

Making a Choice “Yes” or “No” for a Program Moment

I recently started thinking about how many times in a day I get to choose between saying “yes” or “no” to doing something program related. Every morning, I decide how I will start my day. I can say yes to starting my day with some aspect of program such as taking time to chat with my Higher Power, exercising, writing, making a phone call, or creating a healthy breakfast. I can choose to say no by skipping breakfast, jumping into my day with no exercise or meditation, or not creating my meals or an action plan for the day.



As my day goes on, I can say yes by stopping and reading or writing when something is bothering me. I can say no by saying I am too busy and letting my emotions fester and not consider safe ways to handle what is happening with me. When I am struggling with a problem, I can say yes by making an outreach call and talking to another program person or I can invite another member or a good friend to join me for coffee or a safe beverage or dinner. I can say no by thinking I can handle it all myself. I can say yes by answering the phone when another member’s name shows on my caller ID or I can say no and let it go to voice mail. I can say yes by calling my sponsor or other OA members or I can say no “I don’t feel like it today.” I can say yes when I start thinking I have some spare time and could attend a meeting (there are so many in the Milwaukee area, there is bound to be one at anytime during the day I am thinking about it) or read some literature. I can say no by going home and taking a nap or being by myself.

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When service opportunities are announced such as being an Intergroup rep, qualifying at a meeting, being a sponsor, I can say yes to those opportunities. I can say no and say someone else is better able to cover that.

The reality is every minute of every day, I have the opportunity to say yes or no. If I say yes, I can be happy, joyous, and free. If I say no, it’s likely there will be amends that will need to be made to myself, my Higher Power, and others. Plus, I will feel like I missed out on something.

~CF

The theme for the fourth quarter 2022 will be Working with the Tools.

Milwaukee Area Intergroup

Serving Eastern Wisconsin

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Board of Directors

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MAI News Available Via Email

Want to receive free, monthly MAI news via email? Send an email to emailblast@oamilwaukee.org with "Subscribe" in Subject. 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., via Zoom. Contact chair@oamilwaukee.org for the information. Each member group can have two voting representatives. All OA members are welcome.

OA World Service

oa.org

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

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

Spanish OA Website Espanol.@oa.org

French OA Website Francais.@oa.org

Region 5

region5oa.org

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 Oct. 17 Working with the Tools

Send to 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 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.

Progress Not Perfection Gives Me Choices in Program and Life

Working the OA program has taught me that I am a perfectionist. I have learned how this trait can hold me back in program and in life.

For example, many tasks did not get done because of this tendency. Here is one. I needed to clean papers in my bedroom. It's been four months now, and I still have not gotten started. If I had done a small amount of cleaning daily, it would have enabled me to get more done in the future. So it's my mind and feelings that prevent me from getting started on projects. In OA the program teaches us to strive for progress not perfection.

I can strive to move forward and start to take risks. I can start long projects and finish them in a timely fashion. I also know that mistakes are a common condition of mankind. Yes, we've all made mistakes and I have learned how to make amends or accept amends from others.

I can do the best I can in any situation according to God's will and that is good enough. I can do certain tasks to the best of my ability and that is OK.

I have been in the program for more than four decades. I now realize that being a perfectionist is just an excuse. Being perfect does not promise us good health. Instead, it is a negative character trait that needs to be addressed. Due to this trait, my health and self-esteem have become stuck and I have not always been a responsible adult.

If I choose progress not perfection, I realize I have choices in my life. For example, I have become more

honest with other people. I have become more confident that I can learn from my mistakes. I again can see myself as a whole person. My life is filled with new opportunities. The program works if we work it.

Today I am good, and I am blessed.

