



## Recovery and Finding Awareness of the Promises

When we first decided to go to an Overeaters Anonymous meeting and then to continue coming back, many of us made ourselves promises—promises such as “I will learn to eat right,” “I will lose weight,” “I will find out what’s wrong with me,” or “I’ll go until I get a handle on this and then I’ll be good.” Although those were good promises that may have kept us returning, there were bigger promises available to us.

As we started to read *Alcoholics Anonymous (aka The Big Book)* and listened to others share at meetings, the program itself made certain promises to us. Pages 83-84 of *Alcoholics Anonymous* give us specific promises of recovery. It states:

*“If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret*

*the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook on life will change. Fear of people and economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us - sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.”* (Reprinted from *Alcoholics Anonymous*)

When we first read that, many of us laughed or said something like, “Yeah right! How can all that happen with these step things?” The experiences shared in *The Big Book* seemed like stories someone might have created to try to prove the program worked. In this issue of *Out of the Cocoon*, there are several stories of how those in the Milwaukee Area Intergroup have experienced the promises in *The Big Book* as well as the promises they made themselves. This brings the stories much closer to home. If you have not yet had these experiences, read these stories and talk to others at your meetings. Above all, keep coming back because you will experience them over time, perhaps subtly over time.

The theme for the third quarter 2019 Cocoon will be *OA Slogans and Prayers*. What are your favorites? Why? How have you used them?

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## Milwaukee Area Intergroup

*Serving Eastern Wisconsin*

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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](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  
Each member group can have two voting representatives. All OA members are welcome.

## 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

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

Issue	Deadline	Topic
3rd Quarter	June 17	OA Slogans & Prayers

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

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, for newcomer, temporary, 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. Indicate type of sponsor you are willing to be (see above for ideas) and time of day you are available.

## Acceptance or Denial: How Do I Know Which It Is?

A recent event in my family prompted this writing. The program and my Higher Power enabled me to behave well and even feel at peace with things. A few days later I woke up with this topic on my mind.

- Acceptance is a willingness to really look at a situation. Not turn my back to the mirror of reality.
- Acceptance means putting an event to the litmus test of reality by making it external with at least one other person, rather than playing endless fantasy tapes in my mind with “pretend” conversations.
- It is akin to looking at myself in a full length mirror rather than a mirror of the face from the eyes up.
- Denial is akin to fat serenity (oh well, I am not that bad).
- Acceptance may involve some positive action on my part to release anger: eg, be courteous, avoid advice giving.

- Acceptance means no attempt to change another or a situation. No pay-back thoughts. Stick to my side of the street.
- Denial usually involves self-righteousness and “if onlys” and “buts”. Denial usually stops any thoughts of actions I might have to take (eg, an amends, a friendly phone call).
- Acceptance is a smile, denial is a frown.
- Acceptance is “oh my he is really suffering and it is self-inflicted”. Denial is “how could he - I’ll never speak to him again.”
- Acceptance is peace, denial is war.
- Acceptance is surrender, denial is trying to find new weapons to use or putting on an ever thickening suit of armor.
- They are two sides of the same coin: Acceptance is reality, Denial is fantasy.

In gratitude for this program of recovery.

~Kathy Wi

## I Am Warmly Welcomed In OA

Whoever I am, wherever I come from, whatever has brought me here, I am welcomed here.

I am so glad that I am here to celebrate my recovery today. I know I will feel the presence of my Higher Power in these meetings.

At the first meeting I attended I was invited to come back, as I realized I did service just by returning. I now can try to live the hope and joy that abstinence brings. I understand I'm not perfect, but that I am on a journey of faith with others and I'm invited to walk with others.

I am willing to be transformed by my Higher Power.

I am willing to find a true home in these meetings.

I am willing to deepen my understanding & practice of the 12 steps and 12 traditions.

I am willing to reach out to others in compassion, understanding and justice.

I am so grateful that the doors of OA are always open!!!

~Donna H.

## Clearing the Clutter

"I am learning that what my life needs is elimination of clutter and excess which take up time and space and energy, the true source of Serenity of good feelings. It's not getting what I want but wanting what I've got." (From *For Today*)

What clutter and excess can I eliminate in my life so I will have more time space and energy?

