



[LVOA Website](#)
[Meeting List](#)

Always to extend the hand and heart of OA
to all who share my compulsion;
for this, I am responsible. OA©
Fourth Quarter 2023

Step Study: Step Seven

*Humbly asked Him to remove our
shortcomings.*

Light Wash

I have a habit of checking how clean a drinking glass really is by holding it up to the light. A glass that looks so clean when out of the bright light can actually be very dirty, covered in finger-prints and all sorts of marks – it's not fit to drink from. It makes me think of my character flaws and shortcomings and how well hidden they can be.

From the outside, I can appear so clean and pristine in subdued light. I say, "Look at me . . . no flaws that I can see. I'm just fine, thanks, God."

But he insists I be held up to his light. I reluctantly agree, and all is revealed – the stains, the marks, the prints upon my soul, the habits, and

the defects all glaring in clear light. It is shocking to see me as I really am, not as I think I am.

But the great news is that Step Seven is all about humility. We humbly ask God to remove out shortcomings: to wipe us clean, wash us in his truth, and cleanse us of shortcomings that are ruining out lives. If we humbly ask, we receive – it works every time.

If I want my metaphoric glass kept clean and sparkling, I go to God in humility and ask him to remove those stains upon my character. He never fails me.

Of course, the odd smear will keep appearing now and again on my glass, but now I know what to do about it and how to contact the source of all the help I need in the cleaning process. What a blessing!

Thank you God and OA!

*Paulette N., New Zealand
Lifeline, July, 2018*

Tips for surviving the holidays abstinently!!

The following are practical suggestions for surviving the Holiday season with your sanity and abstinence intact.

- 1) Make your recovery a priority before and during the holidays by building up your recovery bank. You can do this by attending as many meetings as possible, working extra hard on the 12 Steps, and using the tools.
- 2) Focus on the true meaning of the holiday, not on the food.
- 3) Don't have unrealistic expectations concerning the holidays.
- 4) Avoid over-scheduling your time. The hectic pace can seriously jeopardize recovery. It's not necessary to attend every party or holiday celebration, to have the "perfect" gift (or any gift) for every person you know, or the perfectly cleaned and decorated home.
- 5) When you become stressed, allow quiet time with your Higher Power. You can do this anywhere, anytime, including at work, a party, or in the mall.
- 6) Keep OA numbers with you at *all* times and use them!!
- 7) Know the limits of your recovery. When in doubt, avoid persons, places and things that have in the past triggered overeating.
- 8) Where food is concerned, treat the holiday like any other day. Our disease *never* takes a holiday.
- 9) Make appropriate plans to protect your recovery, whether abstinence or sanity. If you will be in a slippery situation, have strategies prepared for how you will deal with it. If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.
- 10) At events, focus on people, not food. Seek out individuals, ask them about themselves, and really listen.
- 11) Set an extra place beside you at the table (in your mind or for real) for your Higher Power.
- 12) Allow time in your daily schedule for Prayer and Meditation. Remember, we are restored to sanity One Day at a Time based on contact with our Higher Power.
- 13) During the holidays, get out of yourself by giving service whether to Program, your church or the community. Do something for someone else. It will help you feel good about yourself.
- 14) Just before sitting to eat, or going to a party or event where you anticipate being uncomfortable, call your sponsor. Discuss the event, your concerns, and with your sponsor's help make plans on how you will get through it with your recovery intact.
- 15) If you will be eating at someone else's home, find out ahead of time what is being served. If you have special needs based on your Plan of Eating, discuss these with the Hostess. Offer ahead of time to bring something that is good for you. Your Hostess will think you are gracious, and you will have taken care of your recovery.

16) Remember that you are responsible for what you eat. It's easy to fall into old childish roles where you feel you must eat whatever you're given when with family. It's not true. We are adults and responsible for our own choices. It's up to us to take care of ourselves. It's up to us to set boundaries to protect our recovery. Remember, one bite is too many and 1000 are not enough.

17) Practice an Attitude of Gratitude. There is nothing as good for maintaining abstinence as focusing on the many things we have to be grateful for each day. Do a daily gratitude list, and focus on all we have, not on what we lack.

