

## Coming for the Vanity, Staying for the Sanity

A slogan that I heard at a meeting in my tenth year in OA, gave me something to think about. I have been thinking about this for my whole life, but when I heard the slogan, my thoughts shifted, and I landed in a place of gratitude.

The slogan is “I came for the vanity, I stayed for the sanity.”

Wait..... me, vain, no way. I thought I was just the opposite. Self-loathing, self-denigrating, yes, but vain, no way, not me.

So I looked up vanity. Pride (yep), self-importance (yep), arrogance (yep, big time), superiority (yep, and very judgmental), and conceit (yep, that too). How could this be? How could a person who feels so much condemnation, disapproval and criticism of herself, also feel the very opposite—pride, arrogance.....vanity.

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When I first heard the slogan, I thought, sure, I came to OA because I was overweight and wanted to “look better.” I hated my body. My weight was 25 to 30 pounds heavier than it should have been to be at a healthy weight. But looking at vanity and how it impacted my overall personality, I saw that unless I let go of some of those darn character defects and began adding some assets (humility, kindness, and patience, to name a few), I was never going to “look better.”

I read in *Voices of Recovery* on page 170 that “We entered OA knowing we had a problem with food, but we may not have realized the extent to which we had problems handling life.” This hit the nail on the head for me, exactly. I had a lot of changes that needed to be made, and most of them did not have to do with my weight or my food intake. My problems were with the big hole in my soul.

Recovery is a process, a journey. My vanity kept me stuck in the thought that “I can do this MY way. I know what to do. I’m smart. I have the answers.” Those types of thoughts are vain. When I embrace and accept the first three steps, then I can begin to address my vanity. And when I accept my vanity, then I can let it go and replace it with all the character assets that will bring me sanity. Voila – there it is! I came for the vanity, and stayed for the sanity! I love how it works!

~Terrie

The theme for the fourth quarter 2019 Cocoon will be lessons you have learned from program this past year. You can focus on any area of experience, strength, and hope.

## Milwaukee Area Intergroup

*Serving Eastern Wisconsin*

MAI Website [oamilwaukee.org](http://oamilwaukee.org)

Facebook Overeaters Anonymous - OA Milwaukee

### Contact Info

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Milwaukee Area Intergroup

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### Board of Directors

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

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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  
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
4th Quarter	Sept. 16	What has program taught you this year?

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.

## One Day at a Time is How We Walk This Program of Recovery

When I walked through the doors of my first Overeaters Anonymous meeting many 24 hours ago, I heard this slogan, “One day at a time,” from wise people who had walked the 12-step road before me. My mind was full of past regrets, diet failures, and worries about where I was heading. To live in this moment seemed impossible. To break down a lifetime of bingeing, dieting, obsessing, and worrying and transform my life into living in today would prove to be challenging and gradual. Yet this slogan began seeping into my consciousness as I kept coming back, found a food plan, asked for sponsorship, and started

### Granted vs. Gratitude

Slept through the night

No bathroom, no hot flash

Pay day for both of us

Backache gone

Warm in cold house

Two days of abstinence

Bad cold – I have to take care of myself

How bad things used to be

I need to remember all the gifts

Service

My health granted

Safe water to drink

Access to good food

Not stepping on a landmine

Bombings, air raids

Ability to move, talk, see, hear, feel

My success with OA and the weight I have already lost

21 days of abstinence

Hot water

Electricity

Thanks to all engineers, farmers, shipmates, truckers

Coffee to my table

Friends, family

~Anonymous

working the steps. I was learning to slow down, be patient with myself, and discover the strength of a higher power working within me.

As my days of abstinence grew, I began experiencing feelings and fears I hadn't realized I had. My sponsor helped me see areas of denial and dishonesty. A power greater than myself guided me through the steps, revealing resentments and anger I had buried under layers of binge foods. As I looked at the past in Step 4 and conversed freely and honestly with my sponsor in Step 5, I began to sense a divine spark soothing and healing so many hidden areas I had stuffed and denied. I soon realized that my past experiences could be used by my Higher Power to encourage others.

As I progressed through the remaining steps, I saw less need to dwell on the past or to fear the future. The steps gave me a daily reminder to live in the present moment. Doing Steps 10 to 12 helped me maintain abstinence, remain accountable, build my relationship with my Higher Power, and answer the call to do service.

