

# The Stepping Stone



**OVEREATERS  
ANONYMOUS®**  
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY INTERGROUP

**NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2013  
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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.**

## A Searching and Fearless Fellowship Inventory

### What do you think about OA, about how we carry the message to each other and what we can do better?

OA World Service asked the membership just that question in an online and mail-in membership survey earlier this year. About 2,470 members (an estimated 3 percent of our total membership) responded and, as you can imagine, the answers were as diverse as we are as a fellowship.

The responses, summarized in a 61-page document, “Overeaters Anonymous: A Searching and Fearless Fellowship Inventory—A Good Look,” provide a snapshot of personal experiences, perceptions and needs of the fellowship.

According to WSO, “The purpose was to give members the opportunity to reflect on OA as a whole, using their experience to rate how each level of service is working to help carry the message. The survey was also seen as a means of education, raising the awareness of services and assistance available to members, as well as their opportunities to contribute to the fellowship of Overeaters Anonymous in ways they were unaware of previously.”

We are invited to look over the questions and answers ([oa.org/2013-oa-fellowship-inventory/](http://oa.org/2013-oa-fellowship-inventory/)) in our own groups and OA relationships, talk with our sponsors and service boards and take right actions.

The survey highlights four basic concerns:

- A need for sponsors.
- A need for abstinence and physical recovery.
- A need for public awareness.
- A need for outreach within the fellowship.

Members raised these four issues in response to a question about what their home group could do better to strengthen the recovery of its members and, again, when they were asked what they themselves could do to strengthen the level of recovery in their meeting. The top four suggestions were:

- Call one another.
- Abstinence.
- Service.
- Sponsor more.

When I think of my dear home group, I am grateful for the encouragement each week to remember these tools of the program. I have such a strong “foregetter” that I sometimes try to push through the day alone when I have a fortune of fellowship around me. Each week, my home group steers me back on course. They give me the opportunity to make phone calls, do service, sponsor, and be sponsored. Sometimes it’s a minor adjustment, sometimes an overhaul; always it is a surprise that such simple measures change everything and support one more day of abstinence.

In its report, WSO reminds us that the “responsibility for the survival of OA rests firmly on the shoulders of all members, not only with the trusted servants who are doing so much to support the fellowship. How do we get that message across? We must encourage members to take action, responsibility and ownership, not only of their personal recovery, but also of the welfare of Overeaters Anonymous as a whole.”

I think I’ll make a phone call tonight.

*Jennifer P.*



## THE LITERATURE TABLE: What Are You Reading?

**Anne O:** *For Today*. I bought a copy of this wonderful little book when it first came out in 1982. It was so wonderful to have our own daily reading book. I have continued to read it over the years and find new words of wisdom in it each time I pick it up. It is the one I take with me when I travel.

**Lisa Marie:** When asked about my favorite OA Literature, I immediately thought about the *Lifeline Sampler* and a story entitled “Abstinence is Easier.” This story helped me put a lot of issues into perspective when I was tempted to break my abstinence. One part that really hit home read, “When I’m abstinent, I get to feel good regardless of my size or weight. I wake up with a light, thankful feeling and look forward to a new day, free from the bondage of the scale.” What a blessing it was to read this story.

**Rachel:** The *For Today* book and workbook are my current “faves.” I appreciate the brief and poignant wisdom I find within its pages, truly food for thought! I also appreciate the opportunity to reflect and digest through answering the questions in the workbook and then sharing with a fellow OA. This little book of gems continues to remind me that abstinence, self-acceptance, and letting go are three keys to my success in this program, just for today.

**Marion:** At my first meeting, the newcomer greeter suggested that I buy the book *Overeaters Anonymous* (the Brown Book). The stories in this book introduced me to many aspects of the OA program. They inspired me to keep coming back. I didn’t know it then, but I was filling myself up with the experience, strength and hope of the wonderful OAs

who have come before me. Those stories are the embodiment of the phrase in the last paragraph of Step Twelve: “Those of us who live this program don’t simply carry the message; we are the message.”

**Monica L:** *For Today* is the book that I turn to as a part of my daily recovery. Each morning, I read from this daily reader and get a valuable nugget of truth that grounds me in program as I head off into my day. There is always something within the day’s message that is exactly what I need to hear, even when I’ve accidentally read the “wrong” day ... my HP always working in wondrous ways!

