

DECEMBER 2021

# STEPS OF RECOVERY

OA SOUTH AND EAST ENGLAND INTERGROUP NEWSLETTER



## CELEBRATING RECOVERY: HOW HAS OA CHANGED MY LIFE?

Welcome to this newest issue of the OA South and East England Intergroup newsletter! Our theme this month is all about the topic of celebrating the changes in our lives from coming into OA.

If you'd like to catch up on our previous issues, you can find them on our website [here](#).

At present, the Newsletter Officer role is vacant for 2022. We're hoping someone will take on the role so that the newsletter can continue - find out more on page 6.

*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.*



## I EXISTED BUT DID NOT LIVE...UNTIL OA

I am a compulsive overeater, I am also a binge eater, sugar, white flour and caffeine addict. At times I have also used laxatives and exercise to purge after a binge and as a form of self-abuse.

I have had a weight problem as long as I can remember and I have memories of being referred to as 'fatty' at school when I was about 7 years old, as well as other jibes. I realise now this was not my fault.

Over the years I have but existed, I did not live... my life was a series of small traumas that would always result with the comfort of food. Especially as it was the only drug available to me, my father was a JP and a daughter who was substance abusing would not have gone down well. I also shied away from alcohol as coming from an alcoholic household I knew I could become easily dependant.

I trained as a nurse, and being an empath, this was the ideal job, but I didn't enjoy it and spent those years in

a constant state of hypervigilance and anxiety, it was exhausting I hated the sensations of constantly being out of control.

I lost over 6st at this point due to a fertility condition being recognised. I mastered this with the help of a well-known diet club. I took part in their Slimmer of the Year competition which I didn't win, again I had failed myself,


**I hated the sensation of constantly being out of control**

yet again I wasn't good enough in my eyes.

I left nursing at the point of my second child arriving in the world and childcare becoming an issue, again a major trauma barged in to my life my daughter was born with a rare problem, and spent time in NICU, she

**Our next Intergroup meeting is on Sat 8th January – all are welcome to attend!**





was treated skilfully with surgery. My eating again became out of control. In 2019 I had the opportunity to run the London Marathon, at almost 17 stone and with only 16 weeks left, I accepted the challenge with the hope it would kick start yet another round of weight loss... all I got for my effort was mocking and abuse from many people and fast-food wrappers and boxes launched at me from passing

**I came back for the camaraderie – I was no longer alone!**

motorists. Someone at this point commented that I had the discipline to train and run a marathon and yet I couldn't stop eating. I couldn't answer as I didn't know then what I do now... it's a disease I am powerless over. After decades of unsuccessful weight loss ideas, I was at rock bottom, I decided then that I would remain overweight forever as diets do not work and are harder with each attempt.

It was when a celebrity died recently of anorexia and I followed links on

social media I ended up at the OA website. Knowing I was on the opposite side of the coin.

I joined a meeting. The first one wasn't as bad as I thought, I then did a few more every day for the first couple of weeks finding ones I liked and meeting people. It was reassuring that every meeting I went to people were sharing things I could relate to. I came back for the camaraderie... I was no longer alone! I was drawn to similar stories and became aware of the solution, that didn't involve any harsh punishing gruelling practices. Now I focus on the program and not my weight.

I took numbers from the chat and reached out by WhatsApp initially. I found I was drawn to particular person at a meeting I asked if they would sponsor me.

I read as much literature as I can and when I can. I meditate and pray each morning and night, I ask God as I understand God what their will is for me and what I can do each day, I also try and state my gratitude to them. I'm seven months in program, I don't know my weight because that is my higher power's business and not mine. I do one day at a time and I am willing

**Sarah**





## OA AND HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous says “God has abundantly supplied this world with fine doctors, psychologists and practitioners of various kinds. Do not hesitate to take your health problems to such persons”. And while this is a very clear endorsement for getting outside help, I, like I think a lot of people in OA, have had mixed experiences when it comes to healthcare.

