

A BITE OF RECOVERY

*Behaviour

*Information

*Thoughts

*Emotions

Season's Greetings!



Welcome!

Thank you for picking up the second issue of **A Bite of Recovery Newsletter!** Issues will be released quarterly, each focusing on a small “B.I.T.E.” of recovery: Behaviour, Information, Thoughts, Emotions.

We hope to highlight upcoming events, supports for newcomers, member stories and program tools.

If you have any suggestions for upcoming topics, articles, or would like to join the newsletter working group, please email us at:

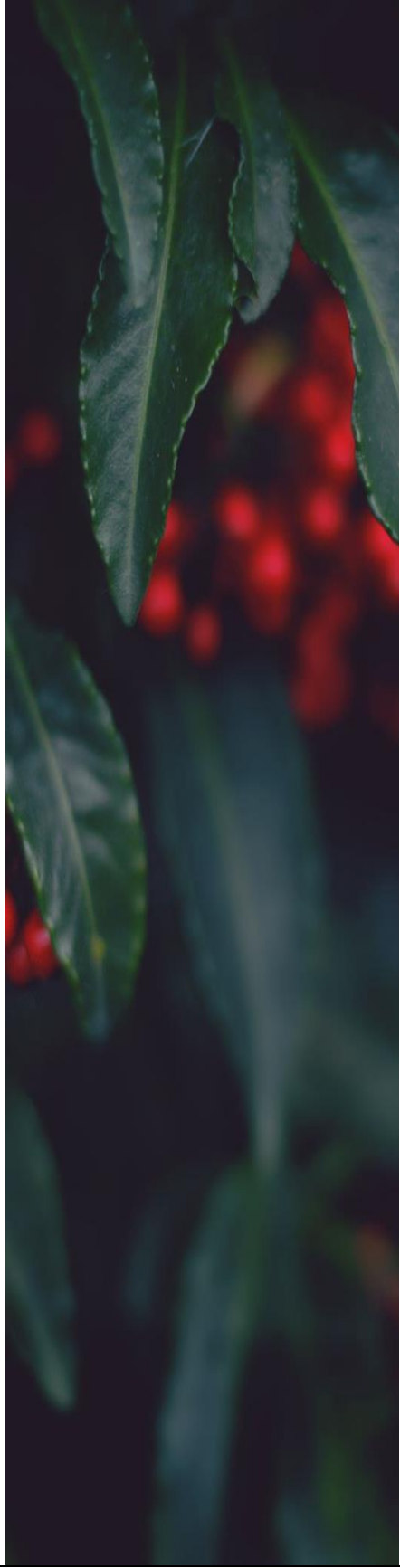
abiteofrecoverynewsletter@gmail.com.

This time of year resonates with many of us for religious and cultural reasons as well as the reality that we are nearing winter and the darkest time of the year. Many traditions encourage us to celebrate and to look forward to a New Year of new life and hope. We have planned this issue to help you embrace the joy, camaraderie, warmth and love of the season without succumbing to the pressures and turning to our compulsive behaviours.

As another year comes to an end, we encourage you to reflect in gratitude on the ways in which your program, personal relationships and spiritual relationships have grown. What parts of your program are strong? Are there areas that could use a bit more attention? How can you best support your recovery?

We hope you find these tools and articles helpful for the upcoming season, but are also able to integrate them into your day-to-day recovery. Whether you create an action plan, “bookend” family dinners with outreach calls or use meditation to turn inward during heightened moments, we hope you take care of yourselves and wish you well in this season of recovery.

♦ **The Newsletter Committee**



Happy Holidays from Program

Happy, joyous, and free is what we can be in this Twelve Step program.

Attitude change—the only person we focus on changing is ourselves.

Prayer is suggested as a form of meditation—a strong component of the Eleventh Step.

Problems begin to lose the magnitude they once had (when we do the necessary Step work).

You need never be alone again—we have a Higher Power to guide us, and we have other people around who understand us.

Hunger will become physical hunger, not emotional hunger.

Occasions such as holidays are about friendship and family instead of food.

