

Return & Recovery from Relapse

Remember that we are powerless over our compulsion to eat, so we don't beat ourselves up about something over which we have no control. That said, nothing happens in HP's world without a purpose, and in relapse, there is something to learn. Am I making my recovery the top priority? When I make my recovery a top priority, everything else in my life seems to fall into place. Am I doing what's necessary to be spiritually healthy—prayer and meditation and turning my worries over to HP? Am I using the resources HP has given me—meetings, literature, outreach to other members, service, etc.? Am I doing what's necessary to be emotionally healthy—writing a daily 10th Step, maybe writing about a specific problem through a lens of all 12 Steps, talking things over with my sponsor, coming up with strategies to better cope with issues confronting me? Am I doing what's necessary to maintain my physical abstinence—am I aware of what my "red and yellow light" foods are, making sure that I am enjoying colorful, delicious, abstinent food in reasonable portions at reasonable times, am I taking care of other physical aspects of my life such as sleep, exercise and medicine?

I think we gain our recovery first through the physical, then emotional and finally spiritual, but lose abstinence in the reverse. Keep HP in the forefront as you come back into recovery.

—Ro M.

Suggestion from a Sponsor

Here is what I do with sponsees: when someone has a slip or relapse, I ask them to answer 2 questions, and make 2 lists:

1. What I stopped doing that fed my recovery?
2. What I started doing that fed my relapse?

That gives us an idea of what needs to change. I also ask a person to commit to ONE change for several weeks...to avoid the overwhelm that leads to giving up.

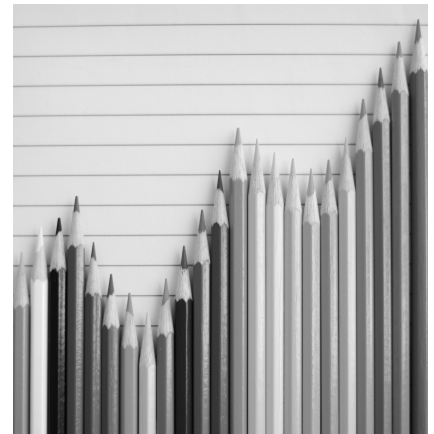
--Anonymous

Using the Tools of Recovery

What I have found to be helpful is, no matter how much shame is being felt, "keep coming back" to meetings. Maybe increase the number of meetings per week. Decide right now to be open-minded and willing to really listen to what others are saying because you might have missed something vital in the past. Try reviewing what decisions or circumstances set the relapse

into motion in the first place and make an action plan to prevent a reoccurrence. Do I need to start writing again, making phone calls, or do service? Remember, attending a meeting is service you can give 10 seconds after a relapse.

—Anonymous



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Personal stories express the experience of the individual member and not necessarily of OA as a whole. Other OA groups are welcome to reprint without permission; please credit Greater Pittsburgh Intergroup.

Surrender Dance

I had many slips and one years'-long relapse while attending meetings and trying to work with various sponsors. I was doing all sorts of variations of the "surrender dance." That meant that I would follow through on one commitment but tried to control in another area. It took years to stop the diet and start choosing foods and behaviors that supported a healthier lifestyle. I now have a sponsor that I report and counsel with regularly. Over time a Plan of Action has become a habitual way to live that includes my physical, emotional/mental and spiritual thinking and behaviors. Here are some changes:

Stop: Eating Fast Food (restaurant/grocery) **Start:** Planning 2 weeks of meals

Stop: Buying "treats"/new items **Start:** Cooking batch meals at home

Stop: Buying center aisles/prepared meals **Start:** Shopping outside aisles and staples

Stop: Eating unaware/accidentally/unconsciously **Start:** Eating pre-measured amounts

Stop: Lying to myself about food/feelings **Start:** Listening to my excuses and rationalizations

Stop: Feeling sorry for myself **Start:** Admitting mistakes, asking: what's the lesson?

Stop: Getting angry when "it" doesn't go my way **Start:** Pausing and see if "it" might be ok/better

Stop: Thinking "right/wrong, good/bad" **Start:** Thinking "helpful/harmful, effective/wasteful"

Stop: Forgetting/hiding this from my sponsor **Start:** Reporting on myself above all to my sponsor

Stop: Thinking "I'm not good enough/bad" **Start:** Allowing mistakes to be my teacher

Stop: Letting outside power rule my life **Start:** Praying/meditating to listen to inner guidance

Stop: Creating chaos with overdoing **Start:** Creating peace by pausing before committing

Stop: Forgetting/being too busy to exercise **Start:** Planning and persisting in exercise even after pauses

--Anonymous

Lip Service

Return from relapse: Physical, Spiritual, Mental, Emotional—each seems to be so connected to the other. For me, having recovery only from one is not really recovery. I had been lost for so long because I wanted program BUT wanted it done my way. Once I surrendered totally to God, my higher power – it all fell into place. Oh, I had surrendered daily for many years, as it says to do in our literature, but it was only lip service. Once I totally surrendered to God and knew he would take care of everything, there was freedom and the return from relapse was evident.

This is hard work!! There will be slips but with God I can get

back up and continue by His grace.

-- JC

How I Avoided Relapse

This is not my first attempt at Overeaters Anonymous. I have come to OA several times and yet I have never relapsed for one simple reason, I never had recovery in the past. You see, I took to heart the fact that the Big Book stated that it was meant to be "suggestive" only. So, I heard that you should "attend at least two or three meetings every week," but I decided one would be enough for me. I should "identify my trouble foods and eliminate them," so I eliminated a couple just to prove I was trying. "Doing service" would help also, but I was a little too busy to do much service - though I could lead the meeting occasionally. I'm sure you get the picture. I thought that I could find an **easier, softer way**, but I did not. Instead, I proved that half measures availed us nothing. This time I got with the "program" and followed it to the best of my ability and have recovery by the grace of God. The Big Book also begs us to be fearless and thorough from the very start. I wish that I had not wasted so many years but am grateful that I now have a program and have learned to work it every day.

