

Overeaters Anonymous

Santa Cruz County Intergroup

The Stepping Stone

Winter 2016

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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 santacruzooa.org or Call Our Hotline, 831-429-7906**

Surviving the Holidays

Thanksgiving Action Plan



This Thanksgiving, my husband, our kids, and I are heading up to my parents' house for the occasion. My intensely loving mother, my ailing father, my skinny bleach blond sister and her husband, and my Barbie doll-looking young adult niece will all be there. No triggers there. None at all! (Just kidding.)

In fact, if there's anything that triggers my compulsion, it's being with my family of origin! So many emotional triggers, so much leftover teenage rebellion around being told how I should eat, how my body should look, who I should be... It has always been a trigger for me to have family members glance at my plate when I serve myself a huge amount or go back for seconds. Yet it is equally triggering to have them watch as I'm carefully serving myself a moderate amount! There's just no winning – I'm going to be watched, and what I eat or don't eat is going to be noticed and possibly commented on.

So, I've made a plan of action for staying sane, and staying free from the compulsion to overeat. First, I've volunteered to write this and report back. That should make me intensely aware of program throughout the "festivities." Secondly, I've volunteered to help with the Thanksgiving OA meeting.

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Thanksgiving with the Family

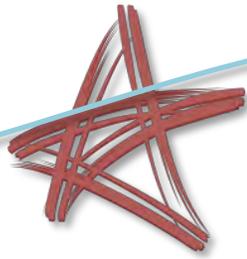
The clock says 6:53 am on Thanksgiving Day 2015, otherwise known as Thursday. Outside it is below freezing with a blanket of white, but inside, temperatures are rising. The dynamics with extended family are intermittently fun-loving and fierce, a cross between "Modern Family" and "War of the Roses." Needless to say, I need all the help I can get to maintain my abstinence today.

I start out by doing a little prayer and meditation, 10th step writing, and reading a story from the Big Book of AA. Next comes a call with my co-sponsor. We discuss worries, celebrations, and an action plan, which includes listening to an OA podcast, doing some exercise, and having lots of fun!

As the day goes by, there are some bumps on the trail: harsh words, hurt feelings, and a sense of over-responsibility. I take time out to rest, breathe, and make a program call. As I discuss the challenging interactions and ensuing cravings, I start to feel more relaxed and grounded. When we finally gather around the table, by the Grace of HP, I am able to eat a moderate, delicious meal and to focus more on the people than on the pumpkin pie. Hurray!

Afterwards, we all hang out, shmooze, take pictures, and even dance while doing the dishes. It has been a rich, complex, and nourishing day. Thank you, thank you HP and OA for this precious gift of abstinence, which enables me to be present for all of it, the smooth slopes as well as the moguls.

Rachel K.



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This serves two purposes: It gives me a dose of program right before the feast, and an excuse to not drive up the day before for a ton of cooking that I have often binged through.

Another trigger is counterintuitive; I can get squirrely if someone notices that I've lost weight. My inner adolescent gets enraged that they are getting their way and making me conform to their standards! She can't stand their smugness!!! At the same time, she's desperate for their approval and wants them to notice. So any notice of my appearance can activate warring self-centered desires. When I get lost in my own wants and expectations, I have taken back control from my HP. When I attempt to control other people I end up miserable. And when I'm miserable I get compulsive.

I've released enough weight since I last saw my (skinny blond) sister that she's likely to comment on it, and I don't know how to keep my ego out of it, if and when she does. Or how to not care whether she does or not. So I ask my HP. The answer is that my job is to focus on what I can give people, not what I can get from them. As hard as it is, I need to notice what she's going through, not my reaction to her. It's not about me. So, I will be kind to her, not expect anything, and tell her the truth if she asks.

I will be doing a morning meditation and writing on Thanksgiving morning, and asking my HP to help me be free from the compulsion to overeat throughout the day. More importantly, I will be asking for freedom from the bondage of being self-absorbed. If I'm not self-seeking in the first place, then I can't get offended by my family members not giving me what I want!

Some specific strategies:

- If family members start fighting, I will quietly remove myself and do some writing or praying.