Love for self is about self-caring—taking care of ourselves, setting Healthy boundaries, and saying “no” when necessary.

In the beginning (and as long as necessary), it is important that our recovery come first in all we do.

Do you have a sponsor and a support group? Both are necessary for recovery. If not, find them. You won’t be disappointed.

Accepting what cannot be changed is a steppingstone to changing what can.

Yes, our recovery is dependent on actively working the Twelve Steps. Start and continue working Steps One through Twelve to be amazed before “we are half way through” (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th ed., p. 83).

Size and weight are not our real issues. The Big Book says clearly, “When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically” (p. 64).

Copyright Overeaters Anonymous, Lifeline article, Originally posted online, November 1, 2018

Prayer and Meditation as Part of the Action Plan

As a fairly new member of OA, I am learning that there are many ingredients to my action plan, but the one I have found most powerful (but also most difficult) is adopting a regular routine of prayer and meditation.

As the product of 2 atheist intellectuals, I had no background in prayer and, in fact, my feminist mind still finds itself bristling at the referral of God as “Him” and “Lord” in the Twelve Steps and the recommended prayers. I understand that these words are simply a conventional way of describing a Higher Power, and do not need to define *my* understanding so I do my best to stay open-minded. Reading Chapter 4 of the Big Book, “We Agnostics”, was tremendously helpful in curbing my skepticism enough to allow me to actually get myself to my first OA meeting. There it became apparent that despite the language and the difference in one’s actual conception of a higher power, the strength and guidance that so many members had found in prayer and meditation was real and inspiring.

As a person who had admitted defeat despite arming myself with information, psychological theory, and a professional background in exercise physiology and how nutrition plays into this, I felt I had no alternative than to find a spiritual path. However, I still felt like I didn’t understand the nuts and bolts of what to actually do when advised to pray or meditate.

I started by saying “Grace” at every meal. Gratitude at healthful food when I felt true physical hunger was easy and this allowed me to pray 3 times a day without feeling artificial. One member had said that before every meal she prayed that the portion on the plate would be enough, and this also was easy for me to do. After I ate and actually felt like I didn’t want more, I could easily thank my Higher Power for this too.

As my sponsor helped me through the Steps, and I participated in a Big Book Study workshop, I tried out the recommended prayers. The language of many of them still rubbed me the wrong way, but in my mind, I altered it to ring true and “acted as if”. I also came to the realization that one of my ways of trying to control everything is through over-intellectualization. This just led me to have a cluttered brain rather than solving problems. I felt that I needed to seek my HP in a way that didn’t use language.

I decided to try using a form of meditation that had been taught to me by a psychologist to manage anxiety and depression (that I had abandoned once my crisis was over). This was based on the Buddhist meditation to cultivate compassion. Since I was realizing that the purpose of my abstinence was to allow me to be of use to other people, this seemed appropriate. And it has proven to be very beneficial. I can see a pattern that on the days that I do this for even 5 minutes in the morning, everything goes better and on those that I “don’t have time” things go awry.

This has led me to think about all the other things I know about that have spiritual origins as well as what actual practices other people in OA use. For example, I have practised Yoga and Tai Chi, both of which have been adopted by western people as programs of exercise, but which were actually developed as a way of living a better life. I do a short period of these moving meditations when I feel tired, overwhelmed or am just having a tough time getting moving on a difficult task. I’ve even seen that going for a walk outdoors is a type of meditation if I take my earbuds out and actually see, hear and smell things along the way.

I have come to the conclusion that prayer and meditation are the foundation of my Action Plan to stay abstinent. I still falter in that I forget to use this strategy in the heat of stressful moments, but I am more and more confident that as I practise daily, it will become second nature to call upon my Higher Power instead of anger, frustration, despair, or food.

- Submitted by Cristabel N.

Set-Aside Prayer

God, Please set aside everything I think I know about you,
Everything I think I know about myself,
Everything I think I know about others, and
Everything I think I know about my own recovery,
For a new experience with myself, a new experience with others,
A new experience with my own recovery, and
Especially a new experience with you!