Before recovery I lived in denial. I had no relationship with my body at all. Dr Google was my GP for a good few years and the dentist gave up sending me letters about my overdue check-ups. In fact, the fear that a doctor might tell me that the shooting pains in my thighs were because of my weight helped nudge me into OA.

I have now been blessed with 3 years of abstinence (including losing 76kg/12 stone so far) but I have had numerous health problems during that time - some of them a direct result of the years of self-abuse from my compulsive overeating. While I thank God for the different medical professionals I have seen, some have

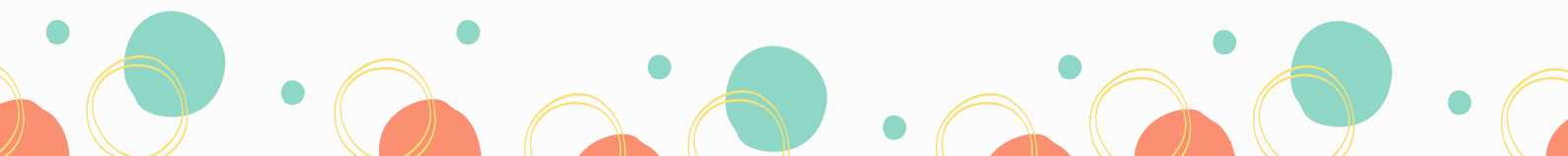
certainly been more open and understanding of my OA journey than others.


A lot of the professionals I've seen were confused on what a 12-step food addiction programme was about. Some were dismissive and saw it as irrelevant. Some were fascinated and wanted to know all about it. What I do know is that when I went through an

### **Before recovery, I lived in denial**

NHS weight loss scheme, none of the nutritionists, doctors or experts I saw were able to pick up that I had a very dangerous relationship with food. Thankfully, regardless of the opinions of medics, no longer being in denial about my body and my health is as much a part of my physical recovery as my weight loss. Showing up and looking after my health is what God would have me do.

In my day-to-day life, I work alongside the NHS so when I heard that there was a service position at intergroup





called 'professional outreach' where I could carry the message to medical professionals, it felt like a God job! When I have medical professionals who can work with and understand my spiritual programme, it's much easier for me to work with their medical interventions.

It has therefore been such a blessing to speak to healthcare professionals about what OA is, how it works, and what it has done for me. I spoke to a nurse who wanted to tell her patients waiting for bariatric surgery about OA. I submitted to a consultation on national guidelines that will hopefully encourage GPs to screen for eating disorders or even refer to OA when someone says they want help to lose weight. Also, I recently spoke to a charity called the Sick Doctors Trust who provide advice to medical professionals who are worried about their own issues with addiction.

Service is a wonderful tool in OA and being able to give service in this way has been a gift. It can sometimes feel tricky making sure I don't overstep the

Traditions but it is very possible to talk to doctors in a way that honours our public relations policy of attraction rather than promotion. I don't know if we'll ever get to a place where everyone in the NHS understands eating disorders and the spiritual

**It is very possible to talk to doctors in a way that honours our policy of attraction not promotion**

solution, but if a few more can reach out to the compulsive overeater who still suffers and point them in our fellowship's direction, that sounds good to me.

*Hannah*

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





# OPPORTUNITY FOR SERVICE!

## The Newsletter Officer role is vacant for 2022

Our newsletter was relaunched last year after quite a long break, and our readership has been steadily growing over the last year - we now have over 150 people signed up to our mailing list, and many more have been accessing the newsletter via our website, social media and through sharing on WhatsApp.

As the outgoing Newsletter Officer, I'd really love to see it continue as a way for us to share stories of recovery as well as celebrate the work that's being done at Intergroup. At present, if we do not find someone to take on the role, then the newsletter will go on temporary hiatus until we have someone able to offer service.

## Could you help?

We have lots of helpful instructions for how to design and distribute the newsletter, and I would be very happy to mentor someone into the role.

There are some qualifications for the role, including to have 6 months of current continuous abstinence, to have attended at least two Intergroup meetings, to have been working the Steps for at least 6 months and to be a regular attendee of an active OA meeting for at least a year.

