

# The Stepping Stone

 **OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS®**  
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY INTERGROUP

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 2

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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](http://SANTACRUZOA.ORG) OR CALL OUR HOTLINE, 831-429-7906.**

## Abstinence Leads to Abundance

A reading from my first days in OA made me think of a three-sided mirror showing my present, past and future. The experience shared by the joyful abstinent writer of the story gave me a glimpse at my own future in recovery, and I could also see the author's struggles reflected in my own past as an overeater.

There were so many times in my life where, usually after a break-

up or some other traumatic event, I would rally, pick myself up, and start being kind to my body and soul ... for a little while. I would go to yoga,

reconnect with friends, make time to call family, eat healthfully and exercise, try a new class, paint a picture, and in many other ways cast myself into the universe. I was doing so well!

Then fast-forward to the time when a new relationship, job, or activity had lost its initial shine – and there I would be, sick again in so many ways. All the good deeds I had done and promised myself I would do forever were left behind. My fatigue from this sickness was all-consuming and I struck out at any available

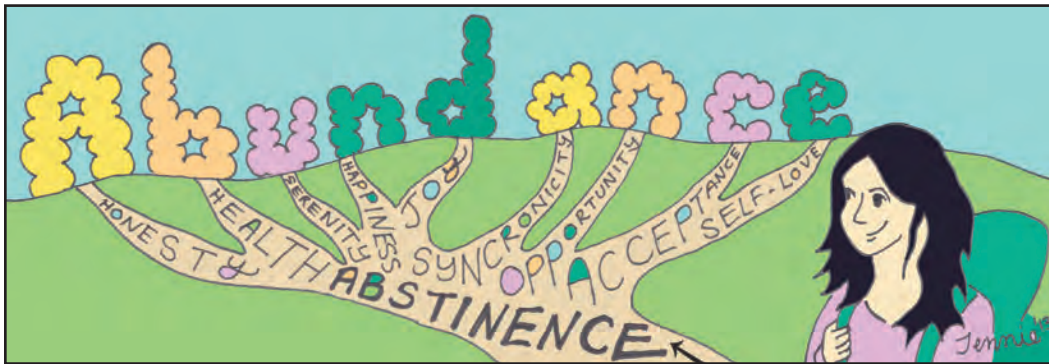
target – my boring work, my ignorant friends, my distant family, an inattentive boyfriend, my insensitive boss, my messy kitchen, my sore muscles – all of these were my perfect culprits.

Abstinence is changing all that. What has amazed me about finding abstinence in OA is the complete removal of this kind of thinking and the clarity that

has replaced it. My work is only boring when I don't challenge myself. My family or boss won't read my mind if I don't hold up my end of the com-

munication. And my kitchen cannot clean itself. My friends and my partner will respect me only if I actively love myself and bring that loving spirit into my relationships. When I do these things, the food falls into place, and I even get to enjoy it! It gives me energy instead of guilt, which in turn grants me the confidence to move my life forward.

When I look in the mirror now, the past and the future don't cloud my view. What I see is an accurate reflection of how I'm living my life.



**The above story and artwork, provided by Jennie F, kicks off The Stepping Stone's support of The Year of Abstinence Awareness, declared by the Board of Trustees of OA World Service. An article in the current issue of *A Step Ahead*, the World Service newsletter, states one of the reasons for this emphasis: "...the incredible rewards of sustained abstinence perpetuate yet more abstinence. OA has survived for the last 53 years because of our focus on abstinence and recovery, and we will assure our future because of the same." To read this inspiring article, log on to [oa.org/membersgroups/](http://oa.org/membersgroups/).**

**Please consider sending your story (and possibly your artwork) to be printed in future issues of The Stepping Stone, to share the miracle of abstinence in your life. Email [oascnews@yahoo.com](mailto:oascnews@yahoo.com) or call Marion at 831-334-7233.**

## Perspectives



The Saturday 11:00 a.m. meeting in Watsonville decided to “keep it simple” for Unity Day this year and observe a moment of silence at 11:30, right in the middle of our regular meeting.

We started our Step-study reading as usual, but many an eye kept glancing up at the clock in anticipation of that one moment in time when so many OA members around the world would go silent and think of the fellowship and recovery they experience in this program.

As it turned out, our regular reading ended exactly at 11:30, and so we all bowed our heads and reflected on what we have gained through the diversity and unity of OA, both inside and outside of our own small meeting. Some said silent prayers in their heads, while others reflected on how far they have come since first walking into these rooms.