I used to get stuck in my obsessive thoughts and emotions. Excessive worry and fear led me into dark places where I wallowed in self-pity and regret. Guilt and shame got smothered in binge eating. This slogan gave me hope when I felt lost and alone. These words penetrated my sad newcomer mind and left me wanting more. Putting down the fork, following directions, and opening my mind to recovery's wisdom showed me how to let go of the past, live serenely, and practice being in the moment.

Even today, this slogan repeatedly reminds me to keep coming back, stay focused on the steps and tools, practice daily surrender to my Higher Power's will, and let prayer and meditation teach me how to live just for today. Because OA is a living program, I get to practice one day at a time.

I have learned that the past and future are not reality. I find truth and my HP in the present. Living one day at a time is manageable as long as I rely on my HP and the fellowship to guide and support me on this path—step by step.

~Kathy Wh.

## Program on a Mug, Drinking in the Slogans

A few years ago, I was taking care of some business for one of the meetings I attended at the former OA office on Greenfield Avenue. While dear Marilyn was there that day, she showed me some items in stock they were trying to clear out for 50 percent off.

I happened to spot two burgundy-colored coffee mugs with white print all over them. Lifting one off the shelf, I smiled to read the words which were all program slogans. I bought both of the cups on the spot. Hang on and I'll get one so I can read to you what a few of the slogans are...Okay I'm back.

*Easy Does It*  
*An Attitude of Gratitude*  
*One Day At A Time*  
*Awareness Acceptance Action*  
*Keep Coming Back*

...and many more.

I love these mugs because when I choose to drink my decaf out of one of them—both of them at the same time would be too hard, I read the slogans for inspiration. I am reminded then and there how fortunate I am to have been gifted by my Higher

## Five-Minute Slogan Challenge

When I came to the program, I was working at a factory in West Allis. Another woman and I decided to try OA together. We both had lots of anxiety and fear. As we did our work in the factory, we would find comfort in being able to see who could come up with the most slogans in a five-minute period. We would both make note of the slogans, and at the five-minute point we would see who had the most written down. This would help distract us from that awful nagging need to want to eat to comfort ourselves. It's a miracle we got any work done and didn't lose those jobs. This challenge we gave each other got me through lots of tough times, and even today, those simple words of slogans can get me through a tough day.

"First things first," "keep it simple," "let go, let God," "easy does it," "one day at a time," and many others have become a way of living that I am so grateful to have received from God and OA. I pray that I never forget them.

~LE

Power with not only the OA program but the amazing people I have come to know.

Recently, I heard a speaker on television talk about the life-changing act of surrendering to a higher power, when just a few days later I heard someone singing a song about surrendering. "Hm," I said. "Is it odd or is it God?"

The next night, I went to the cupboard to take down a mug for my nightly decaf when I spotted my burgundy OA slogan cup. I kid you not, my eyes landed on the word SURRENDER.

"Okay, I get it," I said out loud. I'm supposed to surrender something, but what? "What do you want me to surrender?"

"Everything." I heard.

"I'll need help." I said.

*Lord, Grant me the willingness to surrender the things that you know I need to surrender and please show me what they are when I am in denial.*

~Lisa N.



These slogan boards were created during one of the last Joy of Recovery projects.

## Service is Slimming, Service is Healing

“Service is Slimming,” but is it also healing? For me, this slogan hearkens back to the experience of early alcoholics. Dr. Bob says in the *Big Book*, “I spend a great deal of time passing on what I learned to others who want and need it badly. I do it for four reasons: 1.) Sense of duty. 2.) It is a pleasure. 3.) Because in so doing I am paying my debt to the man who took time to pass it on to me 4.) Because every time I do it, I take out a little more insurance for myself against a possible slip.” Also in the *Big Book* in the story “Women Suffer Too,” the author described AA as a “concrete program, designed to secure the greatest possible inner security for us long-time escapist...I feel myself a useful member of the human race at last. I have something to contribute to humanity, since I am peculiarly qualified, as a fellow-sufferer, to give aid and comfort to those who have stumbled over this business of meeting life. I get my greatest thrill of accomplishment from the knowledge that I have played a part in the new happiness achieved by countless others like myself.”

