

Sept-Oct 2011

“Nature’s Signs”

Lifeline—November 2010

While working the Steps early in my OA recovery, I struggled with surrendering to a Higher Power. A kind man explained a Higher Power could be anything outside ourselves that we turn to for guidance, comfort, support and a healthier perspective. I could relate to that!

Drawn to the outdoors since my lonely childhood, I’d often felt at peace in nature. I never felt the need to eat compulsively outdoors. Instead I felt healthy and wanted to take good care of myself. Prayer and meditation with nature felt awkward, but I knew OA was a spiritual program and I had to pursue this road to become less compulsive.

One morning while walking in a beautiful nature preserve, I thought about my eating disorder—a repetitive pattern of dieting and bingeing. I had yo-yoed up and down some 50 pounds (23 kg) for decades! I was raised in a culture engaged in the relentless pursuit of thinness. My OA meetings helped me identify deprivation as a primary trigger. I seesawed because I was trying to lose more weight than I could without feeling deprived. I knew I needed to work towards healthy eating and comfort as a strong, healthy, medium-sized woman. But at any weight I could maintain, I felt ungainly and unfeminine. I prayed to be able to let go of the old notion that only thinness is attractive and graceful.

I walked on in the preserve, lost in thought and looking down at my feet, when I heard a huffing sound. Blocking the road in front of me was a magnificent doe—the perfect animal to illustrate that size alone has nothing to do with grace.

She stared at me with no intention of moving, even though her instincts should have told her to be fearful of my large dog (uncharacteristically still) and me. We three looked at each other in silence. I hardly breathed. Before me was 200 pounds (90 kg) of solid muscle, power and strength, but also the quintessential example of elegance, beauty and delicacy.

After a while she bounded off and leapt over a nearby stream with the grace of a 90-pound (41-kg) ballerina. This clear answer to my prayer moved me so much it prompted my journey toward real recovery. My “goal” became not a given weight, but the grace and confidence of a healthy, medium-sized woman. I was able to develop a food plan I could be comfortable with, forever.

I continued to notice nature’s many metaphors for my life. A mockingbird, unlike other songbirds that repeat a distinct call, mimics hundreds of birds, changing its songs in rapid succession and mixing them up in new ways. I decided this amazing bird would be a reminder to try new behaviors, to “sing a different song” rather than repeating the same old unsuccessful behaviors.

One afternoon I took a drive to distance myself from a crisis. I used to soothe my despair with sweets on the ride. But now in OA recovery, I drive to a nature preserve to take in the beauty until I feel more peaceful. This day I was struggling with the craving to self-medicate. I had pulled up to a stop sign. A left turn would have led me to the nature preserve; a right turn would have led me to a convenience store and some sweets. I had been about to turn right when a beautiful mockingbird landed on the stop sign and looked straight at me. We stared at each other until his unrelenting gaze made me laugh. Could this creature have landed there to guide me on a different path? Yes.

I turned left to the preserve where I laughed at the mockingbird and its message. My angst had transformed into astonishment and gratitude, and my cravings vanished.

I have had many such amazing experiences in nature. My new spiritual connection has transformed a lonely, lifelong struggle into a successful, gratifying journey towards health, joy and confidence. A gentle and kind force accompanies me on my recovery. As part of my connection to nature, my diet now consists of whole, natural foods. I have maintained a deep commitment to abstaining from compulsive eating because it is the only way I can live a life of hope, pride and serenity.

Our Higher Powers communicate to us in many ways, so I regularly attend meetings, read OA literature, work the Steps and draw on the grace of nature, my Higher Power, to guide and comfort me on my journey.

— Leslie, Broad Brook, Connecticut USA

Lifeline, July 2010: “Suffering Is Optional”

I came into OA in 1988, fat, depressed, hopeless and full of self-pity. I thought I would try one more thing, OA, before killing myself.

