

MARCH 2021

STEPS OF RECOVERY

OA SOUTH AND EAST ENGLAND INTERGROUP NEWSLETTER

COMING TO BELIEVE – CONNECTION WITH MY HIGHER POWER

Welcome to this newest issue of the OA South and East England Intergroup newsletter!

We published the first issue of our revamped newsletter back in December, which you can read [here](#) if you missed it!

This newsletter will be produced quarterly, and the topic for the next edition will be "Unity with Diversity - all are welcome here". We'd love to have your contributions, and also your feedback on the newsletter - keep reading to find out how to get in touch!

Please note that the opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of individual OA members and do not represent the views of OA South and East England Intergroup or OA as a whole





ACTING AS IF, AND FINDING MY WAY

I was born into a family involved in a rather left-field nonconformist church, and until I was 18 that was my life (emphatically not just on Sundays). So I knew I believed in God, but the church didn't dictate what I believed about God, so I had no real idea.

My first Sunday in my university town found me in town with a rucksack and boots and nowhere to go because the Freshers' Week hillwalking trip was overbooked. So I found the local branch of my church and was welcomed, fed, and made much of, and changed nothing much about my God. They went on feeding me free food, of which I ate a-plenty as my anorexia cut flesh off other meals and off me.

The same happened during postgraduate study in another town and my first job in a third. Two years before I hit rock bottom I applied for membership of the church. I had an interview at which I described my belief in God. I can't remember what I said, but the gist was to do with someone controlling the universe at

large with minimal intervention and certainly no interest in me (except maybe my constituent atoms). This was my best attempt as a physicist.

Rock bottom, OA and the Twelve Steps duly arrived, and I thought "At last a use for this God I'm supposed to have, after all these years". Of course, my physicist's God was no use for the Steps, so I "acted as if" there was a Higher

Rock bottom, OA and the Twelve Steps duly arrived

Power capable of loving me and whom it was worth thanking when things went well. That turned out to be often, and I also found out that thanking HP when things went badly but could have gone worse worked a treat, too.

I'm still a physicist, and that HP simply can't be real; but physicists "act as if" all the time, treating the world as flat, or atoms as indivisible points if it makes the maths work. Hence I have



no trouble with doing it to work the Steps, and then to do Step 10 with gratitude list, apologies (if necessary), and handing-over of problems and of people renting space in my head.

My HP was put under strain when I had an injury from exercising that seemed likely to take years (if at all) to heal. My mental pain and resentment

at HP were hard to bear, but by then (20 years into OA) I was so much in the habit of “acting as if” that I went on doing so, despite my resentment, and kept sane and abstinent until my injury was mostly healed. I’ve got another similar injury now, and coronavirus and lockdown all round me, and I’ve not stopped doing what works – acting as if HP loves me.



These beautiful cactus flowers bloom for no more than a couple of days, reminding us to live one day at a time!

Sheila P.

Not signed up yet to receive our newsletter directly? [Click here](#) to subscribe!



THE SOLUTION IS SIMPLE

I'm grateful for the wording in Step Two. 'Came to believe' suggests a process, an evolving, not a one time event. My Step One was so painful; truly admitting that I'm completely powerless over food and my body, and that my life is unmanageable, left me feeling very desperate. So, no amount of self-knowledge or will power could help me? I'm not greedy or lazy, I'm actually spiritually sick? I can't fix myself? Very scary!

Thankfully there is a solution; Step Two! Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a Power greater than ourselves' (p45 Big Book) The solution is remarkably simple! So simple in fact that I can hardly believe it. I have a mind that likes to over complicate things, is addicted to thinking negatively and believing its own thoughts.

I often try to think myself out of my own problems, chasing what I think I want with no perspective on what I

actually need. The result is often my solutions are far worse than the original problem. But by remembering my Step One I can focus on the solution: Step Two. If it's true that I cannot, on my own will power, eat and exercise in a way that's loving and honest, maybe this God-thing can help.