To me the service closest to what these alcoholics are describing is sponsorship. Many members of OA are reluctant to sponsor, for many reasons. Perfectionism might be one. What these members don't realize is that sponsoring imperfectly helps them recover because they get to learn humility, they get to make mistakes and just be human, they get to practice “letting God do for them what they could never do for themselves,” they get to give back to the this blessed fellowship which has been the source of their own recovery, they

get to practice gratitude, and they get to carry the message of hope.

Members already sponsoring have had concerns about not being good enough, that their own abstinence wasn't good enough or long enough. Some felt that they weren't as spiritually or as physically recovered as they should be. What they came to realize was that it is God's will to help others by sponsoring, that they aren't alone, and sponsoring becomes an opportunity to depend on their Higher Power. It's interesting, when my own sponsors have admitted to mistakes and slips, it has given me permission to be an imperfect human being without feeling guilt or shame, and to pass this attitude on to my sponsees.

Please talk to your own sponsors about sponsoring. You won't be alone. OA has helpful brochures and tapes, and many members to help you. You will be giving your Higher Power a chance to do for you what you aren't expected to do without help. It will help you to continue to recover for the rest of your life and pass that gift on to the sponsees who will share their journey with you. We all need you. Please let us know you are willing to try. Thank you.

~Clarice, 12<sup>th</sup>-Step Within Chair

**Please Note:** Sponsorship Day is the third weekend in August. Watch the [oamilwaukee.org](http://oamilwaukee.org) website, Facebook page Overeaters Anonymous—OA Milwaukee, or monthly bulletin for information about annual events MIA hosts that weekend.

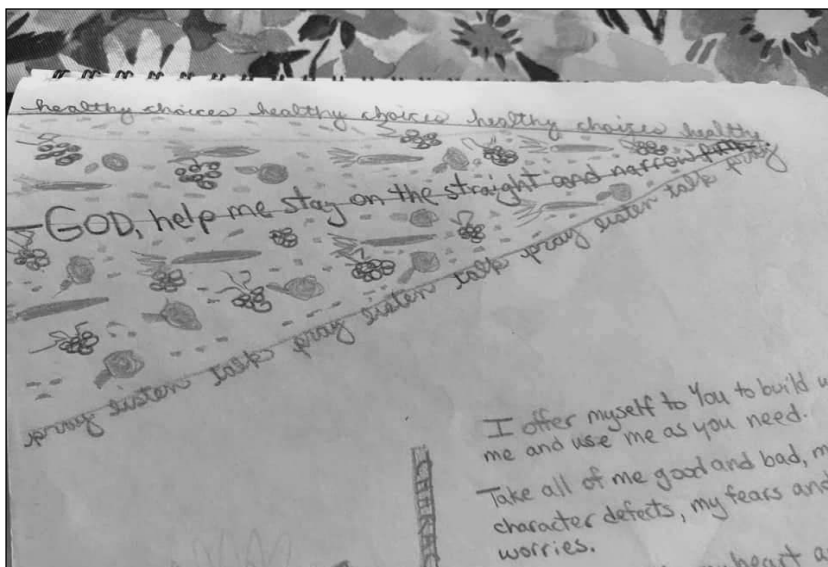


Photo of artwork by Sue W.

## Seventh Step Prayer

*My Creator, I am now willing that You should have all of Me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to You and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do Your bidding.*

~from Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th Edition

## Negative Thinking Impacts Our Entire Being

IDEA Day (the International Day of Experiencing Abstinence) last fall focused on positive and negative thinking. Participants did a bit of internet searching during the workshop to find what they could about negative thinking. This list includes many of the results that were found in just 15 minutes of research.

Most of the effect are on the physical and emotional aspects of our being. The non-all-inclusive list included

- contagious and affects others
- causes chronic stress
- depletes happiness chemicals in brain
- increases mental disease

- damages immune systems; makes brain susceptible to infection and disease
- disrupts hormones
- brain is pre-wired to react faster to negative thinking
- snowballs to more negative thinking—forms actual patterns in brain (path of least resistance)
- declines attention—can cause ADHD
- reduces memory

Continued on page 8

## A Prayer on Hitting Bottom

This is a lifetime disease. One day at a time. I am not a normal eater. I cannot have one cookie and stop. I am so grateful I have learned this about myself. I can abstain for one day at a time. It is up to me, with prayers and asking God for help during the day, before I take that first bite.

