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The Westchester Serenity Times

Brought to you by Westchester United Intergroup



Welcome!

In This Issue...

Welcome to Fall 2011 edition of *The Serenity Times*, the newsletter of Westchester United Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous! The newsletter is published four times a year. The focus of this issue is Steps 1-3.

Material cannot be returned nor can payment be made. All submissions to the editor must be signed, and when published will appear with first name and last initial unless otherwise requested. Names will be withheld upon request. *The Serenity Times* reserves the right to edit all submissions for length and clarity. Other OA groups may reprint without permission. We ask reprinters to cite the writer and *The Serenity Times* as your source. Courtesy copies of reprinted articles are appreciated. The opinions expressed are those of the writer, not those of WUIG or OA as a whole. Please address all submissions and correspondence to *The Serenity Times* via e-mail to: cartersmit@aol.com or via US Postal Service to:

**Westchester United Intergroup
PO Box 125
White Plains, NY 10603**

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The Serenity Prayer

By Janet S.

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.....

I wanted to look up the word “grant” and how it relates to our Serenity Prayer. The dictionary indicates “to give what is requested, as permission, etc.; assent to; agree to fulfill”. Here we are asking God to give us something so we are given what is requested. God hears our prayers and gives to us what is needed. God has agreed to fulfill our request. That request is to have serenity. But what is serenity? According to the dictionary, serenity is “the quality or state of being serene; calmness, tranquility, repose; also clearness and brightness. These are all qualities which we yearn for in recovery; to be calm, serene, tranquil, clear and bright within ones’ self. All these attributes were unobtainable before recovery, but now recovery has given me an opportunity to live them every day.

“Accept” – to take what is offered or given and receive willingly. Also one of the definitions says “to believe in”. So now I am making a request of my H.P. and he is fulfilling my request so that I may experience calmness, tranquility, clearness and I am willingly taking what is being offered to me because I so believe.

All of the above prepares me for letting go of the control I would like to have over people, places and things. However, I am not that powerful to change the

things I don’t accept. My life unfolds each day by the design of my H.P. It is not my will that gets me through each day abstinent, clean & sober. It is my Higher Power’s will for me. I have learned to give up that control to my HP but yet I still have to put in footwork every day; the difference is I cannot change what the results are going to be no matter how much I try to manipulate the situation. So I have learned to ask for help not only from my HP but from fellowship members and friends/family too! I have asked God to grant me or fulfill me with serenity or clearness, tranquility and to accept freely and receive and believe in things I cannot change. I am letting go of the control and power because I am not in charge – He is!

The Courage To Change The Things I Can – “courage” the attitude or response of facing and dealing with anything recognized as dangerous, difficult or painful, instead of withdrawing from it; the quality of being fearless or brave. To have courage means we must be fearless and face whatever situation is in front of us. That’s easier said than done. All my life has been fear-based and everything I have done in the past has been indicative of that; never wanting to face my feelings because I couldn’t deal with the pain so I kept eating until the pain of that destructive behavior outweighed the fear and something had to change.

We Admitted We Were Powerless: OA Members Share On Step 1

I am a low bottom, lying, conniving, self-deceiving compulsive overeater. I have always had a difficult relationship with food and can remember my father telling me, as a child, “don’t eat like it’s going out of style.” In my disease mode, I will do and say whatever it takes to get that next bite of compulsive food. I have done everything YOU have done with food, to medicate myself out of living for today. I have eaten out of the garbage, made up errands—in order to get food, offered to clean up so everyone else can go to sleep, stolen my kids’ Halloween candy etc., etc., etc. And it all starts with one compulsive bite. I can’t eat just one of my forbidden foods. It is none or every one I can get my hands on!

I have a lifetime of stories, one of which I will relay. In the 1980s, when I was in OA, but clearly slipping out, my wife and I stayed with friends in their home outside of Boston. There was an apple pie in the refrigerator, which I snuck downstairs to eat. My friend’s wife was quite heavy and judging by her eating habits, could well have been one of us. The next morning, my friend got very angry at his wife about what happened to the pie, using the word “again!” I said nothing. My wife said, “Rich couldn’t have eaten that pie, he’s going to OA.” I have never fessed up. Like all of us, I have so many eating stories. They all end up with me feeling bloated, self-loathing, and unable to appreciate anything around me. How many kids’ birthday parties, graduations, and other celebrations was I not emotionally present for because getting food took priority?

