

TOGETHER WE CAN

Publication of the DC Metro Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous

May 2007

www.oa-dcmetro.org
Infoline: 301-460-2800

SPONSORSHIP : TOGETHER WE RECOVER

I COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT A SPONSOR

I have worked my OA program with a sponsor and without a sponsor, and working with a sponsor gets my vote. My addiction is a disease of isolation, denial, and dishonesty. And it will get its way if I don't work the steps and take advantage of every tool OA has to offer. I got a sponsor as soon as I walked into the rooms and I immediately stepped out of my isolation and into recovery. I have had many sponsors over the years, sometimes two at a time, who have shared their experience, strength, and hope with me. Working with sponsors has taken many different forms:

- I have committed my food. That taught me that I didn't ever have to lie again about my food. I learned to be honest.
- I have read literature, written about it, and then read it to my sponsor. I wrote a fourth step and gave away my fifth step to my sponsor.
- I relied on my sponsor for extra support when I needed it.
- I learned by example how to be a sponsor.

These days I speak to my sponsor, who lives in Ohio, at 6:45 a.m. every day. (Thank goodness for Verizon Wireless!) I read my food plan for the day. On most days, I also read what I have written about a page from the Big Book. I try to visit my sponsor at least once a year, especially to give away my fourth step. I know that my sponsor is human and will not always be available for me, but that is why I have the fellowship and my HP. My sponsor listens to me every weekend, because my day (that includes the ease works every day) and she will gently re-experience, strength, and hope about her recovery.



My greatest joy is giving back to other recovering compulsive overeaters. I do that through service, which includes sponsoring. Today, I sponsor three recovering compulsive overeaters. I encourage my sponsorees to pass it on as a sponsor as soon as they have a period of abstinence and have worked the first three steps.

I have learned so much from all my sponsorees, and sponsoring helps my recovery so much. I think the biggest challenge for me as a sponsor is letting my sponsorees find their own way in recovery. I can only give them what I have, and the rest is up to them and their HP. Everyone in the program sponsors differently. Find a sponsor who has what you want and talk to that person. It is the greatest gift in recovery you can give yourself.

~ Peggy

UPCOMING EVENTS

Intergroup Meetings

June 9, 10:30

July 14, 10:30

Holy Cross Hospital

Private Dining Room 2

1500 Forest Glen Rd

Silver Spring, MD

Summer Solstice

Retreat

June 22-24

Wellspring Retreat Center

Germantown, MD

See oa-dcmetro.org for flyer

WSO Convention

Aug. 30-Sept 2

Loew's Philadelphia Hotel

Philadelphia, PA

Region 7 Assembly

Oct. 12-13

Rehoboth Beach, DE

MY ANGEL

Lose fifty pounds”, my doctor told me, “and I promise that most of your health issues will resolve themselves.” I agreed. Still I ate, ate some more, and overate. Then the bones in my knees started to scrape together, and at fifty years of age, I was in excruciating pain. “Osteoarthritis,” my doctor said. “Lose some weight.” Again, a lifetime of compulsive eating patterns prevailed and fear set in.

“Help me!” I pleaded to the spirits of old. “Go to Overeaters Anonymous” was what I heard. Once there, I prayed again: “Please send me a sponsor, a gentle, wise woman with many years of recovery.” Sure enough, she came - truly heaven sent, my angel.

“Just tell me if you eat something outside of your food plan”, she told me. And I did. But there were many days when I craved a trigger food, only to stop craving after I couldn’t think of a coherent explanation for her, my angel.

“Free samples at the supermarket are causing me to spiral out of control,” I told her, and she taught me a prayer: “Grant me the willingness to be abstinent and the ability to make abstinent choices.” Now I say the prayer at least twice on my shopping trips, and the calls from the freebies go ignored. A miracle indeed.

One day I slipped in a big way, and I divulged what I had been hiding from my angel: “I can’t possibly give up sugar for the rest of my life!” She replied, “Can you commit for just one day?” I could.

After that, hope arrived. Hope that I can do this. Hope that I can beat this disease. I think I can, but only with an angel sponsor lighting the way on this long and bumpy twelve step road.

To all sponsors who share so generously and light the twelve step road – you ARE the angels.

~ Anne

SUMMER SOLSTICE RETREAT

A weekend of peace,
relaxation, fellowship,
and

recovery.

June 22-24, 2007

Wellspring Retreat

Center in Germantown,
Maryland

Workshops!

Speakers!

Meetings!



See flyer at oa-dcmetro.org

Ready for a Sponsor?

The newsletter topic on Sponsorship helped me to examine why I'm afraid of sponsorship. I have been attending meetings on and off for a few years. I have bought many books and I read them often. I'm still swirling in the first three steps. I must admit I'm embarrassed that I have never made the leap to find a sponsor. One of my defects is fear of asking for help. Until I started attending these meetings, I had no idea that the tools I used to survive growing up no longer served me well as an adult. I was raised with ten siblings. In my big

crazy family, I often felt shame of loneliness, and I learned to use food to numb my feelings and cravings for attention. I lived in fear of my bipolar Egyptian dad, who was 30 years older than my French mom, who was always taking care of babies.

Another reason I have not made the step to find a sponsor is my fear of failure. I am the shy, responsible kid in my family, never complaining, always doing more than my share. I have a history of relationships in which I do all the work, and when I ask for change I am labeled as demanding and then abandoned. So I've learned to be very independent and have no expectations of anyone. I also imagine that if I ask someone to be my sponsor, they would tell me


they do not have enough time for another sponsoree. I long for the recovery I see in other members sharing at meetings. However, I've rarely been abstinent more than a few days at a time. I'm afraid I'll keep failing and then disappoint my sponsor too.