**Mirasol:** My favorite piece of literature! Wow, I have so many! One really special piece of literature is the *Lifeline Sampler*. This book has a very special place in my heart.

When I first got into program, I was on the fence. I would tell myself, I’m not as bad as *these* people. I remember I had been struggling and in the pain of bingeing during this time. There was a Sunday meeting that I went to in San Jose. One of the members must have seen that I was struggling and didn’t quite have both feet planted in the program. He lent me the meeting copy of the *Lifeline Sampler*. This book is filled with member articles from *Lifeline* magazine through the years. This book saved me. During the week, I could jump in and remember that I wasn’t alone and learn how others had recovered. His generosity and service touches my heart to this day.

**Meg:** I read *Voices of Recovery* and *For Today*, the two OA daily readers, every morning. They help me to get on the track of recovery for the day. Today’s reading, for instance, was on the power of prayer and that is just what I needed – a reminder that prayer works. In this season of eating frenzy I need all the help I can get. Yesterday I had food and alcohol thoughts that I haven’t had in more than 20 years. They scared me and I got to a meeting today. Lo and behold, the reading was from *Voices of Recovery* on prayer, just the reminder I needed. HP helps me if I ask.

And now, there are workbooks for both *For Today* and *Voices of Recovery*. This is a great way to deepen recovery. All four books are available from the bookstore on oa.org as well as at most meetings.

**Alex:** The *Members in Relapse* pamphlet is a collection of experiences individual OAs have had with the devastation of relapse. It shares a simple way out of food obsession, hopelessness and despair into abstinence, gratitude and love.



# Letting Go at A Day in OA

The Day in OA was inspiring. I am so thankful for these great workshops that have an intense effect on me. The fun community of OA friends is like a loving family gathering. For me, it is a time for renewing, recharging, and listening to HP's message.

The clothing exchange – well, thank you all for your castoffs, now my treasures! Where else could I go to find these treasures, given with love and understanding, for next to nothing.

Marlynn, the first speaker, started off the afternoon with a story about learning to swim as a child, having the willingness to let go of the side of the pool. The story is an analogy for letting go – of shame, resentments, fear – having faith and courage to let go and let HP. Her words went straight to my core and my barriers began to recede. I was listening, absorbing and feeling my spiritual foundation opening.

Next, our guest speaker, Pam L. from San Jose, was introduced. Pam's story touched me deeply. She spoke of the disease I have, that it has no cure and will not go away on its own. The OA program is the treatment for this disease, including all the tools. Pam spoke of abstinence being a tool of recovery, not

the goal, and of coming to a place of praying for recovery, not just abstinence. Recovery from my obsessions means so much to me – freedom from the underlying reasons for my compulsions. Recovery is what the spiritual path of OA gives me – to be free, one day at a time.

Pam's share was followed by a beautiful guided meditation with Karen M. She led me to a meadow of openness, willingness, and peace. I experienced the freedom of being enough...ahhh...I let go and was at peace.

Recovery is personal to each of us. The path is of our own choosing, and mine is to let go of the side of the pool, ready for HP to guide me. Oh so sweet. I am much more aware now of my spiritual recovery and I am closer to HP. I'm laughing more and enjoying life.

I am thankful for these lovingly-put-together events. Each event changes me, opens me. Thank-you to all who gave the gift of service in putting on this day. I encourage everyone to share the experience of these special events.