I have been in eating rehab (years ago), tried various food plans and programs (those Atkins candy bars were great—but I’m sure eating ten at a time wasn’t helpful). I tried an outpatient eating disorder clinic once, but was put off by the doctor, heavy herself, who during the intake was eating a sandwich, dropped it on the floor, picked it up, and started eating again. I used THAT as an excuse not to work on my recovery, for a while!

This is a life and death issue for me, although sometimes I treat it like a game. I weighed 420 pounds when I came back to OA in 2005, after 17 years outside the room, and am still at an unhealthy weight at about 330 pounds. I have been blessed with good genes or I might not be alive today. But heart disease, diabetes, possible stroke, and other physical disease processes are my realistic foreseeable future, if I don’t adhere to my food plan on a daily basis.

My eating issues have affected every single thing I do, every single thing I say, my family, my career, my friends, my finances. You name it. The physical part of this disease is

interconnected with every aspect of my life and is in a symbiotic relationship with my self worth.

As the workbook says, “[i]n OA, we are encouraged to take a good look at our compulsive overeating, obesity, and the self-destructive things we have done to avoid obesity—the dieting, starving, over-exercising, or purging.” This was necessary for me to face my food issues. Food for me is exactly the same as alcohol was for Bill W, Doctor Bob and the other inspired founders of our 12 Steps. I am powerless over food and it makes my life unmanageable!!!

I am reminded, though, in the first step that it’s not my fault and I’m not alone. I have a disease and only through daily connection with others who understand this malady, do I have a chance to recover.

Does it start with feeling inadequate and with low self worth or am I just a compulsive overeater who eats and then feels inadequate? I believe the food is a cover for those feelings or is a perceived but inadequate protection against feeling the highs and lows of life. It gives me a false sense of comfort. THEN, of course, it has the impact of making me look and feel badly, making me feel as if something is wrong with me because it affects the way I look, the secret way I go about getting food, the manner in which I eat, and what I eat. It is all so related.

My food issues have affected all my relationships. From a physical standpoint, it has made my wife and children fear for my physical well-being. Although, they might not think I’m going to drop dead tomorrow, they still have fears in that regard given my still large size. I can tell by the number of times my son asks me to exercise with him and the happiness I perceive when they see the way I am eating, that my family is keenly aware of my recovery or lack of it, when it is not present. In the past, it has impacted how they are concerned not only with me but with themselves having to see whether I fit into a chair, whether I will be able to get what I need to eat, whether or not I eat appropriately. How will I behave if I overeat? How will I feel about myself after I overeat? What will be the impact on them? This is the life they have had to lead, living with a compulsive overeater.

My eating and my feelings of low self worth have built walls between people I will let in close to me. I do have people I CAN let in and, thank goodness for program, as I have many friends I can share with. But, in the outside world, I’m sure that how I look, how I feel, how I eat has impacted how people relate to me, what I can physically do—in terms of activities with friends, and how I react to situations.

Before my recent abstinence, I would wake up many

mornings concerned with how I look and how I feel and whether I can find clothes that fit. If I'm into the food I cannot possibly connect with the better part of me and cannot function as I need to. When into the food, I'm certainly eating to comfort myself from SOMETHING or is it just that I am committed to feeling badly about myself and not being part of life? Into the food, I am out of touch with my feelings and walk through life making up stories about myself and how others are reacting towards me, that have no basis in reality.

Into food, I am a walking, talking, negative projection machine, living in fear instead of living a life I love. Into the disease, I generally wear a mask of cheerfulness. My family, however, lives with the anger within me, which is merely the flipside of the fears that take over when the food takes precedence over living my life.

Thank goodness, there is a solution, and it is the only one that ever worked for me. The solution is in the steps and the tools and it is in who I am being. Love and service, Doctor Bob says, through my sponsor. Getting outside myself, seeking to be of service to others inside and outside the rooms is part of the solution for me. However, it must start with being clear on my food plan and eating three committed meals with nothing in between. It means getting to three meetings a week and staying connected. If I can manage that, the miracles come true and I can create possibilities for myself and for my life, and be open to opportunities that present themselves.

