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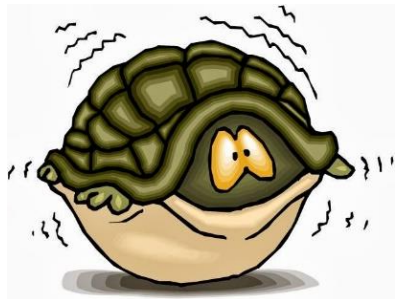
Fighting Isolation

Monarch Monthly



The Three Rivers Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous Serving Northeast Indiana and Beyond

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Isolation

As an extroverted person, isolation is not usually an issue for me. I enjoy being around people and gain energy from positive interactions with others.

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BUT as a compulsive overeater, I learned early on that I had to sneak around to get "all" the food I wanted. Then I learned that I gained weight from the excess food and wanted to isolate so that people wouldn't notice that I'd added on more pounds. Sometimes I chose to stay home in sweatpants instead of squeezing into those too-tight jeans.

Isolation is a way to do what I want by myself when I want. I can isolate myself even when I'm around others by being very guarded in what I say. If I don't tell others what I'm doing, they can't tell me how to do it. I didn't want to be controlled, so I kept things to myself.

In recovery in OA, I have learned, and continue to learn, that I can share about myself, hear what others have to say and then do what seems best. I can thank people for their suggestions, even though I didn't want them and won't be using them.

And I don't have to isolate when I eat! I am content with and not embarrassed by my food. I offer to send my food plan to new people and others who are getting used to a food plan. I don't mind that they know that I eat "all" that, because I know it's what works.

If I find myself hiding out in my life, isolating myself from others, then I know it's time to talk to someone who knows me well. It's time to talk to my HP. I can be honest, open and willing in all my interactions.

— D.M.



Time to Think

These past two years I've reached my hands out across the world to get out of this terrible isolation called food addiction. Sitting alone in a dark room with curtains

closed and bags full of my binge foods and a head full of self-hate. And of course, having to isolate in our houses during COVID means there is so much time on our hands, to think.

Which is never a good place for a compulsive eater. There's an old country and western song that says "I am not much, but I am all I think about."

When we began isolating from COVID I was going to a meeting on Zoom getting two or three days of abstinence then picking up again. I travelled across the globe, San Francisco. New York City and Ireland. without ever leaving my couch.

And somehow this helped me see that food addiction was the same in whatever country it came from and in whatever way it presented itself

By listening to overeaters share honestly it brought me out of that juggernaut of self will. I was able to really own my own powerlessness and want abstinence to stick. But wanting it and getting it are not the same thing. I have been in OA for over 30 years and relapsed many times. I called myself a chronic relapser and wondered if there was even a remote possibility of recovery for me.

The one thing I heard over and over again is if "I wanted something different. I had to do something different."



But what was that? I had a sponsor. I did the writing. I prayed.

Then I heard I have to stop fighting this thing on my own. I had to reach out and get help from other members. In the past I always had an excuse to not do this. My local town had no one in recovery, this one thought she was better than me, that one is too loosey goosey. If I did call, it would always be after I ate/ I'd cry and promise not to do it again, and sometimes be eating before I hung up the phone.

But this time something changed. I have called a lot of people across the globe.

I have talked about cravings and my feelings which are often petty and not pretty. Every night I text someone after my supper. "Meals are done. Kitchen is closed."

I've called to see how they are. Send them a piece of recovery literature. I even ask what is the one thing that connects them to their Higher power.

And as of today I have 176 days free from relapse. 176 one-day-at a-times out of that food that held me in bondage.

I know I have to keep connecting but I finally stopped isolating and stepped into the middle of this wonderful program.

Thank god for OA.

— Deborah K, Toronto, ON Canada



Freedom from Bondage

Boy, do I remember the thrill of getting my favorite binge food and going into a room,

closing the door and eating it all by myself. No one to ask me about the amount of food I was eating or to admonish me for eating such large quantities. Ahh, it

was Nirvana. The food was delicious, at first, but after eating so much, the taste was gone and then I was just eating.

Bored, lonely? I had a solution. Just go and get my favorite binge foods. It didn't matter that after the food was all gone, I still felt lonely, while I was eating, I didn't have a care in the world. SAD? A good bag of my favorite would chase those blues away, but it was only temporary.

Before recovery in OA, compulsive overeating was my response to the human emotions that we experience on a daily basis. Eating alone was the most rewarding because I could eat as much of what I wanted without fear of being seen.

As the disease progressed, I avoided or was not included in many social events. As my body expanded, I became self-conscious of my looks, feeling that people were laughing and talking about me. Sometimes they actually were. I began to prefer the company of books, tv and fantasy to that of people. What a lonely existence.

