



4 Thought

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Covering: Illinois [except the Chicagoland area], Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Manitoba, Northwest Ontario, and Nunavut Territory, Canada.

The mission of Region 4 is to make OA known throughout the Region so that anyone with the desire to stop eating compulsively may find an OA group, and to provide support so that any OA member can have recovery from compulsive eating through the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous.

Pack Abstinence in with Your Kits - by Region 4 Chair

Summer is here in the Midwest and with that comes certain food fests – graduations, weddings and picnics. Where do Compulsive Eaters enter into all of this?

As always, abstinence is desired. These food celebrations are only a small part of our lives in which we can choose how we will participate. Will we stick to our routine food plan or compromise and dive in? At the end of my last set of food fest days, I could no longer engage in ‘controlled eating’. I just ate and ate and ate. My disease was rapidly increasing. Will power (control) that kind of worked in the past was no longer around.

In general, I’ve yet to benefit from the “Poor Me, I can’t eat what everyone else gets to” syndrome. Sometimes my disease tries to sneak in with a bit of mental chatter trying to convince me that I can eat however I want just this one time. My disease is a liar and a cheat, and I douse it with my daily abstinence regime. This consists of ongoing prayer and meditation, following my food plan – no matter what, working the steps, using the tools to help me continue to work the steps, participating in healthy behaviors (service) and incorporating gratitude into my daily life.

Granted I didn’t get to this place overnight, but this integration of active recovery living has given me the blessing of ongoing abstinence, which I treasure beyond all else material in this world. At this time, it’s well over 10 years and maintaining a 130 pound weight release.

In addition, I’ve learned that I teach people how to treat me – even around food. I found that when I’m insecure about my food choices when eating ‘differently’ than those around me, I’m treated like a ‘special case’. This has come in the form of pity, disregard and disrespect. Some have even worked up some effort to convince me to eat like them. My disease just drools over stuff like this. It tries to persuade me that I’m an oddball and I shouldn’t have to do all of that fussy business. After all, it would be so much better to just fit in. I know that if I compromise my plans then I’m left with the miserable me and it’s not pretty. I have 14 years of relapse experience to prove it.

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I am blessed with abstinence and the calmness of mind to easily turn away from that type of thinking. I'm so appreciative, but do not take this for granted. I do not take my recovery casually, nor do I live like a zealot. I work to find the balance of being aware of my disease and living a healthy life with grace.

Now I am matter-of-fact when someone asks questions about my food. When someone wants to challenge me, I know it is about their discomfort. I don't have to have unease as well or in place of theirs. My distress creates a life threatening situation, theirs does not (for most people). Or if it does, it's still not my concern.

I like the food I eat 99% of the time. When I don't it's due to situations beyond my control. These are some of the things I love about my program when it comes to food. Recently a Region 4 Rep said, "Not every meal is going to be a 10." There it is life on life's terms.

The trusted servants (our fellows) of this wonderful program are continually creating options for us to incorporate into our daily lives. Because there is no cure for my disease, I need to monitor it to keep my mind fresh and healthy.

These are a few things I pack in my picnic basket that I can get from the www.aa.org website and they are FREE! Here are a few of them and they are new, fresh and helpful. The first awesome resource is the new "Twelve Step Your Way to the Solution" writing exercise, which can be found by clicking this link - <https://www.aa.org/have-a-life-problem-twelve-step-your-way-to-the-solution-with-this-free-writing-exercise/>. This helps me get the root of my discomfort and discontentedness.



Another great option is the Strong Abstinence Checklist, which for me is a great refresher. This handy resource is found at this link - <https://www.aa.org/in-the-bookstore-strong-abstinence-checklist-and-writing-exercise-pocket-card/>. This compact card slips easily in your wallet, billfold or purse.

The third is the Simplicity Project. You can get some funky index cards and follow the instructions and create your action plan, which too can be carried in your purse, billfold or pocket. Click here to get started. - https://www.aa.org/pdfs/tsw_simplicity.pdf.

There are so many helpful aids, people and literature that can get us to safe ground or keep us there. When abstinent, I don't care that people make comments about my food, because the obsession has been lifted. But I also know that one bite astray plummets me to the depth of despair instead of helping me feel like I 'fit in'. Every time I eat in public, it may be making a silent twelfth step - showing others that there is a different way. The cool thing is, I don't have to say a word, and I just joyfully eat my abstinent meal and appreciate the people and environment around me.