- I will make sure I haven't eaten for at least 3 hours before the meal starts. I will do this instead of my usual 4 hours, because it usually starts about an hour late and it's dangerous for me to be ravenously hungry.
- I will notice what's being served and write down my plan of what to eat before the meal starts.
- I will not eat any of the appetizers.
- I will serve myself one plate of food and be done serving myself before I start eating.
- I will promise myself wonderful food in the future if I find myself feeling deprived. I'll remind myself that I get to eat enjoyable food all the time. It is not now or never.
- I will silently offer my food to HP.
- I will not eat anything off anyone else's plate, even if offered.
- I will make my focus for the meal conversation rather than eating.
- I will excuse myself from cleanup, because I have a history of sneaking leftovers as I clean.

More than anything, I will remain focused on letting go of needing to control any of the circumstances around me, but rather will focus on fitting myself to the flow of whatever the world throws at me that day.

Reporting from the trenches

It's after Thanksgiving dinner and I did great! I stuck to my plan and I actually enjoyed being with everyone. I'm also realizing as I write that the challenge is not over, not even after I go to sleep tonight. I need to not hit the kitchen in the middle of the night for leftovers. I need to be careful of what leftovers I eat for breakfast and lunch tomorrow. The middle of the night and the next day can be just as deadly for me as cleanup. So given that, what I need to do is pray. I need to turn it over to HP, I need to find some way to do service to get out of myself! I think I will post something to the OA Facebook group that might help others. And then I think I will pray, do my evening writing, and put myself to bed. And I'll make another plan of action for the Chanukah party. And the Solstice vigil. And Christmas dinner. And New Year's Eve. . .

Zoe



Gratitudes

Breathe and Reconnect With Love

Self-love and self-acceptance are two program concepts that are very meaningful to me, especially during the holidays, because that time can bring with it self-doubt, loneliness and emotional pain.

Throughout my life as a compulsive overeater, I have looked for love and acceptance from the outside world. As a child, I wanted and needed my parents to give me these two essential emotional building blocks and I was often hurt and confused because they were not readily available to me. Through adolescence and my teenage years, my feelings turned to anger and disappointment, and then changed to self-hatred and shame in adulthood. This is how it was when I came to OA in 2011.

I have learned so much from program and continue to learn, day by day, one day at a time. One of the consistent lessons is that ultimately there is nothing but love. Abstinence is love. Service is love. Meetings are love. The Steps and Traditions are love. Nothing else counts and nothing more is necessary.

Loving myself is essential to loving others and from love acceptance is born. Acceptance of myself and acceptance of others. So when things get tough – as they do – all I need to remember is to breathe and reconnect with love. Then I am okay.

Happy holidays,
Marion

From the 2014 Thanksgiving meeting:

I am grateful that I am in recovery and my daughter and husband are in recovery. I am grateful that I am riding my bike and meditating and praying while I ride.

I'm grateful for the peace of mind I feel since I became abstinent from sugar.

I am grateful for my health, my friends, my son, the beautiful place where I live and the OA fellowship.

I'm grateful for a group of like-minded people, with whom I don't have to hide or feel shame. Everyone has had similar experiences to mine. I can look around the rooms, make calls, and see and hear recovery and encouragement for my own recovery.

Just for Today

I am so grateful for a program that teaches me how to live abstinent, with serenity and clarity of mind, with peace and joy, *daily* tapping into a power that is greater than mine and that sufficiently sustains me. Daily, one day at a time, even through the Holidays. I feel the frenzy in the air, the worry among my fellow compulsive eaters, that the Holidays will bring added stress, travel to or hosting family and friends, strange kitchens and dining tables, distance from familiar grocery stores or more frequent runs to the familiar stores to stock up for the family feast. Anticipation at being with loved ones and dread at the raw emotions and dysfunctional behavior that propinquity with the familiar brings with it. Disruption of familiar and trusted routines when the Holidays come upon us. All excuses we used in the past to medicate with food and vainly seek solace from compulsive eating.

No more.