Today I proudly proclaim, there's no companionship in the food. These precious 12 Steps have freed me from the bondage of compulsive overeating and isolation. Sometimes I enjoy solitude, but it's totally different than isolation. Often, there is a need to withdraw from the cares of the world and spend time with myself and Higher Power for renewal. Food is not an issue when I'm withdrawing to myself for self-reflection and rest.

Isolation is a characteristic of this dastardly disease and I thank God that I found a way out of it. When boredom comes, I can get busy doing things like practicing my sight reading on the piano. If feeling fearful, prayer and/or a phone call always helps. Whatever the uncomfortable feeling, I can use the tools and the steps to deal with it. This fellowship has given me a beautiful array of friends who are always available to listen and share with me. Today, Isolation is not an option. Thank God.

— Nancy R.

Rescue Tools

"I wish she would stop bugging me", I thought, yet part of me was glad someone still cared enough to call.



I had been isolating and bingeing for weeks. No one had heard from me. One OA friend was trying to contact me and when she called, I could hear her message saying "I know you are home and eating. Please pick up the phone". I didn't.

I wanted to be alone so I could continue to eat junk food and numb out. If I kept eating I wouldn't have to think about mum's illness, our broken TV or the fight I had with my sister. That's what I thought. I thought I was calling the shots. I thought it was me that was making the decision to isolate and eat but in fact it was the disease once again exercising control over my decision-making.

There seem to be 2 parts of me. There is the Joy who very much wants food neutrality and recovery and there is the disease of compulsive overeating that wants to keep me under its control. Sometimes my desire for recovery wins and sometimes the disease wins. At the moment of the phone call, healthy Joy had lost the battle."

Over time I have learned that I cannot fight this disease alone. There is very little chance that, all alone, I can lift myself out of relapse. The people who created the program knew that isolation was a problem and so recommended actions that would help us get back into the OA community and recovery. These are called the Tools of Recovery and include sponsorship, meetings, telephone and service.



Calling members on the phone is a positive action and gives me a chance to get on track again. Even if I only get an answering machine, I have demonstrated to myself and my Higher Power that I am willing to

try. As we know, faith without works is dead and so I must take action to get well. When I call a person or attend a meeting there is always the chance that I will hear something that may help break my desire to isolate. It is also a chance for HP to speak to me through another person. I never know when or where I will get the inspiration to try again.

Sponsors are a gift of the program and reaching out to our sponsor is breaking the isolation in a big way. Here is someone who knows us well and cares about our recovery. It is our chance to reconnect with a person. Connection breaks isolation. Service has proved to be a great tool for remaining within the OA community and thus staying in connection to other members. Before Covid my job was to set up our meeting each week. It insured that I would attend. Even if my food was not good it is better to be with recovering OA members rather than to live in solitude with our disease."

— Joy S., Hamilton, ON Canada



Riding the Kiddie Cars

Why am I isolating? I enjoy having people in my life. I enjoy doing service. I don't want to go back to how things were before OA. But there is still a part of me

that wants to be in control. Or more accurately, enjoys the illusion of being in control. Call it ego. Call it whatever. It likes doing what it wants when it wants. When I am isolating, it gets to call the shots. It gets to think it's in control.

Before OA, my ego believed it was in total control. It could turn any way it wanted. The truth of the matter though was that I was like a small child at the county fair, driving one of the kiddie cars running on tracks. Sure, I had a steering wheel that I could spin and show off with. But in reality, that steering wheel wasn't attached to anything that could control the car. The car would stay on the track no matter what I did. I didn't even have the ability to start or stop. That was controlled by the ride operator.

What was the result of my ego's "kiddie car driving?" Well, I was a car out of control, running into this obstacle, then that obstacle, crashing into friends, family and coworkers, running down innocent bystanders.



Yes, I was destroying myself and damaging those close to me and anyone unfortunate enough to find them-

selves in my track of destruction.

Over 300 pounds and wondering if my life was worth living, I came in the doors of OA. What happened? Well, first I found I was in a group of people just like me. I had thought I was all alone, struggling to navigate this crazy life. Then I found out there was a higher power who care about me, who wanted good things in my life and was eager to help me. Next, I found that one of the prices of getting that help was to admit I was out of control and turn control over to this higher power. My ego didn't like that but I think it was growing tired. It had tried to control everything for so long and never seemed to really be able to do it. I guess it was at a bottom, too. Since there was no use going on the way we had been going on, my ego agreed to try something different, to try putting HP in charge.

What happened? Things started getting a little bit better. Given the lack of control and progress in my life before OA, both my ego and I were excited by this changing direction. The more we turned things over to HP, the more we worked the program, the more we connected with people, the better things got. Not overnight mind you, but slowly and progressively. Hey, a slow improvement was a heck of a lot better than being totally out of control!

I also had to start letting go of the illusions I was using to guide my life. No more rides on the kiddie cars! I



had to admit that while fun those rides never

changed anything in my life. They never made anything better. Those illusions were a luxury I could no longer afford if I wanted to keep getting better. I needed to be putting my energies into things that really could improve my life, like seeking knowledge of HP's will for my life and learning to live the guidelines of the steps and traditions to the best of my ability.