-Meg M., Region 4 Chair

A Few Words From The Region 4 Trustee

Hey Region 4,

April and May are my favorite months of the year. Partly because of spring, but an even bigger reason is those are the months when I spend a good bit of time working with OA members from our region and around the world. I love giving service to my group and Intergroup, working to carry the message of recovery to those who still suffer. Going to meetings, sponsoring, doing my personal work to ensure I remain abstinent from my addiction is my first responsibility, but the privilege of serving the fellowship beyond the boundaries of my city and state bring a level of commitment and excitement to my program that I would sorely miss.

My April started off in Kansas City attending the R4 Assembly. There were 27 members present at our Assembly. All but three of our Intergroups were represented. We still have room for more representatives, as not every intergroup sends their allotted number, but having so many committed members show up was a thrill. We spent time on Friday evening in fellowship with members from Greater Kansas City IG and everyone enjoyed the "speed dating" exercise of sharing ways they work their program to keep it fresh. Saturday morning we got to work, reviewing what had been accomplished since the fall and then working on plans to set up and accomplish projects until next fall. The Convention Committee is still working on getting a hotel lined up for the 2016 R4 convention. I know you will be seeing a flyer for this soon. The Ways & Means/Finance committee took the time to review all fund raising efforts and also to ensure the computer equipment and software used by the treasurer are up to date to prevent any problems. The Outreach committee shared the task of contacting our unaffiliated meetings and began disseminating information to the Intergroup Chairs as a means of encouragement for renewed

interest and commitment from their members. If you are reading this and are not attending your own Intergroup meetings or don't even know what Intergroup or Region are, ask around. These Service Bodies are ways for groups and members to reach beyond their own borders and support one another in doing service for our fellowship.

The week after the Assembly I attended my local annual Convention in the Bi-State Area. The Convention was a great success and there were OA members who had traveled from quite a distance to attend. We had our speaker from New Mexico, but others came from Chicago, California, Iowa and Texas. This phenomena, I believe was due to the fact that one of our local members attends a phone meeting and shared that we were having a convention and invited the members of her virtual group to check it out. What a great way to get the word out to people from all over that your local Intergroup has an event that is worth the trip. When was the last time you really made an effort to send out your flyers to other Intergroups and get them posted on both the Region and WSO datebooks? People are interested in recovery events, we just need to make sure the announcements are in more places than our local website, where only our local members might look.

April slid into May while I was at the World Service Business Conference. So many things happened that week it makes my head spin. There were OA meetings morning, noon and night and to be in a room hearing the shared experience of recovery from members who live across the US, let alone from another country is absolutely amazing. The fact that they are all there because they believe that OA is important and that they want to be involved in the decision-making on how OA will best be served is incredible. There were five workshops held at the conference this

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year and each included the message that abstinence is of the utmost importance and that being abstinent then supports us in fellowship and service. There was a fabulous forum presented by the Region Chairs Committee. It was close to my heart because it was the story of Dorothy and the Yellow Brick Road of Recovery. Our R4 chair was supposed to perform as the wicked witch, but due to some unforeseen circumstances she ended up as Glinda the good (see picture at the right).

There are nine WSBC committees which meet and decide what projects they will work on for the next year. The committees are always looking for ways to support the fellowship and carry the message to help each of us with recovery. Ask your WSBC Delegate what committee they are serving on and what their task is for the year. I'm always delighted to see how many of the Region 4 delegates are really involved in this work.

There were two new trustees elected and three re-elected for another term. A new board of officers was elected on the final day and new committee assignments were handed out. I will be serving as the Bylaws Committee Trustee Co-Chair for the coming year. Those of you who have served with me at Region know

this is a job I enjoy, but I will definitely be working hard to educate myself over the next eleven months so I can be up to the task. The thing I love about OA is that we are all given new ways to learn and grow in all parts of our lives. Giving service keeps me engaged, abstinent and satisfied in a way food never could. Don't be afraid to try a new level of service. HP and your fellows will be there to help you achieve what you could never do alone.