Following my food plan, however, does not guarantee for me a happy, joyous, and free life. I need this recovery because I cannot have peace of mind or any chance of serenity without the food being clean. Putting the food down provides me with the clarity and physical recovery that allows me to get the "good stuff" this program provides in terms of emotional and spiritual growth, to put the past in the past, and to live into a future I am capable of creating without living a life acting on anger and resentment. If I am not self-expressed, moreover, I find that I am living in the anger and resentment we read about in the Big Book and the food won't be far behind.

I am grateful for my life and grateful for the gifts we bestow on each other each day, with love, through practicing this program!

- Rich, Eastchester

I'm Jamielee a grateful recovering compulsive overeater. God willing I will celebrate five years of working an OA program this May. My last binge was 6/8/07 and I am abstinent today (written 12/16/10).

When I think of step 1 I think of the daily choice I make to surrender. I surrender the things I cannot control starting with my food. I abstain from eating white flour and sugar and I ask for the willingness to control the

things I can. By being fearlessly honest and doing what is in front of me I am growing and enjoying the day.

I came to OA because I was depressed that I could not stop eating, I was 16, in High School and saw my life being wasted in my preoccupation with food and body image. I felt lonely, misunderstood, ashamed and terrified that I could not stop gaining weight.

My last binge on 6/8/07 was the night before taking a standardized test sent out to colleges. I had been attending OA meetings and working with my sponsor but I was struggling to achieve long-term abstinence. What I have learned as a result of my last binge is that in order to live free of bingeing I must remember my last binge or I will be doomed to repeat it. Right before my last binge, I was watching t.v. and the thought of having an extra food item entered my mind and I acted on it. That action triggered my compulsion to seek out and binge on the white flour and sugar foods that I asked my parents to hide from me. The bottom line is I learned my powerlessness over white flour and sugar and excess food.

After my last binge I was able to be honest with my sponsor about what I eat, attend meetings, work the 12 steps out of the OA 12 and 12 and the corresponding workbook, reach out for help when academic pressure came up and ask for more help from people who have what I want.

Today my life is filling up with the goals and dreams I have had for years but did not know how to achieve. I have the opportunity to plan a trip to Europe, I am singing in two operas this spring, I enjoy life in a healthy body, I take flamenco dance and my first thought is not what other people think of my body and I have found enjoyment and satiation in foods that do not contain white flour and sugar. For example, I am one of the Treasurers at my home meeting and it is helping me to be clear, concise and accountable. These traits are helping me to become more of the person that I want to be. Also, a goal I have to pass my drivers test and finally receive my driver's license. Not having a license has put me in a place of dependency and has kept me young but with the support of OA I am finding the strength to take healthy risks. In OA I moved from Florida to New York to pursue a career in music and the perseverance I have learned in OA has directly benefitted my persistence in pursuing singing.

In closing, I would like to encourage long time OA members, newcomers and everyone in between to look at what brought us to our step 1 surrender and to see if there is anything preventing us from taking our recovery to the next level and living our wildest dreams. After all, a spiritual awakening is what we are promised as the result of working the steps.

- Jamelee

Coming to Believe: An OA Member Shares On Step 2

The Twelve steps, as written, are for me, part of a journey, where I have a hope of things to come, yet I am centered on the trip itself. Each individual step sometimes seems out of reach for me, as I often only see with my own distorted eyes, instead of with the clarity that faith brings. Each step is a powerful testimony of a trip of ever increasing clarity and reliance on a power greater than my own where the rewards of peace, love, beauty and serenity unfurl themselves.

Step two, like the others, is like an accordion to me. I often make wonderful music, and I often close the instrument, and put it in a closet, where my defiance, rationalization and denial rule me, thus denying myself the pleasure of a musical journey.

When I break down the step, the puzzle fits so beautifully that I wonder why I would ever stray from the path.

