

JULY/AUGUST 2010 NEWSLETTER

Dear OA Fellows:

I have recently had an experience that has really altered how I see my life and OA. My story so clearly reveals a positive energy in the universe weaving people, things, and events together in our fellowship, and I feel really pulled to give voice to this experience. (And thank you for the gentle nudge from a long-timer in OA to do so as well!)

Over Memorial Day weekend, my house was burglarized in the middle of the night while my partner and I were upstairs sleeping. I remember having trouble falling asleep that night, and feeling torn between going downstairs to sleep on the couch, or down the hall to the guest bedroom instead. I really believe that the universe was keeping me out of harm's way when intuition told me to go down the hall instead of down the stairs, given what happened next. In the middle of the night, I awoke to the sound of our front door slamming shut, and I ran to the top of the stairs to see our front door thrown open.

Terror swept through me, and the ensuing hours with the police, a crime scene investigator, and a detective were harrowing on many levels. I remain grateful to this day that all our burglar appeared to be interested within our home was our things, and that he left our family of 2 people, 1 cat, and 1 dog unharmed. Interestingly enough, among other things, the burglar stole a meeting bag for one of the local OA meetings, thinking, I am sure, it held something "of value" like a laptop.

As uncanny as this sounds, the stolen OA materials made me feel inextricably linked to the meeting that had unknowingly become involved with our burglary that night. As I called various members who hold service positions for this particular meeting, I felt an outpouring of love and care for both the stolen materials, and for my family. In a flurry, members stepped forward to replace the stolen materials to ensure that the meeting could run as smoothly as possible in light of its unexpected fate. Again and again, I was reduced to tears as the full impact of the burglary sank into my being. And yet, never once can I say that I felt alone. Even when alone in a room, time and time again I felt our fellowship holding me, and my family, through the upset. It was in this meeting that I first felt safe enough to cry about what had happened, and to begin to access all of the heightened feelings that surrounded me and the event. At every turn, despite being in a terribly scary circumstance, I felt OA, and a power behind OA, keeping me safe.

The burglar stole a meeting bag for one of the local OA meetings.

As if that isn't enough evidence of a higher power holding me through a scary time, She had one more light-hearted moment to shine in this story. Almost a week after the burglary, my sponsor forwarded me an email from the editor of the OA Washington DC Area Intergroup newsletter. She had received a strange email from a kind soul who had found our bag of OA meeting materials tossed under their deck, off an alley. This person took the time to look through the wet, scattered materials, and found our very own Intergroup newsletter. He then contacted the editor in an attempt, as he put it, to "right a wrong."

What a miracle! Our We Care lists, meeting format, timer, briefcase, etc., had all survived a harrowing night of adventures, and ended up in a back alley just blocks from our home where the burglary occurred. This "happy ending" speaks to me of many things: the kindness of a stranger who took the time and the care to return our materials to us, and the realization that although much negativity flowed through our home that night, an irrefutable positive energy moved through as well: keeping us safe, reminding us that we were never alone, and "carrying the message" that our meetings, materials, and fellowship can survive many things. As my dad would say, "The Lord works in mysterious ways!"—ELLIE

EDITOR'S NOTE: *When I received an e-mail from someone who claimed they had found a bag of OA materials under their deck, I was skeptical. I put the poor person through the ringer, asking what was in it, why they thought it was from one of my fellows, etc. In the end, I let everyone on the listserv know about this "found" bag, and I am touched to hear that it found its way home.*

I also want to thank everyone for your support and love during a very FULL time in my life. Thanks to God and OA, I am abstinent...and now a married lady!

Interested in a Writing Meeting? Want a Good Way to Start the Weekend? Join us!

The College Park Writing Meeting meets at 7 p.m. every Friday at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 4512 College Avenue, College Park, Maryland (behind the MD Book Exchange, park in lot off Princeton Avenue, enter Rector's Lounge by going up the steps closest to the playground). All are welcome and much appreciated. For more information please call Frank at 301-395-3568.

College Park Meeting Shares Experience, Strength, & Hope

On Tradition Four...