If you might be interested, or would like to find out more about what's involved, please do get in touch at [newsletter@oasouthandeastengland.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@oasouthandeastengland.org.uk)

# NEW OFFICER POSITION – GROUP SUPPORT OFFICER

At the November Intergroup meeting, we voted to create the new role of Group Support Officer.

One of the responsibilities of the role is to be a first point of contact for group enquiries at Intergroup, assist with queries about setting up new groups and offering assistance to existing groups who may be experiencing difficulties.

Please feel free to reach out at [groupsupport@oasouthandengland.org.uk](mailto:groupsupport@oasouthandengland.org.uk)





## RECOVERY FILLED MY LIFE WITH VIBRANT COLOUR

When given the theme for this article, lots of ideas came to mind, and then, how can I fit this into 500-600 words?! How has recovery changed my life? In an infinite number of ways, ways I couldn't have imagined. Like many of us I came into the rooms on my knees, sick and tired of being on a treadmill of dieting and bingeing, exhausted by all the other methods I'd tried, and desperate for a solution. I convinced myself that I didn't even care about the weight I was carrying, I just wanted the constant obsession and head noise to stop. Dieting didn't work anymore, and I was still hoping for a magic pill.

What I found was an amazing way of living and the beginning of a journey that was truly life changing. I knew I had a problem with food, and I thought if I lost weight my life would be perfect. What I learned whilst surrounded by loving, supportive and honest fellows, was that my problem was my reaction to life. I have a spiritual malady and I need a spiritual solution.

I grieved my reliance on food, but as my connection and relationship with a Higher Power of my understanding

grew, I found new acceptance of myself, others and life. Through previous therapy, I'd learnt about how my past affected me. In recovery I learnt how I could live now, without reliance on food. I thought for a while that it was my responsibility to 'swear off' the food, but whilst I focused on the steps and picked up the tools, the obsession began to lift. I think of this


**My learning in recovery continues no matter how long I'm here**

illness we have as an entity that lives with me, and when I'm in a good spiritual condition the volume is down. If I'm triggered or in denial about something the volume goes up – these days it's a barometer that can show me I'm not emotionally sober.

My learning in recovery continues. No matter how long I'm here, or how many days, weeks, months or years my abstinence has been gifted to me, I'm still learning. I'm lucky enough to be experiencing healing relationships with family, I've learnt to speak up, and to deal with my reactions safely,







without harming another. If I do, it's a lesson in humility, and I need God to help me change.

Today I eat 3 meals a day and I have a life in between. I'm more productive at work, I've found hobbies I love, I'm not so afraid, I'm comfortable in my own skin most of the time. Yes, it's great fitting into the same clothes this year

**I have peace of  
mind that I never  
thought possible**

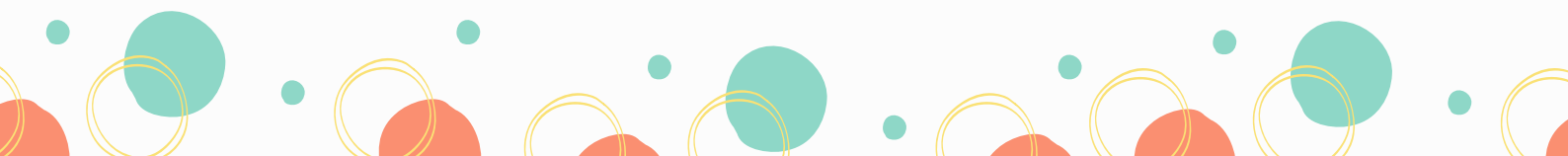
as I did last year thanks to the release of weight, but recovery is so much more. I have a new way of life which gives me a purpose, before I was like paper floating about being battered by the wind. Today I feel grounded in my faith in my Higher Power – I know life isn't 'perfect', there's still challenges and difficulties. My faith, the support of the fellowship, feeling

and working step 10, I turn my worries and defects over to God and I'm able to navigate these obstacles. I truly believe that no matter what happens, I'll be given what I need when I need it.