18) Write a little card or note to each person who will be joining you for the holiday meal. In the note, tell them why you are grateful to know them. Leave it at their dinner place. The focus will quickly shift to the real meaning of the holidays.

19) A holiday is not a crisis. Holidays come every year. They are simply calendar times set aside to honor certain things. We deal with the holidays just like we deal with the rest of the days in the year. You CAN do it!! Relax and work your program the way you know how.

20) For many of us the most dangerous time is after we have successfully gone through a difficult occasion. The insanity of our disease tells us to reward ourselves with food because we did so well yesterday. Or, we suffer a letdown after the special occasion. It didn't meet our expectations. Some of us feel an emptiness after holidays that in the past we have tried to fill with food. For these reasons, plan to go to meetings the next day, and attend as many meetings as possible in the next couple of weeks.

These suggestions were drawn up by the 12th Step Within Committee of the Las Vegas Overeaters Anonymous Intergroup in 2003. We hope you find them helpful.

Holiday Relapse Prevention Plan

Recovery and maintaining my abstinence are the most important things in my life. The experiences of those who have gone before me show that the holidays are a time ripe for relapse. Therefore, I promise myself the following:

- I will attend _____ meetings per week even when I don't feel like going to a meeting.
- I will talk to my sponsor _____ (How often? Daily? Hourly? Three times a week?)
- I will read OA approved literature _____ (How often and when?)
- I will follow my food plan without exception. When I'm considering eating in a way that is not consistent with my food plan, I will call an OA member.
- I will _____
- _____
- _____ (Write whatever you need to pledge to assist in your recovery.)
- _____

I do these things because I'm worth it!

Name _____ Date _____

Six Courses of Abstinence

The first things I did as a member of Overeaters Anonymous on a path to abstinent eating was to divide all foods into two groups: foods I would eat and foods I would not eat. Thirty years later, I still have not eaten any of the foods in the second group, just as I would not eat a pencil or a book.

Then, for the first two months, I dieted, just like the writer of “The Minister’s Daughter” (pp. 136-139 in the first edition of *Overeater’s Anonymous*), which was one of the first stories I read in OA. I also wrote down everything I ate, along with approximate calorie counts, and that continued for the first year. That seemed to enable me to control my food intake.

I also had a food sponsor for the first several months. Each morning, I called and shared with her what I planned to eat that day. Each evening, I called and shared what I had actually eaten. Knowing I had. To call and share assisted me in conforming to my plan of eating.

Every morning I have prayed to my Higher Power to help me to stay abstinent through the day. At the end of each day, I have expressed appreciation for my abstinence by writing in my gratitude log. (I’m presently writing in the sixty-seventh volume of that log.)

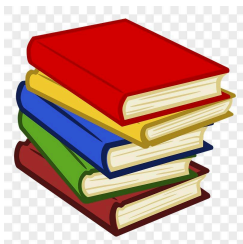
I’ve found that I don’t miss the foods I used to binge on before becoming a part of this program. There are sufficient good-tasting options on the list of foods I do eat. I eat a six-course dinner – small in portions, of course – and enjoy the taste of each dish. I eat at home, far more than at restaurants. Since I live alone, I’m able to eat slowly and take a full hour for dinner. I’m presently a schoolteacher and every weekend I prepare abstinent lunches for the week ahead. I make sure I have the foods I need at home, so I need never diverge from my personal plan of eating. I also subscribe to publications that educate and remind me about healthy food choices and foods to avoid.

I turned 76 in August. Other than Type I diabetes, which I take good care of, I have no health issues. I’ve easily maintained a weight loss of 60 pounds (27 kgs), going down from 196 pounds (90 kg) to 136 pounds (62 kg). I have an active social life, enjoy my work, and exercise daily. I attend meetings regularly, and I love my life because I am abstinent.

*Dave E., Las Vegas, Nevada USA
From Lifeline, October 2017*

Need Literature??