I called myself a “low bottom” food addict. I couldn’t live with the food, and I couldn’t live without it. Ending my life was all that was left. I thought everyone in the world had been taught “how to be a human being” and I had missed

the entire course. Being in my own skin was uncomfortable.

My first OA meeting gave me hope. The members told me I had a disease and was powerless over food. That explained a great mystery: why I ate until I was sick over and over again, even though I didn’t want to eat. Members told me I never had to feel that way again, and I wasn’t alone. They said our recovery was spiritual, physical and emotional. I was free.

I took my sponsor’s suggestions as if my life depended on it. I followed a food plan; studied how to apply the Steps and Traditions to my life; attended many meetings; read and reread the Big Book and OA literature; and began learning what a life dependent on God, rather than food, is like.

Today I practice the same recovery behaviors as if my life depends on it, because it does. At age 40 I married for the first time because my self-esteem

had risen to a place where I knew I was lovable. With God’s help I have stayed

abstinent for 19 years through many of life’s experiences. I did not lose my priorities, despite the deaths of my parents and a beloved pet, career changes,

home purchase, and years of holidays and birthdays.

The biggest testament to our program was my abstinence through the death four years ago of the love of my life, my husband Richard, after 15 years of marriage. I have peace and serenity on most days as long as I keep my spiritual connection with my Higher Power and don’t pick up food.

I have learned pain is inevitable, but suffering is optional. Nothing is bigger than my God, and the rest is small stuff. The only big stuff today is staying abstinent and connected to God.

Today I am “happy, joyous and free”(Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., p.133).

— Penny E., Oaklyn, New Jersey USA



Literature Selection: VOR, Nov 28

“Ours is a spiritual program, not a religious one.”

~OA 12 and 12 p. 13

I was raised in a religious home. I went to church every Sunday and taught Sunday School for fifteen years. However, it took OA to show me what spirituality was.

Today I work several jobs and am very busy. Yet I take one hour of quiet time every morning to talk to God and pray. Before OA, I would never pray for myself, but I cannot be abstinent without God removing the obsession daily. The secret is that He wants me to ask. If I am too busy to pray, I’m busier than God intended me to be. When fear enters in, I remind myself that God did not give me the spirit of fear. In my quiet time I hear, “Fear not!” In the quietness of my mind, God gives me courage and peace.

Literature Selection: VOR, Sept 26

“Take the time to enjoy your meals. You deserve it.”

~A Commitment to Abstinence, p. 4

As I was growing up, meals were the time and place for verbal abuse and general arguments around the table. I remember eating while feeling a lump in my throat, choking down tears while eating as fast as I could to be sure to get enough. Enjoying, or feeling I deserved either the food or the enjoyment, were foreign to me. In program I have realized that I always felt guilt and shame as part of my reactions to a meal. Only through working the Steps have I been able to acknowledge these feelings and recognize their proper place as relics of the past. I am grateful I'm able to enjoy guilt-free and pain-free eating.



Galveston Newsletter—April 2009: “Understanding Feelings”

A recent For Today article was about anger, stating that it is healthy to “own” our feelings, sharing that this is the first step in dealing with feelings. I realize that knowing what you are feeling is part of the selfhonesty that is required for our recovery. So pay attention to what you feel.

But we must separate what we feel from what we say or do. My grandmother used to say to me, “Think before you speak!” What wisdom! And I carry that wisdom with me today. I don't always follow it, of course. But then I am faced with an amends to make to someone where I let my feelings guide me to thoughtlessly saying something.

I value this quote from Divorce Busting by Michelle Weiner-Davis: “We must train ourselves to act consistently with our goals, not our feelings.” I like to think of our feelings as an energy information system. My being is communicating to me

about what is going on in my head or in my life. I need to listen to these feelings.

And I must remember that my thoughts create my feelings. This is an important principle. Then, I can begin to figure out if my thoughts are just “stinking thinking” or good clear accurate thinking. I go inside and check out my thinking. Is it wise? Is it based on self-will? Is it faulty-thinking? Am I reacting to my interpretation of the situation? Do I have enough information? Have I listened to other points of view? Have I written about it? Have I checked it out with my sponsor or others? Have I asked for guidance from my Higher Power?

