

The Stepping Stone

 **OVEREATERS
ANONYMOUS®**
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

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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.**

Beyond My Wildest Dreams

I have been overweight since I was teased as a lonely seven year-old. All the diets and food plans worked, but soon, each time, I was back into the food. I was smart, nice and funny on the outside but miserable on the inside. Every success felt good but not good enough to erase the inner shame. Through therapy, however, I came to grips with childhood issues and my life improved considerably. But I was still obese, obsessed and empty inside.

At age 51, I tried to go to OA. But my higher power sent me to a different 12-Step meeting instead, which was what I needed more at the time, but nine months later, I walked into these rooms and have never left. It has been the biggest blessing in a life now filled with many.

From OA I learned: **I was not fat because I was bad, and I was not bad because I was fat.** (I had always thought so.)

I had an illness, an addiction I did not deserve, and other lovely people had it too. I now had a community of people who loved and fully accepted me. With their help and the program tools, I could manage my illness. When the truth of this sank in, I was on the road to recovery, and as my shame decreased, I was able to be more honest with myself and

How OA CHANGED MY LIFE

The inaugural issue of 2013 presents stories of recovery from six OA members.

Let's share their experience, strength and hope as we move into a new year of meetings, outreach calls, sponsorship, reading and writing, and the other tools of OA.

An abstinent new year to all!

others. I could make amends and change my behavior. In sum, I became able to let people know the real me.

Since OA, I have joined the love of my life in a loving, functional marriage, gaining a large family, who accept me, mostly, and who let me love them. I have wonderful, wonderful friends, both in and out of OA, whom I actually feel I deserve. I am part of several great communities in Santa Cruz where I am valued, supported and able to serve. Most unexpectedly, I have realized a lifelong dream by learning to sing and I am performing with a fabulous group of people.

Although I still have food issues and life is not without

challenges, my obsession with food is gone. I feel whole, and life is good "beyond my wildest dreams."

*Suzanne M.
9 years*

A Year of OA Magic

All my life, I have been looking for the magic that would help me to lose weight. What I found in OA is all that and so much more.

The first sign of fairy dust was the genuine welcomes that I got from the other members. Even though they spoke a language I didn't understand, they accepted me and enticed me to come back. I didn't get the meaning of abstinence, but I got a feeling of hope.

The magic continued as I read the literature. I reached out to others. I listened. I experienced layers of anger and resentment. I started to accept the realizations laid out before me. I didn't realize I was an addict. I didn't even know this was an addiction. I worked the tools of the program imperfectly. Slowly, I created a food plan I could live with, and it was magical.

Finding my sponsor was the most profound miracle of my transformation. It took several weeks of searching and praying. I was too fragile to handle a lot of rejection. My sponsor waved the

magic wand that filled me with acceptance, the greatest gift I could ever imagine. From the very first day, she gave me the words with which to find the best in myself. I have never felt so safe. I could be both honest and imperfect.

I was encouraged to pray, as if I believed. Abracadabra, my Higher Power took over. The struggle got easier. The feelings came and went but I didn't get stuck in them. I observed change. I could enjoy the ups and downs of life.

My relationships are better than I ever dreamed. I created a job that uses my talents and gives me balance and purpose. I have lost 50 pounds and love eating healthy food that supports my brain, body and spirit. I love my friends. Petty jealousies vanish. I started kickboxing and yoga at 60. I am letting my kids live their own lives. I trust HP to run the universe; I no longer take on that task.

The enchantment of appreciation fills my days with a purpose that is more fulfilling than food ever was. A new way of life has emerged. It is such a blessing that I want to keep it, to hold onto it. But, I can't keep yesterday's happiness. I can only create a new happiness today.

I have found a magical program that not only helped me to lose weight but that also changed my life. Is there magic in OA? I see it every day. It is in each of us who believes there is a better way to live. There is a life of peace and joy for those who are willing to succumb to the spell of OA.

Marlynn
1 year

Happily in The World

I was into self-isolation, eating often and alone and too much, especially too much of foods designed to make me crave, to make me fat, and to make me tired and sick.

I blamed, blamed, blamed, so frustrated because I had the answers to the ills of the world and to what ailed you as well, but no one listened. Maybe what pissed me off the most was that those I judged seemed to enjoy life more than I did. How could that be?

"I came. I came to. I came to believe." This slogan refers to Steps 1, 2, and 3. OA and AA literature state that if I used the Steps, taking the smallest actions, the tiniest baby steps – even though they felt like giant steps! – I could not fail to recover. I didn't have to be perfect, be brilliant or be a super model. Swearing off resolutions forever, all I had to do was to use the tools and work the steps – imperfectly – one day at a time, and come to meetings.

Today I am happily in the world. I eat planned meals that I enjoy and that fuel and nourish me. I am healthy and at a healthy body weight. I live a life with people I like, most of the time.

Sometimes I get frustrated when people don't do what I want them to do, but I know where to take that complaint. Other people's actions are rarely my business and what they think of me is also none of my business.

I'm still not perfect, brilliant or a super model. I may be, I hope, a kinder person. I'm happier with me. And I'm happier with you.

*Unity Day:
February 23
11:30 a.m. PST*

OA members celebrate the unity with diversity that thrives in OA at 11:30 am Pacific Time. Members around the world will pause for a moment of gratitude for "that which binds us as one but enables us as many."
The strength of OA is our Fellowship.

Keep coming back because it works. How do I know? On January 22, I celebrate 25 years of abstinence and of coming to meetings in OA.