I am so grateful I was able to ask for help because I knew I needed help. I really didn't know what to do. I still wanted to do it my way. I had someone I was calling my food to but not being honest at all, not being serious, and she told me maybe I should find someone else for a food sponsor. Maybe a change will help me. When she said that, I was feeling I failed again, but now I feel this is what God had in the plans.

So I called and asked for help. It was something I had been thinking I should do, but never did anything about it. I just kept doing and eating what I wanted, when I wanted—wanting my cake and eating it, too. But I was thinking all the time, "This has to stop. Lord please, please help me. I know I would feel better if I lose weight. I am just going to take one day at a time."

I can do all things through God who will give me strength.

~Anonymous

## Putting HP in the Driver's Seat

I recently read a story of a father who let his daughter drive the car around an empty lot starting at the age of 5 years old. She would sit on his lap and steer the car while the father would press on the gas or brake. When she would come to a wall, she would cover her eyes. The father would put the brakes on and put the car in reverse in assure her they were safe and she could open her eyes.

I love this concept with how I surrender to my higher power or God's will today. I can imagine my 5-year-old self sitting on God's lap. God lets me steer the steering wheel through life, letting me decide which direction to go. God, however, is in control of the speed, brakes and putting my life in reverse when I come up against a wall or barrier. God is patient, loving and God knows I'm not always going to steer my life according to his directions. But I know God will get me out of the traffic jams I find myself in. He will put the brakes on my life when I am going too fast. God will assure me that I can open my eyes and not be afraid of the wall in front of me. God will slowly put me in reverse and say, "It's OK. Let's try again." Such patience and mercy and love God has with me. I am like that 5-year-old child trying to navigate through this life in an adult body. My trust is in God. I know God will be my GPS today—God Positioning System. Thank you, God. Thank you for this recovery I have had in Overeaters Anonymous for over nine-and-a-half years. I strive for spiritual progress today.

~Kim B.

## Rigorously Honest—What Does That Mean?

Recently, I have been thinking about what it means to be “rigorously honest.” As I progress day-by-day through the program, I see more and more how critically important it is for me to remain completely honest – with both myself and with others.

Before, when I would make a call to another member within the fellowship, I would put on a brave face and try to feel something that I wasn’t actually feeling. I wanted to have my act together and look good. So, I would intellectualize away my true feelings and try to be “spiritual” (i.e. not let anything bother me). I tried to feel what I believed I should feel and not accept what I was actually feeling.

And, what ensued? Misery. And, what follows misery? Compulsive eating. And, what follows compulsive eating? Shame and isolation and misery. And, on and on I went, straight into regular oblivion.

Things didn’t begin to change for me until I began to shed my “spiritual armor” and acknowledge how I *really* felt (remember nothing changes if nothing changes). This, for me, is being rigorously honest. It means being completely truthful in all areas of my

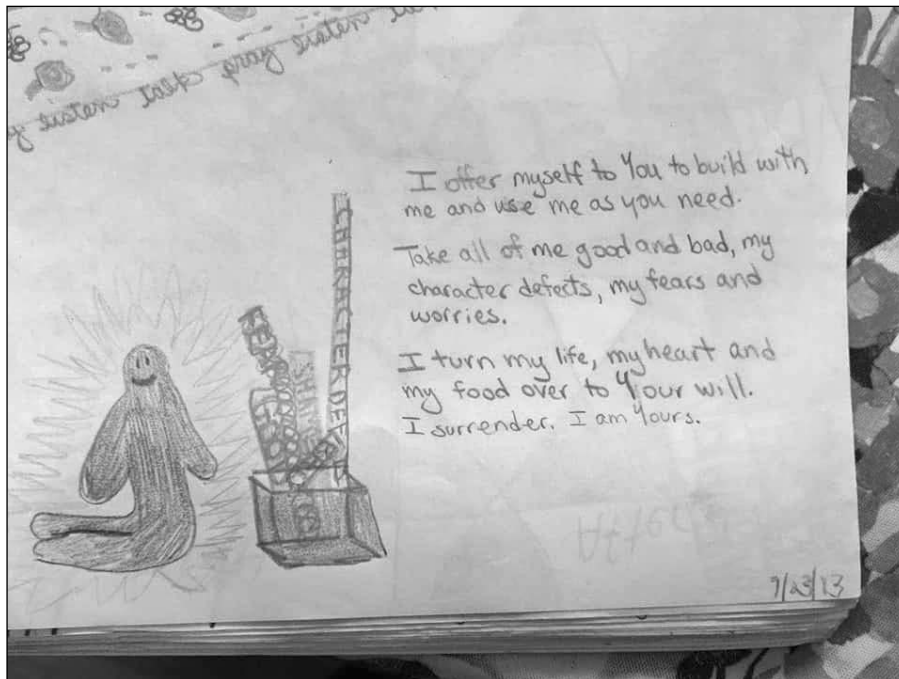
life and acknowledging what is really going on. Am I happy? Am I sad? Am I angry? Am I lonely? And, what if I don’t *know* what I am feeling? I can share that! That’s honest.