“Came to believe” denotes a process. Some people have a lightening bolt course through their body that stays put and transforms their life. I am one of those slow movers that am on the path of a labyrinth that circles until the center is reached. I often seem like I stray, but my eyes are towards the center, which I call God. I do daily writing, where I write, from my own inner wisdom, a letter from God to me. There I see that, on a daily basis, a power greater than myself is there to guide me, yet my pride often prevents me from listening. I am learning, albeit slowly that I am “coming to believe.” There have been times, over my many decades in O.A. where I do believe, and that belief stays with me for many moons, one day at a time. There are other times, when I allow my own darkness to enter and I block that which is so freely given to me. My journey is my own, yet the wonderful news is that it is shared by so many in O.A. Each has his or her own story, yet ultimately we are all holding hands together.

The next part of step two says “A power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.” I freely admit, that I am insane when it comes to compulsive eating. I have been recently contemplating the meaning of insanity. If insanity means an inability to see external reality, then I am insane. Just like a person who is able to keep his or her delusions to himself, I wrap mine in denial and defiance. When I want to consume other than an abstinent meal and I truly believe that tomorrow I’ll be fine, I am as insane as one who is in an institution. My instincts have gone wild and I destroy myself, denying myself the truth of what I am doing. I know, that for me, the compulsion, despite all my “will” is naught until I let a power greater than myself restore me to sanity. When that happens, the miracle unfolds and life, as I believe it was meant to be comes flowing into me, its warmth giving me the strength I need to overcome my addiction.

- Sue, Town of Kent (Putnam County)

Turning Over Our Will and Our Lives An OA Member Shares On Step 3

One of the most incredible prayers I have learned in program has been the Third Step Prayer. For so long it was simply a bunch of words, strung together and recited daily because that was what I was told to do to stay “in the day and abstinent”, humble and right-sized. I didn’t know how it was going to help me do that, or why, or even if...I just knew that my way of doing things hadn’t worked and my sponsor told me to do it—so I did it.

One day, a fellow member was telling me a story of a miracle that had happened to her, where some *huge* financial insecurities had been lifted, seemingly by “magic”, simply by “doing the next right thing” in a string of smaller actions taken over a period of several years. “Suddenly” one day, she was taken care of by the Powers That Be. “That”, she said, “is the Third Step in action.” Confused, I asked what she meant. She answered: “Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love and Thy Way of life.”

That changed the way I said the Third Step Prayer from that day forward. It was no longer just a string of words to rattle off in sequence. Suddenly, each sentence had new meaning, and many often helped me through difficult times in my days.

“God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt.” In other words...I’m no longer in charge; I have *willingly* surrendered myself to my Higher Power to use me as He sees fit for the day; I trust His will for me. But I AM in the game—I have to “suit up, show up and shut up”...do the footwork and row the boat.

“Relieve me of the bondage of self” helps me to put things into perspective and see the truth when someone says something that “hurts my feelings” so that I don’t “poor me” right into the refrigerator!!

“May I do Thy will always!” *THAT*, as the Big Book says, is the proper use of will. God will ALWAYS answer that prayer!

I have seen countless miracles of all kinds in this program; I consider my life to be one of them. I am grateful to all those who came before me to bear witness to the Power of this program, as seen in the Third Step, and to those who walk with me and continue to show me that Power.

-Mary T, Pound Ridge

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE 12TH STEP WITHIN COMMITTEE

Writing workshop being planned for steps 4 - 8 - 10!

We really need your feedback

WUIG is considering organizing a writing retreat for mastering steps 4th, 8th and 10th steps. In order to make this a valuable event, we need direction from our members. Please take a few minutes to fill out the survey - it will only take you five minutes!

To fill out survey, please visit: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/8DZKG9V>

Thank You!

Anne B.
914-332-1019

FALL INTO RECOVERY

SATURDAY – NOVEMBER 19, 2011 9:30 A.M. TO 4:00 P.M.

