



## Negative Thinking Can Hinder Your Program in Many Areas

By special request, a workshop about negative thinking made a repeat appearance in the Milwaukee Area Intergroup area. It first was held at the 2018 MAI convention in spring and again as a stand alone workshop in fall.

As part of the fall workshop, attendees were asked to search online to find scientific articles and studies which showed what effect negative thinking has on the body, mind and spirit of a person. Several sheets of paper were filled with the results of the search.

Several results of negative thinking appeared on multiple sheets. Workshop attendees discovered research proves negative thinking...

- is contagious and affects others
- causes chronic stress
- depletes happiness chemicals in brain
- increases mental disease
- decreases and damages immune systems; makes brain susceptible to infection and disease
- disrupts hormones
- changes the brain reactivity—brain is pre-wired to react faster to negative thinking
- snowballs to more negative thinking—forms actual patterns in brain (path of least resistance)

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- declines our attention span—can cause ADHD
- reduces memory
- subtracts from our energy
- elevates blood pressure
- causes physical illness and disease
- causes panic attacks
- significantly disrupts ability to perform tasks
- Creates less clarity of mind
- closes oneself down to possibility and flow of abundance
- causes suicidal ideation
- causes delusions
- messes with communication between nervous system and brain
- disrupts flight or fight response
- has a spiral affect onto others—damages relationships
- creates chemical changes to the brain that may cause mental disorders including anxiety, depression, ADHD, schizophrenia, memory issues, mood disorders
- alters our perception
- puts chronic stress on the body which causes high blood pressure, digestive disorders and infections and, in turn, shortens life span
- can cause cancer and other illnesses
- can cause eating disorders
- is a form of self-abuse
- makes it harder to find a positive solution to an issue

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The theme for the second quarter 2019 Cocoon will be Promises. See page 6 for more details.

## Milwaukee Area Intergroup

*Serving Eastern Wisconsin*

MAI Website [oamilwaukee.org](http://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, Laurel:** [chair@oamilwaukee.org](mailto:chair@oamilwaukee.org)

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

### MAI News Available Via Email

Want to receive free, monthly MAI news via email? Send an email to [emailblast@oamilwaukee.org](mailto: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.  
Martin Luther Lutheran Church  
9235 W. Bluemound Road, Milwaukee, WI 53226

## OA World Service

[oa.org](http://oa.org)

Free OA podcasts featuring OA speakers: [oa.org/podcasts/](http://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](mailto:Espanol.@oa.org)

French OA Website [Francais.@oa.org](mailto:Francais.@oa.org)

## Region 5

[region5oa.org](http://region5oa.org)

*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>
2nd Quarter	March 18.	Promises

Send to [cocooneditor@oamilwaukee.org](mailto: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 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](mailto:12th-stepwithin@oamilwaukee.org) or call 414-259-0640 and leave a message. 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.

## A Personal Reflection on the Doctor's Opinion

This is a personal reflection on the “Doctor’s Opinion” in the *Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book*. It is part two with the first part appearing in the Fourth Quarter 2018 edition of *Out of the Cocoon*.

### **Xxviii - xxix Phenomenon of Craving**

This paragraph that bridges the two pages describes so exactly my experience with food (even though it is speaking of alcohol). I am quoting most of it. I overeat “essentially because I like the effect produced by sugars.” I admit the practice is “injurious.” Yet the “sensation is so elusive [and compelling] that I cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false.” The overeating way of life seems the “only normal one.” I am “restless, irritable and discontented, unless I can again experience this sense of ease and comfort which comes by taking a few [bites].” “Unless the person can experience an entire psychic change there is very little hope of his recovery.”

The psychic change for me, and probably for most, is a gradual one coming piece by little piece. In my experience there has been no “entire” change occurring once and forever. It seems like an endless barely-moving escalator, where I may have changed 31 facets of my psyche on steps 1 –31, but suddenly another step appears just when I think I’ve reached the top. And I cannot have my freedom back until I undergo whatever I must to make that 32<sup>nd</sup> change.

