

Santa Cruz OA Newsletter

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Overeaters Anonymous is a fellowship of individuals who, through shared experience, strength, and hope, are recovering from compulsive overeating. We welcome everyone who wants to stop eating compulsively. There are no dues or fees for members; we are self-supporting through our own contributions, neither soliciting nor accepting outside donations. OA is not affiliated with any public or private organization, political movement, ideology or religious doctrine; we take no position on outside issues. Our primary purpose is to abstain from compulsive overeating and to carry the message of recovery to those who still suffer.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS AND ITS PROGRAM OF RECOVERY,
VISIT SANTACRUZOA.ORG OR CALL OUR HOTLINE, 831-429-7906.**

Staying Sane Around Food

Abstinence is not about general self-improvement – it's exclusively about staying sane around food.

My abstinence doesn't require healthy food all the time or a certain amount of exercise or anything else that is peripheral. I try to do those things, but not doing them doesn't affect my abstinence.

In order to have a bottom line that I never go below, it has to really be the bottom – otherwise I will violate it and start the mental recriminations all over again.

I didn't invent the rules of my abstinence – they're discoveries! They took me years of experimentation and rigorous honesty to discover. These are mine. Find your own!

- ✓ Three meals a day, no snacks.
- ✓ No chocolate.
- ✓ No cookies when alone.
- ✓ No giving up on myself.

The deal my Higher Power offers is this: It will save me from eating badly by making me truly not *want* dangerous food, by erasing the fatal attraction to it, so

Newsletter Submissions

Do you have an OA-related story for the newsletter? Call Marion at 831-334-7233 for more information.

ABSTINENCE

This issue addresses the subject of abstinence. In 1962, OA's founder, Rozanne S., had a revelation. On pages 2-3 in the book *Abstinence*, she states, "We have to close our mouths from the end of one meal to the beginning of the next. Sometime during the day, we must 'abstain' from eating; otherwise we're feeding our compulsion." Thus was born the concept of abstinence.

Today, OA's Statement on Abstinence and Recovery is: "Abstinence is the action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight. Spiritual, emotional and physical recovery is the result of living the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve-Step program."

The contributors to this issue share their experience, strength and hope in living an abstinent life.

I don't have to keep telling myself don't eat this, don't eat that, trying to discipline myself. That's such an exhausting way to live. Nothing could be better than liberation from that! But here's the price – what I have to do in exchange. When I hear the message from my Higher Power about what to eat, I *must* obey,

immediately. If I procrastinate, my Higher Power could disappear, possibly forever.

That's a great deal. I'll take it.

Anya

My Journey to Abstinence

I first came to OA in February of 2011. Many people shared about abstinence, so I quickly became acquainted with the idea. I also read about it in the brown book, *Overeaters Anonymous*, and in the *Lifeline Sampler* – two books recommended to me as a newcomer.

With my diet-oriented mind, I wanted abstinence the same way that I always wanted to be thin. I also compared myself to everyone else and assessed my progress based on measurements conceived in the fog and furor of compulsive eating.

Fortunately, Higher Power was also working on my abstinence, and by the beginning of April, I got the message to stop eating sugar. This step toward abstinence helped significantly to reduce the food insanity and to bring more clarity into my life.

In May, I started to work the Steps with a sponsor. As a result of Step One, I began to let go of many of my old and familiar attitudes, formed by five decades of dieting. Still, I felt driven to achieve this thing called abstinence, to do it "right" and to lose weight.

In July, I heard someone share

about eating three meals a day with nothing in between. The only limit to the size of a meal was whatever could fit on a plate. I thought, "I can do that," and the next step in my abstinence began.

That worked well, and the food insanity retreated a lot more. By October, the "pink cloud" that I was riding had dissipated, and once again, my diet mentality resurfaced. I knew that I was eating too much at each meal and I started judging the effectiveness of my abstinence.

I completed my fifth Step in January of this year, and with it a new willingness entered my life. My diet- and weight-loss-infused mind surrendered and I have turned my will and my life over to God.

Abstinence is no longer just a concept. It's a way of life.

Marion

From Our Rovng Reporter Interview with Marci S.

The story of Marci's sobriety with food began nearly eight years ago when she entered OA "on a roller-coaster" – up-down-up. She thought she had to "do it alone," mentioning that she "struggled with the fit" of her meal plan, trying one plan after another and attempting to make a one-size plan fit all situations.