"To be able to maintain uniqueness and independence while being a part of a larger group"—what a concept! I have struggled with this issue all of my life within my own family. In many ways, it was not a safe family to be in so I learned that I could not comfortably depend on my family for certain things; I learned I might be able to depend on one or two people for certain things and I learned not to depend on others.

I also was taught that people could not survive without their family, and I learned that many topics should never be discussed outside of the family. Because there were certain fixed family rules, there was a price to pay if someone did not follow the rules—basically get cut off from the family. For some reason, I was not willing to agree and buy into some of the rules. There was so much pressure to comply, to squelch any uniqueness and individuality, to be like everyone else. It was not safe to have and express my own opinions, values, needs, and wants. Offering service or saying "no" was not an option as "obligation, duty, and control" ruled the household.

I used food in so many ways to cope and my weight was one thing that was obsessively focused on. At one point while I was going to college, my father refused to pay for my college because I did not weigh what he wanted me to weigh. I was young, scared, and freaked out, however, I also had emergency money in the bank (thank God!).

Although I learned to deny, isolate, and numb the pain, I also thankfully sought support, connection, and fellowship outside of my family through friends, church, and now the fellowship. How wonderful it is for everyone in the rooms to have a voice while others listen. What a relief it is to know that I am not alone. What a blessing it is to be in a group that no one can kick me out of. I have just as much of a right to my seat in the rooms as anyone else does. What a blessing it is to have rules that support each group's uniqueness and identity while also preserving the larger group of OA.

I am grateful for the Traditions because they provide guidance in how to be in fellowship with other people in a loving, sane manner. I am sure if it weren't for the Traditions, I very well might not still be a member of OA.

—ANONYMOUS

Tradition Four and Boundaries

Tradition Four sounds like it is all about BOUNDARIES! Whoa-what a re-occurring issue in my life. I especially liked the bit at the end—"Living by the 4th Tradition in OA means learning to act autonomously, even as we live in harmony with others! We set necessary boundaries for ourselves and our OA groups so that we won't be abused by others! And, we express our needs openly without insisting that others meet those needs in ways that might harm them."

This illuminates the consequences of mushy boundaries—people can really get hurt or harmed. It also highlights the concept of balance—the need to exercise freedom of choice inherent for healthy living, but only up to the point of imposing on others' freedom of choice.

Program has helped me to be able to better define my boundaries. As my confidence in the reasoning behind my boundaries increased, so did my ability to assert my boundaries lovingly. This is still very much a work in progress! I still need to "unpack" my role in many situations with another person, but it isn't as much of a struggle as it once was before.

It seems to me this ability is a direct pre-requisite to the fulfilling of the promise in the Big Book about "intuitively knowing how to handle a situation which once had baffled us".—JENN

Step 5

I think back to when I formally “did” Steps Four and Five. Step Four seemed to take me forever. I felt like such a horrible person to admit my shortcomings. Actually, the format I used was very helpful as it encouraged me to identify what actually happened, who said and did what, and how I was affected instead of my just feeling generalized shame over the events. I was able to identify some of my more obvious character defects—victim hood, ego, fear, resentment, perfectionism, denial, and dishonesty. Now I can more easily identify them and I am able to have a bit more acceptance of them. I do think that going through the process of Steps Four and Five has helped me continue to practice aspects of these Steps more frequently.

At times I bristle at the concept of looking at my own stuff, my own side of the street, when it would be so much easier to blame things on other people. Step Five encourages me to look at my own issues and then take some action, a little bit at a time, each day, instead of thinking I can just do something quickly and solve the problem. Program isn’t like that—I have to keep living each day at a time, doing the best I can with love, compassion, and acceptance. I think I will keep coming back!—ANONYMOUS

Step 10

Step 10 is like a mini-Step 4. The problem I have with both Step 4 and Step 10 is legal—what is my responsibility and what isn’t? Where does the just action of standing for myself end and the unjust action of imposing on someone else’s rights or freedoms begin?

I have a tendency to put up with bad behavior beyond what is reasonable, but I also can be rude, inappropriate, or downright mean. This is where it helps me to review a behavior or situation with a trusted friend or my sponsor. Part of my disease is an inability to be discerning at times. It greatly helps me to get another perspective on my attitude and actions.