The clutter and excess I can eliminate in my life is guilt and shame of past errors in my life. I can eliminate anger and disgust of myself and others' behaviors. I can eliminate the judging in my head and selfish thoughts and actions. I can only do this with God's complete help. I know I'm powerless. what I can do is to continue to take emotional inventory daily. This seems to help clean out the cobwebs and dust bunnies in my head. I have to spot it so I can ask God to eliminate it for me. Thank you, God. When the space between my ears is cleaned out, I can enter the sunlight of the spirit and experience joy, peace, and serenity. Thank you, God, for being my garbage man.

~Kim B.

## Chaos Turns to Peace by Letting Go and Working the Program

One of the Promises in the *Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book* tells me that I will know peace. I didn't know peace when I came to Overeaters Anonymous, but I could relate well to chaos, crisis, compulsiveness, and confusion. This held true for the way I ate as well as for my attitude toward life and relationships. Food fogged me into self-pity and misery. It gave me weight gain, a false comfort, and an obsessive mind. Peace seemed unimaginable to my stuffed body and rattled mental musings. In my

### God is Doing for Me What I Could Not Do for Myself

I am a sexual abuse survivor. As a very young child, my dad forced himself on me in the middle of the night, making me throw up. I was sobbing and retching when my mom walked in asking what I could have eaten to make me so sick. Dad added insult to injury, talked over me creating a lie of having checked on me, as I cried, "No, no, no!" Unfortunately, he was not the last person who was bigger and stronger than me who hurt me. Each took advantage of the fact I could not even describe what happened to me. I didn't have the words.

In program, through sponsorship and working the steps, I was able to give voice to the unspeakable hurts I held for so long. Counseling and a loving husband helped, too. I could heal the hurts of long ago and not have them hold me hostage any more. As the details I buried so deeply unfolded, support was all around me. My sponsor was a sexual abuse survivor and understood how I felt. I realized I heard other program people talk about being survivors, too. I was not alone on this journey. I took a step back from male friends in program who understood I needed some space during this healing time.

By the Grace of God/HP and lots of willingness, I was able to forgive him and others their trespasses. Forgiveness to me didn't mean I condoned the behavior. It meant I was willing to let the whole thing go. They got a piece of my past; they weren't getting my present or my future. For many years, forgiveness meant you can do whatever you want over there: your life, your space, your house. You don't get to be in

twisted thinking, peace was getting enough of my binge foods, criticizing others to build my own faulty ego, and isolating from people and situations.

Then I walked into the warm, friendly rooms of OA. As I listened to all the stories where abstinence, the Steps, and inner peace were happening to others, I found hope that I could learn how to be honest about food and my life. It was wondrous to hear people talk about reaching a healthy body weight and living serenely. The three-legged stool where there had to be a balance among the spiritual, emotional, and physical legs was a powerful metaphor for working the Steps and using the Tools.

After a few meetings, I heard a woman qualify. She spent most of her talk on emotional and spiritual recovery, but ended by telling us about a large weight loss. I asked her to be my sponsor. From this point, I became abstinent and began studying the 12 Steps with her. With her guidance and support, I unloaded much pain, shame, weight, and guilt. I began learning how to be responsible for my attitudes and actions. As I walked through the Steps with my sponsor, I discovered a close relationship with my Higher Power through this process.

I used to think the word "peace" meant sitting on a mountaintop in deep reflection. The peace I feel today comes from listening closely for my Higher Power's guidance, using the Tools daily, and practicing the principles which continue teaching me how to cope with life sanely and peacefully. I find deep peace in having daily quiet time, doing spiritual writing, and seeking sponsor guidance and support. Doing a daily Step 10 inventory keeps my recovery current and helps me grow more self-aware. Writing a daily gratitude list reminds me that I am given so much each day.

Do I know peace today? Yes, I have come to realize that peace comes when I let go of my self-will and stubbornness so that my Higher Power can give me the gifts of willingness, perseverance, and peace. The Steps guide my life and my relationships on a daily basis. What I am freely given in OA keeps me coming back, living sanely, and being grateful for true peace and serenity.

~Kathy Wh.

