



A BITE OF RECOVERY

*Behaviour

*Information

*Thoughts

*Emotions

Body Image and its Impact on Recovery: Big or Small, We Love You All

Many OA members have a poor body image that contributes to their feelings of shame and inadequacy. Body image is more than how we and others see our physical form; it also includes how we think, feel and act based on our self-perception. Culture, family and peers have told many of us that our bodies are “too much” while we perceive ourselves to be “not enough.” Many of us have fantasized about how attaining the perfect body size will transform us into confident, happy and successful people. We have gone to extreme measures to attain this, only to find that physical change is elusive or may not fulfill our fantasies. The steps offer us the promise of achieving beauty from the inside out by giving us a spiritual solution. We hope this issue of A BITE OF RECOVERY helps you navigate the difficulties of accepting your body as you travel the road to recovery.

Thank you for picking up the Spring 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.



MIRROR IMAGE

“The main problem . . . centers in his mind, rather than in his body” (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th ed., p. 23). Ever since I can remember, I looked in the mirror and honed in on the flaws of my body: the soft protruding belly of adolescence, the irregular dimples on my left buttock, the way my inner thighs jiggled when I ran. Though I wasn’t sure of much in those earlier years, I was sure that when people looked at me, the flaws were all they saw.

I lived with this skewed perception all my life. I thought if I could control my food and reach a perfect weight, I could magically fix the repulsive defects that were keeping me from living a full life. This distorted thinking cast a spell on me for the next thirty years. It set into motion an endless cycle of starving, bingeing, dieting, overindulging, bulimia, and compulsive exercising that grew progressively sicker, until the elusive ideal of perfection discolored all my waking thoughts. If something went wrong, I reacted by feeling fat or unattractive and then restricting my food. If others complimented me, I reacted either by dismissing them or by feeling thin and good about

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myself and then overeating. Food became my master, and I marveled at others who didn't have this secret obsession. I was angry that I was different, until I came into OA. In OA I learned the truth about myself. I learned that my weight problem was really a spiritual malady, a peculiar mental twist. I learned that to recover into a sane way of thinking, I needed an entire psychic change.

Changing thirty years of distorted thinking has not happened overnight for me, but through the help of others in this Fellowship, working the Steps, and being open to spiritual help, a psychic change—a huge emotional rearrangement—is taking place. Today, my definition of a full life is broadening beyond the quest for the idyllic body. Now, it includes a healthy relationship with food, a calm and sane mind, genuine desire to help others, and a belief in a power greater than myself.

Ever so slowly, I am learning to see everything that is in the mirror. I am finally beginning to see the good I could not see before: a normal-sized body, a sparkle in my eyes, dimples on my face when I smile. Developing a balanced perspective for me also means making peace with imperfections, like the soft, protruding belly of middle age and my defects of character. It means forgiving the imperfections of others. In doing so, I am learning to make peace with my humanity.

I have been abstinent for twenty months, and I am maintaining a 70-pound (32-kg) weight loss.

— Edited and reprinted from New Beginnings newsletter, Central Florida Intergroup, July 2004,
Posted in Lifeline April 19, 2016

WELLNESS EXPO

OA Heart of Canada Intergroup participated for the 2nd consecutive year in The Winnipeg Wellness Expo on February 17 and 18. Thank you to everyone who volunteered their time to carry the message of OA and share their personal stories with people who visited our booth. Over the two days, approximately 150 individuals picked up pamphlets to learn about OA. Since then we have seen newcomers at a few of our meetings who shared that they spoke to OA Fellows at the Wellness Expo. We also received an email about the HSC Wellness Event in October. We are planning to participate to continue sharing our program with health care professionals. Watch for future announcements to join the PI Planning Team!



Positive Body Image Affirmations

1. *I choose to focus on my values and passions rather than my appearance.*
2. *I don't hate my body. I hate the way I've learned to feel about my body.*
3. *My body is not the problem: the way society treats diverse bodies is the problem.*
4. *I do not need to change my body to conform to negative comments.*
5. *My body will change, my self-worth doesn't.*

- Kristin Draayer,

<https://nutritionbykristin.com/body-image-affirmations/>

CONVERSATIONS WITH TWO MEMBERS

(Please enjoy our conversation with two of our members – first with a long-standing member, Lori V, and second with a newer member, Nancy – as they share how they use the program to deal with life.)

1) How does your perception of your own body make impact on your recovery (either negative or positive)?