Because some in-person meetings have permanently closed, we have some literature that has been returned to Intergroup. This literature is being made available to members at no cost. Yes! That’s right! Free. For some free literature, or to secure a new publication or a book you still need, please contact Linda, the Intergroup Literature Chair. To get your books, you may send questions to: literature@lvoa.org or call: 702-738-2215. There is a list of available literature on the Las Vegas Intergroup website:



The Path of Totality

In August last year, parts of the United States witnessed a full solar eclipse. There was roughly a 70 mile-wide (113 km) “path of totality,” and the lucky individuals along this path got to experience an awesome phenomenon. At first, I didn’t understand the hype, but my daughter lives near Nashville, which was in the path of totality, so she invited me to be part of it all. I am so thankful we went because we got to experience this breathtaking event as a family. It left me pondering deep thoughts, which I enjoy (though it leaves my family shaking their heads sometimes). I thought a lot about the phrase “the path of totality.”

The people from my hometown weren’t in the path of totality. Their comments about the partial eclipse they saw went something like this: “It was neat, I guess,” “Argh, overrated!” “Actually disappointing,” “Kind of cool, but unimpressive.” Some emphatically expressed on social media that they were glad it was over so people would shut up about it. Overall, they just did not have a once-in-a-lifetime experience. But we did!

Now, let me tell you what we experienced in the path of totality. We sat on my daughter’s front lawn listening to an eclipse playlist of her favorite tunes. We sang and laughed as we waited. We had our little eclipse glasses – we put them on and got to watch the moon slowly creep over the sun. That was cool.

Then it happened. Right there in the middle of the day it became nighttime: the stars came out, the crickets started chirping, the temperature dropped, and the vision of the sun engulfed by the moon was a sight to see! We just sat in awe and amazement, then we exclaimed and shouted, and yes, we even howled. It was beyond what we’d ever expected. God truly is amazing, isn’t he?

This experience has taught me there are some things in life that should be done in totality. It’s all or nothing, or we miss some of the awe and blessings. One thing I’ve learned that I need to do in totality is work the OA program. Working only part of the program is “kind of cool, but unimpressive.” But the path of totality in OA – now that is really something!

Of course, it took effort to reach the location for eclipse totality. We researched, traveled, and dealt with obstacles (like heat and traffic) along the way. But once we set out on the path, all we had to do was look up to the heavens and let our highest Power of all do all the rest. And we sat in awe of what God did that day.

Since I’ve come to OA, some of the obstacles I’ve had to face are trying to get to meetings and finding a sponsor. I kept traveling and searching and reading. At a website for online OA meetings, I found a sponsor through an email list. She has been absolutely amazing. I have never met her, but I feel we have a friendship bond already.

I am new to OA – I’ve actually been in program and abstinent for ninety days today. I’ve lost 26 pounds (12 kg), but more importantly, I’m gaining a happier, healthier me. Although I am new, I can tell: this program is more awesome and amazing if it is worked in totality. Someone said to me, “When you get a sponsor, that’s when it gets real.” Well, isn’t “real” what we really want from program?

Program is working for me because I’m all-in, in totality! I read the literature daily, I write, I got a sponsor, and I’m working the Steps with her guidance. I’m telling you, the path of totality is where it at!

*Lisa N., Alexander City, Alabama USA
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For Discussion . . . and Journaling

In the Path of Totality (P4) the write did some deep thinking about the difference between being partially in our Twelve Step program of recovery and being all in. Think about your program – working the Steps, maintaining the Traditions, using the Tools, applying the Concepts, and understanding the spiritual Principles – and write about how all-in you are in your OA program. Next, write about the results you are seeing now, and what your results might be if you can do more in your program.

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HP's Child

People look at me and form an opinion – appearance does influence people's thinking. If I'm overweight, others might think I'm undisciplined, but what they don't realize is that compulsive eating is an illness. I am a person of color who has been in OA thirty-five years. I have around a 50-pound (23-kg) weight loss. When I came in, I listened but tried to prove to the program that this was not an illness.

When I was young, my father was a carpenter. This was at a time when people of color were not accepted in the carpenters' union, so he had to take odd jobs to supplement his salary. He worked from sunup to sundown to help support his family of nine. He did a great job encouraging us to know that we are God's children, God loves us, and with hard work, we could be anything we wanted.

