the speaker's stories. Attendees were asked to contribute to the Milwaukee Area Intergroup, and recognize their participation in the Labor Day Celebration. Feedback from attendees was uplifting and positive.

~Bobbi

Just by looking, I found many ways to humbly serve OA, neighbors, friends and family members. Again, I benefitted more than those to whom I was giving service. And my recovery continued.

Along with recovery came the gift of peace throughout the pandemic. My willing dependence on HP has transitioned into Trustful Surrender. I trust that God of infinite goodness would not send such a disaster as COVID-19 unless some great good will result from it. I trust that I cannot suffer the least harm unless He wills and orders it, in which case I would welcome it. I trust that He loves me and cares for me in a way that I can never understand fully.

Just as OA guided me to look back to see the progression of my disease, I see now that recovery, too, is progressive. I'm looking forward to a long healthy life full of experiences beyond my wildest dreams!

~Laurie L.

We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace...We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

~from Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th Edition

First Quarter 2021 Theme

The theme for the first quarter 2021 *Cocoon* is "Acceptance is the Answer." Acceptance is the answer to all my problems. How has acceptance aided your recovery? How has acceptance helped you during the pandemic?

Deadline: Wednesday, Dec. 16, 2020.

Literature and Writing Tools to Start my Day

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When I was an adolescent, I began to worry about how I looked. I felt conflicted because I wanted to get enough food to fill me up and still look attractive. The quality of my life had diminished.

Twenty years later, being relieved of bingeing and purging at age 33 was a big improvement. I was no longer wrestling with that heavy burden. But I couldn't stop dieting. Not until I joined OA did I become relieved of dieting and started eating healthfully. Slowly but surely the quality of my life improved. So much so that I no longer obsess about food nor body image. Instead, I turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understand Him. Thank you, Higher Power.

Love,
~Bobbi



OA Tools: Handrailing So We Can Use the Steps

I heard the saying at a meeting, “The OA Tools are like a handrailing so we can use the Steps.” That got me thinking where would I be during this pandemic without OA and without the Steps, and the tools to work the Steps. I would be back in my disease.

Instead, during this challenging time, when I turn on the news for a few minutes and my mind right away goes to catastrophe and thinking the world’s going to end. Instead of heading out to the store to buy my binge food, there are so many tools I can use.

I can call a fellow OAer and get out of myself, see how their day is going. See what’s on their mind. Or I can pull out my journal and get my fear and panic out on paper. I can ask God to take them away, ask Him to handle my anxiety.

I can sit and meditate and get quiet and ask God how he’d like me to be right now. I can ask myself “What is *actually* happening?” Nothing. It’s only me and my fear. And God. The world’s not ending. I’m safe. My family and friends are safe.

I can get down on my knees and surrender. Surrender my fear. Ask God to remind me that He is in control.

I can pick up *Voices of Recovery* or *For Today*. I can look up “fear” and receive all kinds of peaceful, reassuring ideas. I can see how other OAers before me walked through their anxiety– without food. Know that I can too, now that I have Program.

I can text my sponsor and check in. I can go for a walk. I can log onto a Zoom meeting any day of the week. At a meeting, when I hear other OAers struggling with fear, I am reassured I am not alone. Or listening to other OAers at a meeting talk about gratitude and I am reminded of how much God has blessed me. How much He has blessed me with OA, the Steps, and these tools.

~Anonymous

Thirty Questions to ask Newcomers

My Answers to Three of the “Thirty Questions to ask Newcomers”

Read *The Tools of Recovery*. What is the importance of giving service in OA? What is the importance of meetings? How are they both part of the road to recovery?

Giving service is important, because it gets us out of our heads and out of isolation. It gives us something important to do that isn't eating and helps us reaffirm the importance of abstinence and the fellowship by serving others. It gets us out of the selfishness of our own will and helps us to be more responsible to HP and the group. Meetings also get us out of isolation. They help us to feel and know that we are not alone and they affirm there can be recovery and continued recovery. Meetings have a power to turn our day around and help us keep going. They give us purpose as we share strength, experience and hope. Both service and meetings help us get out of ourselves and grow within the fellowship and as individuals working to recover. They affirm our need to change and grow along spiritual lines.

Reread *The Tools of Recovery*. What is the importance of the telephone in OA? What is the importance of anonymity? How are they intertwined? Telephone is important, because it helps OAers to stay connected throughout the week. It serves as a way to reach out when you are in need of help or to serve others by seeing how they are doing. Telephone also connects sponsors/sponsees to each other. If we could only get sponsors from our own local meetings, we would be limited in smaller groups, leading to less recovery.

There are also telephone meetings, opening up many possibilities for recovery, as well as connecting people from all over the world. Anonymity is important, because it allows us to feel like we can share openly about ourselves, our disease and our program. Telephone and anonymity are connected, because we have to remember anonymity isn't just for meetings, but also for when we are telephone. Anonymity when leaving a message on an answering machine is a must!

Reread *The Tools of Recovery*. Reflect and write about reading literature and writing as tools of the program. Why are they essential to our recovery?

Reading literature helps us keep our heads in the program. It teaches us how to do, and leads us through, the 12 Steps. It reminds us that we are not alone. It gives hope to the sufferer and it reminds the abstinent OAer of what they never want to go back to. Writing is a tool that helps us to sort things out that we wouldn't be able to otherwise. It helps us work the steps and clear our minds of the jumbled up mess that can sometimes lead to eating badly. These two tools are essential to my recovery for all the reasons above. My HP used both literature and writing to bring me closer to Him again and to abstinence. He continues to have me do them as a very important part of my program to keep me abstinent.

~Michelle R.

Step 1: Powerlessness over Food

I don't want to be powerless. I want to eat what I want and be able to control it. I feel crazy. I feel ashamed. Why can't I control my food? As a child, I had to be strong to survive. I had to rely on myself. I used food to cope and it worked. It got me through. I associate powerlessness with weakness, vulnerability; being taken advantage of. It feels scary.

Food has been my friend. Why would I want to give it up? Because, it's also been my enemy. It suppresses my feelings, makes me feel "better" for now. But I end up not knowing myself. When I eat compulsively, I just keep pushing myself away, over and over. Without realizing it, I'm actually rejecting or abandoning myself when I eat. I want to be done with that. I want to love and accept myself, to really know who I am. I'm so tired of running.

~Anonymous