~Anonymous

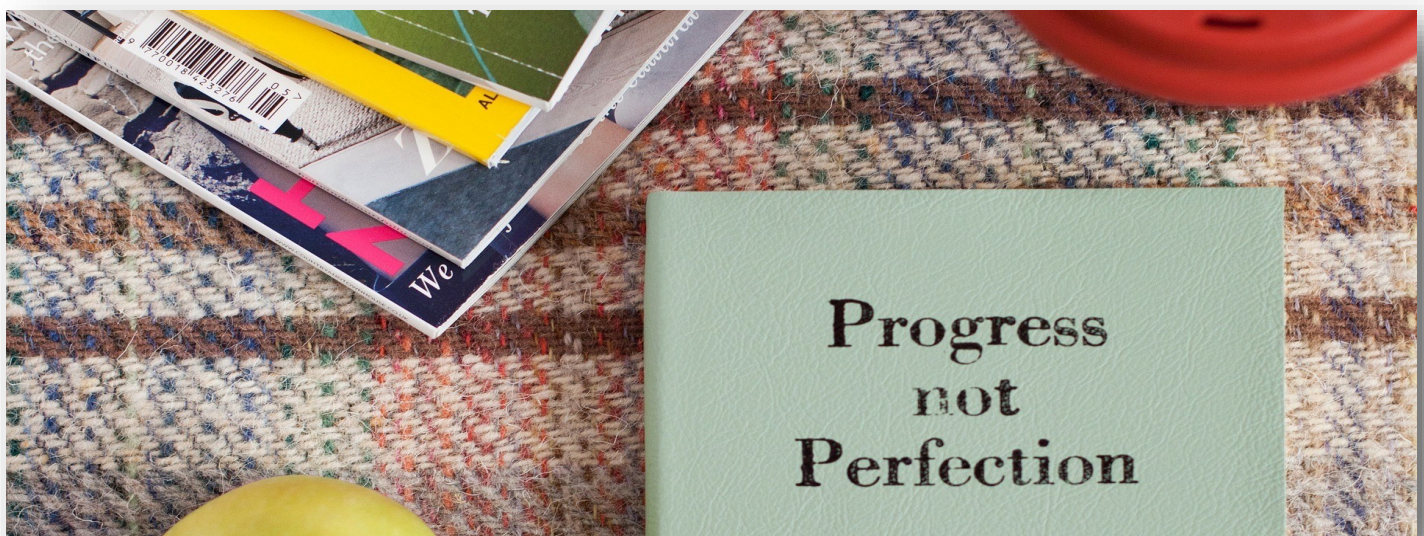
Poetry Links Program, Relationships, and General Life

We are searching everywhere,
Seeking soulmates here and there.
Pride prevents a full exchange,
Sloth stands by to block the range.
Truth prevails when we can care.

* * * * *

Addiction rises to "help" us cope,
Deceiving us away from hope.
We struggle against the status quo,
Believing we will come to know.
Solution comes with truth and love,
The recognizing our spirit above.

~Mona



Back to Big Book Basics of Reading, Writing

This is one member's writing from the Big Book. Periodically, pieces of the writing will be included.

Chapter 2 THERE IS A SOLUTION

P 17 - 18

Right there in the chapter name I/we are offered HOPE in a strong declarative statement. Hope was hard to come by after all the demoralization due to failures with weight loss and “portion control”. I needed hope, still do. Back in the thirties, thousands of demoralized alcoholics recovered, having solved the drink problem. The disease and the ensuing problems had and still do have reign over individuals from every demographic. These individual alcoholics were gripped by an unsolvable dilemma. Once they found their “solution” through the simple program of action, they were joined together, not only by alcoholism, but also by the program of action and the necessity of sharing that program with others. They “absolutely agree” and they “join in brotherly and harmonious action.” They wrote this book to carry “the great news.”

The writers consider alcoholism to be a disease. This was not the common conception of the time. It was considered a mental illness at best. More often the alcoholic was considered a moral defective. In our time obesity has begun to be considered a major cause of disease, but the condition that leads up to obesity is usually not considered at all. Or if it is, it is passed off as lack of will power, “letting ourselves go”, not caring about our appearance. But we of OA believe that there is a disease, an addictive condition, that leads to the state of obesity. Sometimes it leads to bulimia or other harmful behaviors, as the individual attempts to avoid weight gain. Most of us wear our illness in plain sight all over our bodies and we are likely looked down upon or ridiculed because of it. We are at risk for a number of serious illnesses and unhealthy states. Although these conditions are less immediately dire than those faced by an alcoholic, they often are a death sentence which comes after a long painful period of mental and physical distress. We sometimes call ourselves “the walking dead”, because, through dependence on food, we have stopped feeling and are going through the motions of living.