By going to more meetings, I am starting to feel stronger and more patient with myself. Amazingly, the shy me has even managed to share at some smaller meetings. I've learned when the time is right in my life, I'll have the courage to get a sponsor. In the meantime, I'm taking my life one day at a time, and I keep coming back.

~ Cathy N.

GRATITUDE TO SPONSORS

WHY DO I NEED A SPONSOR?

- G**rateful (very) that you are willing to be a sponsor;
 - R**ationalizing no more that I can do it on my own;
 - A**dding HALT to my program (your advice), not to be too hungry, too angry, too lonely, too tired;
 - T**aking time to really listen to your suggestions;
 - I**nspired by how you live your OA program;
 - T**aking time (with your help) for the steps, traditions, and tools;
 - U**nderstanding that we have a disease, not something shameful;
 - D**oing the best I can to follow your suggestions and make progress;
 - E**ager to be ready to be a sponsor too to help pass the program on, and thereby also to keep it.
- 
- T**hank you (all sponsors) for being here,
 - O**pening our hearts to and toward each other.
 - S**aying the serenity prayer together;
 - P**utting my hand in yours and together we can do what we could not do alone;
 - O**pening our eyes (with your help) to a better way of life;
 - N**eeding to accept the things I cannot change;
 - S**piritual progress, not spiritual perfection;
 - O**A program - - putting it first;
 - R**arely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed this path.
 - S**anity - - a life of sane and happy usefulness is what we are promised as a result of working the steps. ~ Linda S.

Why do I need a sponsor? Surrender to the fact of my weakness is why I need a sponsor?! And accountability and fellowship. Let me explain.

I was in another 12 Step program before I was in OA, and I knew I needed a sponsor there. Having a sponsor worked with the first behavior, and I knew that being accountable about the food would work too. So I asked someone in that other program (who knew she had a problem with food) to sponsor me in OA. She agreed that I could phone her to commit my food. But she wasn't committing her food too; she didn't really care. I was making the plan, so... I could change the plan, right? I did change it as much as I wanted, and it didn't do any good to have that "sponsor." What was missing was fellowship. My weakness, my not wanting to commit to another 12-Step program, was standing in my way.

Surrender to being in Overeaters Anonymous, surrender to being accountable to someone who did care and who was working the steps, was why I needed an OA sponsor. That was several years ago, and I still need a sponsor for those same reasons. But a lot of other things about my life have changed for the better, because I surrender to "doing" OA. ~Anonymous in DC Metro OA

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NEW THINKING

Step One of The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous says that once we become teachable, we can give up old thought and behavior patterns that have failed us in the past. I had heard people in the rooms say, "The only thing I need to change is everything." For a long time, I thought that meant that I should change external things, such as my job, my hometown, my significant other. Later I thought it meant change my sponsor, my meetings, my routine for working the OA tools of recovery in a desperate attempt to get and stay abstinent. But here it is right in Step One – one of those things that was always there but that I had never read before in my seven years in program. What we give up and change are old thoughts and behavior patterns that have failed us in the past. The only thing I can change is the internal environment – my own thoughts and attitudes. That is the only thing that can bring serenity and acceptance of the external world exactly as it is. Without that acceptance and serenity, I am uncomfortable and seek escape by diving into food and all the misery that brings.

Here are a few of my old thought patterns and the new ones that have replaced them. The new thinking came not from me, but from working the twelve steps, from my Higher Power, and from listening to others share their experience, strength and hope.

OLD IDEAS:	NEW IDEAS:
I am a bad person because I can't stop eating and I can't control my weight.	I am a good, loving person who has a disease.
God is "up there" doing important things and I can't bother Him with something like my food and weight.	God loves me unconditionally and wants me to be healthy, happy, joyous, and free. God will give me whatever I need to avoid picking up food today.
Pain is scary and bad and I must avoid it at all costs by escaping into food.	God gives me everything I need to handle my life today. Pain is healing. The pain and misery of overeating is far worse than facing anything that is going on in my life.
I am a horrible person.	I am worthy of love, just like everyone else.
God may grant me abstinence today, but what about tomorrow or next week?	God grants me the gift of abstinence one day at a time for the rest of my life.

These new thoughts and ideas are a gift of this program and a miracle from God. However, I do need to remember that I spent 32 years living life according to these old ideas. Because of this, I do have to put some effort into recognizing when I am falling into the old thoughts and then re-affirming my new thoughts and ideas. I will keep coming back because all of you remind me to live in recovery today.
~ Leah M.

Share your story in TOGETHER WE CAN, your Intergroup publication.
The July 2007 edition will focus on Taking the Spiritual Path.
Send your article to newsletter@oa-dcmetro.org by June 29.

Why Does Region 7 Even Matter?

What if there were no Region level, just Intergroups and World Service? What difference would it make? Well, how many of the people in Intergroup became the people they are, in part, because of experience gained at Region 7 Assembly? The biggest strength of Region 7 is as a training ground for working with others. If you cannot go to Assembly for lack of 6 months' current abstinence, would it help to remember that being able to attend Assembly is a good reason to stay abstinent, right now? Qualifying for service positions above the group level is one of the most effective ways of doing Step 12, Think about it – did you get to OA because someone *in* OA talked to you about OA? Or did you read or hear about OA through some form of public information placed by an Intergroup, Region, or WSO? Within OA, being abstinent is the best way to "carry the message" to others, especially by sharing the things you do that are working!

The more of us who go to Assembly, the more benefit we can get! Here's how it is working for me: Trying to be a good chairman of the Bylaws Committee has required me to be patient, industrious, give up time I'd rather have spent other ways, be patient, look things up, pay attention to details, be patient, and increased my sense of humor and my appreciation for other people! Region 7 has done A LOT for me! ~Anonymous