CONVERSATIONS WITH ... A NEWER MEMBER AND A LONGTIME MEMBER

(Please enjoy our conversation with two of our members, Ginette and Pauline!)

Please share a bit about yourself including your OA history:

Ginette: Hi. My name is Ginette and I am a Compulsive Overeater.

I joined OA on April 22, 2021. I had hit rock bottom. My weight had reached 338.8 lbs. I was living to die. I felt I didn't have much longer to live and that physically and emotionally there was nothing to live for anymore. I was on Disability due to a back injury and could no longer work at meaningful employment. I am a nurse, have two university degrees and worked as a general duty nurse, a head nurse, and a program manager. My strong lifelong desire to be of service to others through my work had been stripped from me. I now felt like nothing, useless to the world. My weight compounded my pain and immobility. I woke up thinking of food and went to bed thinking of food. Nonstop. Continuously. My food intake was the same way. I did not know what being hungry meant because I craved food obsessively.

My first meeting with OA was eye opening. I felt like I was home. I could hear and see myself in so many of the other members. On June 1, 2021, with my sponsor's wise and caring words, was when I truly felt a spiritual awakening. I realized that in April I had accepted that my life had become unmanageable, but I had not admitted that I was powerless over food. I have now lost 80 lbs. But my emotional weight loss has been even more life changing. I'm thrilled to share the thoughts and strategies that I am planning to maintain my abstinence during this wonderful, festive season!

Pauline: Hello. My name is Pauline and I am a compulsive eater and volume addict. I joined OA in May of 1995 after I saw the changes in a dear friend who was in the program. At my highest weight, I was 300 pounds and feeling desperate and useless. I am so grateful that I never went over that weight because of the gift of this program. I don't think I would be alive now if I hadn't found OA. I have had to recognize that this addictive disease is life threatening and it has taken me a long time to acknowledge that. From 1995 until June of 2020, I now realize that I didn't do everything in my power to work this program and deal with life. I fluctuated during that time from a low of 199 to a continuous up and down journey back to 260 pounds over those years.

On June 15, 2020, I read a COVID article that said even regular eaters had typically gained 10-15 pounds due to restrictions. I immediately thought "Not me, I'm fine. I'm in OA!" I stood on the scale to prove the article was wrong and to my utter dismay, realized I had put on 15.9 pounds in those short months. I was in despair. I went to bed that night and prayed to my HP and asked for his help to understand what I was doing wrong. When I woke up in the morning, my first thoughts waking up were a message from HP asking, "Do you treat this disease as seriously as you do your MS?" My immediate answer was a resounding NO! and that was my hitting bottom and my wake-up call.

Continued on page 5...

I reflected on my past years in OA and had to recognize that I had not made the commitment to work this program on a daily basis and do whatever it took to live life sanely and not in the food. Thankfully, I have been fully abstinent since that day and have stopped worrying about how much weight I will lose and when. I accept now that this is a lifelong journey that I need to travel daily, always in the direction of recovery.

1. How do you use the Steps and connect with your Higher Power during the holiday season?

Ginette: My Higher Power and my OA support are of the utmost importance in my life. They are my greatest blessing and my most cherished Christmas gift. Being my first holiday season with Overeaters Anonymous. I repeat to myself daily that I am powerless over food. I know that my life has become more manageable with the help of my Higher Power. Christmas has always been a very spiritual time for me as we celebrate the birth of baby Jesus. This year means so much more as I feel more connected to my Higher Power in gratitude for having worked His miracle through me.

Through OA, I am getting more and more physically, emotionally, and spiritually healthy so that I can be of service to others through Him. I look at the spirit of the season with fresh eyes of caring, compassion hope, praying for growth in the kindness and generosity in myself and others, that it may be repeated throughout the year.

Pauline: The holiday season has always been a strange time for me. Since I have always been a closet eater where no one ever truly saw me overeat, the holidays always presented a different kind of difficulty with so many people around me. Before coming to the program in May of 1995, the holidays used to be a permission-free time to eat anything and everything that I could since everyone else was overindulging as well. This lessened after joining OA but still presented the problem of feeling sorry for myself that I couldn't indulge in the same way. But, thanks to my HP and members in the fellowship, I have been able to gradually see over the years the harm I was doing to my body and mind and spirit with the constant barrage of food.