Don't believe in God? No problem.
Don't understand God? Also not

I have a mind that likes to over complicate things

necessary. 'We found that as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and express even a willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results, even though it was impossible for any of us to fully define or comprehend that Power, which is God.'(p46) I don't need to try and





wrap my head around the infinite, name the almighty, convert to any religion, take myself off to a cave or mountain top. All that is required is a tiny mustard seed of willingness to be open to the idea that it could, just maybe, be possible, that there might,

I can see evidence of God/love on a daily basis

just maybe, be a power greater than myself. God, Goddess, Allah, Muhammed, Jesus, Mother Nature, Spirit of the Universe, Gut Instinct, Good-Orderly-Direction, Group-Of-Drunks, Not-Me, Divine Beloved, Frank. Call it what you want, as long as it's not you.

I learnt that I had to fully surrender to the idea that my thinking around food and body image is distorted and not to

be trusted. Thoughts are not facts, and they're not instructions. There is a loving powerful energy that wants me to be happy and useful. Joy is the natural state. So I followed my sponsor's suggestions, despite my thoughts and feelings. And slowly I came to believe.

I can't see God, in the same way I can't see love (it's not like glitter falls out of someone's face when they love someone). But I can see evidence of God/love on a daily basis. My trust in God has grown, over time. It's a God of my experience, not my intellectual understanding. And sometimes the gap between where I am and where I want to be feels cavernous, the leap seems impossible. Until I remember we do this one day at a time, imperfectly, and together. 'When we saw others solve their problems by a simple reliance upon the Spirit of the Universe, we had to stop doubting the power of God. Our ideas did not work. But the God idea did.' (p52) When Step One gets painful enough Step Two looks easy. Thank God there is a solution!

Charlie B

**Our next Intergroup meeting is on Sat 1st May
– all are welcome to attend!**





FUN AND GAMES!

OA has lots of slogans that can help with our recovery, but how many can you recognise just from their initials?

ODAAT

PNP

LGLG

TTSP

CFTV, SFTS

AAI

FTF

FITYMI

BFTGOG

LALL

TTT

AITA

EDI

DQBTMH

Answers on the back page!





ALWAYS A WORK IN PROGRESS

Greetings from Hong Kong! I am a gratefully recovering compulsive eater and member of OA for 19 years, most of it based in London.

Had you told me, in my late teens, and still a normal size (though definitely not a normal eater) that from my late twenties I would gain about a stone a year until I had come close to doubling my weight; that from my early thirties I would start to suffer from a serious gastric disorder which would progress three stages in six years; that I would be informed by doctors that unchecked progression would significantly increase my chances by age 50 of suffering bowel cancer - the same disease from which a 49 year old relative was to die a couple of years later and, that even that information would not be sufficient to stop me eating the foods I knew were making me ill, I would have told you that was impossible.

Yet that was exactly what happened: such is the power of my self-will and of my addiction.

Had you told me, in my late thirties, after spending six years and a small

fortune trying every therapy and quack in town to deal with my gastric distress; after getting my GP to refer me to a dietician and for both private and NHS psychotherapy for my compulsive eating - all to no avail, that by sitting in a circle of like-minded sufferers from the disease I didn't yet know I had for an hour a few times a week; talking, listening and learning

By sitting in a circle of like-minded sufferers... talking, listening and learning ... I could be restored to sanity

about our shared experiences and working the solution available through the fellowship and 12 steps of Overeaters Anonymous, and later by additionally following a weighed and measured food plan, I could be "restored to sanity", I would also have told you that was impossible.

Yet that, too, was exactly what happened: such is the miraculous strength of a Power greater than both myself and the disease of compulsive eating with which I was born and with which - abstinent or not - I will die.





That “Power”, be it the OA fellowship itself, the benevolent spiritual power I have always felt accompanying me from childhood, the established religion I have been both comfortable with and proud to have been born into or some combination of all three, has given me, among countless others, the following gifts:

I am learning, a day and an experience at a time

- My six year-long gastric symptoms were removed without the need for medication or surgery. I have had only one serious relapse during a period of stress in 2006 since my first OA meeting four years earlier.
- My weight, after two decades of relentless, progressive gain, has been restored to a normal level from one where, under current UK legislation, I would have automatically qualified for gastric bypass surgery.