I quite like who I've become, I feel quiet confidence, I feel more worthy and I have such peace of mind that I never thought possible. I feel joy and gratitude. I still get angry, jealous and can fall into self pity, but I have a framework to deal with that – otherwise I wouldn't need to keep coming back to meetings and doing inventory right?

Tonight I wrote on my gratitude list that I really do have a blessed life, this a gift from working the 12 steps and giving back what I have been given is my thankfulness in action. Before recovery my life was black and white, today it's full of wonderful vibrant colours.

**Becky**







# INTERGROUP NEWS

At our November IG meeting, we elected officers to fill service positions for 2022.

We'd like to introduce our new Intergroup board of officers - thanks to everyone for volunteering your service!

- Chair - Hannah
- Vice Chair- Vacant
- Treasurer - Natalie
- Executive Secretary - Darren
- Minutes Secretary - Pam
- Website Officer - Robbie
- Social Media Officer - Vacant
- Newsletter Officer - Vacant
- Telephone Officer - Mandy
- Public Information Officer - Vacant
- Professional Outreach Officer - Vacant
- World Service Business Conference delegate - Charlotte
- Group Support Officer - Caroline
- Virtual Space Officer - Belle
- Meeting Host - Natasha
- Co Host - Vacant
- Greeter - Vacant

Thank you to all our outgoing officers for all your hard work.

We've still got some positions to fill, so we'll hold elections again in January (and beyond if there are still gaps!)



# ALWAYS REMAINING TEACHABLE

During my 29 years in OA I have learned many lessons and would like to share some of them with you. I also know that an important part of my recovery is to remain teachable for the rest of my life and continue to learn more lessons.

When I came into OA, I heard three things which have had a positive impact on me. First was “Meeting makers make it”. The second was “Take what you like and leave the rest”. The third was “Keep coming back no matter what”.

Another important lesson took me over 15 years to learn and that was having a Sponsor to lead me through the 12 steps and helps me learn how to work the program.

Once I had a Sponsor, I also learned the importance of giving service above the Group level. Service is not an option it is a requirement as an important part of my recovery. It “only” took me 80 years to attend my first WSBC as a delegate.

Another lesson was not to ask why did God do this “To” me but why did God

do this “For” me. For example, when I came into OA I asked “Why did God do this To me”. Now I realize “Why God did this For me”. OA has saved my life physically, emotionally and spiritually.