Suggested Donation: \$5.00 (OA way – No one will be turned away)

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More from the 12th Step Within Committee: The Call to Service

Hi. My name is Cindy. I'm a compulsive overeater. Yadda yadda, 12th Step Within, blah blah blah. The important thing for me to always remember is that I *am* a compulsive overeater! And I thank God I am, because that allowed me to find a place that would give me the instruction manual for how to make a life that is beyond my wildest dreams. If you know me, you know how much weight (no pun intended!) there actually is to that statement. So yes, I often bubble over when I speak of things OA. Because before OA my life was full of more misery than any one person should ever have to endure. Before OA I was a stupid, fat, ugly, worthless piece of s#^& that didn't deserve anything good. I was the worst of the worst, the bottom of the barrel, the dregs of the dregs. The worst rapist/murderer/serial killer was better than I was. (What do they say: "egotism with low self-esteem"?) But in Recovery I actually learned just the opposite: I am a loving child of God's, and God don't make junk!! I *do* deserve the good stuff. And I love finding out almost daily what the good stuff is, and I hope to be able to continue on that journey until the day the monitor flat lines for me. But how can I continue on that colorful journey into the Garden of Eden, that joyous Road to Recovery? Part of the answer is simple: give service. What is it that St. Francis said? That in giving, we receive. Our recovery is like a river: as long as it's moving, it can stay healthy, but when all movement stops, it begins to die. So I give service. I try to always say yes when I'm asked. Like to become someone's sponsor. Or an intergroup rep. Or Region 6 Delegate. Or Chair of the R6 12th Step Within committee. Or WUIG's 12th Step Within committee. Sometimes I cringe when I'm asked (OK, lots of times!), but I still say "yes" whenever possible. R6 holds its elections at the Fall Assemblies. Candidates must get up in front of the Assembly and give a statement as to why they would make the best [fill in the board position]. And *every* time, they *always* include in their statement how incredibly much they have been given by serving in whatever positions they've already filled. And they all say that it is in stepping out of their comfort zone in those positions that they have gained the most. It's almost like a

broken record! But it makes me think that maybe they've got something there. I mean, it can't be *EVERY*one's hallucination that giving more service means getting more happy, joyous freedom... can it???!! But then sometimes I wonder how will I ever get everything done that I need to do... aren't I already *insanely* busy (like looking for a job, running a house, taking care of Mom, riding my bicycle & my Harley...??)? But then I remember, if it's God's will, then there will be a way. So when Carter says to me "maybe you could write a column", after the immediate need to empty my stomach contents all over the place, I think it may be worth giving it a try. And besides, haven't I been bubbling all over to any c.o. that'll listen, how much juicy stuff I got at those 12th Step Within workshops? I guess that'll teach me to try and park the Scilian passion at the door (...*NOT!*).

In my last article, I urged folks to make phone calls ("my sponsor told me to make calls"; "how are *you?*" ...). Now I'm offering a suggestion to our member meetings: on the 12th day of every month, make calls to folks you haven't seen in a while. Look back at your We Care lists. Find the names you haven't seen lately. Are there lots? Then divvy up the list to a few members. Not too many? Then maybe a couple of people can call the same person. OK, maybe not the very same day, but you get the picture. I keep remembering what I heard at the Convention workshop: "I don't know how many times I've called someone who's been 'out there' for a while, and they were cranky about the call, didn't want to be bothered, maybe even embarrassed that I noticed they'd been gone. But then some time later (maybe even a year later), that person came up to me in a meeting and thanked me profusely, saying it was my phone call that brought them back in!!!" Remember folks, it's not up to us to know the outcome of the exercise. It's just up to us to do that footwork.

- Cindy, Somers

Recovery Toolbox: A Plan of Eating

A plan of eating - who knew? After 8.5 years in program and a lot of wonderful spiritual and emotional recovery, I finally got ready to admit that I had never entirely surrendered to the first step and done the physical recovery. I have not binged since I came into program and that is a miracle. But I always worked my food plan just "a little" bit my way - just a little course - a little enough to keep me stuck in 50+ more pounds than I need and in body hatred and pain. So after my 2nd child and having been sent a new sponsor with hard core recovery - I got the willingness (Gods Grace!) to go all in. For the last 70 days, I have worked a modified grey sheet plan. I have asked for guidance, hated the answer and then done it anyway. I have done things with food (or not done things as it were) that I think are stupid, unreasonable and useless - I have surrendered. And the result has been the most miraculous and unexpected change in my relationship with food - beyond my wildest dreams. I have gone from eating 3 meals and 3 snacks, to 3 meals. I am almost never hungry. I make it meal to meal with almost never thinking about food. I eat much less at a meal than I ever have and I am not obsessed with food most of the time. I have my struggles - I always will - but this plan and the willingness I am granted to do it day after day has shown me what real physical recovery is and I will be deeply grateful for the rest of my life that I finally got here. And I pray every day that God keeps me here because I know that only God and program will keep me here... here's to 70 more days, weeks, months.....for us all. Keep coming back.

