

LETTERS OF HOPE

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"The opinions expressed herein are those of the individual OA member and do not necessarily represent those of the Director, DMI, or OA as a whole."

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How Five Male Alcoholics Saved my Abstinence

I had barely slept all night. I was so upset that once again, I was totally consumed with the idea of food and flirting with breaking my abstinence. Food and eating were all I could think of even though I was on vacation at one of the most beautiful places on the planet, a place that was usually a happy one for me.

But this time vacation wasn't going as well as usual. I had been so worried about my house guests having fun that I had not fully enjoyed our time together. Furthermore, I was worried about my kids and issues they were facing, doubting that even God could take care of their problems. I had not been in regular touch with God like I used to be. I didn't know why until yesterday when I attended an AA meeting (because there was no OA meeting where I vacationed).

In that AA meeting, I started crying when someone said that he "was cross with life." Was I cross with life? More like disillusioned, I would say. Disgruntled. Disappointed in certain things. Sad. Angry. That meeting was the first I had attended during the 3 ½ weeks I had been travelling, and it triggered some very strong feelings. At my sponsor's urging, I went to another AA meeting this morning.

When I arrived, I felt uncomfortable because I am not an alcoholic, I was the only woman in the room, and I wasn't sure how much I was allowed to share since I am from a different 12 step program. I listened for the first part of the meeting as tears welled up in my eyes. I could almost hear my sponsor saying, "Talk. It is OK. Talk about your feelings." Taking a deep breath, I introduced myself, saying that I was addicted to certain foods, not alcohol, and that I was discouraged because of the mental obsession I felt. I went on to say how sad and angry I was about certain aspects of my life – my unhealthy sibling, the three parents I had buried in my lifetime, and problems in significant relationships. I said I missed my sponsor, home group, and family. I knew I was seriously close to breaking my abstinence, and wondered if a break had not been coming for a long time.

(Continued on Page 2)

Focus on Step 9

*"Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."
OA 12 & 12*

In practicing Step 9, we:

1. Have completed Steps 1 – 7 to the best of our ability,
2. have spent an appropriate amount of time on Step 8 with ourselves (perhaps consulting our Fourth Step inventory), our Higher Power, and our sponsor to determine who our failings have harmed and in what way they have been injured,
3. have prayed for the willingness to do whatever is appropriate and necessary to make restitution for our actions, and submitted our fear or pride about the amends process to our Higher Power,
4. and have proceeded to make an appropriate amends to all persons on our Step 8 list.

Step 9 is one of the crucial "action" steps, and according to The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, it is after the practice of this step that the Promises begin to be fulfilled.

Utilizing the help of a sponsor is very important in the making of our amends. Their feedback and guidance can assist us in making the best form of amends in each situation. It can be difficult to determine on our own what sort of amends ought to be made directly, or where direct amends might cause more harm than good. There are also situations where those to whom we need to make amends have passed away or with whom we have lost contact. In every situation, consulting with our Higher Power and our sponsor will help us determine the appropriate amends.

The Amends process is varied. Some of us find that making amends requires a single conversation with certain people, while with others it may not require words but rather a "living" amends: a different pattern of interaction with that person than what we have pursued previously. Amends can take many different forms, and as always, we are not alone. Our Higher Power will show us the way and give us the opportunities – but we must be humble, willing, ready, and courageous.

OA 12 & 12: pages 112 - 119

The Big Book of AA: page 76 - 84

Voices of Recovery: pages 68, 88, 202, 214, 245, 246

For Today: pages 50, 171, 290

Story continued from Page 1:

Suddenly the topic of the meeting shifted to the importance of emoting. One man said his wife was a great crier and that she was visibly better once she had a good cry. Another man said he cries frequently and would be there for me or anyone else who wanted to cry. A third man talked about how he fell apart when his wife died, and what a relief his emoting had been. I couldn't believe it; not only were these men accepting me, but they were also encouraging me to express my feelings. The shares shifted to the importance of sharing our burdens with each other and with our HPs and to the necessity of banding together to help one another. Now I was smiling because I felt accepted, relieved, and hopeful. The men also talked about the rejuvenating, centering effect of a meeting and how taking even one drink would surely lead them to death.

How 5 male, recovering alcoholics saved this compulsive eater from despair and possible relapse is nothing short of a miracle that speaks volumes about the importance of meetings, even when we cannot find an OA meeting. I went to the meeting feeling negative, upset, and hopeless. I left feeling supported, content, and re-committed to my program.

- Anonymous

**If you have a recovery story of your own to tell, please submit it to
rosej2911@yahoo.com**

Heard at a Meeting:

- You can't speed up your recovery, but you sure can slow it down
- Unless I accept my virtues, I will be overwhelmed with my faults
- The most natural state of a compulsive overeater is irritable, restless, and discontented

- Collected and submitted by Mary

The following is reprinted from:
World Service Business Conference (WSBC)

2014 ASK-IT BASKET QUESTIONS

Do You Have Any Specific Suggestions On How To Encourage A Climate Of Recovery In Our Meetings (Other Than The Suggested Meeting Format)?