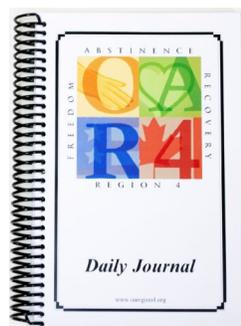
In Service,

-Cyndy L., Region 4 Trustee



NOTHING TASTES AS GOOD AS ABSTINENCE FEELS!

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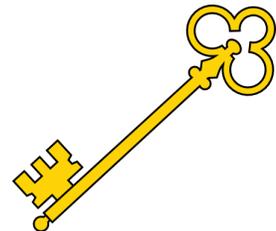
Members from the Promises of Eastern Iowa Intergroup Share on the Topic of Readiness

A New Definition of Readiness

It's interesting how the definition of the word readiness has changed for me since starting in OA. Readiness used to be preparing for that next binge – what foods it would include, where I would get them, how I would pay for all of it. It also used to mean how I would obtain or maintain all of these ridiculous standards of perfection I had set for myself. You know the ones, the perfect job, the perfect body, the perfect house, the perfect life. Funny thing was the more ready I thought I was, the crazier and out of control not only my eating became but also my life got.

Since joining OA, my definition of readiness has changed. It now includes a list of items I never before considered and a list I constantly remind myself that I've gained through working my program. The list includes:

- The willingness to admit that I'm powerless over my disease.
- The acceptance that I've turned my will and my life over to my higher power and given up the control.
- The openness to listen to what others including my sponsor and my fellows are saying to me and incorporating what I hear into my program and my life.
- The ability to be honest with myself about the lies I've told myself for years about my disease, the resentments I've held, and the expectations I had set for myself and others. The ability to keep facing dishonesty whenever it surfaces.
- The willingness to do whatever it takes to stay in recovery... whatever it takes...even if that means coming to terms with "whatever it takes" and the action necessary to do that.
- The acceptance and belief that change is necessary and a part of recovery.
- The ability to remain teachable and to find recovery wherever it may be present whether in a meeting, a book, a movie, a sermon, a walk or a conversation. Recovery is all around me. I just need to be open to finding it.
- The willingness to give back to others, the fellowship, and the community what has been given to me. I ask myself what needs to be done and act on that.
- The zeal to continuously redefine who I am in this process of recovery and to have compassion for the person I was, the person I am and the person I will become.



Readiness is no longer about selfishness; rather, it is truly about being ready and open for the gifts of grace and mercy my higher power has in place for me in this moment. OA has given me a life I never thought possible, and one I never truly thought I would have – my gratitude is never ending.

-Anonymous

Creating Readiness

I have often been off-put listening to food drunk-a-logs from speakers or participants in OA meetings. In my left brain, I understood the importance of the stories in the Big Book were to help people identify; that a changed life was the biggest testimony to the success of choosing recovery. I know that the principle of identification is essential in OA, as hearing my story spoken by others softened my tight, scared, inward focused heart. All left brain understandings.

On my OA journey, I have experienced this pattern – receiving knowledge of a truth, then a little later down my path, watching that truth settle into my soul- where the full transformation of my personality and heart can occur. This experience was repeated just recently as I read the following statements from another book: “By opening up to others, you’ll prompt people to open up with God.”

And then to the subject of this article the question was asked in another book: “Why do you tell stories?” Answer: “Whenever someone has a ready heart for this (truths), the insights and understanding flow freely. But if there is no readiness, any trace of receptivity soon disappears. That’s why I tell stories: to create readiness...”

So once again I have been humbled to receive the truth and wisdom of our recovery forbearers. The importance of telling my story and hearing others tell their stories has settled into my soul. My impatience and off-putting feelings have been replaced by a grateful heart. I can listen with joy and faith to the stories of my recovery family, as my Higher Power creates the readiness in each of His children. I am so grateful for being a recovered compulsive eater!

-Jane M.

The Gift of Readiness

In Bill’s Story on Page 12 of the 4th edition Bill’s friend suggested: “Why don’t you choose your own conception of God”.

Bill says that statement hit him hard and melted the icy intellectual mountain in whose shadow he had lived and shivered many years. He said: “I stood in the Sunlight at last”.