Lori V: I have never liked my body. When I lose weight, I feel better and start liking how my body looks with the weight loss. However, I still will find something wrong with my body that I do not like. When I lose the weight and I see my body looking better, it encourages me to lose weight and helps me with my recovery. Gaining the weight or finding something wrong with me affects my recovery. I feel like nothing I do will help. It discourages me.

Nancy: My perception of my own body impacts and challenges my recovery because I don't like what I see in the mirror. It makes me want to lose the weight super fast, which would be unrealistic and unhealthy. I get quite upset because my addiction got out of hand after finally reaching my goal weight and then once again succumbing to the addiction and gaining over 50 pounds in less than two years. I am reminded of this every day when I see myself. I am reminded when I look through my wardrobe because most of my favourite items no longer fit.

2) What do you do or have you done to make friends with your body as it is today? Describe challenges with that and how you have overcome them. If you haven't, what do you think is holding you back?

Lori V: I don't think that I will ever be friends with my body, but I am trying. I am starting to look after it more by going to a massage therapist to help with stiffness and soreness. I am also making sure that I see my chiropractor to help with the same thing. I am trying to move around more by doing more walking. It is hard for me to become friends with my body because I was taught by my parents that it was wrong to do so. I have always thought it is wrong.

Nancy: Being reminded of my failure reminds me now that I am more than my reflection in the mirror. God is showing me who I really am and that there is hope for me to be in control through focussing on Him. I am also realizing that my body will never be "a perfect 10". Knowing that the weight loss will just be replaced with wrinkles and saggy skin, He's teaching me to accept where I am today with my body. I remind myself that God loves me just as I am. I definitely have some work to do with loving my body. I find it when I turn my focus over to God.

3) How do you respond to compliments about your appearance? Has this changed over the course of your recovery?

Lori V: I now say thank you. Before I couldn't. I did not see what the people were complimenting me about before. I would think they were wearing rose-coloured glasses and not accept what they said. I would say something like "oh really", or "you think so". This has changed over time due to therapy that I received last summer. I can actually say thank you now.

Nancy: I have definitely always "loved" compliments from others when I lose weight. This awareness reminds me that I am such a "people pleaser". As I work on my recovery I am releasing that; the only thing that matters, and where it begins, is with my own peace and acceptance of my own body.

Tools: Action Plan

Creating an action plan is the process of identifying and implementing attainable actions to support our individual abstinence and emotional, spiritual, and physical recovery. This Tool, like our plan of eating, may vary widely among members and may need to be adjusted as we progress in our recovery.

[-https://oa.org/working-the-program/tools-of-recovery/](https://oa.org/working-the-program/tools-of-recovery/)

Please enjoy how two of our members take action in their program.

Plan of Action - Journaling

According to OA, Journaling is “Putting our thoughts and feelings down on paper, or describing a troubling or joyous incident, helps us to better understand our actions and reactions in a way that is often not revealed by simply thinking or talking about them.”

I like writing down what I hear or read that I find a connection to, or that I feel my higher power is trying to tell me. Most of the time, I write down what my gratitudes of the day are, if something is bugging me, or things that I could do better. Even writing out how your day went, with events that have happened in the day, can help you figure out if you have any resentments or issues that you need to resolve. You can go back to it later to help you with your recovery. Another thing you can journal is the food you eat. It helps you monitor what you eat and the amounts.

I once bought a journal from Region 4 but it did not leave me very much room to write in. Some people like journals like that, but I discovered that I could make something similar for myself with more room to write in. Everybody does journaling differently; you just have to figure out what you want to write about and stick with it.

Plan of Action – Physical Activity

In my long career of food and weight obsession, I have often engaged in exercise bulimia. Just as I knew the calorie content of every common food item by heart, I also knew how many calories a person of my height and weight would burn in a

given amount of time, and compulsively tallied the input and output. In my teens and twenties I was actually a completely normal weight despite the constant bingeing. Some of this was due to periods of extreme restriction and some due to over-exercising.

Despite this, I was convinced that I was terribly overweight because I didn't have the physique of a ballet dancer. I perceived my body as grotesque and used exercise to control it as well as to punish myself for my inability to restrict for any length of time. This led to chronic overuse injuries which furthered my feeling that my body was betraying me.

Even before I got into OA, psychological counselling for other mental health problems helped me recognize that my “ideal” body image was completely unrealistic. Some more serious knee injuries forced me to moderate my exercise and appreciate my exercise routine for all the other benefits it gave me apart from weight management.