Sometimes, I catch myself in the middle of squirrely behavior and am able to take a step back and do a quick check. Am I hurting someone? Does this fall into God’s plan for my life? What would my sponsor say? Will I regret this? If I start trying to rationalize my response, I know I am in trouble! When I go through this process, I immediately feel better, and my negative emotions diminish significantly.

Although I have been in program for years, this is one step I know I will always be working on, fodder for my prayers for years to come. Having my plusses and minuses in the front of my head also greatly helps me have compassion for others, and when I am quick to apologize for my own wrongs, I have noticed it increases other’s compassion for me.—JENN

TRADITIONS CHEAT SHEET

1. Common welfare first - unity
2. One authority - a loving God
3. The only requirement - a desire
 4. Autonomous, except
5. One primary purpose - carry the message
 6. Outside enterprise
 7. Fully self-supporting
 8. Forever non-professional
 9. Never be organized
10. No opinion on outside issues
11. Attraction rather than promotion - personal anonymity at level of press
12. Anonymity - spiritual foundation; principles before personalities

—Barb M.

Outreach at the DC Metro Area Intergroup (DCAIG)

I want to talk about where our Intergroup (IG) has been, and where I think it needs to go, concerning our outreach to the professional community. Over the last three years, we have done one big outreach event each year, beginning in 2008 with the National Education Association (NEA) annual convention at DC's convention center. This event clocked in at about 14,000 attendees, many of whom walked away from our booth with much increased awareness that there is a solution for compulsive eating, whether in their own lives or the lives of their students. We heard from many schoolteachers and counselors who had come into contact with children suffering adult consequences from compulsive eating behavior. One teacher related her story of a 12-year-old student of hers who died from an obesity-related heart attack. Other teachers were aware that they themselves had eating issues, so we were able to carry the message in a number of different areas. This outreach was a definite success in terms of making Overeaters Anonymous (OA) better known as a solution for those individuals who have compulsive eating behavior. Our local fellowship responded to the request for volunteers to staff our booth with people from DC, Maryland, and Virginia—a unity-based approach!

In 2009, we had a booth at the Obesity Society's annual meeting at the Marriott-Wardman-Park Hotel in Washington, DC. Again, a highly successful outreach, this time to a very educated global community of scientists and researchers specializing in the treatment and study of obesity. Although the organization is immersed in the problem of obesity, we were able to offer hope in the form of a solution, something these individuals may have lost sight of. Finally, this spring, we purchased an inexpensive booth space at the annual meeting of the Psychotherapy Networker Association, and carried out yet another successful outreach to the mental health professional community. However, this last time, many problems came up with co-coordinator difficulties and insufficient numbers of volunteers, requiring more time commitment from existing volunteers and the outreach chair.

At this year's Region 7 (R7) spring assembly, I attended the R7 Outreach Committee, and heard from several committee members that they had found one-on-one outreach to professionals to be much more effective than the approach our IG has been using. Since it seems that enthusiasm on the part of our local volunteers has waned, I'm encouraged to change direction, and work toward a smaller-scale approach through our members directly to their own medical professionals, or to professionals they believe may be open to our message. I intend to discuss this between assemblies with other members of the R7 Outreach Committee, to help us at DC Metro plan the most effective way to conduct the one-on-one personal outreach that seems most successful. In addition, I think we need to work toward adequate exposure on the internet and in print. Again, I will look to my R7 family for ideas and support, and will be talking by email to the new Outreach Chair at R7 to get recommendations and advice.