I encourage you not to be like me, but to recognize that the Big Book has great suggestions. However, they only work if you work them.

--Anonymous

Unity Day Celebrated

On 2/24/2024, over 35 fellows attended a Unity Day workshop offered by the 12th Step Within Committee on connection through the 12th steps. The two-hour workshop featured two speaker and three panelists each sharing their experience, strength and hope as they utilize service to work their programs. At 2:30 pm the Serenity Prayer was said to symbolize the world-wide unity of OA. A document entitled "Giving Service at all Levels" was shared, part of which is included in this VOR issue. Here are some of the highlights:

Speaker Leigh Ann shared the importance of OA being a daily spiritual program, using the 12 steps to illustrate her insights.

1. How the desperation of powerlessness enables the power to change
2. HP cares about us, our food & body image
3. Surrendering to HP is a safe and protected place
- 4.&5. Shame can only exist in silence
- 6.&7. Willingness and belief are **reliance, not defiance**
- 8.&9. Taking responsibility for action replaces blame and shame
10. Daily gratitude provides accountability to be more honest
11. **The Two-way Prayer:** Journaling prayer to HP and then HP's response to us. For more info on two-way prayer, visit oafootsteps.com
12. Service is a blessing, an honor and privilege, and allows us to become useful

Speaker Stephanie shared how she's learned to use the 12 principles of the 12 steps for her food addiction, bulimia and struggle with perfectionism:

1. Honesty to feel what we feel, things can't be buried anymore
2. Hope that we're not alone even in our weakest moments
3. Faith: realizing how much our actions affect others
- 4.&5. Courage/Integrity: we don't have to do this perfectly, and it is a process
6. Willingness to let go of shortcomings and defects and self-will
7. Humility to trust God for the removal of defects; a nightly inventory helps with humility

8.&9. Self-discipline/Love helps us to become quicker to make amends for damage done to others.

10. Perseverance to feel the feeling but do the right thing anyway

11. Spiritual Awareness: importance of prayer but then to also listen as we often don't want to listen.

12. Service helps in staying abstinent by showing up, gets you out of your head

Panelist Kristi shared the **benefits of service:** fellowship, listening to shares, gaining support, feedback, and spiritual growth, the chance to work on defects, and paying it forward. She also shared pg. 328 of the Voices of Recovery: "Service is its own reward."

Panelist Dorothy discussed listening as a form of service and service as a form of connecting and source of joy. She extolled the value of hugs (even virtual ones), and how "**progress is perfection.**"

Panelist Gene emphasized the importance of connecting with others through service in the small things, and attraction not promotion by "**being the message.**" As Dr. Bob said, "Keep it simple."

Giving Service at All Levels- Giving Individual Service

- Staying abstinent is a service to ourselves and to others as well
- Sharing at a meeting helps us and other members at the meeting
- Simply attend a meeting
- Make a phone call, text, or send an email
- Be willing to listen
- Receive a phone call, text or email and respond
- Set up literature or chairs in a Face-to-Face meeting
- Greet a newcomer; remember how you felt at your first meeting
- Take the time to answer a newcomer's questions

Giving Individual Service, continued.

- Have a sponsor!
- Contact members you haven't seen in a while.
- Ask "How are you doing?" and LISTEN to the answer!
- Honestly answer the question, "How are you doing?"
- Think before you speak harshly
- Agree to have your contact information listed on the meeting list
- Practice the program to the best of your ability
- Work and live the steps
- Be honest with ourselves
- Give someone a hug
- Be tolerant and accepting of others
- Do a kind deed anonymously
- Share literature with others, lend books
- Share your experience, strength and hope by submitting an article in your intergroup's newsletter
- Order literature for your meeting
- Prepare a flyer for an event
- Give someone a ride to a meeting
- Offer to lead a workshop at a marathon
- Make signs/slogans for your home meeting or a marathon
- Attend an Intergroup meeting to voice the concerns of your group
- Call someone to say hello
- Act as your group's treasurer
- Offer to share at other meetings
- Give priority to your personal recovery
- Lead a meeting or act as Zoom host

 Always to extend the hand and heart of OA to those who share my compulsion, for this I am responsible.

Help Us with The Next VOR

"...to carry the message of recovery through the Twelve Steps of OA to those who still suffer."

OA Preamble

We would like to hear from you about your experience, strength, and hope on Bulimia/Anorexia Awareness in OA. How has OA helped you in your struggle with bulimia or anorexia? What makes this struggle unique? What do others in OA need to know about the struggle of bulimia/anorexia? Send your submission to vor_editor@gpioa.org by June 15. You can submit anonymously upon request.



GPIOA Website Updated!

Thanks to our Webmaster and the Website Discussion Group for making our website a friendlier place! Check it out at <https://gpioa.org> including a new search bar, Newcomers Page, calendar of events, and much, much more!

Dates to Note

- May 7 10-11:30 am Beaver 43rd Anniversary
- June 2, 2 p.m. Intergroup Meeting
- July 7, 2 p.m. Intergroup Meeting
- August 4, 2 p.m. Intergroup Meeting
- August 16 - 18 Sponsorship Weekend

Check gpioa.org for the latest information on the events above and any other events in our region.

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- Vice Chair
- Treasurer
- Secretary

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- 12th Step Within
- Outreach
- Speakers Bureau
- VOR Editor
- Special Events

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