Last year, I had the most amazing holiday experience of truly enjoying what the holidays are, a time of joy to be spent with our loved ones. I made sure I did my daily readings, reached out to members, volunteered for the OA phone line for December and lived life one day at a time. I started each morning with a "Good Morning God. Thank you for another day. Please help me remember to treat this disease of compulsive eating as deadly and help me navigate any issues I will face today." I will continue to do that this year.

2. What OA tools will you use to handle the holiday season?

Ginette: I must remember that I am allergic to food. A **commitment** I made to myself was that I cannot eat that one extra bite, otherwise I will consider that as a breach of my **abstinence**. I **shall read my daily readers** every morning, do some **journaling** to identify the positives in my life, and **plan my meals** ahead of time. I plan to **concentrate on family and friends** at gatherings rather than food. I shall prioritize some time for **prayer and meditation** (even though it is a busy time of year). **Relaxation CD's and exercises** on YouTube and the Internet have been very helpful to destress me in times of anxiety. The **OA website, OA.org podcasts and videos** are a treasure trove of support and inspiration. And of course, **my sponsor** is my most precious asset and resource.

Pauline: I will continue to connect with other OA members daily, continue my readings, and meditations and prayer. This disease is not meant to be dealt with alone and it is so important for me to remember that. I will use my God's job jar. This has helped me so many times, including my favourite one I discovered when I was away during the holidays - the good old toilet! A few years ago, I was feeling desperate during the holidays while in Calgary and the only quiet spot was the bathroom where I hid. I sat there praying to my Higher Power and thinking, "I need to put this in my God's job jar!"

I suddenly spied the roll of TP and remembered I had a marker in my purse! I quickly tore off a few squares and wrote people's names and situations on them and let them float to the bottom of the bowl. I thought, "Here you go, God, please take these troubles from me as I am powerless to deal with them." I then flushed

Continued on page 6...

them away and it worked! I laughed out loud and thought “There’s no way I’m taking them back after where they’ve been!” I have signed up for January for the OA phone line and will be part of the buddy contact system we arrange at our Saturday meetings as well.

3. What worries you most about entering the holiday season and how do you plan to handle this worry?

Ginette: This is my first holiday season with OA and my first big test with food abundance, both in baking for others and being surrounded by all this food wherever we shall go. I do worry that I could have a relapse and take that “just one bite” that would be the crack in my wall. I worry that would make my resolve come crashing down. My sponsor is my most precious support as well as the wonderful kindred spirits I share with at every OA meeting I attend. I plan to maintain my attendance at meetings to the best of my ability throughout the holidays. My family are also incredible cheerleaders and are aware of my concerns. This is it. This is the real deal. No more “I’ll start tomorrow” because “Today” is way too precious!

Dear Newcomers: It is one day at a time. One craving at a time: walk away, call your sponsor, another OA member, a family member, a friend, take a walk, listen to music, or a podcast, read OA literature, or a good book, pray, meditate, or watch a good movie, do deep breathing and relaxation, do exercises, have a nap, read jokes, think positively, do volunteer work . . . just to name a few 😊 One . . . day . . . at . . . a . . . time . . . Have a wonderful holiday season.

Humbly and gratefully yours, Ginette

Pauline: I’m not as worried this year as I plan to make sure of **HALT**. Never get too **hungry, angry, lonely, or tired**. With the help of fellow OA members, I will do my best to remember not to get overwhelmed and work my program daily. If food starts calling, I will be on that phone very quickly reaching out.

The Great Spirit Prayer

*Oh, Great Spirit, whose voice I hear in the wind, whose breath gives life to all the world.
Hear me; I need your strength and wisdom.*

Let me walk in beauty, and make my eyes ever behold the red and purple sunset.

Make my hands respect the things you have made and my ears sharp to hear your voice.

Make me wise so that I may understand the things you have taught my people.

Help me to remain calm and strong in the face of all that comes towards me.

Let me learn the lessons you have hidden in every leaf and rock.