Even carrying more weight than was ideal, I was grateful for the feeling of strength, limberness, ability to move efficiently and gracefully and, most importantly, the mood lift that I got from regular exercise. I explored new types of exercise like kickboxing aerobics and Zumba, and found them fun, energizing and sociable. I also learned to meditate while doing some of my endurance exercise, such as swimming laps or using the elliptical trainer.

When I started OA I had re-injured my knee (not due to over-exercising) and so was not able to do my regular exercise routine. On top of it, COVID prevented me from swimming, which I could always do, no matter how bad my knees. But, I was quickly learning that all changes in my life would take regular work and that included getting back into a fitness routine. Just as I planned and measured my food intake, I did a measured amount of exercise every day, including therapeutic strengthening, gradually building it up while I healed.

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Today I use physical activity as part of my daily practice. Often, I find if I am having trouble with my program, just getting outside for a walk for 10 - 15 minutes can reset my outlook. Even without extra pounds I will never look like a supermodel. My skin is older, more stretched and sags. My 60 year old joints have arthritic changes, so aches and pains are part of my reality. But I am now thrilled to have this body that carries me through this amazing life. Among many other things, it can shovel snow for 45 minutes at a stretch, run up and down stairs to do household chores, go for beautiful hikes in the woods, dance, hop and garden!

**Sometimes, we entwine
Our sense of worth with
The sense we have of
Our body – and often,
Our body is not viewed
With kindness or love,
But with deep shame.
But feelings and fact
Are not the same.
The truth is, your worth
Is innate, irrefutable,
Accepting who we are
And how we are in this
Moment – that is
Endlessly beautiful.**

- p. bodi

REFLECTING GRATITUDE

I came into Overeaters Anonymous more than nineteen years ago weighing 250 pounds (113 kg). I thought I was one of God's biggest mistakes. I hated myself. I hated my body. I recall looking in the mirror and wishing I could just take a knife and cut off all the fat rolls.

I got a sponsor at my first OA meeting. I began doing everything she told me to do. I read what she told me to read. I wrote what she told me to write. I found a plan of eating and began following it.

That last part was not easy. I spent a lot of time white-knuckling it. But for the first time in my life, I began losing weight. It was wonderful! I could shop in "normal" stores and buy clothes just because I liked them. At first, the delight of my shrinking body kept me excited; however, I've been at a normal body weight for over eighteen years now, and the excitement has worn off.

I will never have the body of a supermodel. The reality is I am 60 years old. I have lost over 100 pounds (45 kg) and have given birth to and nursed six children. Sometimes when I look in the mirror now, instead of feeling gratitude, I see the side effects of aging, gravity, and extra skin.

Recently, I got out of the shower and was looking critically at myself in the mirror. I was feeling disgusted with my body and was well on the way to hating myself when my husband walked in. He looked at me, smiled, and said, "You sure are beautiful." It was so diametrically opposed to how I was thinking and feeling right then that it was a shock. The only person who is critical of my body is me.

I have found that gratitude is key. When I focus on what I don't have or what I don't like, I find more of what I don't have and don't like. When I focus on the good, on what I have been blessed with and what I like, I find more good and more to be grateful for.

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My solution is working the Steps. Low self-esteem and poor body image are rooted in my character defects (self-pity, dishonesty, and perfectionism, to name a few), and I am as powerless over them as I am powerless over my compulsive eating. Feeling good about myself is directly proportional to the extent that I allow God to remove these defects. Twenty years ago, I thought that the body I have today was an unreachable achievement. Today, living in the miracle, I can still find things to criticize if I'm not careful.

Most of the time, I can look at myself in the mirror and say, "God did a really good job the day he made you." Today I know the truth, and I know that there really is a solution.

— Vicki

©Overeaters Anonymous, Posted in Lifeline April 19, 2016



UNITY DAY – FEBRUARY 24, 2024

We had an out of town speaker share at the Saturday Morning meeting to honour Unity Day. The message was difficult to hear, but incredibly inspiring for me.

She shared her story, and transitioned into OA's Unity with Diversity Policy. As a member of a visible minority, her message that many in our fellowship focus on outside issues and controversies instead of the message of hope found in the twelve steps really hit my heart. She shared in such a way that I felt my "otherness" was recognized, but also saw the areas I needed to improve to ensure that not only visible minorities would be included, but also people with invisible otherness.

