



Accidentally “Outing” Someone and Recovering From It

Program teaches us a new way of life. We are going to hit bumps in the road and make mistakes. If anonymity or another form of trust is broken, we make amends and try to make things right.

Step 12 encourages us to practice these principles in all our affairs. Working 40 or more hours a week often gives ample opportunities to practice principles at work. Going out to lunch is often a fun way to relieve some stress from the day. I had lunch with a co-worker friend and we laughed as we talked about a new relationship in her life and a new nickname she was given. As a long time married person, it was fun and exciting to hear all her joy.

Later in the week while we were lunching with another coworker, to be funny, I referenced the nickname. My friend got angry and said, “Thanks for outing me!” The other person had no idea until my friend said that; however, I felt awful since I opened

the door. I had no idea using the nickname would break her trust. The third person was all excited and said so. “I’ve never known a gay person before!” I felt worse. I apologized.

At a later date, I apologized to my friend again. She accepted my apology and let me know the third

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Did They Save the Best for Last? Anonymity in Action

Wow! Anonymity is so important to OA, it is part of the name of our organization. Tradition 12 states: “Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all these Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.”

The second edition of *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous* does an excellent job of explaining many ways we benefit from anonymity in six easy-to-read pages: from aiding the newcomer’s willingness to enter our doors, healing our guilt and shame, all members being equal in this program, remaining teachable, not gossiping and, yes, to the fact we can share our last names within our groups and for OA service work. We learn to focus on the principles instead of personalities because that is how we recover. Read on to learn more as this issue of the *Cocoon* focuses on Anonymity in Action.

~Anonymous

The theme for the fourth quarter *Cocoon* will be Sponsorship. See page 5 for more details.

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Milwaukee Area Intergroup

Serving Eastern Wisconsin

MAI Website oamilwaukee.org

Facebook Overeaters Anonymous - OA Milwaukee

Contact Info

414-259-0640

Milwaukee Area Intergroup
PO Box 270054
Milwaukee, WI 53227

QR Code

direct to website



Board of Directors

(new board members take office at November meeting, based on October elections)

Chair, Heidi B: chair@oamilwaukee.org

Vice Chair, Mary B: vicechair@oamilwaukee.org

Secretary, Joy M: secretary@oamilwaukee.org

Treasurer, Kathy Wi: treasurer@oamilwaukee.org

Region 5 Reps, Lynn H. and Kris WL:

region5rep@oamilwaukee.org

World Service Rep, Lynn H:
wsorep@oamilwaukee.org

Leave message for any board member:
414-259-0640

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Send an email to emailblast@oamilwaukee.org
with "subscribe" in Subject. Include in the body of the
email 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.
Rogers Memorial Hospital
11101 W. Lincoln Avenue, West Allis, WI 53227
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

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Serving Midwest US and Canada

Cocoon Submissions

Yes, we need and want your stories of recovery,
poems, pictures, and news!

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Deadline</u>	<u>Topic</u>
4th Quarter	Sept. 17	Sponsorship

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

Cocoon Editor: Cindy F.

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 12th-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. Provide your contact information, the type of sponsor you are seeking (i.e. food, step, maintenance, late night calls, etc.), and any other specific needs you have.

Available to Sponsor?

Please add your name and phone number to the list so you can help another member.

Friend or Foe: Sometimes the Name is the Same

Are you friend or foe? When I first sampled you, I felt euphoric and delighted. What a wondrous experience! How glad I was to have discovered you! You and I met long ago. If I'd known how large a role you would play in my life, I would have recorded the date and saved it in a special place.

Once I tried you, I found myself thinking about how exciting it was to indulge in you. I longed to try you again. Soon we encountered each other at a party. Curious to get you alone and feel your wondrous effects, I withdrew from my friends and fondly reached out to you. Our relationship began to grow as I turned to you more frequently day by day. A little of you didn't seem to be sufficient anymore as I kept striving to recreate our first meeting.

I began making excuses to be alone with you. You were becoming so alluring and necessary as I got to know you. Even when we couldn't be together, I fantasized about the thrill I would have indulging in you again. Day and night, my thoughts centered on you. How I craved you and even woke up from dreams where we became one.

