

Together We CAN

A Publication of the DC Metro Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous

January/February 2008

• www.aa-dcmetro.org

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Working with Others—Are We Carrying the Message?

The joy of living is the theme of AB Twelfth Step ... Here we experience the kind of giving that asks no rewards." So begins the chapter on the Twelfth Step in AB Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (p. 106).

OA bases its program on the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. The AA *Big Book* devotes the chapter "Working with Others" to carrying the message of recovery. It instructs us to carry the message of our own recoveries. By doing so, we illustrate the importance of this activity. Carrying the message may help others, but it is vital to our spiritual well-being.

The chapter contains precise instructions on how to help a newcomer: when to approach him or her (at the end of a spree), when to leave the person alone (if the individual doesn't want help) and

when to involve the family or a professional working with the newcomer. Through sharing our



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own stories, we emphasize the sickness from which we suffer, the fatal nature of our disease of body and mind, and the strange mental twists that set up the compulsion. The instructions caution us to stress the spiritual nature of the

solution we have found but to couch it in everyday terms that will not arouse prejudice.

The AA *Big Book* emphasizes the importance of working with professionals in a cooperative and helpful way — never critical. It advises us not to waste time trying to persuade someone against his or her will because that may spoil the person's chance for recovery later. It encourages us to stress that desire must come from within and that recovery is not an overnight matter, but it can come regardless of any life event. We have found a solution through the AA Twelve Steps, as adapted for Overeaters Anonymous.

We do not wish to inflict this solution on anyone. No one is obligated to us. Our only desire is to give help when asked, just as it was freely given to us. We may wish to

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Upcoming Events

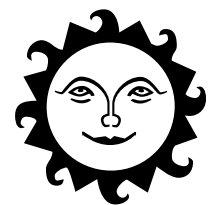
An OA Sponsorship Workshop,
Sunday, January 13, 2008, Silver Spring, MD.

Sunlight of the Spirit at
Star Lake Lodge
*Friday, January, 18th–
Sunday, January, 20th, 2008
Bloomington, NJ*

Unity Day 2008
*Saturday, February 23, 2008
Lanham, MD.*

A Great Way to Start the Day

There is a wonderful meeting option for those of you who live or work in the Gaithersburg area. Start your day in the best way with a step/traditions meeting on Tuesdays at 7:15am at St. Martin of Tour Catholic Church on 201 S. Frederick Avenue in Gaithersburg. You can enter the parking lot from Summit Avenue and the meeting is downstairs. We read a step or tradition each week from the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous. We also spend about 10 minutes reading or meditating. We are a small, but strong meeting and would love to have you join us.



Quotes from OA and AA Literature on Sponsorship

ON THE NEED FOR SPONSORSHIP

IF PEOPLE ASK YOU TO SPONSOR THEM, REMEMBER, this may be the first attempt they have made to establish contact with someone in the program. If you are truly too busy, take the time to introduce the new members to other qualified sponsors. If a newcomer does not follow through, don't take it personally. — *GROUP HANDBOOK (OA PAMPHLET)*

PERHAPS IT IS FORTUNATE FOR US, and for the millions of compulsive overeaters who still suffer, that most of us who've worked this program will be unable to keep



Some of us have tried to follow our program in isolation and have been unable to keep our emotional balance and our abstinence.

—OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS

the recovery we have unless we share our experience, strength, and hope with others. Some of us have tried to follow our program in isolation and have been unable to keep our emotional balance and our abstinence. Had this been possible, we might not be here today to carry the message to newcomers. We would have missed the best part of the twelve steps, for the greatest joy of recovery comes to us when we share our OA program with others.—*OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS*

"THE ONLY REAL FREEDOM a human being can ever know is doing what you ought to do because you want to do it." —*Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous*

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Every 24 hours there's choices to make

words to a song written by an OA member

Every 24 hours there's choices to make
Chances to take; the past to forsake.
And I am so scared I might make a mistake
But that's part of life, one day at a time.

One 24 hours I woke to despair
There was pain in the air; more than
I could bear
And it almost seemed as though God
wasn't there
As part of my life, one day at a time.

For a time I would wander in darkness
And I made the wrong choices
My friends in the Program would reach
out to me
But I could not hear their voices

And each 24 hours I'd wake and decide
Between progress and pride; and oh,
how I cried.
And how could I ever decide to decide
What to do with my life, one day at a time?

Then, one 24 hours I woke with the dawn
The pain was all gone; and I carried on
I returned to the Program I've depended upon
And now that's my life, one day at a time

And I learned many lessons in darkness
For God did not forsake me!
I learned that each day I must give up my will
And just see where life takes me

And each 24 hours, there's choices to make
Chances to take; the past to forsake
And Lord only knows: I will make a mistake
'Cuz that's part of life, one day at a time.

For this 24 hours, I've made up my mind
I'll leave fear behind; I'll be gentle and kind
I'll be good to myself, and myself I'll remind
Just to give God my life, one day at a time.

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give practical help, but not if the person is simply using the Fellowship for his or her own needs. Finally, the Big Book tells us not to display an intolerance of others' drinking [eating] — the disease is ours, not theirs.

In my area, we take this chapter "Working with Others" very seriously. When people call OA, we try to match them with members of similar backgrounds. We offer to meet with them, in their homes or ours, to share our stories of how we came to OA and what it has done for our lives. This introduces them to the program. Of course, if they don't wish to meet with us, we do not insist, but we do inform them that many newcomers find this practice helpful. After this meeting, during which we give them an idea of what to expect in an OA meeting, we offer to take them to their first meeting and introduce them to members. At the meetings, they usually hear much about sponsorship; we have plenty of people ready to sponsor and keen to share what sponsorship has meant to them.