Currently, I’m working on what I call “critical action.” By that I mean taking the right action (phone, writing, prayer, meditation), at the critical point before I succumb to the damaging bite. Seems I should have (could have) made this change long ago, but then, that speaks to the self-will, do-it-myself nature of my personality. I feel more positive than I’ve ever felt about my potential to make this particular change.

### **Xxix There is a Solution -**

The doctor continues briefly on a very positive note – speaking of the remarkable transformation accompanying the psychic change - whereby the alcoholic “finds himself easily able to control his desire for alcohol.” He merely needs to expend the

necessary effort to follow “a few simple rules.” Next the doctor admits that his and his colleagues’ efforts to help achieve a psychic change are not enough. Also that many alcoholics do not respond favorably to the ordinary psychological approach.

He reiterates his theory that alcoholism is not entirely a problem of mental control, that there are allergic types who are different, who are subject to the phenomenon of craving, who drink to overcome a craving beyond their mental control. I feel this is so true of me. I will conclude this section with a return to the concept of “a few simple rules” that must be followed in order to arrive at and sustain the ability to control the desire. The doctor does not enlarge upon them here, but I know them to be the 12 steps, which are designed to bring about surrender and spiritual awakening. They are my salvation.

### **Xxix**

At the bottom of this page, the doctor describes a “typical” – (my choice of words) scenario of the alcoholic/addict/me. It entails stepping back into the addiction just prior to the time some favorable outcome is to occur. Seems like a failure wish to me. Once they started to drink they were then condemned to continue because of the physical craving. However, I would point out (and from my own experience) that there was likely a deficit in the person’s spiritual fitness prior to the first drink/bite/whatever. That is why I/we need more than knowledge. I need a daily reprieve, a daily miracle - perhaps earned through service to God and to others.

### **Xxx**

The doctor discusses “types” of alcoholics, which are really just psychological “types” of people, who happen to be alcoholics – psychopathic, dramatic, manic-depressive. He also mentions those who are unwilling to admit to alcoholism, those who believe they can safely drink after a period of abstinence. And there are the normal types – normal except in the effect alcohol produces on them –able, friendly, intelligent. My comment here is that addiction can strike anyone, and that one common result of

*Continued on page 4*

## ...Personal Thoughts on The Doctor's Opinion of the Big Book

From page 3

addiction is to deny that it is a real problem. It is more than just a “result,” it is a part of the addictive mind set.

He states that there is no treatment that permanently eradicates the problem for those set apart by this “allergic” reaction. The only suggestion the medical community has is complete abstinence from alcohol. The general opinion of physicians: most chronic alcoholics are doomed.

When it comes to the food addiction counterpart, it seems quite hopeless for most. However, a vast industry tries to find treatments - medical, psychological or otherwise. And, in my opinion, there is a large market of overeaters being conned into bogus treatments. Through Overeaters Anonymous we are encouraged to accept abstinence -*defined as the action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight. Spiritual, emotional and physical recovery is the result of living the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve-Step program*—as the key element to arresting our addiction.

### **Xxxi – xxxii (end of chapter) It Works**

To explain the solution the doctor has seen in action, he tells of an experience with a patient who came to him in very bad shape physically and mentally, who had lost everything and was only living to drink. The man believed himself to be hopeless. After alcohol had been eliminated from his body, he was found to have no permanent brain injury. The hopeless man (probably Bill W) accepted “the plan” which had barely been tried by alcoholics (perhaps only one) up to that point. When the man came back to visit the doctor a year later, the doctor “knew the man by name, partly recognized his features, but there all resemblance ended.” The man was “brimming with self-reliance and contentment.” I love his choice of words – isn't this what I/we all want? – self-reliance and contentment?

The doctor remembers another patient when he needs a mental uplift. He was also a chronic alcoholic and a deeply ill man, who knew he had no hope. The doctors believed this, too, and felt that his only

possible hope (and they were doubtful) would be “the plan” which they now called “moral psychology.” He, too, underwent a total transformation after setting forth on “the plan.”