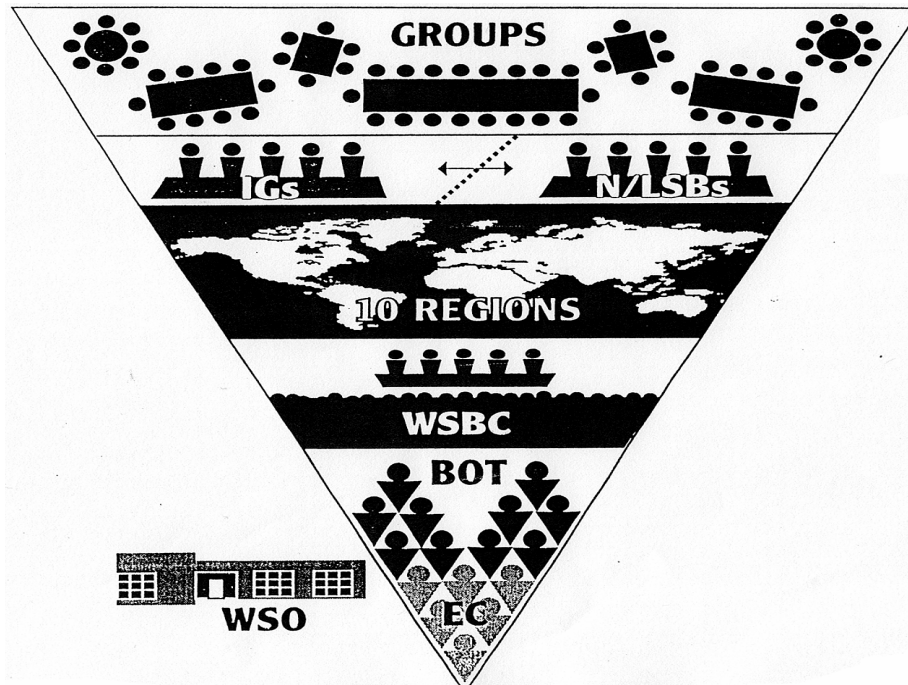
If reading this gets you excited about the possibilities of reaching out, I encourage you to join us at Intergroup in working to carry the message in a new way this year! No matter how you slice it, this kind of service remains deeply satisfying at an emotional and spiritual level for myself and nearly everyone else I've spoken with who has done it. I personally feel very blessed to be able to contribute to this kind of work for my beloved OA fellowship. PLEASE JOIN US! —BARB M. (Outreach Committee Chair)

There is No They or Them in OA, Only Us and We: *OA Service Structure and How Service, Services Us*

As your Intergroup Chair and as a member of our Fellowship for over 19 ½ years, I have been blessed with opportunity to do service at most levels of OA (meetings, Intergroup, Region, and World). The people in all of these rooms through out OA, have greatly impacted, shaped, and changed my program and my life. There is always someone that I can contact almost any hour of the day or night when I need to reach out; I am truly never alone in my disease. That is truly a gift of doing Service. Service does indeed serve us.

Over the years I have met many of our members who do not know or understand how OA is structured and how it all works. For many of us, there is the conception that OA is They or Them. In fact, there really is no They or Them, there is only Us and We. Our collective consensus (conscience) decides everything that happens in OA. It is We who have written all of our literature, determined our bylaws, policies, established our tools, concepts, traditions, steps, etc., not some mysterious entity. So with this in mind, the following is a brief tutorial on exactly how OA is structured. If you have any questions concerning this material, please don't hesitate to contact me with your questions or thoughts. In Fellowship and Service, NEAL S. (DC Area OA Intergroup Chair)

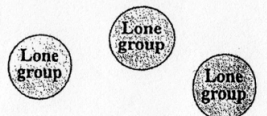
EMAIL NEAL S. AT chair@oa-dcmetro.org



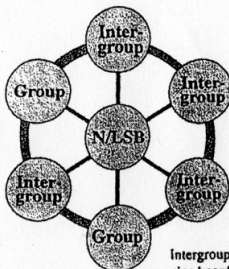
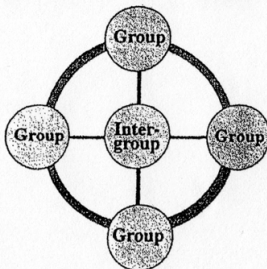
The OA Service Structure—Illustrated

Individual compulsive overeaters attend meetings which may be unaffiliated (registered with WSO but not part of an intergroup), or affiliated with an intergroup serving a general geographic locale.