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I have a program that continues to teach me that I can live and have been living abstinely and with serenity, for a long time, one day at a time. My OA program has given me tools for living and has taught me that abstinence is the inevitable prize or promise if you will, of using the tools to work the spiritual steps that lead to a life filled with joy, purpose, and promise, one day at a time. Program and my fellow OAers give me a bag of tricks, called the tools, that pretty much guarantee that if I work the program and take certain actions, *daily*, I can trust my Higher Power, God, to reward my actions with the joy of living a sane life of usefulness, at peace with my fellow man, one day at a time. In short, program teaches me that if *daily* I have a sponsor, plan my food, commit my food, eat what I commit, start my days with prayer and meditation, tapping into my Higher Power, make outreach calls and attend meetings, read program literature and do some writing, avoid gossiping in the interest of anonymity and be of service, taking stock at the end of the day and resolving with the help of my HP to do better the next day and the day after that, this program will continue to work for me, *one day at a time*, and really, if I look at the Holidays as just another day of abstinence, another Thursday, several one day at a times, when all I have to do is stick to the same plan of abstinence working the steps with the tools, I will be okay. As I have been okay, several days, weeks, months, years, doing the same things, daily!!! So, "no shaking." It's just another program day!

Which brings me to the program literature that capsulizes this one day at a time philosophy and action plan, the pocket pamphlet, JUST FOR TODAY. It is a simple prayer that I tend to say on the oval throne, first thing in the morning. . . It is a prayer, a mediation, a reminder of the reasonable expectations and action plan for the day that make my program work, you guessed it, one day at a time. It reminds me to plan to live one day at a time and not try to tackle my whole life problems at once; that I am as happy as I choose to be; that I will adjust myself to what is; I will strengthen my mind, exercise my soul, be agreeable and look good and not find fault; that I will have a program I may not follow perfectly; I will meditate and get a better perspective of my life; and most importantly I will not be afraid to enjoy the beautiful. For me, it is an extended Serenity Prayer, that reassures me that I can be abstinent, by the grace of God, just for today, one day at a time. There's other literature, of course, but in a pinch, Just for Today, the Holidays can be lived abstinely and joyously, one day at a time. . .

Agnes

Find A Meeting

Meetings are drop-in and open to all.
see santacruz.org for up-to-the-minute changes

SUNDAYS

9:05-10:15 a.m. Speaker *Fragrance Free*
Sutter Maternity & Surgery Center, Sutter Room
2900 Chanticleer Avenue, Santa Cruz

4:00-5:15 p.m. 90-Day *Fragrance Free*
Church of the Nazarene, 115 S. Morrissey,
Santa Cruz *green door to left of main entrance,*
off parking lot

MONDAYS

12:15-1:15 p.m. Prayer and Meditation
Fragrance Free
Trinity Presbyterian Church, Library
420 Melrose Avenue, Santa Cruz *through yellow gate*

7:00-8:00 p.m. Book Study/Speaker
Soquel Congregational Church *Fragrance Free*
Anne Hutchinson Room, 4951 Soquel Dr., Soquel

7:00-8:00 p.m. Literature
Mars Hill Coffee House, Community Room
610 San Benito Avenue at 6th Street HOLLISTER

TUESDAYS

1:00-2:00 p.m. The Tools of Recovery
Trinity Presbyterian Church, Youth Room
420 Melrose Avenue, Santa Cruz

WEDNESDAYS

10:30-11:30 a.m. Voices of Recovery
Trinity Presbyterian Church, Youth Room
420 Melrose Avenue, Santa Cruz
(2nd door down from corner of Melrose and Poplar)

6:30-7:30 p.m. Writing
335 Spreckles Drive, Suite A, Aptos

7:00-8:00 p.m. Young Persons (all ages welcome)
UCSC, Kresge College, "The Cove" Building 393,
Room 153

THURSDAYS

1:00-2:00 p.m. Focus on Abstinence
Trinity Presbyterian Church, Youth Room
420 Melrose Avenue, Santa Cruz

FRIDAYS

12:00-1:00 p.m. 90-Days, AA 12&12 Study
Live Oak Family Resource Center *Fragrance Free*
Community Conference Room
1740 17th Avenue, Santa Cruz

12:15-1:15 p.m. For Today Book Study
Quaker Meeting House, Social Hall
225 Rooney Street, Santa Cruz

SATURDAYS

9:00-10:10 a.m. Speaker/Discussion
Calvary Episcopal Church
531 Center Street, Santa Cruz

11:00-12:00 p.m. Speaker/Literature
Watsonville Hospital *Fragrance Free*
Sequoia Room, Watsonville