Money was not in great supply then, so when I became an adult and felt good about myself, I got some of the things I wanted: any food; flowers if I needed them; travel if I liked – whatever I wanted. People of color often eat without thinking about calories. We use food for celebrating: birthdays, anniversaries, baby christenings, funerals, a raise at a job – anything. I picked up weight even though I was exercising – I am 5 feet 4 inches tall (162 cm) and my top weight was around 195 pounds (88 kg). I finally realized that my eating was an illness.

I learned that family health history plays a part in my own health. Diabetes runs in my family. I watched five of my sisters and brothers die from it. That was one of the reasons I joined OA, so I would not have to die from this disease.

Will food kill? It can if people don't eat well and do the things that help keep us healthy. Through the Twelve Steps of

Overeaters Anonymous, I don't have to live like I was living. Some foods are my trigger foods, so I try to stay away from them, one day at a time. I've changed my food plan when I needed to. I pray and meditate daily to help me stay in contact with my HP, which is God. I am somebody; I am HP's child.

I am thankful for OA – the people I meet and the places I go – because the program helps me deal with life on its own terms. By now I'd probably be dead had I not found OA.

*Mary F., St. Louis, Missouri, USA
Lifeline, July 2018*

An Everyday Clean

Whenever I'm frustrated in my program or in life, or when my selfish, lazy self wants an easy way out, I try to remember that abstinence is like cleanliness. One bath, one toothbrushing, one housecleaning doesn't last for a week, month, or year – certainly not a lifetime. Each day I must work at cleanliness if I want the benefits.

My program is no different. Just going to meetings, having a sponsor, and making a food plan doesn't grant me lifetime abstinence. But daily practice of the Principles, daily use of the Tools, and reminders (in thought, Prayer, and deed) that I only have the work of this day to manage – and doing the intentional work of this day will give me the benefits.

*Nan
Lifeline, July 2018*

**Program acronym: NUTS
Not Using The Steps**

Newcomers Corner Looking Forward

I spent the last three years mostly unhappy. I lost both my parents, my second marriage failed, and my children had issues with the separation. I avoided any intimate relationships and, in spite of three years of therapy, still didn't have a firm idea about why. I also hit my all-time high weight of 285 pounds (129 kg). I was bingeing two or three times a day, and I was abusing one of diabetes medications to keep my blood sugar from skyrocketing while I binged.

I've never considered myself a religious person, but one day I decided to go to church. I hadn't been to church more than four times in thirty years, but I woke up one Sunday morning and decided to go. When the service was over, I did feel better, though only briefly.

The next morning, I checked the church's website for any social events. (I tended to stay isolated when I was without my kids.) I noticed the church calendar had meetings for something called "OA." Having belonged to a scouting organization that used those initials, I thought the meetings were scouting-related. But then I noticed they were meeting almost every day, so I clicked one. It said, "Overeaters Anonymous."

I quickly closed the browser window and went about my day, but I kept thinking: I'd spent thirty-one years of my life dieting and trying to control my weight, but never had any long-term success. Maybe I was a compulsive overeater. After taking the quiz on oa.org and only "missing" two questions, I had my answer. I was a

compulsive overeater. I checked the schedule for local OA meetings and found one I could make with regularity. So I made the commitment to go.

The rest of the week, I was nervous and scared (though I only binged three times that week). The night before the meeting I was a wreck. I could barely sleep, and I kept crying, already mourning the foods and behaviors I would have to forsake.

The next morning, I drove to the meeting. Even though it was only a couple of miles from my house, it seemed like the longest drive ever. I must have looked like a total basket case when I sat down – I don't think I've been that nervous in my entire life. But the people there were incredibly welcoming. Several said to me, "You're in the right place."

When everyone introduced themselves, I did so as well: "I'm Stu, I'm a compulsive overeater." I was terrified I wouldn't be able to do it, but I did" I had just admitted to a roomful of strangers something I'd been struggling to admit to myself for years.

After the meeting, I felt great! I set my phone's schedule to remind me I have a weekly meeting. The following week, I received outreach calls from members of my group.

I've now been to six meetings and can honestly say I look forward to them. In fact, I can't imagine not going to meetings. And the best part is, now I have something that I've never had before: hope.