I lost over 90 pounds and kept it off for 30+ years. My life became better than I had ever dreamed possible. So how did I end up here, isolating? Someone once told me that complacency is the greatest threat to my recovery. The truth is so much of that pain and suffering was left behind over 30 years ago. It is so easy for my ego and me to start to forget what it was like back then. My ego starts saying, "Hey, why don't you let me take control for a while?" And I don't strongly resist. Those problems were so long ago.

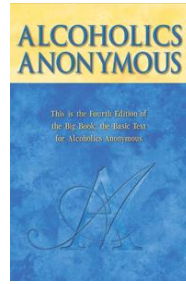
One thing I could always count on to keep that pain, those problems fresh in my mind was working with newcomers. When I saw the pain in their eyes, when I heard the suffering in their voices, I remembered. I remembered that was exactly how I felt when I first came to OA.

But things change. Since Covid-19, whether meeting in person or on Zoom, our local meetings have had many fewer newcomers come and many fewer stick around. I guess I didn't realize that I had started to forget. I didn't realize I was getting complacent about working my program, about connecting with newcomers and others in OA. I didn't realize I was isolating.

Things have changed so I need to change, too! I've started attending a Recovery from Relapse Zoom meeting in the UK. I have started hearing newcomers' voices again. I have started reaching out more to people I haven't seen much at meetings during Covid. I have started looking for more meetings that remind me of why I'm here and what I need to do to keep improving, to keep growing.

Thankfully, with Covid, I now have access to more meetings across the world than I ever dreamed possible! I now have access to more people in OA than I've ever known before. Not only can I pick up the phone, email someone, text someone, I can use WhatsApp or other platforms to chat with people anywhere in the world at little to no cost. OA has changed while I was isolating, while I was sleeping. OA really is a worldwide fellowship now! I can connect with people across the world in the OA family every day. It isn't just a concept today, it is a reality, every day! Thanks HP! Just what I needed!

— K.G.



Big Book Quotes Needed!

Do you have some favorite quotes from the AA Big Book? We now have a section in the newsletter for people's favorite Big Book quotes! Please include the page number and a little about why you like it, if you are willing. Send them to: newsletter@3riversOA.org and keep them coming.

Share Your Favorite Slogans!

Please share your favorite slogans with us along with why you like them. Send to:

newsletter@3riversOA.org

Can't remember your favorite slogans? Go to 3riversoa.org/oa-slogans for a list over 200 slogans to jog your memory. Some great ones are:

- Acceptance is the Answer
- Acid corrodes the vessel which holds it.
- Baby steps. Just take baby steps.
- Change from the inside out
- Do the next, right thing.
- Don't borrow from tomorrow.
- DENIAL = Don't even know I am lying.
- Even if your ass falls off don't overeat!
- Expectations are premeditated resentments.
- Face your stuff, don't stuff your face.
- FEAR = False Evidence Appearing Real
- GOD = Good Orderly Direction
- God grows tomatoes. He doesn't pull weeds.
- Half measures availed us nothing.
- HALT: Don't let yourself get too hungry, too angry, too lonely or too tired.
- I can't. God can. I think I'll let God.
- I need to use my HP as a steering wheel instead of a spare tire.
- Just For Today
- Keep it simple.
- Life on life's terms.

April Newsletter



How OA Changed My Life

The April Monarch Monthly topic will be "How OA Changed My Life."

What was your life like before? What happened? What is it like now? How is life better in recovery?

Articles are due Thursday, March 24th. Thanks for making our newsletter great! Send articles to: newsletter@3RiversOA.org

Three Rivers Intergroup News

Due to insufficient agenda, the Intergroup did not meet in February so there are no minutes and no treasurer's report this month.

[Need Help Finding a Sponsor?](#)

Having trouble finding a sponsor? Now you can request help from Region 5 OA. Just go to the following link and enter your information: region5oa.org/request-for-assistance-in-find-a-sponsor

Would You Like to Check Out Our Intergroup Meeting?

We meet on the last Monday of the month (except December) at 8pm via Zoom. All in our Intergroup area are welcome! Just click [Zoom Meeting](#). If prompted for an ID or passcode use:

ID: **966 0796 9857** and Passcode: **260574**.

Email chair@3riversOA.org ahead of time to ask for the documents that will be used in the meeting.

Three Rivers Intergroup Meeting List

Instead of including a meeting list that may be out of date before it is even sent out, we recommend you rely on the master meeting list on our website for meeting information. Please go to: 3riversoa.org/meetings.

Donations to the Three Rivers Intergroup

You can make online donations with a credit/debit card to the Three Rivers Intergroup by going to:

3riversOA.org and clicking the "Donate" link. You can also mail a check. Go to: 3riversOA.org and click the Contact Us link to get the mailing address.

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