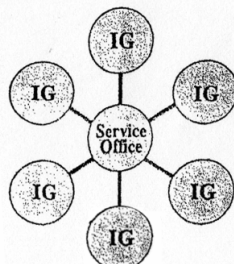
Affiliated meetings send representatives to their intergroup to participate in decisions regarding intergroup activities and other related issues.



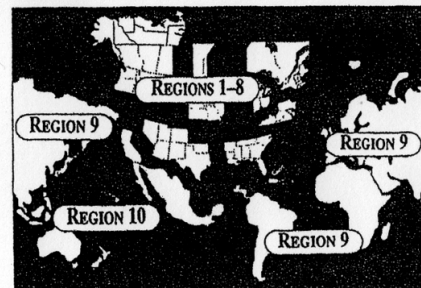
Lone groups and intergroups may send representatives to region assemblies to participate in decisions regarding regional activities and related issues.



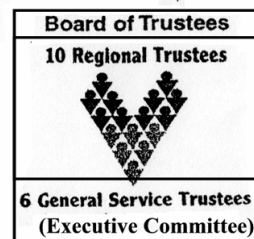
Intergroups and national or language service boards may send representatives to the annual WSBC to participate in decisions regarding new literature, election of trustees, and policies and procedures that affect OA as a whole.



As the need arises, an intergroup or cooperating intergroups may create centralized service offices to provide services such as responding to inquiries or coordinating special events or other services which are beyond the financial capability or volunteer-power of individual meetings or intergroups. These service offices have no authority, voice or representation in the OA service structure.



Region chairs attend the annual WSBC as region delegates, representing both their regions as a whole and the voices of the unaffiliated groups within their respective regions.



The Board of Trustees serves as custodian of our OA Traditions and interpreter of OA policies affecting OA as a whole. It also serves as liaison to the World Service Office in Rio Rancho, New Mexico. The WSO provides important services to the OA Fellowship and is funded by voluntary contributions and literature sales.

Where Do I Fit In?

Many members ask how and where they can involve themselves in OA service. Below is a list that can be discussed or distributed during the service portion of a Service & Traditions Workshop.

Group Level:

- Attend meetings
- Carry coffee supplies
- Arrange for meeting leaders/speakers
- Lead a meeting
- Make a telephone call
- Be a liaison between a group and other service bodies by:
- Attending Intergroup meetings, reporting actions and asking for group member input.
- Sharing mailings from Intergroup, Region and World Service with the group.
- Greet newcomers
- Unlock and/or help set-up meeting room
- Stock literature
- Be a sponsor/Get a sponsor
- Become a *Lifeline* representative

Intergroup level

- Participate in group conscience as an Intergroup representative
- Participate in Intergroup committees that:
 - Plan events (retreats, marathons, conventions, etc.)
 - Carry the message to non-OA bodies (Public Information)
 - Plan ways to raise funds (Ways & Means)
 - Assemble Speakers list
 - Keep all groups informed of coming events (Internal Information)
 - Assemble articles, type and distribute a Newsletter
- Become an Intergroup Officer
- Volunteer to answer the phone or work in the Intergroup Office
- Be a liaison between the Intergroup and other service bodies by being:
 - A representative to the Region, reporting actions and asking for Intergroup input
 - A World Service Delegate, reporting actions and asking for Intergroup input.

Region level

- Participate in group conscience as a Regional Representative at Regional business meetings ("Regional Assemblies").
- Become a committee member of a Region Committee that coordinates information from Intergroups throughout the Region through the following committees:
 - Public Information
 - Ways & Means
 - Twelfth Step Within
 - Professional Communities & Institutions
 - Bylaws/Policies & Procedures
 - Young People's
- Participate on a convention planning committee for the annual recovery convention on one of the following subcommittees:
 - Registration
 - Entertainment
 - Hotel Liaison
 - Literature
 - Program
 - Hospitality
 - Convention coordinator
 - Signs/Decorations
- Become a Region Officer
- Run for nomination as the Region Trustee, or as a General Service Trustee.