## Third-Step Promise Helps Me Stay On Track

When we think of the Promises of the Program, we often think of the Ninth-Step promises, found on Page 84 of *The Big Book*. However, there is a powerful Third-Step promise in the first edition of the *12 Steps and 12 Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous (the 12 & 12 of OA)*, page 27. It reads “Once we compulsive overeaters truly take the third step (“Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him), we cannot fail to recover. Now that, in my mind, is HUGE!

Here is the rub. What does recovery look like? How do I know that I’m in it? Does it mean a perfect food plan, a beautiful body, gorgeous children, fame and fortune? Oh, and I can’t forget my knight in shining armor. When I first joined OA, I must admit my recovery fantasies went along those lines. After all, isn’t that what the ads for all the commercial weight loss programs suggested?

I have found that recovery, for me, is a lot messier. For starters, there has been cleaning up past messes caused by my addictive behavior. For example, I returned money to a former employer, making amends for the food and time I stole while bingeing. I was embarrassed (literally feeling, “bare-assed”). The supervisor looked at me as if I were crazy. All my life I have been

terrified that people would think I was nuts, stupid, ugly, etc. and now it happened. And something else happened—something I never could have imagined. Instead of feeling overwhelming shame, I walked out feeling light, for the first time not caring what people thought. I was living my own truth. When I screw up, I don’t have to pretend I’m perfect, I can free myself by making amends! Thank you, 12 Steps.

Recovery sometimes awes me and at the same time challenges me. It is two steps forward, one step back. And it’s hilarious. I can’t forget that. I now laugh at events in my life that mortified me in the past. You all laugh with me because you get it.

Do I get lost? Of course! I commit to not leading the way and then forget to ask for directions. Luckily, the Third-Step promise addresses this, too. “When we get off track, our Higher Power will guide us back, as long as we are sincerely trying to know and do God’s will. We can confidently face any situation life brings, because we no longer have to face it alone” (*The 12 Steps and 12 Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, first edition, page 27). Amen to that!

~CAM

## Recovery Gems from Unity Day Marathon and The Big Book

The theme of Unity Day was “Voices of Recovery: Gems from *The Big Book*.” The following edited excerpts from three of the stories were featured. I found them moving and thoughtful for my own recovery.

*The Housewife Who Drank at Home*, p. 298-299 of *The Big Book*

I began to try to live without alcohol. But I only succeeded in fighting it. And believe me, an alcoholic cannot fight alcohol. I decided to get interested in other things – to keep busy. I became one of the most active women in the community. I volunteered, I started a business. But I was not happy. I found that everything I turned to became a substitute for drink. And when all of life is a substitute for drink, there is no happiness, no peace. I still had to drink, I still needed that drink. **Mere cessation from drinking is not**

**enough for an alcoholic while the need for that drink goes on.**

*My Chance to Live*, p. 316-318

What happened due to my drinking was: I fell into an abyss and I found myself at the bottom of a canyon thinking I’d never see the sun again. AA did not pull me out of that hole. But it did give me the tools to construct a ladder with the Twelve Steps. Today I have the gift of choice. If willingness is the key to unlock the gates of hell, it is action that opens those doors so that we may walk freely among the living.

Sobriety is nothing like I thought it would be. The program is a plan for a lifetime of daily living. Today I can walk down any street, anywhere, without the fear

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## Learning to Let Go as a Young Person

When I first came to OA I had a friend with me so despite being the youngest in the meeting I wasn't too concerned with feeling younger. I was grateful after going to another meeting that I met another young person (aside from my friend that came with me). Eventually my friend moved and I still had my eating problem. There was something I knew I needed from

### Reading the Promises Reveals They Are Being Lived

Wow. I just reread the Promises from *The Big Book* and I realized that for the most part, I AM NOW LIVING THEM OUT IN MY LIFE!

Most days I greet the morning with hope and serenity. I face the day with gratitude and am anxious to see what new opportunities for learning and growing will show themselves. I feel very at home in my skin and the realization of this miracle humbles me.

There have been many ups and downs in my life- in the over 20 years of program and before. But today I live with a plan, just for today to eat well, nourish my soul, and face the emotional highs and lows that may come. I have the support of my Higher Power, my sponsor, other members in program, plus writing and literature.