Today, when I make a call, I still want to have everything together (although, thanks to working the steps, the desire has somewhat subsided). It is important for me to remember that I am not alone. When I make calls, I can trust that, at some point, the other person has felt the same way. Maybe the facts surrounding the situation are different, but our feelings are really all alike.

We are all in this together. We have a disease that we didn’t ask for; a disease we don’t want; and, a disease that we can’t get rid of. And, we have a solution. I believe that solution is the program of Overeaters Anonymous. And, in that, I find infinite hope.

May God bless and keep each of you.

~Joe



### Third Step Prayer

*God, I offer myself to Thee  
To build with me and to do  
with me as Thou wilt. Relieve  
me of the bondage of self,  
that I may better do Thy will.  
Take away my difficulties,  
that victory over them may  
bear witness to those I would  
help of Thy Power, Thy love  
and Thy way of life. May I do  
Thy will always!*

~from Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th Edition

Photo of artwork by Sue W.

## ...Negative Thinking Impacts Our Entire Being

From page 5

- subtracts from our energy
- elevates blood pressure
- causes physical illness and disease
- causes panic attacks
- significantly disrupts ability to perform tasks
- causes less clarity of mind
- closes oneself down to possibility and flow of abundance
- facilitates delusions
- messes with communication between nervous system and brain
- disrupts flight or fight response
- spiral affects onto others—damages relationships
- decreases immune system
- creates chemical changes to the brain that may cause mental disorders including anxiety, depression, ADHD, schizophrenia, memory issues, mood disorders
- can cause suicidal thoughts and be life threatening
- alters our perception
- can decrease life span including high blood pressure, digestive disorders, and infections
- can cause cancer
- can cause eating disorders
- is a form of self-abuse
- makes it harder to find a positive solution to an issue
- attracts others to support our negative self-thinking
- changes the structure of our brain
- can eventually lead to panic attacks
- depletes brain chemicals for happiness



Artwork by Sue W.

- increases stress hormones
- decreases lifespan
- lessens physical activities
- causes anxiety, depression, self-abuse
- decreases energy and overall wellbeing
- creates feels of being less worthwhile and having less happiness
- causes less peace of mind
- garners feelings of being less successful

Spiritually: (not verified by internet but mentioned by participants):

- not connected to God
- not living up to potential
- angry at God
- resentful
- blaming

Each participant was asked to list their top ten negative thoughts. One that was common among the members was some version of “I am not good enough.” Then they were asked to list six things that move them toward negativity and six things that move them toward positivity. Program people seem to be very good at finding ways to reduce their own worth or diminish their own success so it was good to focus on the positive side because there are great solutions to negative thinking available to all of us. They include staying cognizant of our thoughts and feelings, reaching out to others, exercising, staying connected to our Higher Power and other program people, keeping our food “clean,” smiling and laughing, helping others, getting enough sleep, and using the prayers and slogans to help support our needs. One of the final pieces of the day was to think about “What if my life were eternally optimistic?” To reinforce the being optimistic part, participants created vision boards to hang at home in a prominent place.

I thought I was a fairly positive person. Looking at how much negativity could hurt me made me want to look at a few things more deeply. I asked myself, “Am I really being positive, or am I putting a bandaid on situations and saying it is being positive?” “When I say positive things, do I believe them or are they a way to make a situation seem better?” “Do I let the thoughts expressed by others impact how I feel about myself and how does that in turn affect my program?”

~Cindy F.