As she began to lose her diet mentality, her meal plan started to evolve. On any given day the foods may vary slightly, but the basic elements do not change. During her food plan struggles, Marci's sponsor asked one day, "What is the bottom line that you will accept?" With this question they came to a clear idea of what would work for a strong plan.

Today, Marci celebrates five weeks with her "bottom line abstinence," consisting of four moderate meals with nothing in between, and no "random eating."

During the evolutionary phase of this process, she discovered that she needed to look at things differently.

"My mind is a dangerous place to be alone. Higher Power must be involved in my food decisions," she says. "My grazing thing wasn't working for me! Oh yeah, I had a food plan – it extended all day long with no boundaries."

What keeps abstinence strong for Marci is rigorous "honesty in asking

for what is needed." She talks with her sponsor daily. "It keeps me accountable. Journaling is also very powerful," she reports.

Currently working on rebuilding her relationship with her Higher Power, Marci says she was out of touch with HP, "like you might be with an old friend. Writing and praying are strengthening that connection again. Spirituality is a big piece [of recovery]."

Marci also speaks frequently with, and listens to, friends who care, "both in and out of OA." Her friends are proud of her. For instance, she recently asked her husband to "please not offer her food between meals," and was pleasantly surprised that it was so easy. He was happy to help.

Further along the lines of rigorous honesty, Marci says, "I always want to cheat, like with eating before a hard work out (work hard – eat hard)." So no random eating has become key in her program.

Her sponsor's encouragement "to not eliminate any food groups" at this time, helps her maintain a hopeful abstinence. "It helps me to get through the challenge of making those difficult food decisions," she states.

"In the past," she continues, "I didn't want to own having a disease, but now I'm beginning to see that a lot of people are willing to reach out their hands to me." Her main hope, that she can continue to actually have times when she is abstaining from food, is made stronger by that network of support.

"Nobody is judgmental," she says. "If they are, they aren't telling me and that's great – I don't need to know. That is hopeful! We have to come to our own way and pace, which is also hope."

Marci's concept of a recovery plan is an action plan, and for her it includes exercise and not eating in a particular place (she has a certain room at work which has too many temptations). "My sponsor is helping me with the food part and to lose the diet mentality," she adds.

"Abstinence is something that is not often given as a subject by speakers at meetings, and it is a wonderful topic – there are as many definitions of abstinence as there are people in a room."

Find a Meeting

Meetings are open to all.
Meeting information is subject to change.

SUNDAYS

9:00-10:15 a.m. Speaker/Discussion

Sutter Maternity & Surgery Center
2900 Chanticleer Avenue, Santa Cruz
Free childcare with advance reservation
Call 831-429-7906

4:00-5:15 p.m. 90-Day

Church of the Nazarene
115 South Morrissey, Santa Cruz

MONDAYS

12:15-1:15 p.m. Literature

St. Stephen's Lutheran Church
2500 Soquel Avenue, Santa Cruz
Fragrance Free

7:00-8:00 p.m. Book Study/Speaker

Soquel Congregational Church
4951 Soquel Drive, Soquel
Focus: Addicts and alcoholics

TUESDAYS

12:15-1:15 p.m. Steps and Traditions

St. Stephen's Lutheran Church
2500 Soquel Avenue, Santa Cruz
Fragrance Free

WEDNESDAYS

10:30-11:30 a.m. Voices of Recovery

Bayside Baptist Church
1335 Seabright Avenue, Santa Cruz
(across from the Gault School)

12:00-1:00 p.m. Literature

Watsonville First United Methodist
229 Stanford Street, Watsonville
St. Stephens Room

6:30-7:30 p.m. Writing

The Wednesday Night Meeting
Teach by the Beach (next to JC Nails)
Rancho Del Mar Shopping Center, Aptos

THURSDAYS

1:00-2:00 p.m. Big Book study

Louden Nelson Community Center, Room 5
301 Center Street, Santa Cruz

FRIDAYS

12:15-1:15 p.m. For Today book study

St. Stephen's Lutheran Church
2500 Soquel Avenue, Santa Cruz

12:00-1:00 p.m. Writing

Watsonville First United Methodist
229 Stanford Street, Watsonville
St. Stephens Room

SATURDAYS

9:00-10:00 a.m. Speaker/Discussion

Calvary Episcopal Church
532 Center Street, Santa Cruz

11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Steps/Traditions

Watsonville Hospital
75 Nielson Street, Watsonville
Sequoia Room