Stu

Lifeline, July, 2018

Dancer in the Mirror

For years, I'd walk my dogs at a local park. Nearly every night, we'd pass a recreation room where there was a Latin dance aerobics class, and I'd watch from a distance. I didn't want to invite the humiliation of being a morbidly obese woman watching people exercise. I had been ridiculed in public before.

In the mirrors, I saw reflections of people sweating unselfconsciously and dancing riotously. I also saw a shadow in a corner: me, watching them.

They didn't seem imprisoned in their bodies. Their bodies seemed like places of comfort and ease rather than repositories of shame and anxiety.

For many years, I wondered if I'd ever be able to join in: I was more than 100 pounds (45 kg) overweight and had many health problems. My doctor had cautioned me against any vigorous exercise, so every night, I'd simply walk to my car with my dogs and leave.

Eventually, I had a weight-loss surgery that separated me from overeating, but it had the unforeseen consequence of forcing me to confront what I thought, how I felt, and what I did when I could not overeat. I experienced an anguish so profound that I could not manage the challenges called "life." I was completely despondent. I returned to OA and took the Twelve Steps. The Steps reunited me with a Higher Power that interrupted my cravings and obsession. Most importantly, this Power led me to a complete psychic change. Yes, I lost nearly 120 pounds (54 kg), but what I gained was the opportunity to live a life I had once abandoned.

One night, I left the park with my dogs, but then did something I'd never expected: I put on exercise clothes and showed up at that Latin dance aerobics

class. I wasn't terrorized by the prospect of being ridiculed or hindered by my memories of being made fun of. I learned that I am a dancer. I learned that my body is not a receptacle of shame. I learned that I could simply exist in an experience of my body.

I also noticed that when I looked into the mirror, I couldn't see myself. But it wasn't simply because I'd lost weight.



Even when I was heavier, family members would show pictures or videos of me in group settings,

and I couldn't recognize myself. Flabbergasted, they'd have to point me out. I had never developed a body image because I didn't relate to my body as anything other than a burden, a problem, or a source or potential humiliation. I didn't see my body as *me*.

But instead of ruminating about this, I put one foot in front of the other and kept dancing, kept returning to class. I trusted that if I did the footwork and followed the rhythms of life, everything else would fall into place.

I have a self in the mirror now. I'm conscious of how I move through life and how I move with others. I learned to dance, and I learned to see myself because I worked the Twelve Steps.

*Gerri P.,
Orlando, Florida USA
Lifeline July 2018*

Journaling questions:

In what areas have I been freed by OA?
Are there aspects where I still want or need to change?

Finding My Depth

I have always felt fortunate that when I found OA three years ago, my home meeting was well attended by people who had a lot of recovery to share.

Sadly, one by one the oldtimers began to leave. I had such a desire for the program, but the wisdom and strength I had been receiving were disappearing. I was scared and began to feel abandoned.

I ventured out to other meetings, but at that time I was emotionally unable to let much into my life – whether it was people, places or things. The only thing I was willing to let in was that meeting.

I hung in faithfully every week, not knowing if I would be the only one there or not. I worked very hard on my recovery, and I began to see rays of hope. I felt stronger and beamed with my newfound spiritual recovery. I had even begun to experience physical recovery. I was feeling very humble, and I became willing to share what I'd been given.

Members began to trickle back every week. The meeting was rejuvenated. My prayers had been answered.

I was the oldtimer. I was uncomfortable because I still felt like a baby in the program, but I shared what I could, when I could. A new experience happened: People were looking up to me, wanting what I had. I was the only sponsor. I tried to be a good one, but with hindsight, I see that I never drew any kind of boundaries. I had a very hard time saying no.

I felt a lot of pressure, but I quickly pushed the feeling down. I felt responsible for my meeting and the people in it. I started being dishonest with myself and them. I hid my pain and struggle from the group, because I felt I always had to be *up* for them. I represented recovery at that meeting, and I became perfect again, leaving no cracks showing.

My recovery came to a standstill. I allowed the meeting and its people to engulf me. It started off being a very innocent thing, and then it became a good excuse to let the disease creep back into my life. When I was busy care-taking I had no time for myself.