I have invested much time and effort working program and yet over and over I am reminded that these results are a GIFT. I just daily need to do my part.

When I stopped to think about the words in the Promises and what has changed in my life, I am full of amazement and awe. My life is so different and so much better than the plans I had for myself.

May you be blessed on your journey as well.

~Mary M.

Steps  
+ Tools  
+ Forgiveness  
+ Working With Sponsor  
= Promises Fulfilled

these meetings. I did feel disconnected in some ways (language/culture), but I was also disconnected from spirituality and kindness which made OA unfamiliar. I have been in OA for four years now and my life has changed. I have never felt so comfortable and loved as I do in meetings. I felt that my problems were so different from the women around me. Come to find out they were eerily similar. Seeing a newcomer (especially a younger newcomer) makes me so excited because I know that this program has helped me to acknowledge my Higher Power, make service a weekly priority, and accept who I am.

Letting go of the food is painful. There is a lot that still calls to me, but the longer I stay abstinent the more I want to protect it. Parties and get togethers are hard—I realized that alcohol made me slip more often than not. Letting go of food and alcohol has not been an easy process and I have slipped and slid throughout my program. HOWEVER, I never want to go back. I know that every day brings new challenges, but as I am writing abstinent, I can feel the feelings and I don't need to hide away in my bed with food and Netflix. Thank God.

-Holly P.

### Serenity at Family Gatherings

“We will comprehend the word serenity and will know peace.” (*Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous*)

Dictionary.com helps me define these words. Serenity is “the state or quality of being serene, calm or tranquil..” Peace is “a state of harmony between people groups” Peace can also be “cessation or freedom from any strife or dissension” As an inside job, peace can be “freedom of the mind from annoyance, distraction, anxiety, an obsession etc.”

The serenity I feel allows me to feel peace at a family event. I have been given the gift of God’s presence. God will be with me. They are God’s children. I have been invited. I can be at peace, if I don’t try to change what I can’t and allow God to guide me to loving and caring. That’s why the chatter in my head such as “I won’t be funny,” “they are just being nice,” “I have been dependent on them” doesn’t disrupt that serenity.

~Lynn H.

## ...God is Doing for Me What I Could Not Do for Myself

From page 3

my space, my home, or have anything to do with my life.

I have a unique ability. I can communicate with those who have died. Years ago, I thought the communication was one way; spirits could show up and talk to me without any control on my part. Over the past four years, I learned I do have a say in who I talk to in the spirit realm just as I do in this life. Again, God does for us what we were never able to do for ourselves. What I was told was something to be kept secret, spirits talking to me, turned out to be a gift.

My dad died in 2006. In 2017, he energetically was able, and I allowed him to, apologize for his behavior. He showed me incidents that occurred and told me he did not get how his behavior affected others while he was on earth. He is doing that learning now.

From talking about my experiences with spirit, my daughter noticed spirits don't seem to be able to do anything but be supportive and encouraging to me. I hadn't noticed. When it came to my dad, I had continued to be apprehensive into this year. I have a boundary he cannot talk to me without my permission. With my daughter's observation, my apprehension disappeared. When a discussion about how his behavior affected others came up with my sister, I asked Dad if he wanted to chime in. I learned more about his perception on his earthly behavior, which is priceless.

## Willingness Is All I Need

The word willingness is standing out to me as I read the Big Book. Willing to turn my life over to God. Willing to pray. Willing to work the program. Willing to be Abstemious. I'm willing to admit I've hit rock bottom. Willing to let God take over. It is too much for me. Willing to go to any length to not take that first bite. I thank God for giving me the willingness to take it one day at a time, showing me I cannot do it alone. I need God and the program. Willing to keep praying and asking God for his help one day at a time.

~Sharon L.

While continuing to improve my conscious contact with God, as I understand God, He provides me with the skills, support people, tools and knowledge I need to bring me through what life throws my way. I have peace. He allows others' experience to help me and lets me share my experience, strength and hope so others know hurts can and do heal.

~Jane D.

## Promises I Make, Receive

Promises to myself:

Tomorrow for sure!

I will stop overeating.

Ok, tomorrow for sure!

I'm only going to eat that, only in front of others.

Ok, tomorrow for sure!

I am never, ever going to eat that again!