The more I partook of you, the less I wanted to leave you. I began shutting out family and friends so that we could be alone. I was obsessed with you, wanting more and more to get that "buzz" feeling where I became euphoric, numbed and fogged over. In numbness I felt no pain, no sadness and no emotions. In this clouded world of us, I could hide from past hurts, uncomfortable relationships and world problems.

Where once I valued spirituality, now I adored you. Where once I treasured family, now I thought only of you. Where once I felt euphoria, now I lived in confusion and despair. Each day began and ended with you. My thinking became skewed and my insides grew muddled. Where once you were a magical dream, now you were my own personal nightmare.

Friends and family seemed so mean as they expressed their anger and frustration with me. In my confusion, I pushed them away. I blamed them for driving me to using more. I blamed people for not understanding me. Who wouldn't use when people

were so cruel! How I could justify my actions and isolate from the world!

Turning to you in complete surrender came gradually as we stumbled madly through the years. You helped me forget how to love anyone but you. You held me in bondage and convinced me of your power. How confident I would feel when filled with your deadening substance! How I bragged and insisted that being let go from jobs didn't bother me! How I clung to your honest-sounding lies and your logical-sounding temptations.

When people walked away in sadness, you were there. When physical deterioration afflicted me, you were there. Even as I lay dying, I craved you and longed for more of you, and you were there. As I neared death, I finally asked your name. In a familiar voice, you smiled and said:

"I am Addiction. Some call me Alcohol. Others call me Narcotics. Some call me Food. Others name me Gambling. Whatever my name, I invite you into a world of endless craving, constant longing and unending dissatisfaction. I feed your fears, manipulate your thoughts, paint your dreams and lead you into self-destruction. I come in the appearance of Friend, but now you know me as Foe."

~Kathy Wh

A.N.O.N.Y.M.I.T.Y.

Anonymity

No one

Outstanding

No one

Yielding

Many

Individuals

Trying

Yearning

~Anonymous

Freely Given—Anonymously

I was 24 when I attended my first OA meeting. It was attraction, rather than promotion which helped me find OA. People kept telling my supervisor at my new job how terrific she looked and commenting on her weight loss. She looked normal to me. One day when we were alone, I asked her about the comments and what worked.

"If you really want to know, I'll take you to a meeting," she said. My heart dropped into my stomach. "What had I gotten myself into?" I wondered. "And it's my boss, how do I bow out gracefully?"

My face tells all. She assured me it would be fine. There would be no cost or sales involved, she would have me over to her house for dinner. She would introduce me to her friends. She said there are speakers and there would be a great one at the end of March. We would plan to go then. I agreed.

As God would plan it, it was not the speaker my supervisor had thought, a man who had lost hundreds of pounds. It was a woman anonymous to me and many others in the room as she had been called to fill in because the original speaker was called out of town. I didn't know the speaker, yet from what she shared, it was clear she knew how I felt, how I *really* felt. She knew things I had never told anyone: she talked about eating while crying because she was fat; she talked about having a closet full of clothes and nothing to wear; she talked about crying when getting an invitation to go somewhere because she didn't have anything to wear because nothing fit. She

The Pity Train

The Pity Train has just derailed at the intersection of Suck It Up and Move On, and crashed into We All Have Problems, before coming to a complete stop at Get the Heck Over It. Any complaints about how we operate can be forwarded to 1-800-waa-waaa.



~Connie

talked about comparing her insides with other people's outsides.

She never told us where she lived or what did for a job. I didn't know her last name and I was alarmed she was sharing these very personal details of her life with total strangers. And I felt she knew everything about me and I hadn't even spoken to her. I knew I belonged.

She also talked about yo-yo dieting and she just yo-yo-yo'd, and everyone laughed! She was laughing, happy she found recovery in OA. Anonymously, she was able to freely give what had been given to her. Thank you and I pass it on...*Anonymously*.

Sands of the Program

This little visual helps me a lot so I thought I would share...

Before program, I used to think that when I had a few days of sticking to a food plan, my compulsion was solved. "I'm fine now," I thought to myself, "I've recovered from my eating problems!" But, of course, that was never true. Program has helped me admit that I am a compulsive overeater, and will always be one. Recovery happens with the help of my higher power, and it happens just one day at a time. So now I've come to think that recovery is like living on a tiny desert island—like one that you might see in cartoon as just a hump of sand with a single palm tree on it.