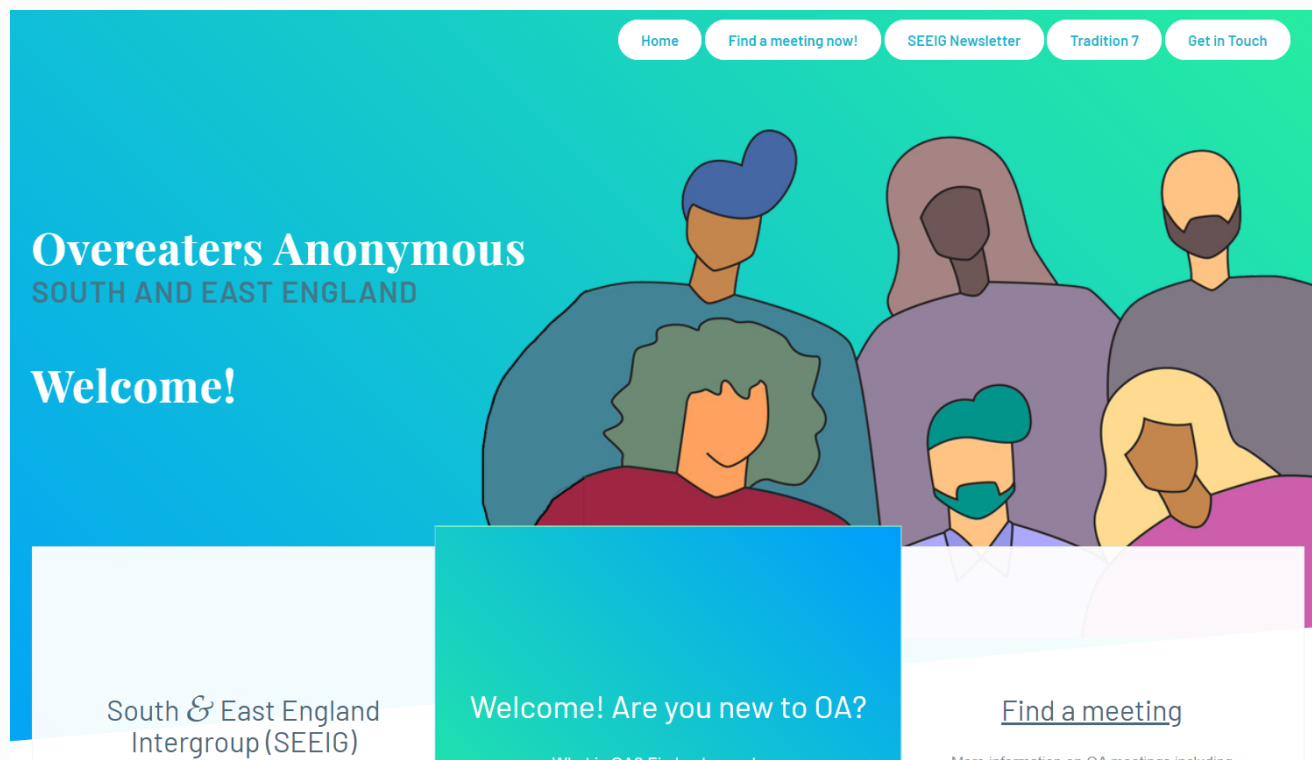
Define Higher Power or God as you understand Him and acknowledge that He loves you every moment of every day and is always available to help you. Ask Him for help. I also learned from an OA friend about writing a letter to God and having Him write back to me. I do that as part of my daily devotions which includes reading “For Today”, “Voices of Recovery” other religious readings and using the Region 7 Journal as well as beginning with a time of meditation.

**There are six As in my OA program.**

- 1. Awareness that there is an OA program**
- 2. Acceptance that I had a disease and my life was unmanageable**
- 3. Ask-my HP whom I call God what Action I need to take**
- 4. Action-my HP’s action not my action**
- 5. Amnesia –I forget what I need to do**
- 6. Abstinence-for me its imperfect-physical, emotional and spiritual which helps me to connect with my HP whom I need to work my program.**

*Bob*

# WE'VE RELAUNCHED OUR WEBSITE!



If you've visited our website recently, you'll have seen that it's had a complete redesign, and it's looking pretty fabulous!

Over a year ago, our Web Officer Robbie brought a proposal to Intergroup that we should redesign our website to make it more modern and easier for visitors to use. Changing the site would also make it easier to update and maintain, opening up the Web Officer role to those without any coding experience.

Intergroup gave their approval for the changes, and the new website has

been a lengthy project taking many hours of work.

We also hired a web designer to assist with the more technical aspects of the redesign, and advise on making it user friendly.

We now have a bright and attractive website full of useful information for newcomers, OA fellows and Intergroup officers and reps - thanks so much to Robbie for your hard work and dedication!

[www.oasouthandeastengland.org.uk](http://www.oasouthandeastengland.org.uk)



# OA HAS TAUGHT ME I DON'T NEED TO DO IT ON MY OWN

Hello, my name is Natasha and I am a compulsive eater. Being in OA has completely transformed my life and outlook; my mind and body and spirit have been forever changed. I came into recovery over a decade ago, feeling lost, empty and stuck, positively overwhelmed by my inability to evade body obsession and control. This manifested itself in policing my calorie intake, working out to excess, researching diets, worrying about how others saw me, and scrutinising my body in the mirror and on the scales. My distorted 'assessment' felt equivalent to my worth, and ultimately influenced my mood.