~Nicole, Goldens Bridge



OA Members share...

Meditation and Step 11

“Sought through prayer AND meditation to improve our conscious contact with Gd.....

What is meditation? It has been described as a 4th dimension or state of consciousness. It is a practice that: slows the mind, quiets chatter, gives us space to listen and possibly hear spiritual answers in the form of our own intuitive thoughts. Meditation slows heart rates, calms anxieties, helps us focus and concentrate more deeply.

Meditation is an ancient practice that is part of almost all religions and spiritual traditions. It strikes me that Bill W. and the other AA founders had the insight to include meditation in the steps in 1939. In 2010, the idea of meditation is not so radical, but I would imagine back then, it was not a concept practiced by many.

I consider myself fortunate to have been led to meditation in the 60's, when it was popularized by the Beatles. I have found it to be an indispensable part of my day, just like OA is now an indispensable part of my life. However, prior to OA, my morning meditation was followed by 8 to 10 cups of strong caffeinated coffee and a breakfast loaded with sugar. Then I would race around in a frenzy, my mind in 5th gear, never a mind 4th dimension. Hence, my food compulsions greatly reduced, if not nullified the benefits from my morning meditation. Forget about hearing Gd or intuitive thoughts, I was lucky if I could find my keys and get out the door on time.

Since coming to OA and being graced by Gd with almost 4 years of abstinence, and the loss of my shame, fears, and resentments along with 85 pounds, my meditations have really quieted my mind and work for me on all three levels: physical, spiritual and emotional. I always feel better after I meditate, no matter what.

Meditating allows me to listen and hear. This capacity draws me closer to Gd. It enables me to make conscious contact in ways that would otherwise not be possible because my thoughts would be screaming and drowning Gd out.

However, it is not discipline that keeps me meditating regularly. In the same way that I know I need to go to sleep at night, I know I need to do my morning and evening meditation.

I meditate for 20 minutes first thing in the morning before eating, as digestion is hard work for the body. I meditate again for 20 minutes before dinner. It's comparable to taking a long nap that re-energizes me.

- Shayna, City Island

News from Region 6



The OA public service advertisement towers over Times Square.

In case you missed it last December, this note came from Mary Rose, Region 6 Trustee, last year. It has been slightly edited as it's now in the past tense...

Metro Intergroup groups, and groups throughout the tri-state area, please note! ALL OTHERS BE AWARE!!!

As has been announced, the 15 second version of the Overeaters Anonymous Public Service Advertisement (PSA) play[ed] **every hour, 18 hours a day** from **December 1 [2010] to January 1 [2011]** on the **CBS Super Screen in Times Square, on 42nd Street between 7th and 8th Avenues!**

The screen's dimensions are 26' x 20' for a total of 520 square feet of viewing space. The screen is full motion and full color with no audio. Nevertheless, the World Service Office . . . arranged for closed-captioned text to appear during the PSA so people [saw] the text whether or not it [could] be heard. OA contact info will be on the screen at all times.

Viewership is about 1.5 million people daily.

This ad resulted from a representative from the screening

service seeing the OA PSA on a local station as part of our Public Awareness Campaign; then turning to the **Greater NY Metro Intergroup oanyc.org website** that quite impressed him. He then contacted OA, and after consideration, the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees voted to authorize the \$15,000 in setup expenses required to run the ad on the Super Screen. Note that OA World Service Office (WSO) expenditures, including this one, are made from funds donated from individual groups around the world. These funds are not spent lightly.

From the OA PSA to the Metro IG website, to the kindness of strangers, together we are spreading the message of recovery ... We are the message, and the strongest support for another suffering compulsive eater's recovery may well be *you*.

I am proud to be part of this amazing fellowship.

Warmly and in service,

Mary Rose, Region 6 Trustee