Cate M.
25 years

23 Years And Counting

Before OA, my marriage was shaky because I was always telling my husband how he should be, how our marriage should be, how life should be. Now, our marriage of 30 years is a partnership and is on solid ground, not full of my sugar- and menopause-induced, extreme mood swings.

In addition, I learned the value of doing service, which helped me to feel part of, not a freak, not worthless, not rotten to the core.

I no longer have to prove myself. I am off the dieting merry-go-round and have maintained a healthy body weight for 23 years – a total miracle. I have good relationships with family and friends instead of creating havoc in everyone's life. I am not perfect and I know how to make amends for my mistakes.

The Promises have come true for me: I don't regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. My experiences make me who I am today: a perfectly imperfect, loving, caring woman. I have a Higher Power who supports and guides me whenever I am willing to listen. Life can still be messy, but with OA and HP, I can handle what comes my way. I am grateful to be abstinent – a priceless gift – one day at a time.

Meg H.
23 years

My Journey Through Step One

I was always angry and confused about what people were trying to tell me. Am I not good enough for them? My mind was always reeling with put-downs and

The Acronym Game

Looking for something new to enliven an OA meeting with a flexible format? Play The Acronym Game!

1. Create strips of paper with one acronym per strip.
2. Fold each strip and place it the 7th Tradition basket.
3. When the basket is passed, ask members to draw a strip or two.
4. Suggest that members share about their experience with the acronym they draw.

AGE

- ◆ Another Growth Experience

BINGE

- ◆ Believing I'm Not Good Enough

EGO

- ◆ Easing God Out
- ◆ Edging God Out

FEAR

- ◆ Face Everything And Recover
- ◆ False Evidence Appearing Real
- ◆ False Expectations Appearing Real
- ◆ Feel Everything And Relax
- ◆ Feelings Expressed Allow Relief
- ◆ Failure Expected And Received
- ◆ Forever Escaping And Retreating
- ◆ Forgetting Everything's All Right
- ◆ Forget Everything and Run
- ◆ Frustration, Ego, Anxiety, Resentment

GOD

- ◆ Good Orderly Direction
- ◆ Great Out Doors
- ◆ Gift of Desperation
- ◆ Grow or Die
- ◆ Gifts Offered Daily

KISS

- ◆ Keep It Simple, Stupid
- ◆ Keep It Simple, Sugar
- ◆ Keep It Simple, Sweetie
- ◆ Keep It Serenely Simple
- ◆ Keeping It Simple, Spiritually

SLIP

- ◆ So Long, I'm Perfect
- ◆ Sobriety Lost Its Priority
- ◆ Something Lacking In Program
- ◆ Something Lousy I Planned
- ◆ Spiritual Life Improperly Pursued

depression. Now that I am in OA, however, I can take it one step at a time and through God's help, I can accept myself.

Through my sponsor's guidance and support, I use the Serenity Prayer. "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference."

Through OA, my world has opened up to a different view and I have experienced several miracles. The most prevalent miracle for me is acceptance. When I walk into an OA meeting, I can be free to express my feelings, such as guilt, shame, anger, fear, and the most important one, love.

Because of OA, I have a better relationship with my family now, and that is a miracle. I am able to see and feel more tenderness. I keep an open mind

and I'm learning to not judge other people.

Truly, there is more I could tell you about me before OA, but now that I am on Step Two, looking back is only a setback.

All I have to say is, just keep going to meetings.

*Nancy T.
6 months*

Freedom From Craving

Before OA, I never knew that I could be free of craving. I knew only two things: to resist the craving or to give in to it. Both represented misery. Resisting was mostly difficult. Even if I had some easy days, I was so scared that I would fail – and I eventually did – that I could not relax.

Giving in to the craving held tremendous shame, self-hatred

and fear. I never felt free.

In OA I learned to look at my cravings in a different way. I learned to stop hating and blaming myself. Through Steps 1, 2 and 3, I learned that I am powerless over food and that I have a Higher Power to whom I can turn over the management of my daily life.

I learned about one day at a time, a concept that keeps me focused on the present moment and requires no more from me than to live that moment in an abstinent way.

And I learned about surrender. Surrender is what has given me freedom from craving.

It is more than wonderful to live this way. I am most humbly grateful for OA.

*Anonymous
2 years*

FROM SANTA CRUZ COUNTY INTERGROUP

Meetings To Go

BRINGING OA TO YOUR HOME



When?

You're sick
Recovering from surgery
Taking care of a loved one
Can't attend due to illness/disability

We'll bring OA to you!

Half-hour or shorter meetings
Sharing
Readings from Lifeline
Readings from For Today
Voluntary Seventh Tradition

We'll go to:

Your home
Hospitals
Nursing homes
Rehab

JOIN MEETINGS TO GO

- ♥ Become a MTG ambassador
- ♥ Contribute old issues of *Lifeline*
- ♥ Call Marion, 831-334-7233
- ♥ Or Nanette, 831-462-9644

To schedule a Meetings to Go Visit, call Nanette or Marion at the numbers above.

Find a Meeting

Meetings are drop-in and 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 by
5 p.m., Friday. 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

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

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 *Learning Our Literature (LOL)*

49 Blanca Lane, #303
Watsonville

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

The Wednesday Night Meeting
335 Spreckles Drive, Suite A, Aptos

THURSDAYS

1:00-2:00 p.m. Big Book & Brown Book
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 *Wonders of Writing (WOW)*

49 Blanca Lane, #303
Watsonville

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