Once desperate enough to want something different for myself, I became determined to immerse myself in a fellowship that promised me freedom; I found a sponsor who had what I wanted and started working the steps and tools to the best of my ability. She graciously shared with me what had helped her and how these tools/lessons could be applied to all areas of her life. She introduced me to affirmations (like the OA slogans, but personal to me), which allowed me to find a focus for my meditation and


when I felt disturbed or agitated through the day I could pause, assess the truth of the scenario and refocus, rather than get pulled down by an (often fear and shame filled) narrative I would put on things.

Given that acceptance really is the answer to all of my problems today, one of the activities she encouraged was for me to say one of the affirmations three times, while looking at myself in a mirror in my underwear, without judgement, just as I was. I

**Acceptance really is the answer to all of my problems today**

cried through that exercise for the first weeks that I did it, eventually coming to recognise that a lot of that sadness came from how disconnected I had become from what my body really needed and how I had been punishing it/myself in response to having big feelings, as all humans do. How I had failed to recognise just how capable it was and how strong and beautiful it was, just as it was, no matter what I





looked like or weighed. She encouraged me to choose parts of my physical self that I loved and to adorn them as if I loved them, so that I could start to reframe my relationship with it. Spoiler alert; it worked!

Instead of 'acting out' in trying to control my body, the tools, particularly writing and having an action plan for when things felt intense, have saved

**OA taught me I am allowed to take up space and be seen in the world**

me on many an occasion, as has outreach. OA taught me that I need not do this (life/ recovery) alone, that asking for help is brave and allows other people to be of service and that I am allowed to take up space and be seen in the world; to claim my seat by opening my mouth in meetings to speak my truth and to confidently pass on that which I have been freely given, when I am ready to. The confidence I have gained in recovery helps me speak in front of hundreds of

people at work; I am able to reframe things that feel daunting, to right size them and work through them one action at a time, one moment at a time, without the need to be 'perfect'. I no longer hate every part of me, but instead strive to meet them with as much love and kindness as I can, particularly when overwhelmed. My plan of eating has one rule: to be loving in frequency and quantity; nothing more. For me, this says it all.

My day starts with a loving kindness meditation (so I can see myself and others how my HP would have me), with writing and breathing and setting my intentions for the day, followed by treating my body with kindness as I get ready for my day, culminating in marvelling at the changing seasons as I take my first sips of water and breathe and allow myself to be still in gratitude that I am alive.

If you had told 21 year old me that anything near this would have been possible, she would have laughed at you. For today, this is my truth (and it is overwhelming to the point of tears, in a good way). As long as I keep doing the next right thing with love, anything is possible.

**Natasha**



# NATIONAL SERVICE BOARD VACANCIES

**Are you willing to do service? The OAGB NSB needs to co-opt new board members. Could this be you?**

**Join us, and strengthen your recovery.**

**We have gained the following:**

**"Learning,  
Stretching and Recovery"**

**"Challenge, Support,  
And Team"**

**"Giving Back,  
Gratitude and Fullfilment"**

**"Belonging, Trust,  
and Expansion"**

**Have I experience of service above group level? Have I been abstinent for a year? Am I working with a Sponsor? Am I happy to work within the traditions and concepts? Have I been nudged by my Higher Power? Have I asked what my Higher Power wants for me and my fellows? If YES email us at [nsb@oagb.org.uk](mailto:nsb@oagb.org.uk).**

Could you consider joining the OAGB National Service Board?

After our National Assembly in October 2021, we are left with 3 members serving on the National Service Board (NSB), one of which will be stepping down in 2022.

We do not want to be in a position where we have to close down our NSB, so we would LOVE to encourage more fellows to be co-opted.

Our bylaws state that we can co-opt onto the board until we have 5 members. This means we have the potential for 3 more fellows to join us!

Please distribute the above flyer far and as wide as you can.

To find out more about the service we do please email [nsb@oagb.org.uk](mailto:nsb@oagb.org.uk)

OAGB really looks forward to receiving your applications!