- I have begun to be able to pass on my experience, strength, and hope to others through sponsorship and service – the two actions proven most likely to help me stay abstinent.

Please don't get me wrong; mine has been a long, arduous journey full of potholes, breakdowns, and throwing myself into reverse. I wouldn't recommend my route to anyone, but for the fact that it is still unimaginably, miraculously better than anything I ever had before my first meeting. My self-will and my addiction are definitely and defiantly alive and well! As one very dear fellowship friend put it: “We addicts find out what works, then we stop doing it.”

But... I am learning, a day and an experience at a time - however grudgingly, however falteringly - to surrender that self-will to the God of my understanding, knowing that God has something much better for me in its place. A sponsor's sponsor once told me: if I am still obsessed with food, then whatever my current relationship with my Higher Power, it needs to change.

That is why my connection with my Higher Power will always be a work in progress.

Robin





INTERGROUP NEWS

All the latest news and updates from our Intergroup!

World Service Business Conference: Our outgoing delegate Jacqueline chaired a meeting in February to discuss the motions that will be debated and voted on at the Conference. Our new delegate Charlotte will attend and vote on our behalf - thank you both for your service!

Public Information: We also filled another vacant service positions and elected Kelly as new Public Information officer - welcome Kelly! This role involves dealing with media enquiries and other opportunities to carry the OA message in accordance with our Traditions

Carrying the message: Did you know that our Intergroup carries the OA message online via social media? Our Social Media Officer Charlie maintains our accounts - you can find us @oaseig on Twitter and Instagram

National Assembly 2022: Our Intergroup have decided to submit a bid to host the National Assembly next year! We've set up a committee to do some research into possible venues that could host the event, if you'd like to get involved please contact chair@oasouthandeastengland.org.uk

Website: Our Web Officer Robbie has been working with a web designer to completely overhaul our website. The new look will be revealed later this year, and will be eye-catching, easy to use and full of useful information - can't wait to see it!

Vacancies: We still have a vacant position for Vice Chair of Intergroup - the role involves supporting the work of the Chair and being part of the Executive Committee. Qualifications include one year of current continuous abstinence and to have attended at least two Intergroup meetings, and we'll be holding an election at our next meeting.





FINDING MY OWN WAY

When I came into recovery, I had no idea what coming to believe meant. As a recovering perfectionist, I wanted to get it straight away. In this attempt, I was calling fellows asking them what their definition of a Higher Power was. I was trying to define mine, to only find myself in disappointment because none of them would do the job.

This continued until I came to realise that there were no words that could encapsulate the notion of a Higher Power that would work for me.

The Big Book encourages us to find our own conception of a Higher Power. It invites us to have a personal experience with it. This is what I found to be true after having had my attempts at "keeping myself abstinent". All I had to do is to take the first step into the journey. Step two then became my starting point, a coming, one step into the right direction. I dropped notions and definitions and started having an open conversation with Him.

My journey in establishing a connection with my Higher Power wasn't one that had completion with

the end of the steps. It definitely didn't transform overnight upon taking the second step. This connection is something that I develop on a daily basis, every time I take a conscious breath. Each time I pause, choose differently, and rewrite my story. It evolves and expands when I show up to a meeting and share my ESH with another compulsive overeater. The relationship with Him is the most important I have today in my life.

All I had to do is to take the first step into the journey

I make sure I develop it on a daily basis. Being a personal one, I have to find meeting and share my ESH with another compulsive overeater. The relationship with Him is the most important I have today in my life. I make sure I develop it on a daily basis.

Being a personal one, I have to find my own way. There are no instructions for this, although having some basic meditation techniques comes handy.