If I don't do this step, I will probably be “reacting” to the situation. Our goal is to be “responding” NOT “reacting.” So be aware of your feelings, check out your thoughts, and then and only then, respond.

~the editor

Try not to become a man of success, but rather try to become a man of value.

~Albert Einstein

Lifeline, Feb 2010: “Strategic Planning Abstinence on Vacation”

I returned from a 12-day cruise having lost two kilograms (4lbs). I was not dieting, just following my food plan. I mentioned to my husband I’d lost two kilos (4 lbs). He hopped on the scale and announced, “Well, I found them!”

I realize how blessed I am. Before OA a vacation meant weight gain. What was different? I’ve finally surrendered.

I’ve realized I can’t do this alone—even though I’d been trying. Now I listen to my sponsor, other OAers, the readings and my Higher Power’s promptings.

Before I left on the cruise, my sponsor and I focused on strategies I could use to maintain abstinence. These strategies included the following:

- ◆ Packing weighed-and-measured portions of breakfast cereal, because I don’t do sugar and wasn’t sure sugar-free cereals would be available (My eating plan includes sugar-free cereal);
- ◆ Bringing along OA books and committing to specific readings each day;
- ◆ Discussing possible food choices and how to work them into my food plan, so I would know which choices to make when faced with a menu;
- ◆ Committing to attend a “Friends of Bill W.” meeting, if available. It was, and it was wonderful. Our small group included AAers, Al-Anons and myself. I heard new things I could use, and I was able to share a bit of our OA program afterwards with someone who showed an interest (a Twelfth-Step opportunity!);
- ◆ Avoiding the buffet (not as difficult as feared because the buffet room was the most crowded part of the ship, with a depressing ambiance);
- ◆ Having the courage to ask for seconds on salads and veggies when the portions did not meet my eating plan;
- ◆ Setting aside a specific time for prayer and meditation each day;
- ◆ Reminding myself when tempted that nothing tastes as good as abstinence;
- ◆ Keeping a food diary and emailing it to my sponsor when I got home.
- ◆ With the help of my sponsor and my Higher Power, I was able to remain abstinent, keep in constant contact with my HP, and for the first time, enjoy a vacation centered on what I was doing, rather than on the food.

Thank you, OA.

— Vicky E., New Zealand



Literature Selection: Big Book of AA, Appendix II: SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

The terms “spiritual experience” and “spiritual awakening” are used many times in this book which, upon careful reading, shows that the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism has manifested itself among us in many different forms.

Yet it is true that our first printing gave many readers the impression that these personality changes, or religious experiences, must be in the nature of sudden and spectacular upheavals. Happily for everyone, this conclusion is erroneous.

In the first few chapters a number of sudden revolutionary changes are described. Though it was not our intention to create such an impression, many alcoholics have nevertheless concluded that in order to recover they must acquire an immediate and overwhelming “God-consciousness” followed at once by a vast change in feeling and outlook.

Among our rapidly growing membership of thousands of alcoholics such transformations, though frequent, are by no means the rule. Most of our experiences are what the psychologist William James calls the “educational variety” because they develop slowly over a period of time. Quite often friends of the newcomer are aware of the difference long before he is himself. He finally realizes that he has undergone a profound alteration in his reaction to life; that such a change could hardly have been brought about by himself alone. What often takes place in a few months could seldom have been accomplished by years of self-discipline. With few exceptions our members find that they have tapped an unsuspected inner resource which they presently identify with their own conception of a Power greater than themselves.

Most of us think this awareness of a Power greater than ourselves is the essence of spiritual experience. Our more religious members call it “God-consciousness.”

Most emphatically we wish to say that any alcoholic capable of honestly facing his problems in the light of our experience can recover, provided he does not close his mind to all spiritual concepts. He can only be defeated by an attitude of intolerance or belligerent denial.