I am often surprised at how rare this introduction to newcomers is in OA. Many intergroups have an answering machine that gives meeting times but leave newcomers to find a meeting by themselves. They have no knowledge of what to expect, having spoken not one word with an OA member. Are we willing to believe the *Big Book* when it says that carrying the message will bring about our own recovery? Have we tried it?

At meetings, how often do we hear a request for sponsors to identify themselves, only to hear them say they are not available right now? Sponsorship seems to be a big problem throughout OA. What has happened to us? Have we perhaps forgotten our gratitude or the people who were there for us

when we first came in? Have we perhaps forgotten that the OA preamble says, in part, "Our primary purpose is to abstain from compulsive overeating and to carry this message of recovery to those who still suffer"? It took me a long time to realize it didn't say sponsorship was something to do in my spare time. As it says in the *AA Big Book*, "A kindly act once in a while isn't enough" (p. 97).

Those whose recoveries I admire,

will be of maximum use to him and others. These people seem to be free not only of the food obsession, but also of wanting and of self. Dr. Bob, cofounder of AA, said better than anyone why we do this:

1. Sense of duty.
2. It is a pleasure.
3. Because in so doing, I am paying my debt to the man who took the time to pass it on to me.
4. Because every time I do it I take out a little more insurance for



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4. *Because every time I do it I take out a little more insurance for myself against a possible slip*

—*Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., p. 181*

those who really do seem to have that joy of living, are committed to service full-time in all areas of their lives, committed to trying to live the way God would have them live every day. I don't hear them talking of needing time for themselves, needing balance; they just quietly ask God to send them where they

myself against a possible slip
(*Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., p. 181*).

Sound good? Try it sometime!

— *J.H., Lyttelton, New Zealand*
Reprinted from "A Step Ahead,"
4th Quarter, 2005

Quotes from OA and AA Literature on Sponsorship

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WE ASK A SPONSOR TO HELP US through our program of recovery on all three levels: physical, emotional and spiritual—*THE TOOLS OF RECOVERY (OA PAMPHLET)*

YOU CAN HELP WHEN NO ONE ELSE CAN. You can secure their confidence when others fail.—*BIG BOOK OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS*



DON'T EVER GIVE THE IMPRESSION, "You blew it." It is much better to focus on the positive: "Okay, let's go forward one day at a time."

—*GROUP HANDBOOK, OA*

SUGGESTIONS

COURTESY, KINDNESS, JUSTICE, AND LOVE are the key notes by which we may come into harmony with practically anybody.—*AA BIG BOOK*

REMINDE THE PROSPECT THAT HIS RECOVERY is not dependent upon people. It is dependent upon his relationship with God.—*AA BIG BOOK*

LIMITATIONS

IN OFFERING HELP TO SOMEONE who asks for it, I must keep individual differences in mind. We are not

carbon copies of one another. What may benefit one person could be entirely inappropriate for another. Each of us must be free to find our own way, both in the adoption of an eating plan and in working the program. Am I helping those I sponsor find what works best for them?—*FOR TODAY*

STEP TWELVE

WE USUALLY ASK GOD TO HELP US in talking about the program with those outside OA and with those in meetings. When we turn ourselves over to our Higher Power, we can relax and speak honestly without worrying that we might not say the right thing.—*OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS*

BY WORKING WITH other members of OA and sharing their experience, strength, and hope, sponsors continually renew and reaffirm their own recovery.—*GROUP HANDBOOK*

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR HIM TO REALIZE that your attempt to pass this on to him plays a vital part in your own recovery.—*AA BIG BOOK*

INNER CHANGE IS THE SUBSTANCE OF THE 12-STEP PROGRAM. It is sad to contemplate that there are OA meetings where food plans and "food sponsors" take precedence over the 12 steps. Newcomers are given shadow in place of substance. When I take a sponsor, both of us understand that we may or may not discuss food and food plans. The whole idea of having a sponsor is predicated on my need for guidance in working a spiritual program—by someone who has attained a measure of experience in doing so.—*FOR TODAY*

12 GUIDELINES FOR SPONSORSHIP

1. I will not help you stay and wallow in limbo.
2. I will help you to grow and to become more productive, by your definition.
3. I will help you become more autonomous, more loving of yourself, more excited, less sensitive, and more free to continue becoming the authority of your own living.
4. I cannot give you dreams you 'fix you up,' simply because I cannot.
5. I cannot give you growth or grow for you. You must grow yourself by facing reality, grim as it may be at times.
6. I cannot take away your loneliness or pain.
7. I cannot sense your world for you, evaluate your goals for you, or tell you what is best for you in your world—for you have your own world.
8. I cannot convince you of the crucial choice of choosing the scary uncertainty of growing over the safe misery of not growing.
9. I want to be with you and know you as a rich and growing friend; yet I cannot get close to you when you choose not to grow.
10. When I begin to care for you out of pity, when I begin to lose trust in you, then I am toxic, and bad; inhibiting for you, and you for me.
11. You must know—my helping is conditional: I will be with you, I will hang in there with you as long as I continue to get even the slightest hints that you are still trying to grow.
12. If you can accept all of this, then perhaps we can help each other to become what God meant us to be—mature adults leaving childishness forever to the little children.

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