Help me seek pure thoughts and act with the intention of helping others.

Help me find compassion without empathy overwhelming me.

I seek strength, not to be greater than my brother, but to fight my greatest enemy, Myself.

Make me always ready to come to you with clean hands and straight eyes.

So when life fades, as the fading sunset, my spirit may come to you without shame.

— translated by Chief Yellow Lark



Holidays can be the best of times and the worst of times. Family dynamics are hard - and harder when everyone is under the stress and excitement of the holidays. Traditions change, we lose family members and gain some. We can be the person we want to be if we come prepared and look for ways to be of love and service. We always have a choice - do not let anyone or any food be an excuse to lose our abstinence.

General Tips

- ♦ Renew your commitment to the program and food, etc. - “new level, new devil” - Some levels of life are more demanding, risky, vulnerable: such as holiday time, food, family, emotions, etc.
- ♦ Remember that your disease is not taking a vacation or holiday. This is like any other day for you foodwise. It is a special day because of the people you will be with and maybe even some fun clothes!
- ♦ Think about what you can offer at this gathering, such as being a good listener, helping clear the table, passing out food, cleaning up, watching the little ones, etc.

The Food

Be prepared, do not let lack of preparation lead you astray! Have an emergency kit in your car or have backup food with you! Your food is your medicine, you need what you have on your plan.

- ♦ Never say “I shouldn’t have that” or “I can’t have that” but say instead things like “no thanks, I’m good” or “I’m full, thank you”. People are less likely to try to talk you into eating. “I have food allergies.”
- ♦ Offer to set the table or clean, but don’t offer to wash dishes or be alone with the food.
- ♦ Clarity — look at what is on my plate.
- ♦ Drink lots of water.
- ♦ Stay away from the snack table, bring a game to play before the meal.
- ♦ Say “no thanks” to desserts.
- ♦ Don't watch cooking shows.
- ♦ Don’t graze or stand over the table.
- ♦ Chew a piece of gum if it isn't a trigger for you.
- ♦ Keep it simple!!! Don't over-think it! Abstinent recipes can have very few ingredients and don't have to take a lot of time to prepare.

Food at your house...

- ♦ Pick out abstinent, balanced meals that fit your food plan; ask others to bring their favorite dish.
- ♦ If you are cooking, stick to recipes you have made before...no need to taste!
- ♦ Cook the minimal amount possible to avoid having leftovers.
- ♦ Don't bake if this is a temptation - or do it with someone else.
- ♦ Eyeball your food for the meal if you aren't comfortable weighing and measuring in front of others at home. Talk with your sponsor for suggestions.

Food when eating away from home...

- ♦ Call ahead to find out what they are serving and bring your own meal in a lunch bag that you can have on hand in the car if needed. You can always eat what you can at the meal and substitute the rest from what you brought from home.
- ♦ Build your plate reasonably, only once.
- ♦ Make an abstinent dish to take and share.
- ♦ Make a meal and take it to the gathering, if you feel that there is nothing there on your food plan.
- ♦ Eat before you go and then focus on service.

Holiday Emergency Action Plan Card

(To keep handy and carry when you go out, keep in your car, at work.....)

Five things you need on your card:

1. Circle of support phone numbers = Sponsor and 2-3 OA fellows.
2. Pray! Write your favorite prayer on your card.
3. Write your food plan on the card.
4. Be prepared - Bring your own food/beverages to have as a substitute for whatever you may need.
5. Remind yourself to be present and that it is just one meal.

Twelve Steps to a Better Holiday Season

1. We admitted the holiday season has a deeper meaning than devouring food.
2. We came to believe a Power greater than ourselves could help us see and celebrate the true meaning of the season.
3. We came to believe our Higher Power could help us appreciate the joyfulness of the season as we understood it.
4. We made a searching and thorough examination of our relationship to food during the holidays and other things we enjoy about the season.
5. We admitted to our Higher Power the exact nature of our food habits during holidays seasons past.
6. We became entirely ready to allow our Higher Power to remove our attachment to food as a necessity of the holidays.
7. We humbly asked him to remove our desire to partake of holiday treats.
8. We made a list of all persons whose presence makes the holiday season joyful for us and with whom we would like to share our joy.
9. We made plans to spend time with those people whenever possible, except when to do so would remove us from our primary purpose of abstinence.
10. We continued to enjoy the company of friends and family and other non-food aspects of the season.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our appreciation of the season, praying for knowledge of its meaning and the joy we feel at this time.
12. Having realized that sharing the joy of this season with others far outlasts the fleeting pleasure of food, we gave ourselves the gift of abstinence throughout the holidays and gave others the gift of our full attention and appreciation.