Ok, tomorrow for sure!

I am not going through the drive thru.

Ok, tomorrow for sure!

But, how about just this last time.

Ok, tomorrow for sure!

Promises to God:

God, if you'll help me

I will give this up forever

Ok, tomorrow for sure!

God, I need help

But, I'm not willing to give up my ways

Ok, tomorrow for sure!

But, what about that party?

A girl has to have fun!

Ok, tomorrow for sure

But...

Ok, tomorrow...

OA Promises:

If I follow directions

Today, for sure!

If I use the tools

Today, for sure

If I make an effort

Today, for sure

If I ask for help

Yes, today for sure!

If I turn my will, my life, my food and my body over to a higher power

TODAY FOR SURE!

~Annonny Mous

## I Put My Hand in Yours and Together We Live the Promises

The OA Promise, often used by groups to close OA meetings, states: “I put my hand in yours, and together we can do what we could never do alone. No longer is there a sense of hopelessness, no longer must we each depend upon our own unsteady willpower. We are all together now, reaching out our hands for power and strength greater than ours, and as we join hands, we find love and understanding beyond our wildest dreams.”

These few words summarize the promises in *Alcoholics Anonymous (The Big Book)*. As we join hands and say these words, we share with each other how we can benefit from each other—whether we are a newcomer or seasoned member—just by being present. We reiterate our interest in our fellows as we have just shared our experience, strength, and hope together during the meeting. With program, we no longer have to feel hopeless about finding a solution; the uselessness, the pain, and shame of our addiction has a place to be dropped and left as we move through recovery. Typically, the words of the OA Promise are

### ...Recovery Gems from Unity Day

*From page 5*

of meeting someone I’ve harmed. Today my thoughts are not consumed with craving for the next drink nor regret for the damage I did on the last one. **Today I fit in my skin.**

Crossing the River of Denial, p. 336-337

**I have found everything I ever looked for in AA.** I used to thank God for putting AA in my life; now I thank AA for putting God in my life. AA members explained to me that *The Big Book* had no chapters titled “Into Thinking” or “Into Feeling” – only “Into Action.” **You said as long as I put AA first in my life, everything that I put second would be first class.**

Good days and bad days, reality is a wild ride, and I wouldn’t miss it for the world. I don’t question how the program works. I trust in God, go to meetings, give service and practice the Steps to the best of my willingness each day. I don’t know which of these keeps me sane, and I’m not about to try to find out. It’s worked for quite a few days now, so I think I’ll try it again tomorrow.

followed by greeting others in the room helping dissipate fear of people as we discovered those in the room are much like us. I have found such power each time I have said that OA Promise.

I have experienced the OA Promise more powerfully than the traditional joining hands in a circle and saying the words. It was twofold. Before the group said the OA Promise, we stood in a circle without joining hands. The leader turned to the person next to her, looked that person in the eye and as she extended her hand, she addressed the person by name and then said, “I put my hand in yours” after which only they clasped their closest hands. Then that person turned to the next person and with her free hand, repeated the gesture. This continued until the circle was closed by all holding hands. Then we all said together, “I put my hand in yours” and continued saying the OA Promise. Some people had to ask the name of the person next to them to follow the process and that was ok because it added more connection between those two. Additionally, as we spoke the remaining words, we connected to each other by making eye contact with others in the circle. It surprised me these gestures more powerful in large circles than when I experienced them in small circles, but both have made me emotional.

Because of the sense of connection I felt with those experiences, I now try to make eye contact with others in the circle whenever I say the OA Promise. I do that because I feel as I say those words, I am making a promise to do whatever I can to be a help to fellow OAers. And, when I need help because something or someone is threatening my program and my serenity, I can pick up a phone and connect with a fellow OAer. I can share the experience, strength, and hope I feel by looking another in the eye and making that commitment. So, if you are with me at a meeting, and see me looking around the circle or looking directly at you, I am making that commitment and, I’ll gladly accept that eye contact and commitment between us.

Feel free to try more eye contact or the individual hand connecting closing of the OA Promise as two ways to experience the promises of *The Big Book* through the OA Promise. After all, these words are not a prayer, they are a promise—a promise I am making to you and myself every time I say them.

~Cindy F.