*Wendy R.*



## The Inverted Service Pyramid of Overeaters Anonymous

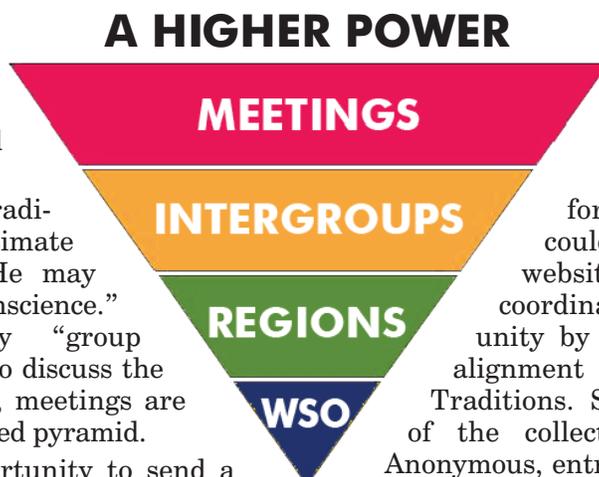
In many organizations – business and government – there is a chain of command that starts at the top and flows to the bottom. In a strict literal sense, this is also true of Overeaters Anonymous. In practice, however, the OA structure is the opposite of other organizations. That is because in OA a Higher Power is the director. The OA structure can be represented by an inverted pyramid.

According to the Second Tradition, we have “but one ultimate authority, a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.” Group by group, monthly “group conscience” meetings are held to discuss the business of the meeting. Thus, meetings are at the highest level of the inverted pyramid.

Each meeting has the opportunity to send a representative to Intergroup, bringing the group's voice, arising out of an informed group conscience. Intergroup is the next level in the inverted service pyramid.

Intergroups elect Region Representatives to take their group conscience to Regional Assemblies and a World Service delegate to attend the World Service Business Conference. The 10 OA regions are the next level of the inverted pyramid. In service of the 10 regions and OA as a whole, OA World Service is at the bottom of the inverted pyramid.

Service bodies have been formed to accomplish “what we could never do alone.” They host websites, help facilitate conventions, coordinate outreach, and help maintain unity by approving specific literature in alignment with OA's 12 Steps and 12 Traditions. Service bodies are the servants of the collective conscience of Overeaters Anonymous, entrusted with carrying the message of recovery from compulsive eating through the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions.



*Alex M.*



## 12 Steps to a Better Holiday Season

1. We admitted the holiday season has a deeper meaning than devouring food.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could help us see and celebrate the true meaning of the season.
3. We came to believe our Higher Power could help us appreciate the joyfulness of the season as we understand it.
4. We made a searching and thorough examination of our relationship with food during the holidays and other things we enjoy about the season.
5. We admitted to our Higher Power the exact nature of our food habits during holiday seasons past.
6. We became entirely ready to allow our Higher Power to remove our attachment to food as a necessity of the holidays.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our desire to partake of holiday treats.
8. We made a list of all persons whose presence makes the holiday season joyful for us and with whom we would like to share our joy.
9. We made plans to spend time with those people whenever possible, except when to do so would remove us from our primary purpose of abstinence.
10. We continued to enjoy the company of friends and family and other nonfood aspects of the season.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our appreciation of the season, praying for knowledge of its meaning and the joy we feel at this time.
12. Having realized that sharing the joy of this season with others far outlasts the fleeting pleasure of food, we gave ourselves the gift of abstinence throughout the holidays and gave others the gift of our full attention and appreciation.

Lifeline, Nov. 2007

## Public Information The Year in Review

We reached out to nutritionists, gastroenterologists and dietitians by mail, sending them OA information, and sent postcards to counselors, psychiatrists, and psychologists, asking if they wanted more information about OA for their clients. In October, we had a booth at the Cabrillo College Wellness Fair and met with two Cabrillo students to share information about OA. We continued to reach out to the public media to make sure that information about our local meetings is listed. We are helping to form an OA meeting at UCSC. We started an anonymous Twitter account to tweet to young people with eating disorders about OA. This account is now following 1,202 people and is followed by 281 people. We plan to form a group of OA members to help tweet to these young people.

Nanette S.  
Public Information Coordinator

**If you are interested in participating in public outreach, call Nanette at 831-462-9644 or email at [pic@santacruzoa.org](mailto:pic@santacruzoa.org).**

## 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  
Fragrance Free

### 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**  
Trinity Presbyterian Church, Library  
420 Melrose Avenue, Santa Cruz  
Fragrance Free

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

Soquel Congregational Church  
4951 Soquel Drive, Soquel  
Fragrance Free

### TUESDAYS

**12:15-1:15 p.m. Steps/Traditions**  
Trinity Presbyterian Church, Library  
420 Melrose 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  
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

Quaker Meeting House  
225 Rooney Street, 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  
Sequoia Room  
75 Nielson Street, Watsonville  
Fragrance Free