Several moments later, we raised our heads and began our

## on Unity Day

discussion – with the topic of Unity combined with Step Two (our step of the month) making for some very interesting sharing.

The common thread that holds us together was clearer than ever, both in that moment and well beyond.



At 11:30 a.m. on Unity Day, a group of us were having coffee and fellowship following the Saturday 9:00 a.m. meeting in downtown Santa Cruz. One of us had set the alarm on her phone to sound at 11:30, prompting us to join hands and to bow our heads in observance of this moment of worldwide unity within the OA Fellowship. We quietly recited the Serenity Prayer as we held hands.

Soon we parted and went about our day, secure in the knowledge that each of us is just one of many, bound together in our desire to stop eating compulsively and to carry the message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers.

packet. Have group members write their contact information on the packet before or after the meeting, introduce yourself to people you don’t know and ask them how they are doing.

- ♥ Offer to do service at the group level.
- ♥ Take the key ... set up chairs ... put out literature.
- ♥ Volunteer to lead a meeting.
- ♥ Stay for the business meeting and contribute your thoughts and ideas.
- ♥ Be inclusive.
- ♥ Invite all members for fellowship after the meeting.
- ♥ Offer to put together a contact list for the group.
- ♥ Conduct a Group Inventory to get input from all members as to what things are going well with the meeting and what things could be better. Follow through with suggested changes.
- ♥ Review the “OA Checklist For A Quality Meeting” to see if changes are needed.

### Between Meetings

- ♥ Be abstinent.
- ♥ Make a phone call.
- ♥ Send a love note or e-mail.
- ♥ Offer support and an encouraging word.
- ♥ Be a sponsor.
- ♥ Visit a meeting you wouldn’t normally attend.
- ♥ Call or e-mail your sponsor.
- ♥ Call someone you haven’t seen in a while and ask how they are doing.
- ♥ Use the tools!
- ♥ Work the Steps!
- ♥ Practice the principles!
- ♥ Organize social events for members and their families.
- ♥ Invite another member to join you for a walk.
- ♥ Attend marathons, retreats and conventions.
- ♥ Attend intergroup meetings and report back to the group.
- ♥ Start a new meeting to focus on relapse.
- ♥ Offer to share your story at a meeting that is struggling.

From the Overeaters Anonymous, Inc. website, oa.org.

## Membership Retention

### What We Can Do to Support Members Within the Fellowship

**Members are more likely to stay in the fellowship if they see and hear recovery and if they feel welcome and connected. Here are some ideas to help.**

#### At Meetings

- ♥ Be abstinent and when sharing, say that you are abstinent.
- ♥ Take abstinence seriously – life or death.
- ♥ Celebrate your abstinence and recovery by sharing important milestones with the group.
- ♥ Smile and greet all members.
- ♥ Ask someone if she or he would like a hug.
- ♥ Read OA approved literature.
- ♥ Share about the solution – not the problem.
- ♥ Listen when others are sharing.
- ♥ Identify yourself as a sponsor.
- ♥ Warmly welcome newcomers and

offer them a Newcomers’ Packet. Ask group members to write their contact information on the packet.

- ♥ Talk to newcomers after the meeting and ask whether they have any questions – offer them your phone number to call during the week if they have a question or want support.
- ♥ Offer yourself as a temporary sponsor for the newcomer to get him/her started on working the program.
- ♥ Ask the newcomers if they would like to receive a call during the week and if so, take their phone number and make the call.
- ♥ Offer to give someone a ride to the meeting.
- ♥ Warmly welcome returning members who are struggling and offer them a Welcome Back

## Thank You, OA!

Walking into OA, I was morbidly obese, eating continuously, and hopeless about ever changing my life. For years, I had been using food to keep myself in a fog and under the illusion that I had control of my life. But control had long since escaped me. At the point that I walked into these rooms, not even food was able to keep me fooled or filled, but I didn't know how to stop the insanity. I didn't think it was possible.

At the first OA meeting I attended, I caught a glimmer of hope. Soon, I learned that abstinence was a critical piece of my recovery. Once I was able to cut out trigger foods and limit my eating to three meals a day, I had a clarity of thinking I hadn't had ... ever. Abstinence gives me the ability to focus on today. To connect with people in an authentic way and to be present for life.

