

W I N T E R 2 0 1 2

# The Westchester Serenity Times

Brought to you by Westchester United Intergroup



## Welcome!

Welcome to WINTER 2012 edition of *The Serenity Times*, the newsletter of Westchester United Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous! The newsletter is published four times a year.

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Westchester United Intergroup  
PO Box 125  
White Plains, NY 10603

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## New Meeting! Saturday AM at Graymoor

**Saturdays 8:30-9:30 am**

**Contact Lisa M. with questions- text/call 917-716-2488 email [lisafaf@aol.com](mailto:lisafaf@aol.com)**

Please spread the word and help bring OA's message to Northern Westchester/Lower Putnam. Visitors from other groups are welcomed- please share your experience, strength and hope with our new group.

**SPEAKERS NEEDED! Let Lisa know when you're available.**

Closed meeting. Format is Literature Study, Speaker/Discussion, Writing.

Graymoor's located at 1350 Route 9 in Garrison, NY 10524.  
Meeting will be held in the 4th floor conference room

## Let's kick it into a higher gear!

A Message from Don C., Chair of Intergroup

All things in OA flow from personal recovery. People in recovery who are working and living the Steps pass on the message through sponsorship, do service for their meetings and intergroup, attract more newcomers because recovery attracts, and ensure OA continues to be strong and available for the still-suffering.

Twenty-seven people attended the January WUIG meeting where the question was discussed, "Are there activities that intergroup could undertake to help members enhance their personal recovery?" The consensus was "definitely!" WUIG's ability to do it, however, depends on whether members are willing to step up to do more service. Intergroup members themselves serve primarily as organizers. Lots of members outside intergroup would need to help. Members do not necessarily need to attend intergroup to serve on committees.

I presented as food-for-thought an *action map* of 40 or so examples of member support activities I've seen used in various intergroups in past years. The broad categories of ideas included:

1. Workshops on *working and living the program*
2. Promotion of things such as group inventories, OA's Handbook, selected OA literature especially sponsoring pamphlets
3. Newsletter articles
4. Speakers and sponsor banks
5. Marathons/events
6. Weekend retreats (step studies or Big Book studies)
7. Closed step studies (2-3 months)
8. Publishing stories from members with sustained abstinence

After my 15-20 minutes on the *action map*, all the attendees shared their own ideas and/or comments on the *action map* items. Here's a summary.

### Needs: Most often mentioned

1. Information on working and living the program
2. More sponsors
3. Food plans versus abstinence
4. Service
5. Getting out of relapse
6. Group inventories

### Needs: Actions to address needs

Everyone was positive on most things on the *action map*. The highest priority ideas based on comments of the 27 people were:

1. Workshops on working and living the program, for example: individual workshops on sponsoring, developing a food plan, working a step or groups of steps, studying the Big Book, relapse and recovery
2. Marathons/events
3. A local pamphlet of abstinence stories
4. Step studies
5. Retreats

Here's some things mentioned that were not specifically on the *map*:

1. Perhaps we should give people the opportunity in meetings to do day-counts, not just 30, 60, 90, etc. For example, leader says, "Anyone counting days?"
2. Workshops/newsletter articles on body image
3. Childhood obesity
4. Working the program with your family
5. Difference between food plans and abstinence
6. Welcoming newcomers
7. How to keep newcomers coming back
8. Helping someone without transportation
9. Supporting new meetings

The January meeting was an information-gathering event. WUIG's next meeting will begin the process through its voting members of setting priorities, looking at costs and budgets, and assessing whether resources are available to chair or co-chair and organize the activities.

It is important that every meeting is represented at intergroup. Make sure your meeting has a rep and an alternate in case the rep can't make it.

At the meeting, a number of visitors who are not intergroup reps signed up to help in any way they could. Their information included name, number, length of abstinence and years in OA. If you are willing to be on this "Friends of Intergroup" list, email me with your information. A key use of this list will be finding people to help on committees organizing events such as workshops or other activities.