The doctor encourages all of us who read this book (and perhaps scoff) to “remain to pray.” How powerfully he has stated the case. How his “opinion” affects me – lifting me, jolting me out of the quagmire of addiction, into a life that has meaning and hope, and contentment. How fortunate I feel to have this powerful influence directing me to find a daily input of Truth and Power, greater than my own faltering will - which has no staying power in the face of addictive behavior and substances. Lucky I am.

~J.M.

## ...Negative Thinking Hinders

From page 1

- attracts others to support my negative self-thinking
- changes the structure of your brain
- physically: depletes brain chemicals for happiness, increases stress hormones, decreases lifespan, lessens physical activities, causes anxiety and depression, causes self-abuse
- wellbeing wise: decreases energy, less worthwhile, less happiness, less peace of mind, less successful, less clarity

One group added that there is an affect on spirituality that they could not verify by internet. They included not connected to God, not living up to potential, angry at God, resentful and blaming as what negative thinking does to our spirituality.

The discussion continued with ways we can help our program and our overall body recovery by finding positive ways to look at life and our experiences, regardless of how stressful something may be. The follow up to this was the creation of vision boards to look at positive dreams and images we can have in our lives.

~Anonymous

## 12th-Step Within Survey Results Reported

Dear OA Friends,

My name is Clarice and I am the chair of the 12th-Step Within Committee. This committee practices the 12th Step by reaching out to give support to those within the fellowship who are still suffering from the effects of this disease we share. I have the privilege of keeping a list of available sponsors and responding to anyone needing a sponsor if emails are sent to me at [12th-stepwithin@oa.milwaukee.org](mailto:12th-stepwithin@oa.milwaukee.org) or if I'm contacted another way. I contacted all the sponsors on the list in September to verify availability.

Recently I was sent the surveys completed anonymously at last fall's retreat concerning sponsorship which contained questions posed by members. I will share some answers to those questions here, but know that each person needs to talk to their own sponsor and decide the answers for themselves. Remember that in OA a sponsor is defined as someone who is committed to abstinence and is working the 12 Steps to the best of their ability. Nowhere is the word "perfect" in that definition. Everyone defines their abstinence for themselves, and I've found my own abstinence has persevered and been strengthened because I can believe I haven't lost my abstinence when I slip, and I recommit gratefully to being a recovering person working the steps.

Members who have never been sponsors gave answers that demanded much more of themselves in order to become sponsors, and reflected many concerns. The answers by members who are already sponsors reflect that they had the same concerns but were able to resolve them and find peace in their sponsoring relationships. For example, current sponsors gave these answers: How long a person needs to be abstinent before becoming a sponsor ranged from "Today" to "30 days" to "three months" to "one year." For a Step Sponsor having worked program "one more step than the sponsee" was a suggestion. When asked to define what makes abstinence clean enough to be a sponsor, sponsors answered "refraining from binge foods," "progressing towards or maintaining a healthy body weight," "actively working the 12 Steps with a sponsor," "a commitment

to abstinence," "maintaining a food plan," or "have completed the first three steps." The time commitment listed by current sponsors ranged from "15 minutes/day" to "one to two hours/week" depending on the "newness or needs of the sponsee" and "the sponsor's availability and type of sponsoring." The time commitment for remaining as someone's sponsor varied but "had to be decided by sponsor and sponsee," and "could be ended at any time if not working out." And most answered "yes" that they need a sponsor to be a sponsor.

Finally, current sponsors checked most of these answers when asked about their concerns about becoming a sponsor: "I felt I wouldn't be good enough at it." "I felt I wouldn't be as good as my own sponsor was." "I felt afraid or unable to take the responsibility for someone else." "I felt I didn't know how to be a sponsor." "I felt being a sponsor might cause me to lose my abstinence." "I felt I needed to be a perfect physical example to be a sponsor." "I felt I needed to be much more spiritually fit to be a sponsor."