I started experiencing slips more frequently. I regained the weight I had lost, and with it came depression, rages, and crying spells. I was praying and practicing the program's principles less and less. I began seeing old defects of character pop up again.

I spoke to OAs on the phone with wisdom and calm, when only moments before I had been overeating, crying, and isolating. I couldn't apply what I was saying to myself. I became unable to walk my talk anymore. I almost left OA, but the fear of being out there alone was too much to bear.

I started going to another meeting where I knew there were people with more years of recovery than I had, and I sat and listened. I learned that a very important thing had been missing from my recovery – an oldtimer to help me.

I look at OA as one person clasping another's hand to help the next one up the hill. I learned that by isolating myself from other meetings and being the lone oldtimer at my home meeting, I had no hand to help me up that recovery hill.

I learned that I cannot give to others what I don't have to give to myself. I have to learn not to hide and let my life become a mass of secrets. With the help of H.P. and the program I knew that I had to let go of my sponsorees and work on myself for a while.

My H.P. and my sponsor gave me the courage to tell my sponsorees, and I have let them go with love. Their friendship means the world to me. But I have to love myself and them enough to say "uncle." One by one I need to remove the things I've put in the way of my working on myself, even if it hurts. I need to find my path again. So when the time comes to sponsor once more I can truly share – not only because I've been there, but, more importantly, because I survived by using OA principles, and I am a little more recovered because of it.

I've let go and turned my will and my life back over to the care of God. Things are definitely looking up!

*K. B., Littleton, Colorado
Lifeline, June 1993*

Love Yourself

My recovery has been unfolding for more than fourteen years. I'm grateful to be one of the lucky ones who have remained connected to God and other compulsive overeaters. They provide what I need for my recovery.

Everyone talked about *abstinence* in my early years: having it, losing it, not being able to get it back. *Recovery* wasn't part of my vocabulary. We attempted to use *Alcoholics Anonymous* as a guide for everything we needed. When any of us "lost" our abstinence, we quoted the Big Book passages which describe the progression of the disease, and we became convinced we were doomed unless we could somehow do more to assure our spiritual fitness.

My Higher Power brought a young woman into my area during my second year in program. We're as different as two women can be. She became my first real sponsor, though we never did make an agreement about it. Looking back I see we sponsored each other in the most genuine ways. I couldn't have withstood some of my periods of personal torment without her influence. We spent time together, often connected by phone, a little less often in person. We talked and talked, trying to figure everything out. We used a lot of literature. Once we both grabbed a dictionary during a lengthy phone conversation, looked up *abstinence* and *sobriety*, and discovered that they would serve us better if we reversed the ways we used them!

Our focus was often on the aspects of our program that didn't seem helpful. Yet we saw members trying to get physical results by calling in food plans to food sponsors and putting energy into not weighing themselves while weighing and measuring food. We read the words, "OA does not endorse any particular plan of eating," and found printed food plans on literature tables. The twelve steps did not tell us to diet, yet it seemed as though lots of us were dieting, at least until it stopped working. Then many quit attending meetings and left the rest of us saddened and perplexed. What were we missing?

My sponsor started a Sunday afternoon OA meeting which she called, "Love Yourself." We read the twelve steps but dispensed with many of the other preliminaries, believing that everyone needed to be heard. "Let's not use our abstinence or lack of it as reward or punishment," she would say, exposing me to the idea that I was not getting well by measuring myself or by being measured by size or behavior. Shame needed to be banished from our Fellowship.

Time has moved on. My friend and I were intimately connected for five years, until life took us in separate directions. I've sometimes found my path very bumpy – I've relapsed more than once, gaining as much as sixty-two pounds. My friend's message of unconditional love was a forerunner of what we now call *twelfth step within*, addressing the issues we experience in relapse. Through the sharing of members who are devoted to the loving care of others who don't necessarily get a lifelong abstinence once and for all, I have been able to stay in recovery. I maintain a healthy weight these days, and I try to focus on self-care as a manifestation of my connection with God.

My very special friend called last week. She's not surprised by any of my changes. She still knows why I feel as I do and fills in the gaps for me as we share. She's back in my life. Lucky me.

*M. R., Pleasanton, California
Lifeline, June, 1993*