Don Carmichael, Chair, WUIG  
914-824-1509  
[fobb1234@verizon.net](mailto:fobb1234@verizon.net)

## Discomfort

By Eric (from the Bronx)

*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 work, splitting my time as a psychologist and guidance counselor. Recently, I spoke professionally with a colleague about the issue of a patient/client's discomfort. The colleague seemed surprised when I mentioned that people grow from discomfort, and it is not always the best thing to make our patients/clients comfortable -- that can actually stifle growth. To illustrate, I related the following story of me and food, my old comfortable "friend:"

On January 16, 2010, just as I was beginning to work the food plan I use in a more refined manner today -- and beginning to lose weight from the 243 pounds I weighed on December 30, 2009 -- I entered the home of my recently deceased father and institutionalized mother (she was in a nursing home). I found a bill for back rent for over \$3,000, after I had been informed my sister and I did not have to worry about rent. I was stressed as could be. I handled the logistics of that, and other errands, as best I could, under the stress. While running one of the errands, I passed Baskin Robbins. I have just one true trigger food -- sweets, chocolate in particular. I really wanted a hot fudge sundae. Keep in mind that my sundaes are no ordinary concoctions. They have to have three scoops of the most creative ice creams -- which Baskin Robbins is known for -- plus as many toppings as I can cram into the container -- plus whipped cream, hot fudge, a cherry, maybe peanut butter, caramel, etc. This is no exaggeration. One voice said, "You need this today." I was tempted to make myself "comfortable."

But, amazingly, there was another voice! This voice said, "Not today. Not as a solution to this stress." If I wanted the ice cream, it would be there another day, when I wasn't using it as a solution to stress, to discomfort. In fact, my original plan in tapering down was to have my next sundae on my next vacation weekend, President's Day weekend, four weeks away. I don't know how or why on this day I avoided the action of seeking comfort I had used so many times before, but I did -- and I have not touched ice cream since!

When President's Day weekend arrived, and I traveled, I was in an ice cream shop. I was starting to lose some

significant weight, though I was still quite heavy. The shop I was in didn't have the means to make the sundae I like, the amazing concoction! So I thought, "Why not keep going on this streak of no sundaes, and see where it leads me?"

It led me to the summer, when I was down to about 185 pounds, and visiting family in Tampa, Florida, who praised my weight loss and diet, which I simply transferred to the local supermarkets. I verbalized for the first time that I probably shouldn't have sweets ever again, even though such a thought was difficult (and, of course, untrue -- I only need to avoid sweets one day at a time! But I digress). Later in the summer, I was in New Orleans, and informed that I "must" have a beignet, the local treat. I decided that I mustn't!

And on and on it went! From one decision to allow myself to feel uncomfortable, I have now passed 22 months since that date. I far surpassed my goal of weighing 160 pounds on my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday, June 17, 2011. I have been noted for being "ripped," and "big," not fat. Plus, even though I did not attend an OA meeting in 2010 until October, I found better solutions for my discomfort -- calling OA fellows, attending meetings, writing, etc. Oh, and the money? I paid the rent from my savings, didn't go broke, and have long since been paid back.

Suppose I had made myself "comfortable" with the sundae? I might have enjoyed five minutes (I ate very fast in those days -- one of my tricks has been to eat very slowly and really savor what I eat). Then I still would have had the money to contend with. Plus seven dollars for the sundae -- concoctions aren't cheap. Plus the extra time I would have lost on my weight loss and dieting.

Hardly worth the few minutes of comfort, is it?

But the discomfort has paid, and continues to pay, enormous dividends. I have grown beyond my wildest imagination!

## Turning Over Our Will and Our Lives An OA Member Shares On The 3<sup>rd</sup> Step Prayer

*“God, I offer myself to thee, to build with me and to do as thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self so that I may better do thy will. Take away my difficulties that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of thy power, they love and thy way of life. May I do thy will always”*

God – my HP, my good orderly direction, my life line.

I offer myself to three – the first line in the dictionary under the word “offer” says “to present to God in an act of worship”. The next one says “to present for approval or acceptance”. So I am presenting myself to God for his approval and acceptance; which of course is unconditional.

To Build with me and to do with me as thou wilt – to build with me is to bring me back to wholeness and to make me new again. To do as thou wilt – your will God, not mine.

Relieve me of the bondage of self – Relieve is to ease, lighten, reduce as pain, anxiety, etc...or to free from pain. Bondage of Self – the self-centeredness, the hate, the fear. I am asking God to ease that fear and pain and free me from my demons.

So that I may better do thy will – I cannot do God’s will when I’m being self-centered and full of negativity. So as God eases and frees me of the pain and fear, my heart and soul are open and able to do his will.

Take away my difficulties – take away my obstacles and my objections in my life because they make my life hard to contend with.

That victory over them – I will succeed and overcome those difficulties and obstacles with God’s help.

May bear witness – so I can be a person who saw or who can give a firsthand account of how my God and his power has freed me.

Thy Power	Thy Love	Thy Way of Life
↓	↓	↓
Undeniable (that cannot be denied)	Unconditional (w/o reservation)	Undying (never ending)

May I do thy will always – God permit me to continue your work as you see fit and to help those learn of your greatness.