Would you like to contribute service to the newsletter?

If you would like to include an article, assist in creating, or give service in another way to our newsletter, please reach out to abiteofrecoverynewsletter@gmail.com.

Any service is appreciated!

Our next issue in March will focus on **Renewal/Reaffirmation** .

Please feel free to send us any tips you use.

Quick List of Meetings in our Intergroup

This list can also be found at the OA Heart of Canada webpage:

<https://www.oaheartofcanada.ca>

SUNDAY 11 AM F2F Meeting on Zoom

<https://zoom.us/j/8637723075?pwd=QXZ4KzRrcE0rWEEybFVmV0Z6azE4dz09>

Meeting ID: 863 772 3075

Password: WpgF2F

MONDAY 7:00 PM F2F Meeting on Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82629926338?pwd=LzcrSzk0U05jT0o2MW1CL3pKVIJ3UT09>

Meeting ID: 826 2992 6338

Password: recover

(PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS MEETING IS NOW HYBRID, INCLUDING BOTH ZOOM AND IN-PERSON FORMAT,
ADDRESS: GOOD NEWS FELLOWSHIP CHURCH, 891 ST. MARY'S RD., NEAR FERMOR.)

TUESDAY, 7:30 – 8:30 pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86586967187?pwd=Q0pkRjZobzFGay9PQnhGbytsbXNDQT09>

Meeting ID: 865 8696 7187

Password: Freedom

(PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS MEETING HAS SWITCHED FROM HYBRID TO ZOOM FORMAT ONLY AS OF DECEMBER 14TH)

WEDNESDAY 7:30 AM F2F Meeting on Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86213444550?pwd=UWhsRmZsVHF0d0dadkM0bXdaUGg2dz09>

Meeting ID: 862 1344 4550

Password: 279813

THURSDAY 7:00 PM F2F Meeting on Zoom

Topic: Thursday, 7:00 pm - Heart of Canada Zoom Meeting's Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82629926338?pwd=LzcrSzk0U05jT0o2MW1CL3pKVIJ3UT09>

Meeting ID: 826 2992 6338

Password: recover

(PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS MEETING IS NOW HYBRID, INCLUDING BOTH ZOOM AND IN-PERSON FORMAT,
ADDRESS: GOOD NEWS FELLOWSHIP CHURCH, 891 ST. MARY'S RD., NEAR FERMOR)

SATURDAY 10:30 AM F2F Meeting on Zoom

<https://zoom.us/j/8637723075?pwd=QXZ4KzRrcE0rWEEybFVmV0Z6azE4dz09>

Meeting ID: 863 772 3075

Password: WpgF2F

Region 4 Webpage

<https://oaregion4.org>

Heart of Canada Intergroup is part of Region 4.

Check out our webpage at **<https://oaheartofcanada.ca>**

Did you know we also have a Facebook page?

Search for OA Heart of Canada

OA's 62nd Birthday Party – Window of Opportunity

January 14, 2022 @ 4:00 pm - January 16, 2022 @ 7:00 pm MST \$32.64



It's OA's 62nd Birthday Party! Join fellows from all over the world from the comfort of your own home! Your ticket will include access to all recordings. Join us for fun, laughter and the fellowship you crave before you have to fly to Los Angeles for it!

REGISTER AT: <https://registration.socio.events/e/oabdp22>

Details

Start: January 14, 2022 @ 4:00 pm MST

End: January 16, 2022 @ 7:00 pm MST

Cost: \$32.64

Organizer

Overeaters Anonymous – Los Angeles Intergroup