We find that no one need have difficulty with the spirituality of the program. Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable.

“There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance—that principle is contempt prior to investigation.”

—Herbert Spencer



*Obstacles are what you see
when you take your eye off the goal.
~Source Unknown*

Ask Anna Nimity

Dear Anna,

Why do I need a sponsor? I think I can work the program on my own, and besides, I really don't want to bother anyone.

Independent

Dear *Independent*,

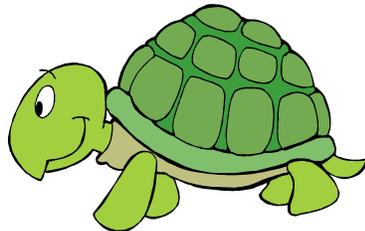
One of the great benefits of the OA program is the fellowship, and that includes having a sponsor. Often compulsive overeaters have a past that they reluctant to share with anyone, but clearing up the "wreckage of the past" is a part of recovery which is best handled with the help of a sponsor. A sponsor has "been there, done that" and is happy to pass on the gifts of the program.

It may be difficult to ask for help, but a sponsor is glad to share the recovery he or she has experienced. It is simply much easier to work the program with the help of someone who is already walking the road of recovery.

Yours in humble service,
Anna

MYRTLE THE TURTLE:

Don't believe
everything you
think!



Sep-Oct Big Book Reading List

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| 16. 553 | 1. 369 |
| 17. 301 | 2. 171 |
| 18. 17 | 3. 512 |
| 19. 388 | 4. 44-49 |
| 20. 470 | 5. 50-57 |
| 21. Gratitude
List | 6. 246 |
| 22. XI-XXIV | 7. 501 |
| 23. Your favor-
ite story | 8. 208 |
| 24. 375 | 9. 522 |
| 25. 171 | 10. 486 |
| 26. 232-239 | 11. 309 |
| 27. 151 | 12. 446 |
| 28. 246 | 13. Dr's Opinion |
| 29 208 | 14. 151 |
| 30. 561-574 | 15. 553 |

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Next Intergroup Meeting: Oct 11@ 6:30pm
Intergroup Office, 7701 E Kellogg Dr Ste 635

All are welcome!

www.oawichita.org

Mid-Continent Intergroup Combined Treasurer's Report Jul-Aug 2011

Checking:

Beginning Balance (Jul) \$ 950.51

Donations (\$1020.44)

Step Study \$ 37.00

Monday 7:30PM \$ 575.03

Monday AM \$ 40.00

Wed BB \$ 46.00

Friday Noon \$ 18.16

Sat AM \$ 52.00

Sat PM \$ 40.00

St of Ks Refund \$ 15.00

Anon \$ 20.00

Mon 5:30PM \$ 102.25

Hutch Sat AM \$ 75.00

Expenses (-\$709.22)

Phone (Jun19-Aug18) -\$104.85

Rent (Aug and Sep) -\$520.00

New Phone -\$ 62.92

Check Order -\$ 21.45

Publicity Budget = \$300; \$88.27 remg

Prudent Reserve = \$3364.79

Net (Donations minus Expenses) \$+311.22

Ending Balance (Aug) \$ 1261.73

MID-CONTINENT INTERGROUP OFFICERS

(Terms are 2 years in duration, and are
limited to 2 consecutive terms per position)

CHAIRPERSON:	Deb S.	316-734-6790 (2nd term, '11)
VICE CHAIR:	Laura L.	316-684-5904 (1st term, '10)
SECRETARY:	Mary M.	316-619-8140 (2nd term, '10)
TREASURER:	Jane V.	316-558-1625 (1st term, '11)
LITERATURE:	Jill C.	316-371-2045 (1st term, '11)
PILOT EDITOR:	Kirsten W.	316-214-9144 (2nd term, '11)
PARLIAM.:	Mary G.	316-652-8689 (1st term, '10)

All officers are willing to lend an ear for your concerns, comments and questions! Please thank them for their generous