Hugs in recovery,  
Janet S. (The Bronx)

## How To Keep Them Coming Back

### An Excerpt from The OA Handbook for Members, Groups and Service Bodies: Recovery Opportunities

Newcomers are much more likely to return if someone gives them personal attention and encouragement. Here are some ways to do this:

1. Appoint a recovering member as newcomer chairperson at each meeting. This person is responsible for taking the names of the newcomers and calling them sometime during the next week to let them know they are not alone and asking if they have any questions.
2. If it is common in your area for members to go out for coffee after meetings, encourage newcomers to join you.
3. Offer transportation help, if needed.
4. Be ready to befriend other OA members, even if they don’t ask you to be their sponsor. You will still have the opportunity to share your program.
5. Help newcomers get involved as soon as possible. Let them know they can help.
6. If people ask you to sponsor them, remember that this may be the first attempt they have made to establish contact with someone in the program. If you are truly too busy, take the time to introduce these new members to other qualified sponsors. If a newcomer does not follow through, don’t take it personally. Be realistic about the times you want the person to call. If you are never home at night, don’t tell someone, “Oh, you can call me anytime.” If the person stops calling, find out why. Don’t ever give the impression, “You blew it.” It’s much better to focus on the positive: “Okay, let’s go forward, one day at a time.”

## Food Always There

by Mark S.

It seems you've always been there with me  
 If memory serves, as far back as three  
 Black and white photos show stocky legs  
 and robust thighs  
 Images succinctly seen by everyone's eyes.  
 Or was it the chubby cheeks with freckles,  
 that all had to pinch?  
 Oy Vey, those grubby old hands made me flinch  
 When mom wasn't sad, we'd sing and we'd play  
 But when she was, you were there during the day  
 In 1964, mom went to the hospital, she was really sick  
 Her visits were long, no not very quick  
 After months away, Mom returned much better  
 According to the doctors, fit to the letter  
 Good as new it seemed to me  
 Oh the wonders of ECT.  
 It was all pretty good for a while  
 Mom again wore her angelic smile  
 Then one day, a month before I turned six  
 Something occurred, that no one could fix  
 My sister Shelly and I walked in the house to find,  
 That our beautiful mom ended her arduous grind  
 Dead at 41, never again to be seen  
 My mother, my life now a distant dream  
 Not sure how we all got through that year,  
 But now I knew the emotion, fear  
 You were never far away, never far at all  
 My next best friend to playing street ball  
 This time you came to me in a strong, forceful way  
 To my dad, the enabler, I cried for you all day  
 You were brought home with him after a hard days work.  
 After me begging for you like a complete jerk  
 "Bring me this and bring me that"  
 There was no concern that I would get fat  
 The three of us were merged as one  
 Grocery store owner, his food, and seven year-old son  
 You became something that I always needed  
 Dad never denied the constant requests I heeded  
 Of course there was my older sister and brother  
 Dad & you, but there was no mother.  
 If Dad was late, even just for half hour  
 I knew he was dead, and my mind played on that power  
 When he finally came home, my heart became steady  
 Dinner was eaten, and now I was ready  
 I snuck you into my room, and closed the door  
 There was never enough, I always wanted more  
 Before & after dinner, before and after lunch  
 I always had something, yes something to munch  
 Yes, I always had you by my side,  
 always thinking you were protecting my hide.  
 At Age nine my sister, my love, my heart & my soul  
 Went away and got married, leaving a huge hole  
 My father remarried after my sister had left  
 The night of my sisters wedding, I wept and I wept  
 After that you became a bigger part of my life-  
 Dad had his business and his new wife.  
 She was cruel- and he was absent, but  
 What I hated most was her yelling, and accent

(continued on p.6)

## Building A Foundation

by Anonymous

*"We admitted we were powerless over food- that our lives had become unmanageable."*

Admitting complete defeat felt like getting caught with my hands in the cookie jar. I resisted for years admitting that I couldn't control myself around sugar. I tried everything I could think of to prove I could manage my life, and more so that I could manage my eating. Who knew that recognizing the powerlessness and unmanageability would actually shift from utter humiliation into "the first steps toward liberation and strength;" Step One in OA has allowed me to recognize that I suffer from a mental obsession regarding all things sugar, and once I choose to put it in my body, it results in the phenomenon of craving. My body reacts differently to sugar. Once the obsession starts, I can't focus on anything else, anyone else until I work tirelessly to fill the insatiable God-shaped space with sugar. God? We talk about God here?