Gratefully, my higher power lives there too. The water around it is like my disease, like my powerlessness. My disease will always be there, but as long as I am on the island with my higher power, I am safe from it. However, every day, I wake up in the water... every day, I wake up as a powerless compulsive overeater... and every day, I have to use program to swim back to the safety of the island where my higher power protects me. Even though I may be back on the island, I could fall into the water at any time because this disease is cunning, baffling and powerful. Luckily, I know that I can swim back to the safety of the sand and my higher power at any time, just by using the steps and the tools.

~Tammie N.

Anonymity in Sponsoring

I recently had a conversation with a member about anonymity with sponsors and sponsees. We were discussing how the sharing of sponsors' and sponsees' names is a breach of anonymity in OA yet sharing such information in AA is encouraged.

It was pointed out how in HOW meetings, it generally is the sponsor who presents the sponsee who has completed the first three steps and is ready to step up to be a sponsor. Those at the meeting should "forget" who the sponsor is who presented the new sponsor. Granted this is not outside of the organization and for that reason many people do not consider it to be an anonymity issue while others do. For that reason, sometimes people change sponsors after that stepping up phase and sometimes they don't.

The reason for not discussing these relationships is to keep the principles before personalities as well as to follow what is said in the *Overeaters Anonymous 12 Steps and 12 Traditions* where it discusses putting people on a pedestal by stating we should not "throw members' names around within the group." This means we do not use names at all in a meeting when we refer to something we have heard. Instead, saying

Vulnerability

Something revealed today

Something shared

But what if...

Maybe she won't...

Of course she will

She is OA

She loves me like no other

Believe it or not

She too has this defect de jour

Who knew

I know I am safe

I know

She will keep it in her heart

She will not share

Boy, am I glad to be home!

Boy, am I glad for anonymity

Thank God, for OA

~Anonymous

"a member said" or if referring to your sponsor using "my sponsor said," maintains anonymity.

If someone is doing well in program, it is the responsibility of the member and conversely, if someone is struggling in the program, it is the responsibility of the member. However, some people look to the sponsor. If someone identifies in a meeting who their sponsor is and then ends up struggling somewhere along the line, someone who is looking for a sponsor may think that the sponsor would not be good for him or her. Program guidelines say, "Look for someone who has what you want and ask them how they got it." If you are asked that and part of that success is because of your sponsor, take those lessons and use them to sponsor the person who is asking you to help them with their program.

~Cindy

Sacred Awe

Sacred Awe is sunrises and sunsets

Each different, a new day to explore, savor, celebrate.

Sacred Awe is life itself.

Diverse to the tiniest bug, to the largest mammal.

The colors of the universe

The ocean, the mountains, the earth, even the night sky.

Sacred Awe is you and me.

Our bodies functioning, our needs and wants,

Our recoveries, our languages

Our love for one another, our praise

Sacred Awe is music.

Full organ and chorus

A tiny cricket

The wind in the trees

Sacred Awe is God's world

Complex, Diverse, Amazing

Bursting with life and opportunities.

~Anonymous

Practicing Anonymity at Group Meetings

OA suggests anonymity is not only to be practiced when we meet or talk about someone in the “outside world”. It has a key role to play within our meetings. Tradition Twelve in the *OA 12/12* discusses the dangers of putting people on pedestals and of “throwing members’ names around within the group.”

Here are some ideas about putting principles before personalities **at meetings**. Except as your own program dictates, these do not refer to your one-on-one conversations outside of the meeting.

- Sincere THANK YOUs to the qualifier or someone who pitches are great. Avoid discussing their recovery. Instead talk about your own recovery or maybe something that was said that was especially touching to you.
- Avoid putting people on pedestals (“You are a poster child for OA,” or giving characteristics they used to have and now do not). Speakers and those who pitch should not be worried about what you will say in response or what you think. Instead they are free to concentrate on whatever they choose to share.
- Avoid advice giving.
- When referring to what someone said at a different meeting, omit their name.
- Refrain from naming your sponsor.
- Avoid cross-talk (“I wish you had not said that,” “Maybe you need to...”).
- Share your story and avoid mentioning or referring to someone in or out of the program by name.