World Service Level

- Participate in group conscience for OA as a whole by being a World Service Business Conference Delegate
- Participate as a Conference Committee member on one of the following Committees:
 - Public Information
 - Hospitals, Institutions & Professionals (HIP)
 - Young People's
 - Ways and Means
 - Literature
 - Twelfth Step Within
 - Bylaws/Reference
 - Conference Planning
 - First Tradition
- Participate in Workshops at the World Service Business Conference
 - offer to lead a workshop when the request is sent to Delegates.
- Become a World Service Trustee who:
 - oversees the operation of the World Service Office (General Service Trustee)
 - acts as a liaison from World Service to the Region (Region Trustee)
 - implements the group conscience of the World Service Business Conference
 - Chairs or co-chairs one or more of the following committees:
 - History & Archives
 - Young People's
 - Conference Planning
 - Convention Planning
 - Hospitals, Institutions & Professionals (HIP)
 - Internal Information
 - Publications
 - Literature
 - Intergroups and Regions
 - Public Information
 - Twelfth Step Within
 - Foreign Publication
 - First Tradition
 - other ad hoc committees as needed

Resentments

"If you have a resentment you want to be free of, if you will pray for the person or the thing that you resent, you will be free. If you will ask in prayer for everything you want for yourself to be given to them, you will be free...Even when you don't really want it for them, and your prayers are only words and you don't mean it, go ahead and do it anyway. Do it every day for two weeks and you will find you have come to mean it and to want it for them, and you will realize that where you used to feel bitterness and resentment and hatred, you now feel compassionate understanding and love."

[PRAYER]: "Dear God, I have a resentment towards a person that I want to be free of. So, I am asking you to give this person everything I want for myself. Help me to feel compassionate understanding and love for this person. I pray that they will receive everything they need. Thank you God for your help and strength with this resentment. (BB, Freedom from Bondage: 552)

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Resentment is the number one offender. Harboring a resentment is like drinking poison & expecting the other person to die from it. Not gonna happen. One of my hot button character defects is having expectations. Geez, I am working on that one but still fall into the old way of thinking & expectations tend to be my thing. Expectations lead to resentments.

Resentments stem from anywhere. Yes, resentments are a way of life but it is not fundamentally the preeminent way for me to live my life. Holding resentments gnaws away at my insides—infecting my spirit, undermining my thoughts, corrupting my feelings, infiltrating my very soul as it floods every fiber of my essence with carcinogens. Fostering resentments also affects my social life, making it arduous to construct healthy relationships.

Focusing on my spiritual existence allows me to scrutinize myself & gives me the opportunity of getting to know myself better. Concentrating on my spiritual presence means I am embracing a mystical, ambrosial, transcendental, omniscient essence. I may engage in meditation, listen to soothing music, do some yoga to reach within to ponder on those debilitating resentments that strangle the heck out of me.

I have to catch my resentments and let them go without lashing out at others. I have to learn to forgive not so much to give individuals who may have hurt me—real or imagined —“a free pass,” but for me to grow and allow the sunlight of the spirit to nourish me!—DIANE

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

This is your newsletter. Please share your contributions, comments, and experience in the OA way of life. Publication of any contributions or editorial opinions does not imply endorsement by OA as a whole, but by the individuals who wrote them. Material submitted cannot be returned, may be edited for clarity or length, and other OA groups, without permission, may reprint all copy. Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis at ee12step@gmail.com, and should be sent in a Microsoft Word document attached to an e-mail.—ELISABETH L. (newsletter editor)

Washington D.C. Area OA Intergroup

Intergroup (IG) is a clearinghouse through which groups and members can communicate quickly and efficiently for the purpose of OA business. Each group affiliated with Intergroup may elect a member (and an alternate) to represent the group at the monthly Intergroup Meeting. IG operates a 24-hour answering service, maintains a local meeting list, publishes a monthly newsletter, disseminates information to the public, keeps the World Service Office informed of meeting changes, and arranges marathons and retreats. Intergroup meets on the second Saturday of each month, 10:30am-12:30pm. There is an OA meeting at 9:30am, just before the Intergroup meeting. Intergroup meetings are held at:

Holy Cross Hospital
1500 Forest Glen Rd
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Contact us by phone: 301-460-2800