Answers provided by members of the Board of Trustees
[Note from the editor. This reprinting gives our readers some insight into some of the topics discussed and viewpoints represented at the WSBC this year.]

In many AA meetings, non-sober members are not allowed to share. OA favors giving a voice to everyone. Does this mean sharing about lack of abstinence is okay? Would it be okay to ask people their length of abstinence at the start and for the speaker to then call on those with the longest abstinence to share first, before getting to non-abstinent members (if they share at all)?

In strong meetings, members share things that give hope, and they share things we can all identify with. I think this creates a "climate of recovery." Some meetings have a group conscience and decide to suggest that members have a certain length of abstinence before they share. According to Tradition Four, groups are autonomous, so they can do this. However, Tradition Three says, "The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop eating compulsively." This means that groups cannot require members to be abstinent in order to speak.

I have been encouraged to begin my shares by "identifying." That means saying how long I have been in program, how long I have been abstinent, how long I've been at my healthy body weight, and how much weight I have lost or gained to get to a healthy body weight. Saying this gives hope that recovery is possible. So I believe that sharing this information at the beginning of my share is a good thing. Sometimes newcomers may be better able to relate to someone who is newly abstinent rather than long-timers who may have forgotten what it used to be like. As you mentioned, the Suggested Meeting Format found in the Group Support page of our website is a good guideline to help achieve a climate of recovery. I'll quote a few suggestions from the Format.

SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR SHARING: "As you share your experience and strength in OA, please also share your hope. Please confine your sharing to your experience with the disease of compulsive eating, the solution offered by OA and your own recovery from the disease, rather than just the events of the day or week. If you are having difficulties,

share how you use the program to deal with them. If you need to talk more about your difficulties and seek solutions, we suggest you speak to your sponsor and other members after the meeting."

Some of us say, "Share the message at the meeting and the mess with your sponsor." Others say, we ask for "positive pitches" or strongly suggest that non-abstinent people close their mouths and open their ears and minds. Sharing that you are having trouble becoming abstinent is one thing but bragging about it and expecting sympathy is not positive or helpful to the meeting. The intent is to let the solution come forth from within the group rather than to listen to the problem, which other members in pain already know too well.

Again, the Suggested Meetings Format offers good guidelines: "Feedback, cross talk and advice-giving are discouraged here. Cross talk during an OA meeting is giving advice to others who have already shared, speaking directly to another person rather than to the group and questioning or interrupting the person speaking or sharing at the time. We ask everyone to respect our group conscience. This meeting has decided that the chair for each meeting has the discretion to suggest to anyone sharing that he or she is off topic or is speaking too long. This meeting asks you to accept this suggestion in order to keep the meeting on track." [We suggest you add here any other guidelines your group conscience has decided to follow.] This means that the meeting leader should kindly try to get the meeting back on track if a newcomer shares too long or goes too far off track. We have all suffered from "terminal uniqueness" when we first come into the rooms and many of us have control issues too. Some groups decide to use a timer for shares. This is a non-judgmental way to help limit any shares that may go off track. Many meetings go around the circle with shares so everyone gets a chance. This makes everyone feel welcome. I think this is a better way than having the speaker choose who gets to speak next.

Allowing a newcomer to speak can help them realize they are not alone, and it helps us to remember what we used to be like. Many newcomers will be disheartened if they are not allowed to share. They are "home" and we should try to make them feel that way. The Strong Meeting Checklist found on the Group Support page on our website under the Members/Group section says just that. Are we welcoming? Do we follow a format? Do we hold a regular group conscience meeting? Do we avoid cross talk and advice giving?

OA Meetings in the Dallas Metroplex:

Sun	10:00 am	Richardson - DMI Svc Center, 331 Melrose, Suite 116 (ent #2 - entry code 0333*)	Literature - For Today
Sun	4:00 pm	Tyler – Christ Church Episcopal, 118 S. Bois D’Arc. Brandi, 903-316-8002	Open
Sun	6:00 pm	Richardson - DMI Svc Center, 331 Melrose, Suite 116 (entrance # 2 - entry code 0333*)(3rd Sunday of month only)	Intergroup Business Meeting
Sun	7:00 pm	Dallas - Congregation Ohr Hatorah - 6324 Churchill Way, btwn Preston & Hillcrest Phone Mtg also: 712-775-7100, access# 897214	90 Day and Phone
Mon	Noon	Plano - Prairie Creek Baptist Church, 3201 W. 15th Street, Room 103	Leader's choice
Mon	12:10 pm	Dallas - St. Matthews Episcopal Cathedral 5100 Ross Ave., Garrett Hall, The Garrett Room. Park off Garrett Ave in circle drive - use side ent. w/ chair ramp, ring bell	Literature - For Today
Mon	7:00 pm	Richardson - Arapaho Methodist Church, Arapaho at Coit. Anna, 214-663-5895	Literature/Discussion
Mon	7:00 pm	Duncanville - Charlton Methodist Hospital, 3500 Wheatland, 3rd floor, Conf Room 5	OA12&12/Big Book
Mon	7:30 pm	Lewisville- First United Methodist Church, 907 W. Main Street, Room 123 (near the church offices). Off I-35 on Main Street. Michele T., 972-539-4248	Leader's Choice Closed Meeting
Tues	10:00 am	Mesquite - Ridge Park Christian Church - 2701 N. Town East Road, Parlor	Literature
Tues	Noon	Plano - Prairie Creek Baptist Church, 3201 W.15th St. Plano, Room 103	Abstinence Lit.
Tues	5:30 pm	Mineola-St. Dunston’s Episcopal Church, 800 N. Johnson St.	
Tues	6:00 pm	Palestine - Palestine Regional Rehab Hospital (Dogwood Room), 4000 S. Loop 256	Leader’s Choice
Tues	6:00 pm	Plano – New Location—2109 W. Parker Rd., Ste 728, Plano. Call Carol B. for directions, 214-228-2830.	
Tues	7:00 pm	Denton – Beginning August 5 th , First United Methodist Church, 201 South Locust, Room 200. Enter through the North entrance facing Mulberry St. Contact Kay with questions, 940-594-1650	
Tues	7:30 pm	Farmers Branch – Faith Un. Presbyter. Church, 12717 Marsh Lane, 1 block N of LBJ	Lit—OA 12&12
Wed	noon	Plano – Prairie Creek Baptist Church, 3201 W. 15 th Street, Room 103	Literature – Lifeline
Wed	12:10 pm	Dallas – Holy Trinity Cath. Church, 3826 Gilbert Ave., Commun. Life Ctr. Media Room	Lit–Abstinence
Wed	7:00 pm	Lewisville – First United Methodist Church, 907 W. Main Street, Family Life Center (behind church) – 2 nd floor – Room 303	Step Study / Writing
Wed	6:30 pm	Phone Meeting: 712-775-7100 access# 897214	90 Day Phone
Wed	7:30 pm	McKinney Care and Share – Medical Ctr of McKinney, 130 N. Central Expressway	Leader’s Choice
Thur	12:10	Dallas – Holy Trinity Catholic Church, 3826 Gilbert Ave, Community Life Ctr. Media Room	Lit–OA 12 & 12
Thur	noon	Tyler – First Christian Church, 4202 S. Broadway, Tyler,	Open
Thur	noon	Plano – Prairie Creek Baptist Church, 3201 W. 15 th St. Plano, Room 103	Writing
Thur	noon	Sherman – Wood Street Church of Christ, 2100 N. Wood St <i>Lunchtime meeting please feel free to bring your sack lunch!</i>	Open
Thur	7:00 pm	Richardson – DMI Svc Center, 331 Melrose, Suite 116 (entrance # 2 – entry code is 0333*)	Discuss Lit
Thur	7:00 pm	Mesquite – Eastridge Park Christian Church, 2701 North Town East Blvd. Parlor Room	Step Study
Fri	10:00 am	Mesquite – First United Methodist Church – 300 North Galloway	Literature
Fri	noon	Plano – Prairie Creek Baptist Church, 3201 W. 15 th Street, Room 103	Literature – Big Book
Sat	7:00 am	Plano – ODAAT 2109 W. Parker Road, Suite 728, Plano	Men’s Meeting
Sat	9:00 am	Plano – New Location—2109 W. Parker Rd., Ste 728, Plano. Call Carol B. for directions, 214-228-2830.	Discuss Lit
Sat	9:00 am	Frisco – First United Methodist Church, 7659 Preston Road, Room #1 in the Ministries Building (brick building on the south side)	Leader’s Choice Closed Meeting
Sat	9:00 am	Whitehouse– Gateway Baptist Church, 101 Leisure Lane. Lee, 903-571-8938	Newcomer Meeting
Sat	10 am	Palestine - Palestine Regional Rehab Hospital (Dogwood Room) - 4000 S. Loop 256- Contact for both Tues and Sat meetings is Cheryl, 903-948-2956	Steps/Traditions/Topics
Sat	11:00 am	Farmers Branch - Faith United Presby. Church, 12717 Marsh Lane, 1 block N of LBJ	Lit-Steps & Trads
Sat	noon	Dallas - Our Redeemer Lutheran Church - 7611 Park Lane at Boedecker. Behind sanctuary from Boedecker, Call Ryan R for info, 469-233-0945	Men’s Meeting

Last updated 7/15/14