Some people need to start working the Steps before they can become abstinent, but I had to do it the other way around. Once abstinent, I was able to really start taking a look at the ways that I had been using food to 'manage' my life. Seven months later, the never-ending compulsive food thoughts and behaviors have quieted down. This has cleared out so much more space in my life for recovery.

At this point, I can't say that those compulsive thoughts have "left me entirely" but today, I don't have to act on them. Yes, this path of recovery has brought joy, creativity and peace back into my life, and with that, I must also experience the sadness, pain and disappointment that is a part of life.

With my HP and OA, I am learning how to be present through it all, without compulsively overeating. Thank you God. And thank you OA.

*Monica*

### *How to Get a Temporary Sponsor*

1. You contact the Temporary Sponsors Bureau online at [santacruzcoa.org](http://santacruzcoa.org) or by calling the OA Hotline at 831-429-7906.
2. It can take five to seven days to find an available sponsor.
3. You are given that person's contact information so you can get in touch.
4. The two of you decide how to connect with each other – email, phone or face-to-face.
5. Steps, traditions and food are reviewed, with a focus on taking Step One.
6. Your temporary sponsor will work with you for two weeks and an additional two weeks if desired.
7. If the temporary sponsor has other commitments after the two (or four) weeks, s/he will try to assist you in finding another sponsor.

*Keep coming back – it works!*

### **I Don't Have to Do It Alone**

Can I stay abstinent alone? I tried many, many times in my life to be abstinent. I called it a diet and I always tried it alone. My shame about myself made it unthinkable for me to ask for help or to look for fellowship in recovery. As a matter of fact, diets were not about recovery. They were about losing weight as fast as possible and then – well, I don't know what then, because I never finished a diet. I never lost the weight I wanted to and my compulsive eating always reclaimed my life.

Abstinence in OA is a different matter. It's one day at a time. I stay abstinent with the help of my OA fellows, because I go to meetings and I make outreach calls. I stay abstinent with the help of my sponsors who support me daily as I turn over my food to one of them and I work the Steps with the other. I stay abstinent with the help of my Higher Power, who guides me through my day and helps me to be willing to follow my food plan. My Higher Power fills me with love and acceptance for myself no matter what, so I don't live in fear of failure. I also don't live in fear of success, because my program is one day at a time and I don't think of or worry about the future.

So, for today, I live by the Twelve Steps to the best of my ability. I follow my food plan, I read, I write, I make calls, I go to meetings, I do service, and I pray in gratitude to my Higher Power for all the miracles in my life.

*Marion*

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **May 11, 2013:** A Day in OA. *The Promises: Being Fulfilled Among Us*. See next page for details.
- **June 28-30, 2013:** *Let Go*, Region 2 Convention, Hilton Palm Springs Resort. Register at [oar2.org](http://oar2.org).
- **August 29-September 1, 2013:** World Service Convention, Cleveland, OH. Visit the OA Convention Web page at [oa.org](http://oa.org) for more details.

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY OA INTERGROUP PRESENTS  
A DAY IN OA

# THE PROMISES

BEING FULFILLED AMONG US

Saturday, May 11, 2013

12:30 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.

Live Oak Grange

1900 17th Avenue  
Santa Cruz, CA 95062

Speakers ❖ Activities ❖ Workshops ❖ Raffle

Clothing and Accessories Sale

PREVIEW SALE STARTS AT 11:50 AM

## ❖ NEW MEETING ❖

Tuesdays 7:00-8:00 p.m.

Louden Nelson Community Center  
301 Center Street

Check at front desk for meeting room number.

**Speakers ❖ Writing ❖ Literature  
Gratitude/Affirmations**

## We're Collecting Raffle Prizes for A Day in OA!

- Weekend at your time share or cabin
- Gift certificate to local store or restaurant
- Scholarship to the OA Retreat in the Redwoods in August
- Cool stuff: decorative items, jewelry, CDs or DVDs, crafts, exercise equipment, etc.
- OA literature or a subscription to Lifeline
- Services such as massage, coaching, cleaning, catering, gardening, organizing, hair cutting, etc.
- ANYTHING ELSE you have to offer!

**To donate, call Carol F. at 421-9454**

Following the Seventh Tradition, we cannot accept contributions from anyone outside of the OA fellowship.

## 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

**7:00-8:00 p.m. Speaker-Writing-Literature**

Louden Nelson Community Center  
301 Center Street, Santa Cruz

**New**

Check at front desk for meeting room number.

### 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  
831-707-0039

**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 and 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  
831-707-0039

### 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