These sponsors were able to resolve their concerns by talking to their own sponsor or other experienced sponsors, or reading literature on sponsoring, or attending workshops. They learned that no one starts out as a perfect sponsor, each sponsor and sponsee grow during this mutual journey. Many sponsees have benefited because each of these members was brave enough to say "yes" when someone asked them, or when their own sponsor said they were ready, that their recovery would benefit, and they had something to give another needed. They learned they weren't responsible for another person, just responsible to them, and the commitment to abstinence they take one day at a time because they are sponsors is invaluable to their own recovery. They learn from their sponsees also, it's not a one way street. And when the sponsee entrusts them with their life stories, their joys and sorrows, their mistakes and their progress, the sponsor experiences the love this wonderful fellowship promises.

~Clarice

## Together We Can: Service Supports Our Program

Saturday, 7:30-8:30 a.m. is one of the favorite parts of my week and it shows. It's my home OA meeting. People there tell me I glow. I feel my Higher Power's presence there so strongly. I feel gratitude. I feel peace. In so many ways, I hear His messages and know I am on the right path. No wonder I glow.

In November I had the chance to do service. November, the 11th month, makes me think of Step 11: "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out." I had talked to the God of my understanding in my kitchen that morning. I turned the volume down on my car radio and talked to Him most of the way driving to the meeting. Then, I turned up the volume and sang the rest of the way.

Obviously, I'm a morning person. I was up at 5 without the alarm. I like to think of it as God's way of getting my undivided attention, first thing!

It was starting time for the meeting and no one had volunteered to lead. I asked God; I could do this. I try to make sure others are encouraged to volunteer to lead because we connect with one another when we hear each other's stories and *we all know that Service is Healing*. And connection is how we learn from one another, see our commonalities and get the courage to reach out to get to know each other better by telephone, text or sponsorship.

Without time to prepare, I trust God to provide the words. I carry a notebook and pen because I love the tool of writing. I listened as members read the readings and I wrote down the words I heard: We; Happiness, Contentment and Achievement in all areas of our lives; by being aware that God is doing for us what we could never do for ourselves.

And because others have shown me the way in OA, I knew I needed to share what it was like, what happened and what it is like now.

With gratitude, entwined in my story, I talked about how the words in the readings touched me. *We*. It's a

program of *we, us, our*. Wonderful words given to *us* by *our* Higher Power via one of His servants. I didn't get abstinent, until I got a sponsor and *we* worked it *together*. I love my meetings, where *we* come together and can feel God's presence as *we* share our experience, strength and hope. *We* can create happiness, contentment and achievement in all areas of *our* lives.

Let's do that, together!

The meeting happened *together*: I lead, others read. Someone unlocked the door, another swept the snow off the walk, others set out literature and put it away after the meeting, others promoted IDEA Day and convention, the treasurer gave her report. Together, we can and do, whatever it takes to recover.

*There is a place for all of us in OA*. We are all needed for the 2019 convention, September 27-29. Please mark your calendars and join us on the A Train as "We trudge the road to Happy Destiny." (*Alcoholics Anonymous*)

~Joyfully, Anonymously Yours

## Next Cocoon topic: Promises

Many of us came into program making promises to ourselves—lose weight, become less angry, look better, etc. We said if we could just do those things, our lives would be better. However, the *Big Book* and Step 9 speaks of the real Promises—what you will experience with recovery. Review the promises and share with your OA community what you have experienced because of your recovery. Share what life was like before and how it compares subsequently. Which promises have come true for you? What promises did you once doubt and have you since had come to fruition? Were there promises you made yourself or others told you would happen; have they happened and how do they relate to those in the *Big Book*?

As always this topic is only a writing prompt. Any articles about your experience, strength and hope are welcome. Send them to [cocooneditor@oamilwaukee.org](mailto:cocooneditor@oamilwaukee.org) by March 18.