God doesn't judge me or punish me. That I came to learn the hard way. His voice is quiet, sweet, and nourishing. He is calm, patient, and cheeky at times. Our relationship is made of fun and light moments but also serious conversations. I make sure to have a meeting with Him from time to time and discuss various areas of my life. I ask Him where would He want me to

Nurturing this connection gave me the opportunity to live a life beyond my wildest dreams

go from here. Bringing His vision into the world is my most treasured duty.

This journey of coming starts again and again at the dawn of a new day. Every day I have the opportunity to start with fresh new eyes and look upon His miraculous creation. I often like to go back to the pages in the Big

Book where Bill shares about the miracles of life, the wow effect of events that take place in nature.

Coming to believe is just that - a choice, a desire, an openness to the present moment. If I pay attention to this moment, I can have glimpses of His presence. I can track that which is miraculous in my everyday life: observing a flower blossoming, listening to the birds singing. Noticing my digestive system, being nourished by nutrient and vibrant food, the freshness of the water. Not to mention of the miracle of the breath and the power of the pause. That in itself deserves my full attention.

Nurturing this connection gave me the opportunity to live a life beyond my wildest dreams. In active addiction I couldn't show up to the simplest things in life. Today these are the ones I treasure the most. I pray and hope that you do, too. And that you start developing this personal experience with your Higher Power, making it as unique as you are.

Elena

Not signed up yet to receive our newsletter directly? [Click here](#) to subscribe!





PRACTICE THESE PRINCIPLES...

Step Twelve asks us to 'practice these principles in all our affairs', and here is one OA fellow's experience of how that works for her. Steps 7-12 will be covered in our next issue!

Step One – Honesty

For me learning about honesty in recovery, living the recovered life, is learning to accept the reality of my life, in all its strengths and areas of development. Learning to find and acknowledge feelings, that have been numbed through addiction. Learning the honesty of my experiences.

Knowing that my honesty changes over time as I grow in programme. My programme requires me to search for the true meaning of what is going on. So the shame of my childhood becomes recast as incidents of misfortune. My honesty is not static, but an evolving truth as I learn about myself and the world I live in.

Step Two – Hope

I have had many times when hope was not part of my reality. There have been times when I have seriously contemplated suicide and prepared for it. There was a time last year when the pain in my head meant that succumbing to delusions and a

different reality felt like a way out of pain. For many reasons I could step away from the abyss. For today hope means that there is a way forward, the next step, just for today. I do not know where things are going but I can make the next step.

Step 3 – Faith

Faith is about trust. Trusting my HP, myself, and those with whom I join hands, OA, family and friends. It is about taking action without knowing what the outcome could be. It is about accepting that I am not in charge of

everything. It is about having faith and trust in the process or principles rather than the expectations of outcome. It is about letting go and letting God. Having faith in programme when my addict head is telling me otherwise.





Step 4 – Courage

In living in recovery, I have had to learn to live in honesty, hope and faith. I have had to overcome many fears. Am I good enough? Will I be rejected? Am I worthy? Am I liked? Will you still love me? Learning to have the courage

to speak my honesty and truth. That takes courage for me which I have hidden in food or other addictions. This programme is about having the courage to be an adult in the world, not a child or a parent.

Step 5 – Integrity

On my wall when I was working was a poster that said, “Values inform Thinking informs Behaviour informs Outcomes.” Integrity for me is that the external world is a reflection of the internal world. That what I profess is reflected in my actions. It is about honesty in word and deed. It is honesty

about my side of the street. As I have journeyed through programme, I have continued to peel off layers of the onion of deceit and delusions that surrounded my addicted self. As I learn to gain integrity, I struggle and battle with this as I have grown up with blame, making judgements and hierarchy.

Step 6 – Willingness

Am I willing to do the next right thing? Sometimes I don't understand why I should. Sometimes I don't know where it will lead. Sometimes I am scared and fearful about the next right thing. There are times when I don't want to be willing. I don't want to share at

meetings, I want to stay in bed, I want to watch trashy TV. I want to jump off the roundabout called life. I want to retreat and not put my “hand in yours”. Willingness for me is about staying connected, practicing integrity, having courage. Sometimes it is hard.