When I first got to program, I almost ran in the other direction when I saw the word "God" in the Steps. I worried that I would be forced to believe in Jesus or inducted into some cult with strange beliefs. I stuck around because I was desperate. Step Two is "*Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*" They simply asked that I believe in *something* greater than myself- to be willing to see that I, by myself could not remain healthy. This step is twofold for me. First of all, the OA Group is a Power Greater than me. On my own I could not stop overeating; I could not remain sane in the face of an insane thought: I could not choose to abstain from sugar even when overwhelmed with shame. I felt so alone in the Universe. Powerless over the obsession and the compulsion, without defense against the first bite, I would eat even when I desperately wanted not to. I came to believe that OA held within it a Power that could help me stay abstinent one day at a time. It felt like magic.

(continued on p.6)

*Food Always There (continued from p. 5)*

But you were always there by my side  
 I always felt you protected my hide.  
 Dad was late one day, and I threw a panic fit  
 The woman my dad married couldn't give a shit  
 No one knew how to deal with the demons I carried  
 I guess it was you – who I effectively married  
 High school came and emotions ran high  
 I no longer smiled when I looked into the sky.  
 In middle school they pushed me thru  
 without passing grades  
 There were no rewards, no medals and no parades  
 I started to read- and started to study-  
 High school was hard - it was not Silly Putty.  
 I somehow caught up, and began to succeed,  
 but the whole world outside was a mystery to me.  
 Vietnam, and Watergate had folks up late in bed.  
 I on the other hand, lived deep inside my head.  
 At age 16- and feeling different- in every way  
 Now the gut wrenching truth, was I feared I was gay  
 Too much to handle for this lonely teen  
 It seemed like my whole life began to careen  
 For a few years my thoughts were in flux  
 Every morning I woke thinking my life sucks  
 I was not equipped to deal with this feeling  
 I was a mess, and my emotions were constantly reeling  
 I graduated high school at age seventeen  
 To not walk down the aisle, I skipped  
 THE graduation scene  
 Senior year I experienced great shame and gay guilt  
 But, I lost weight, grew a few inches,  
 a new body was built.  
 Then came my first encounter with  
 the psych profession  
 Please change me, please change me  
 was my dire confession  
 In 1976, I was sent to Israel for the entire summer, and  
 As it turned out- it was not really a bummer  
 I made some new friends- I was the youngest  
 in the group  
 Sometimes because of my fears I felt out of the loop  
 But you weren't with me that summer, no not at all  
 Emotions were rampant- and soon there came fall  
 I came home and went to college, still only seventeen  
 Somehow a year ahead, but still very green  
 I tore up my knee driving to the basket,  
 and only down by four  
 It would be over a decade that I would once again score  
 With my knee in shreds, and sports now in my history  
 You came back into my life, which was no great  
 mystery  
 Away at school, hobbies quite sparse  
 Living was a chore, and tremendously harsh  
 While people had fun, and explored their life's dream  
 I sat home alone, eating Ice \_\_\_\_\_ !  
 Staying up late while studying for an exam  
 Why did late night binges have to accompany the cram?  
 Of course, there were friends I had social skills  
 But friends couldn't cure the cause of my ills  
 But there were no sports (because of my knee)  
 The one thing that always made me, me

*(continued on p.7)*

*(continued from p. 5)*

My first sponsor helped me expand my concept of a  
 Higher Power. She said to me, "The sun goes up every  
 day and goes down at night, and you're not up there  
 pushin' it up and down, are you?" I began to see that I  
 was not in charge of as much as I had once thought.  
 Humbling. I thought about the wind and the fog, and  
 how no matter what weather I may hope for on a  
 beach day, if it's raining, I can't make it stop. I am  
 powerless. I think about the forces in the universe-  
 centrifugal force- when you spin around with water in  
 a pail and it doesn't spill. I don't fully understand that  
 but I accept it. Gravity- I can't fully explain it, but I  
 believe in it. Step Three says, "Made a decision to turn  
 our will and our lives over to the care of God as we  
 understood Him." Some days I fight the rain, and  
 some days, I "turn my will over to it." I can't say I fully  
 understand the Universe's will, but I do feel I have a  
 sense of what it means to "go with the flow." Some  
 moments I feel I am turning my will over to my Higher  
 Power, and practicing acceptance, and sometimes, it  
 seems clear that I have taken my own will back (i.e. I  
 MUST get to the store NOW that will be closed in the  
 next 5 minutes to get that specific brand of food that I  
 didn't plan for NOW even though it's rush hour GET  
 OUT OF MY WAY!)