The following quotes are taken from the OA website in the suggested meeting formats document. Please read and consider how we can use these suggestions to make our meetings stronger.

- “Feedback, cross talk and advice-giving are discouraged here. Cross talk during an OA meeting is giving advice to others who have already shared, speaking directly to another person rather than to the group, and questioning or interrupting the person speaking/sharing at the time.”

- “As you share your experience and strength in OA, please also share your hope. Please confine your sharing to your experience with the disease of compulsive eating, the solution offered by OA, and your own recovery from the disease, rather than just the events of the day or week. If you are having difficulties, share how you use the program to deal with them.”

~From, A grateful (and anonymous) OA member

Experience Hosting Marathons

Marathon events are held on most holidays and sponsored by Milwaukee Area Intergroup. It takes individuals or groups to organize and host the events. Organization includes setting the theme and the time (from a few hours to all day) for the event. It also involves getting speakers, if appropriate, who have at least one year of current abstinence. The Slinger group recently hosted a marathon for the first time and shares their experience:

“Thank you to everyone who attended the Memorial Day OA Marathon! It was a wonderful event and the turnout was fabulous. Together we made it a spiritually uplifting morning. Thank you again for sharing your time with us.

When our Monday Night Slinger 6:30 p.m. group agreed to host the Memorial Day Marathon, we jumped in with both feet and started with a blank slate, with the plan of keeping it simple. We held the Marathon at St Luke's Church in Slinger, from 10 AM til noon. Everyone congregated in the gathering area, where the chairs were set up in a circle

and bottled water and coffee were served for refreshments. We had one speaker for each hour, after each speech the room was opened for sharing.

Simple and Welcoming! The Memorial Day Marathon was an amazing experience.

We encourage your group to host a marathon, too!”

Intergroup has Policies and Procedures and a how-to list for any group that would like to be a host. Contact fellowship@oamilwaukee.org for more information.

~Monday Slinger 6:30 p.m. group

...Accidentally “Outing” Someone and Recovering From It

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person had contacted her and asked if they could be friends because she had never had a gay friend before and she would like one. My friend told me she felt like she was being asked to be a part of her collection; instead of wanting to get to know her because she was funny, smart and all the cool things I knew about her. We were good. My friend also gave me permission to try and educate the third person if the opportunity arose.

And, I have been on the receiving end of anonymity breaks. At a meeting after her wedding, a program friend announced she needed to make some amends. Her family, and her Mom in particular, struggled with her being in the program and its value and her not (gasp!) serving alcohol at her wedding. Her Mom wanted to know who was having all that fun at her reception without any alcohol. My friend looked right at me in the meeting and said, “I’m sorry, but I told her, those would be my program friends, Mom.”

Another time I helped a program person get a job interview at my place of employment where I was in a senior leadership position and specifically talked to her in advance about being “friends of friends” when asked how we knew each other. It was for a job that required confidentiality. I emphasized it would be important not to talk about outside relationships. The person told me about the interview and informed me she told them how she knew me. I reminded her the job required confidentiality and she said she didn’t remember discussing anonymity with me.

I prayed for this person and wished her well on her journey. It is a reminder I get to choose how much of my personal details I disclose which is also covered in Tradition Twelve. Together we recover when we place the principles before personalities.

~Anonymous

How Do You Two Know Each Other?

As we grow in the program, many of us have acquired lifelong friendships with other program people. So typical questions like, how do you two know each other, often arise in mixed groups of friends. So, what about anonymity? I suggest talking to each other beforehand and deciding together how

Sponsorship Writing Prompts

The next issue of *Out of the Cocoon* will be published in November. The topic will be sponsorship. Please consider writing an article about what has worked for you with a sponsor or a sponsee or as being a sponsor or sponsee. Here are a few writing prompts: Why do you sponsor? How have you chosen what type of sponsor to be? What types of sponsors do you have? What experiences have you had with your sponsor really spurred you to succeed in program and why? What have you used as a sponsor that has helped you experience your program with a sponsee? Remember to keep the anonymity of your sponsors and sponsees by not identifying names.