My takeaway was that I am human so I will default to language I am most comfortable with, but when something is brought to my attention, I can chose to be open and more aware. I met the speaker when she attended a Thursday night meeting. I wanted to know more of her story so I asked the Saturday group if they would mind hosting. I made a poster, and bam! - We had a Unity Day event.

This year, IDEA day will be held on Saturday November 16, 2024. "International Day Experiencing Abstinence (IDEA), celebrated the third full weekend (Friday included) in November, encourages OA members worldwide to begin or reaffirm their abstinence from compulsive overeating."

I ask our members how can we celebrate this year? Have you met someone whose story you want to hear? Want to celebrate but Saturday's are a time beast? Just like the steps, sometimes it isn't about doing something just like it says in our literature. Sometimes it is just about doing **something**. My recovery is a little bit better because I did what I could and ended up hearing a powerful message. Please consider doing the same.

- Christina, Intergroup Chair

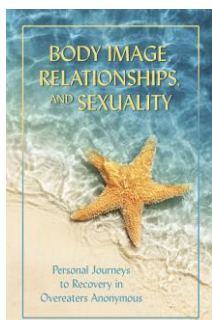
The Knots Prayer

Please untie the knots that are in my mind, my heart, and my life. Remove the have nots, the can nots and the do nots that I have in my mind.

Erase the will nots, may nots, might nots that may find a home in my heart. Release me from the could nots, would nots and should nots that obstruct my life.

And most of all, I ask that you remove from my mind, my heart and my life all of the 'am nots' that I have allowed to hold me back, especially the thought that I am not good enough.

- Iyanla Vanzant. 2002



Available from Intergroup Inventory (<https://oaheartofcanada.ca/current-stock/>) or via e-book format via: Amazon Kindle, Apple Books or Barnes and Noble Nook.

(OA receives a royalty share for e-book purchases made through these third-party vendors.)

Description

Body Image, Relationships, and Sexuality; Personal Journeys to Recovery in Overeaters Anonymous is a first-of-its-kind collection of member stories about how our disease can be deeply intertwined with the most intimate parts of our lives—our deeply held traumas, personal relationships, and changing identities. In this book, OA members share openly and honestly about their journeys from unfulfilled—even shattered—existences to lives overflowing with the acceptance, freedom, and serenity found by working and living OA's Twelve Step program of recovery. Find hope as you read in *Body Image, Relationships, And Sexuality* how these OA members became truly “happy, joyous, and free.” Softcover; 132 pages.

GET OUT THERE



Stand-up comedians tell jokes about the fat guy in a tiny swimsuit at the beach or park.

But a powerful lesson exists there. You just have to look hard to see it. That heavy guy is having fun with his friends and family. He's getting some sun and exercise, and he doesn't care about your opinion regarding his appearance or the appropriateness of his beach attire.

Many of us in OA use poor body image as an excuse for isolating. We pass up opportunities to go out with friends and family and have fun. So take a lesson from that guy: Get out there! (And if you want to swap the tiny bathing suit for cargo shorts, that's allowed.)

— Reese T., Glenview, Illinois USA

©Overeaters Anonymous, Posted in Lifeline April 19, 2016

Praise God for how He created you – even for the things you wish were different about your body. Ask that you could have eyes to see yourself the way He does: beautifully and wonderfully made.

JUNE 1, 2024 SATURDAY 1-4PM

“Relapse through the eyes of the Big Book”
Linda T from AZ

GUIDED MEDITATION:
INTERACTIVE QUESTIONS:
BREAKOUT ROOMS

IN PERSON AND ZOOM

\$5 SUGGESTED DONATION

RAFFLE PRIZES

JUNE 1, 1-4 P.M.
SOUTH HILLS
CHRISTIAN CHURCH:
3200 BILGLADE RD,
FORT WORTH TEXAS
76133
AMBER: 817-798-6289

ZOOM ID:
992-9317-2057
ZOOM PASSWORD:
r3cover



Dallas Metroplex Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous Spring Workshop

**Getting into Action:
Steps 4-10**

(The Program doesn't work by just reading or thinking about it!)



Saturday, May 11, 2024

10:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Hybrid Workshop (in-person and virtual options)

Our guest speaker from Houston is known for bringing the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous to life for compulsive overeaters!