P 18

Bill says that the alcoholic causes anger and hurt, by “annihilation” of things worth while, “engulfing” others lives, causing resentment, financial problems, disgusted friends and family, warped children. Well, I don't see so much ripple effect from the compulsive overeater, some but to a lesser degree. The overeater tends to isolate, tends to acquiesce to those around her/him, keeps as much of the suffering to him/herself as possible. This is not a clearly defined distinction, but, in my personal experience and the experiences of those overeaters I hear, it appears to me that the compulsive overeater is likely to care “too much”, to be “too responsible”, to abuse his/her own needs rather than those of others. Am I being self-righteous in thinking this way? Maybe. I am certainly willing to consider other opinions on this topic.

Continued on page 5

Happy, Joyous, and Free

"It has been a long journey, but I have made it to the other side: I am happy, joyous, and free."
Voices of Recovery, May 21, p. 142

When I started out in OA thirty-four years ago, I had so much to learn about the Program. And other than my youth when I still lived at home and stole food from my folks and lied about it, I have been an honest person. In fact, during most of my adult life, I've believed in being open, honest, and direct. However, I can honestly say, that it took an act of God for me to love myself, but it has happened over time. Case in point: now I care about feeding myself with healthy foods and healthy proportions. I buy myself clothes that fit me now, and I don't know about my size in the future, so I don't know how they'll fit in the future. And I love most everybody, including myself. I'm not perfect at this, but I'm doing pretty well. One day at a time. As a result, I'm happy, joyous, and free most of the time.

~Bobbi P

Freedom from the Bondage of Food and Food Behaviors

"...happy, joyous and free are compulsive overeaters, who, like the rest of us, began at the bottom." *For Today*, May 18, p. 139

I remember the desperation I felt when I attended my first OA meeting in 1988. In fact, the desperation is what compelled me to attend. I felt desperate, because I could not stop dieting on my own. And yet, I was sabotaging myself by eating foods not on my diet. So, I was restricting and, at the same time, eating compulsively. I didn't know then, but I know now that I was and still am, powerless over food and food behaviors.

Flash forward 34 years in OA, and I am no longer desperate. My Higher Power has led me here to OA, and by His grace, I have been relieved of my need to diet. Instead of dieting, I have learned in Program to accept myself for what I am, a compulsive overeater in recovery, one day at a time. I have Good Orderly Direction from my HP, Twelve Steps to follow, wonderful tools to utilize everyday, and a kindly sponsor and a dear sponsee, both of whom I truly love, along with lots of friendly and caring OA cohorts. Freedom from the bondage of food and food behaviors means happiness for me way beyond what I ever imagined my life to be. Thank you, HP and OA.

~Bobbi P

...Back to Big Book Basics of Reading, Writing

From page 4

If this is a "difference" between the alcoholic and the overeater, I don't see that this stands in the way of an overeater's success with the 12-step Program of action. It truly adapts itself miraculously to benefit those with different addictive/abusive behaviors. The writer (Bill) hopes to "inform and comfort" the "many" who are affected. Bill could never have predicted how seriously he understated the results!

It says that the alcoholics were pretty much "unapproachable" by family, friends and competent psychiatrists. They would not discuss their situations without reserve. While talk about weight loss surrounds us in the media and in the conversations of normal eaters who wish to be thin, the concept of compulsive eating is generally not understood at all. I never freely discussed my binges and other flagrant eating behaviors with anyone, prior to finding OA. In younger years I dieted successfully a few times, but later on that was not the case. I tried a few common diets, but learned that what worked for others seemed entirely impossible for me.

In italics, Bill emphasizes that the only person capable of winning the full confidence of an alcoholic is an ex-problem drinker who "has found this solution and is

properly armed with facts about himself". He emphasizes qualities/conditions that the recovered alcoholics found effective in reaching another: having had the same difficulty, "knowing" what he is talking about, being living proof of the "real answer" he has found, lack of self-righteousness, no fees, no axes to grind, people to please, lectures to endure. It was equally true for me, as a compulsive overeater deep in the quicksand of my addiction, that those were the conditions that caught and held my attention and gave me real hope.