I have come to believe that my Higher Power is the  
 Force that makes the world go 'round. The same force  
 that creates Nature, and Gravity and even the Fog. I  
 can choose to fight it, or I can choose to "go with the  
 flow." I can dig my heels in and create white caps in  
 the river, or I can lie back and float down stream with  
 the leaves. Easy Does it.

I have just begun the inventory process of Step Four. I  
 have "begun to swallow some big chunks of truth  
 about myself," rather than numb out with empty  
 calories. I am so grateful that I am on not on this  
 journey alone, but walking side by side in the  
 Fellowship of OA, in the care of my Higher Power,  
 and firmly on the Foundation of the first three steps.

*Food Always There (continued from p.6)*

I graduated college, my last year a mess  
 I did not pass the big 8 interview tests  
 I finally got an offer form a medium-sized firm,  
 I worked with very orthodox Jews,  
 their intelligence made me squirm  
 My anxiety level was high, and my esteem was real low  
 Yes, my college and teen years had dealt a big blow  
 I had many jobs in those first ten years  
 Went to work, came home but nothing allayed my fears  
 What did I do in those after work hours?  
 I sat home of course, eating the sum total  
 of sugar and flour  
 Yes, I always had you by my side  
 Always thinking, you were protecting my hide.  
 I had tried many a diet over the years  
 Had great success despite the ongoing fears.  
 But you always returned to me with promises of relief  
 I trusted in you, as you were the chief.  
 In 91, I found OA.  
 I finally dealt with the fact I was gay  
 After 3 years in OA I thought I had you licked.  
 But you a lethal opponent, that refused to be kicked.

So off I went back into the disease  
 This was done with such tremendous ease  
 Another 12 years, and I'm back in the program  
 Why did I ever leave and go out on the lam?  
 Some peace for a year, and now back on step 4  
 My dad gets sick, and I am again out the door  
 Back and forth we go, You make your stance known  
 And I am once again- well overgrown  
 I stayed away until 2010- when I walked back in  
 Shoulders slumped- wearing no grin  
 Almost at ropes end- I reached out my hand  
 Is this my last chance on this precious land?  
 Here I sit in front of my brothers and sisters  
 Rehashing my life, exposing my blisters  
 Is there anything different about this time around?  
 I fight more honestly to keep my feet on the ground.  
 It's all in the steps- we are constantly told  
 Whether we are 20, 30 or 70 years old  
 It works if you work it, This is what we hear  
 If I let go and let god- Then there is no fear  
 The more I Hold on, The more I stay still  
 This is the result of taking back my will  
 It was not easy to tell this tale by rhyme  
 But then I am reminded it's one day at a time.



*Intergroup's Public Information campaign carries the message to shoppers at Whole Foods in White Plains in the form of this enormous billboard.*



### News from Region 6:

## Region 6 Convention 2012: Recovery is A Capital Idea!

*Ottawa, ON Canada – October 26-28, 2012*

Region 6 of Overeaters Anonymous invites you to attend the bilingual 2012 R6 Convention in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Whether you arrive as a day tripper or join us for the entire recovery-and-fun-filled weekend, we want you to join us in Ottawa and discover that **Recovery is A Capital Idea!**

We encourage you to sign up early to take advantage of the early bird rate and to take further advantage of an easy online registration. Through this website you can also sign up for service and speaking opportunities, and purchase souvenir merchandise and basket raffle tickets. We have provided a link to the Delta Ottawa City Center online hotel reservation system. Mail-in registration is available by printing the registration form.

#### **Please note:**

**Convention Registration.** This is to attend all workshops, keynote speakers, and entertainment. Simultaneous interpretation will be available. You may attend the convention as a Weekender or a Day Tripper. You may register at any time up to and through the convention, however for the best price, we recommend that you register early and online. The cost is \$40 through August 1, 2012, and \$50 starting August 2, 2012. Canadian funds are necessary so it will be easiest for those with US funds to register online! Registration at the door is \$50.

**Service.** Conventions cannot run without members doing service. Sign up for service online (<http://oaregion6.org/2012/>) or fill out the service section on the mail-in registration form when you register. Please give back generously what you've been given.

**Hotel Reservations.** Visit the Hotel Reservation page for more information

**Day Trippers.** If you plan to attend the Saturday Evening Banquet you will need to purchase a banquet ticket. This is only for those who are not registered with the hotel and meal package. You may purchase a banquet ticket anytime prior to September 1, 2012.

**Collectable Merchandise** may be ordered along with your registration or you may purchase additional items from our online store.

**For complete information, online registration and more, visit:** <http://oaregion6.org/2012/>

**We look forward to seeing you at  
OA Region 6 Convention 2012!**