First United Methodist Church - 503 N. Central Expressway (75) - Richardson
Mays Hall, Room 130
(Please park in back of church)

Suggested donation: In person: \$10 pre-registration, \$15 at the door
Zoom: \$10 pre-registration (workshop link will be sent out upon registration)

Payment Options:

Zelle - dmi.oa1212@gmail.com

Venmo - DallasOAmetrogroup@DallasintergroupOA

Check - made out to DMI-OA and mailed to: Tina Thoreson, 521 S Delaware St, Irving, TX 75060

For additional information, please contact Patti P. at ppierce047@yahoo.com / 214-403-0175 or Tina T. at dmi.oa1212@gmail.com/214-682-1618

Did you know that OA has a newsletter directed to the Health Care Community to help them understand our program? Check out the latest edition of the Professional Community COURIER. <https://media.oa.org/app/uploads/2024/01/25090624/professional-community-courier-2024.pdf>

This is the link to the Professionals webpage on the OA website: <https://oa.org/professionals/>

“Curious how Overeaters Anonymous (OA) can support your work to help your patients who are compulsive eaters? You’re in the right place. We work alongside many like you. OA complements your recommendations. OA offers an ongoing support system for members and encourages them to help one another—thereby weakening their isolation and loneliness. OA claims no medical, nutritional, or psychological expertise. We recommend members contact qualified professionals for help in these areas.”



ANNOUNCEMENTS

OA HOTLINE 2024

Volunteers still needed for the OA Hotline for May, August and September this year.

Please reach out if you would like to volunteer. 3 months of abstinence required.

Please call, message, or email Gail Cantor (oainquiries23@gmail.com) , 204-782-5087) to volunteer.

Thursday Meetings

The Thursday Night meeting is now hybrid every second week.

Please contact Lori V. at Queenloriv5@outlook.com for details OR join the Thursday meeting via Zoom to become a member of that group.

Region 4, which our Intergroup has been part of, is being dissolved by August 2024. The decision to disband was based on a persistent and critical drop in service to intergroups and the region board. Since 2012, the region's intergroup count has dropped from sixteen to thirteen, and many service positions, including chair positions for boards and committees throughout the region, have gone unfilled. In May 2023, the region board found itself without both a chair and vice chair as well as anyone qualified who was willing to volunteer.

As of this week, we are now officially part of Region 1, which encompasses the Pacific Northwest Region. Please check out their webpage at <https://www.oaregion1.org/> where you will find many interesting links, including podcasts, newsletters, etc. from the other 22 intergroups that we will be joining.

Convention Committee: Call for Volunteers

It was wonderful to have a convention once again in 2023 after all the COVID shutdowns. If you are interested in volunteering for this year's Fall Convention Committee, please contact either of the Co-Chairs: Nancy Martin: Nemartin@shaw.ca or Pauline Kulbaba: ppkulbaba@gmail.com.

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 ZOOM Meeting

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

Meeting ID: 863 772 3075/Password: WpgF2F

MONDAY: 7:00 PM HYBRID Meeting on ZOOM + in-person

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82629926338?pwd=LzcrSzk0U05jT0o2MW1CL3pKVlJ3UT09>

Meeting ID: 826 2992 6338 / Password: recover

ADDRESS: GOOD NEWS FELLOWSHIP CHURCH, 891 ST. MARY'S RD., NEAR FERMOR

TUESDAY: 7:30 – 8:30 pm ZOOM Meeting

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

Meeting ID: 865 8696 7187 / Password: Freedom

PLEASE NOTE: AS OF JANUARY 2024, THIS MEETING IS ZOOM FORMAT ONLY

WEDNESDAY: 7:30 AM ZOOM Meeting

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

Meeting ID: 862 1344 4550 / Password: 279813

THURSDAY: 7:00 PM ZOOM Meeting EVERY WEEK + IN-PERSON EVERY SECOND WEEK

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

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82629926338?pwd=LzcrSzk0U05jT0o2MW1CL3pKVlJ3UT09>

Meeting ID: 826 2992 6338 / Password: recover

PLEASE SEE FULL DETAILS OF THE CHANGES ON THE ANNOUNCEMENT BULLETIN BOARD ON PAGE 9 OF THIS ISSUE

SATURDAY: 10:30 AM HYBRID Meeting on Zoom + in-person

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

Meeting ID: 863 772 3075 / Password: WpgF2F

ADDRESS: JOHN BLACK UNITED MEMORIAL CHURCH, 898 HENDERSON HWY AT ROBERTA
IN NORTH KILDONAN