~Joy M



Imperfect but Progressing

"That is what we are in OA—imperfect but progressing."—*Overeaters Anonymous*, Second Edition, p. 6

I love this reminder: there are no demands on me here to be perfect. Not so in my previous years. Looking back, I get the sense that while growing up in my family of origin, both my older sister and I were supposed to be perfect. Her way of dealing with it was to rebel against my folks at full throttle, with all the ramifications of teenaged rebellion. But my way was probably to turn to food and secretly/quietly overeat. In every other way, I did not rebel. I did well in school, loved studying voice and art, and was what they wanted—except I wasn't skinny, which was something else that they wanted.

After I was out of that home, I took the ball and ran with it, demanding perfection from myself. Wow! Was that tough because I'm not perfect and never was. Fortunately for me, I got some counseling and joined Overeaters Anonymous. Taking both of those actions was essential in my growing up and becoming a whole person, not succumbing to environmental demands on me. It's taken me time, but I've become happy with myself.

Steps Six and Seven have been extremely helpful to me. First, my character defects were revealed to me,

sometimes through God-with skin on, sometimes through my intuition, and then I have humbly asked God to relieve me of them. The result is, I'm still not perfect. But I have much more clarity about who I am and how I can improve. One day at a time. Thank you, Higher Power.

Love you and me.

~*Bobbi P*

Heard at a Meeting

"As a compulsive overeater, I've never been able to get this issue of weight perfectly. My past history of being a people pleaser meant to me that I really had to try hard to be what other people wanted me to be, including weighing what they wanted me to. But I failed miserably at this, and a couple people who were close to me at the time were very disappointed in me. Now, however, due to the OA Program, I can smile and breathe a sigh of relief, because I have learned that I don't have to please anybody about my size and weight. Instead, my weight is just between me and my Higher Power. That's it. Thank you, HP and OA."



Haiku Expands the Middle Five Steps of Overeaters Anonymous

The following are a few Haiku. A Haiku is a Japanese poem of seventeen syllables, in three lines of five, seven, and five, traditionally evoking images of the natural world.

Faith give us COURAGE:

The ability to change.
Finding inner strength!

INTEGRITY is

Sharing our strength with others:
Inside is outside.

Our WILLINGNESS is

Based on trust in our "true self":
Our life with spirit!

HUMILITY is

Awareness of our "life place":
God is in control.

SELF DISCIPLINE is

Good orderly direction
Willingly embraced.

~Mona

Heard at a meeting:

"My understanding from the OA Program is that at this very moment in time, I am just as my Higher Power wants me to be."