In that moment of readiness, Bill was able to receive a message that changed His life. At this fork in his road, he was moved to start down the spiritual path of recovery. He was separated from alcohol for the last time, and moved into a life of God-consciousness within.

Wow, when I read that today, it was like I was watching a motion picture – an action flick of a supernatural kind... The readiness was present, the message was received and a transformation began.

Fast forward to this year in my life- I acquired a sponsee who was being directed by her Higher Power to do meditation twice a day. She did the work of the steps and healing has been transforming her life. I watched her journey of coming into deeper connection with her God through meditation.

One day the readiness was present in my

heart, the message was received into my soul and a transformation began. I began meditating briefly three times a day: ‘clearing the channel’. I have struggled to discipline my mind to come back to stillness and peacefulness. I have been deep breathing, counting my breaths, and coming back to a single word (such as peace, still, God, or whatever word God gives you). This is the hard work of emptying my mind of its thoughts so I can be a vessel to be filled with the Sunlight of the Spirit. My life and spirit are changing. I am experiencing peace beyond my understanding.

Resentments toward people who are not the way I want them to be; fears that I won’t get what I want today; fears that things won’t go the way I want them tomorrow are being pushed out by the Spirit. I am experiencing more and more freedom! Today I live more and more in the place of “acceptance is the answer to all my problems today”.



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Here are some of the things I am learning:

- I may have been so used to living a small, confined life, that joy, freedom from worry, trusting and unboundedness can feel scary.
- It takes great courage to unwrap the gift of meditation.
- There is only one character defect – the inability to be still – to sit still with God.
- The solutions come from the stillness

- Go to the word over and over and instead of you doing it, it does you.
- I resonate to the tuning fork of the stillness – my word is the tuning fork.

Thank you today Higher Power, that you brought the gift of readiness, my heart was open to receive it and I am being changed!

-Anonymous

Readiness in Working the Steps

Readiness has been key to my OA experience. I became ready for OA when my wife threatened a divorce due to my overweight and overeating. She couldn't watch me kill myself any longer. I loved her. It was easy to find and attend OA.

At my first meeting I was clearly in the right place, but I was agnostic and "Higher Power," "God," and "He" or "Him" appeared in six of the steps. Fortunately, we read the beginning of chapter 5 from the Big Book at every meeting and it mentioned "The Chapter to the Agnostic". From this chapter I learned that if I could keep my mind open to the possibility of a higher power, that was enough for a start. After all, hadn't food proven a power greater than me?

Next I became ready for a sponsor, as the fear of rejection faded. I've since grown so much from those relationships and learned the satisfaction of being a sponsor. Now I understand members' willingness to serve in

this role and the feeling that I get more from being a sponsor than having a sponsor.

Working the steps brought several challenges to readiness. Completing step four meant sharing my wrongs with another person. What would they think of me? I worked more than a year on step four, in part, because it put off step five. I'm not good at sharing intimate details about myself, but I got through it. It wasn't nearly as hard as I anticipated.

I didn't know if I could turn over my character defects to my Higher Power as called for in step 7. Could I really change that much? I wasn't ready until I decided I wanted what the later steps offered. Then I said my prayer and moved on to step 8.

Readiness for step 8 came a person and a resentment at a time as my attitudes changed. Ultimately, I needed to become ready to forgive myself and forgive the people I resented. For some, I was ready to proceed to step 9 and amends. For others, time and prayer were needed.

Making an individual amend, even when I believed it was necessary, took readiness in the form of determination to proceed, courage to open old wounds, and risk of rejection. But the important thing was what I said (and didn't say) about the harm and how I intended to mend my ways.

Steps 10 and 11 called for changes in my routine to keep me ready to promptly apply what I learned from the program on a day-to-day basis. For me that meant I needed to set aside some time each day for prayer and meditation, to be willing to sponsor and be sponsored, to serve at meetings, and apply the tools in a meaningful method for my recovery.

Many aspects of my recovery have required readiness, from walking in the door of my first meeting to discussing current concerns with another member. But this comes in part by relying on a Higher Power. The rewards are well worth my effort.