As always, if you would prefer to share your experience, strength, and hope on a different topic, you are welcome to submit that as well. The next deadline is Monday, Sept. 17. Submissions can be made electronically to cocooneditor@oamilwaukee.org or mailed to Cocoon Editor, PO Box 270054, Milwaukee, WI 533227.

you would like to handle it. Some people talk openly about being in the program. Others choose to keep involvement in the program anonymous.

For those who want to keep their responses anonymous, here are a few suggestions for your consideration. One response, “*friends of friends*,” often works. It is along the lines of “We met at a gathering.” One can say, “We met through Rosanne.” (She is the founder of OA.) You have choices.

When I had a young child, my husband and daughter sometimes dropped me off or picked me up on Saturday morning. Many people like to talk to small children. I warned people if they didn’t want to be known as one of Mommy’s friends from her meeting, don’t talk to either of us on Saturday mornings or you will be associated with Mommy’s meeting forever.

Anonymity is another place where an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. Talking about expectations before an event usually works best for everyone. Or, you can imagine the awkward moment when you both look at each other and wonder what you are supposed to say. Now, you have an option no matter what situation comes up.

~Friends of Friends, Me

Do We Speak Up for OA Principles No Matter Who Will Be Displeased?

My heart just dropped to my stomach, did yours? This question is on page 168 of the Second Edition of *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*. It is listed in the questions at the end of Tradition 12 under “In what ways do we act 'to place principles before personalities.’” It is shortly after it states “we accept responsibility for our actions, looking only at our own faults and taking no one’s inventory but our own.”

I remember where I was clearly: there were three of us OA members on a Saturday afternoon, stragglers having after lunch conversation. The conversation topic turned to someone who wasn’t there. The conversation went from that person not being there to what someone heard from someone else about negative behaviors and why the person wasn’t there and it was about to go on. I was taught in program, gossip was murder by character assassination. I wanted to scream, “Stop!” I wanted to run. I blurted, “Can we stop here, please?” Everything went silent. Shame hung heavy in the air. Just being there and not speaking up, I would have been allowing gossip to continue.

The first person who spoke said his immediate reaction was extreme anger. Who was I to say that to

him? No one talks to him like that! And then he realized, his whole reason for being here was to get better. He said he hadn’t even realized what was happening or how easily the conversation had turned. He thanked me. The third person apologized. I said I didn’t know what to do. I didn’t really know the person. They knew the person better and agreed to call and see how she was doing. We grew and became better friends as a result of our experience that day.

Experience is a great teacher. Now, years later with more experience, I would have more options available to me. I may still have qualms about speaking up, yet what better tradition to uphold than anonymity? In case you would like to borrow one, the first is my favorite: I would smile and say, “Sounds like someone who could use some outreach calls.” And, hopefully, we decide who has the contact information and make plans accordingly. If someone continues, I might say, “You sound very concerned. Perhaps it is something you’d like to discuss with your sponsor.” One of the things I learned in program is I always have choices. I can leave if that is the best choice for me. “Excuse me, it’s time for me to leave,” and wish everyone well as we *trudge the road to happy destiny*.

~Anonymous

Anonymity Becomes Listening

Anonymity. I don’t want to be anonymous. Sure, it helped me share the shame of growing up fat, of going to different places to get my fix so they wouldn’t see my pattern of eating and of stealing food. Not now. I am at a healthy weight. I have almost 20 years of abstinence. I am doing service on many levels. I am something.

Not!!! A food plan was my HP when I first started program. Next, my sponsor became my HP. I was my own HP after getting to a healthy weight. I started thinking about food way too often. I gained a little weight. I needed a different HP. Prayer and meditation has helped me to learn to listen and to not give HP a to-do list. I need to listen at meetings and to my sponsor. I need to follow directions, not give them. It doesn’t

matter how many days, months or years of abstinence one has, HP speaks through all rooms. It is HP that speaks to us. Yes, anonymity allows people to speak their hearts. Anonymity helps me to open my heart to hear you and my sponsor. I will be listening.

~Lynn H

Tradition 12: Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all these Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.