Freedoms of the OA Program

Freedom to live

And to give

Freedom to listen

Shine and glisten

Freedom to pray in my own way

Freedom to believe

Not wear it on my sleeve

Freedom to let it go

And grow, and grow, and grow

Freedom to take what I need

Or do someone a good deed

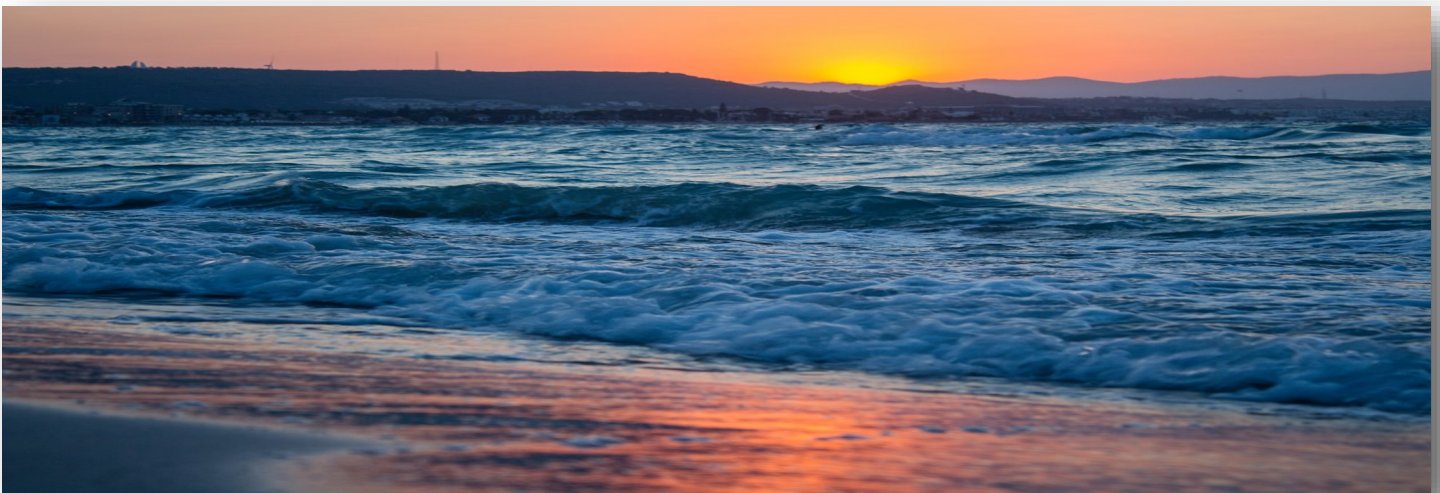
Freedom to stop eating

And giving myself a beating

Freedom to open up myself

And not be stuck on some shelf

~Sue W



Seventh Tradition Concept Takes on More Meaning Over Years

“When we meet and defeat the temptation to take large gifts, we are only being prudent. But when we are generous with the hat, we give a token that we are grateful for our blessings and evident that we are eager to share what we have found with all those who still suffer.” *The Language of the Heart: Bill W’s Grapevine Writings*, page 221.

When I came to Overeaters Anonymous in the spring of 2009, I just had my work hours cut to part time. The counselor I went to for help about the loss of my job suggested I attend Overeaters Anonymous. I surrendered and went. I was very grateful that it was a free program, that there were no dues or fees. However, when the basket was passed, a \$2 donation was suggested. I eventually made sure I had my \$2 at the meeting. Overeaters Anonymous was the “last house on the block” and I was struck abstinent a week after my first Overeaters Anonymous meeting. It save my life and 12.5 years later, I’m still at a healthy body weight and my life is more manageable, one day at a time with the help and guidance and reliance on God and this beautiful OA fellowship who are my family of choice and my HP with skin on.

I attended an Overeaters Anonymous birthday party convention via Zoom and heard a great speaker on the traditions. It saddened me to hear how OA is not fully self-supporting by contributions from its members and instead the central office depends on literature sales to pay expenses so it can be a support to me, OA groups, and OA service bodies around the globe. Hearing that really make me start to think about how I have not always been attending face-to-face meetings for the past five years due to work conflicts. Also with the COVID-19 pandemic, I attend more phone meetings and Zoom meetings. But I do not always contribute financially. I realize this is my responsibility. I should be willing and graciously contribute to the meetings to give back what I have been given so freely. In OA recovery I have found freedom from compulsive eating which means less doctor visits for my physical injuries from over exercising or complications from my weight. I no longer have to pay to be on high blood pressure medications or for a boot for a stress fracture in my foot for when my weight was too much for my feet. I don’t have to spend money on binge foods or gym

memberships or race entry fees anymore. I no longer spend lots of money on exercise equipment or workout clothes. A nice walk with my dogs every day with God and nature is all I need today. Plus, I no longer have to spend money on new clothes every season because my weight keeps increasing.

So I was considering where does all my extra money goes? I feel I need to be a little more self-sacrificing in the Seventh Tradition, making a better conscious action to give online so Overeaters Anonymous will be here for me today and for you and for those who still suffer. As the 12th Step states, “Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry the message to other compulsive eaters and to practice these principles in all our affairs.” A simple spiritual way to help carry this message that has to continue to help me in my daily spiritual awakening is to contribute financially to the best of my ability every day.

“Faith without works is dead.”—page 88 of the Big Book. For today I will act according to my Higher Power’s will and will contribute to the best of my ability so I may stay spiritually fit and have a wonderful fellowship to continue on my journey of recovery and to help carry the message to all those who still suffer in this cunning baffling powerful disease of compulsive overeating.

~Humbly written and submitted by a gratefully recovered in Wisconsin

Overeaters Anonymous Responsibility Pledge:

“Always to extend the hand and heart of OA to all who share my compulsion; for this I am responsible.”