-Irvin E., Iowa City





Insight from Intergroup



My journey with OA began nine years ago. Refraining from what I deemed to be compulsive overeating was my first abstinence. Looking back on how I had eaten, even then, I can clearly see that I was still consuming around 2,000 calories a day. After I adopted the second food plan offered in the Dignity of Choice pamphlet, I lost thirty pounds within six months. More important to my health was the results that came the next two years.

My doctor had given me a stern warning after discovering that my triglycerides were over 1400. She stated, "You are like a ticking time-bomb, waiting to have a heart attack or stroke." Without taking any prescription or over-the-counter products, I chose to eat less fat, which meant no deep-fried foods and less meat.

Within the first year, the triglycerides went down to 620; then the count fell within their normal range over the next few months. As an extra bonus, my physician noticed that my borderline high blood pressure had gone down 12 points on both the systolic and diastolic numbers. Even my blood sugar levels, which had been pre-diabetic, were within normal range, as well.

I moved from being an IG member, representing one of our weekly meetings, to becoming IG Secretary. I learned so much about the worldwide effects of Overeaters Anonymous, that I agreed to take on the responsibilities of IG Chair. I saw many members from our area reach and maintain a weight-loss of over 100 pounds. I enjoy giving support to other OA members, just as I have been one who has received so much encouragement on my journey.

Still having maintained normal medical test readings, I continued my eating plan, but my weight loss had become stymied. I have most recently, begun a similar plan of eating, influenced by the H.O.W. menu selections. This has resulted in a slow, but steady weekly weight loss. I started planned exercise three times a week. My increased flexibility makes moving and participating in more activities possible.

Being able to reap the rewards of my OA involvement has transformed my view of my life from day-to-day. Perhaps most importantly, I have evolved into a more caring person who wants to "be the message."

-Carol A., Greater Ozarks Intergroup Chair, Springfield, MO

New Registered OA Phone Meeting: Midwest Step and Tradition Study Using the OA "12x12" Book

Get connected with other OA's from the Midwest and around the world! All are welcome to join us! Great way to start or end your week!

- Sunday evenings
- 7 PM – 8 PM US Central Standard Time
- Phone Number: 605-562-3130
- Access code: 290492#



Contact Name & Phone Number: Bob 763-229-6196 CST
Meeting # 55338. See oa.org "Find a Meeting" feature for more info.

WE R4 RECOVERY: OUTREACH TO THE PUBLIC

How did we all find OA in the first place? In my own case, a friend took me to a meeting. I had been eating non-stop and gaining lots of weight for years. I tried everything to stop. I tried all kinds of do-it-yourself diets, many kinds of weight-loss companies, even some kinds of counseling and therapies. Nothing could stop my overeating. One day in despair I told my friends that I totally gave up. There was nothing left to try. My eating was going to kill me, and the sooner the better. One of them told me she had one more suggestion. Seeing how helpless I was, she took the initiative. She found a meeting 2 miles from my house, picked me up and drove me there, and stayed with me through the whole time. That day I found the hope that I'd thought was lost forever.

Many others have said they found OA through a friend, or through a counselor or doctor who has heard about OA from patients. Word of mouth is our most powerful method. Others find OA through other kinds of outreach. Some find us through newspaper listings, cards on community bulletin boards, attraction notices online or even signs on the back of buses.

So don't ask "what can one person do?" A single person can wait for an opening and then tell another compulsive eater, or can talk to their doctor and maybe even get Lifeline into their waiting room, or can put sticky notes on bulletin boards. An open meeting can place a listing in the events calendar of a local newspaper. An intergroup can send people to health fairs or place various kinds of attraction notices around in the community. Don't wait for Region or World Service to do all the work. Yes, their efforts may reach a lot of people at a time, for instance through trade shows or internet notices. But remember how powerful word of mouth can be. There is nothing like the example and enthusiasm of one person talking to another.

-Elizabeth C., Region Representative from the St. Louis Bi-State Area Intergroup



Do what you can, when you can!

The opinions expressed here do not necessarily represent R4 or OA as a whole.

Do You Have Something You'd Like To Share With Your Fellow OAs? Please Submit Articles or Information About Your Local OA Events!

**4 Thought is a Quarterly Newsletter That Comes Out in March, June, September, and December.
Please Send Submissions To: 4thought@oaregion4.org**