Teresa





TOWARDS FAITH, PEACE AND SERENITY

My OA journey is a little unusual in that I made a commitment to attend to my spiritual wellbeing before I knew that OA existed. I had heard a speaker, who specialised in work with addictions say that anyone who was serious about addressing addiction must look after their spiritual health.

I decided I would find a way to do that and weeks later, a stranger told me about OA and how to get in touch!

Almost exactly a year ago, after making contact with an OA fellow by phone, I sucked up my courage and drove to my first face to face meeting. Nobody was there. In hindsight, I think this was a beautiful clue that a recovery journey isn't always straightforward. My journey hasn't been straightforward.

It took me a long time to find my first sponsor and it didn't work out. I have found a second sponsor and it is working beautifully. I have been abstinent and I have relapsed.

I have aimed for 90 meetings in 90 days and found that I just couldn't manage it. I have stumbled and cried through shares and have learned that sharing is giving service. I have worked my way through to Steps 8 and gone all the way back to Step 1 because I really needed to.

And all this time I know in my heart that I am on the right journey. I have come to believe more and more deeply that a Power greater than

**Each of my stumbles
has been a learning
opportunity**

myself can restore me to sanity. Every session with my sponsor, every meeting, every conversation with a fellow and even (especially) each of my stumbles has been an important learning opportunity to show me how





the programme works and how this Power is restoring me.

- I have learned that I am ‘insane’ and that it isn’t just about putting down the food. While I am very lucky and have many things for which I am grateful, it has taken OA to show me how I have been hiding from defects like self-centredness, selfishness, procrastination, resentment and fear. And there is a solution...

My life is shifting, slowly and steadily

- I have learned about self-will and surrender. I am finally aware that I have had all kinds of expectations of others and of what life should be and when people haven’t done what I thought they should do I

have behaved terribly and self-destructively. And I am willing to surrender.

- I have learned how to meditate and pray. Over the past year I have felt my mind relax. My moments of anger, martyrdom and despondency are fewer and farther between and I know what to do. I ask my Higher Power for help.
- I have learned – am still learning – how to be honest about food. This is still difficult as shame about my eating clings doggedly, but I work on it every day. I have so much hope.

As I look back on my first year in OA, I realise that the Steps, the Tools and the connections with the OA community have all served to grow my belief in a Higher Power and that my life is shifting slowly and steadily, like a vast turning ship, towards a life of faith, peace and serenity. I am so grateful.

Gwen, Scotland

**Our next Intergroup meeting is on Sat 1st May
– all are welcome to attend!**





Your newsletter – How to get involved!

Deadline: 16th May 2021

Write an article

The topic for our next newsletter is "Unity with Diversity - all are welcome here" Could you write 500-600 words on this topic? If you're not sure what to write, how about interviewing another OA fellow and ask them some questions relating to the topic?

If you're in your first year of OA recovery, you could also write an article for Newcomers' Corner!

Get creative!

We welcome creative contributions such as poems, art work, games etc that are related to recovery - we'd love to see what you can come up with!

Make suggestions for future newsletters

Do you have any ideas for improving the newsletter? Or ideas for future topics? Please get in touch!

Get in touch at

newsletter@oasouthandeastengland.org.uk

Please note: Contributions may be edited for length or for adherence to the Traditions. Depending on how many contributions are received, it may not be possible to publish them all.





FUN AND GAMES! – ANSWERS

How many OA slogans did you guess?

ODAAAT	One day at a time
PNP	Progress not perfection
LGLG	Let go, let God
TTSP	This too shall pass
CFTV, SFTS	Came for the vanity, stayed for the sanity
AAI	Act as if
FTF	First things first
FITYMI	Fake it til you make it
BFTGOG	But for the grace of God
LALL	Live and let live
TTT	Think, think, think
AITA	Acceptance is the answer
EDI	Easy does it
DQBTMH	Don't quit before the miracle happens

