

SERENITY TIMES

2ND QUARTER 2021

A VIRTUAL NEWSLETTER
BROUGHT TO YOU BY WESTCHESTER UNITED INTERGROUP

MAINTENANCE & 2020 GRATITUDE

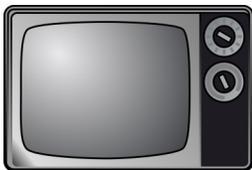
NEW MEETING!

SPONSORS HELPING SPONSORS

- 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month •At 5:30pm - 6:30pm (ET)
- <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89698254909> Meeting ID: 896 9825 4909 - pw: 121212
- Contact: Roberta at (914) 329-1126
- Meeting is intended for sponsors and for those planning to be sponsors.



Carry the message and practice these principles in all our affairs.
Bring your challenges, questions, experience, strength, and hope.
Learn from other sponsors and help them too!



TELEVISION COMMERCIAL!!

Your generous contributions are helping reach those who share our disease through an OA television commercial aired throughout Westchester! Check it out:

<https://vimeo.com/434505559>

SPONSORSHIP:

Need a sponsor? Are you an available sponsor? Email Barb, Sponsor Bank Coordinator: servicewuig@gmail.com

OA ZOOM MEETINGS:

Access the virtual meeting schedule, via Google Doc or .pdf:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/18bXW0gCJEVsxVYO-WGe_ZqSTsOj0tx83I94zBV0wuY0/edit

Downloading Google Docs and Google Drive apps will allow you to access the most up-to-date version of the meeting schedule..

OA and God have been the bulwark of my existence since I came into program just over two years ago.

I am at my goal weight and daily commit to: abstinence, service, prayer, meditation, anonymity, writing, reading OA literature, sponsor & sponsee work, an action plan, attending meetings, phoning/texting fellows, a plan of eating, exercise and playfulness.

2020: A BLESSED YEAR OF LIFE!!!



**FILLED WITH JOY, GRATITUDE, AND
AMAZEMENT.**

After thirty-three years of an unhappy living situation, God lifted my fear of financial insecurity, and I moved out in February 2020. I bought a beautiful apartment that I designed in a way that reflects my favorite places in nature. Wood floors throughout, wall to wall plants, murals of forests, beaches, and a Tuscan village set the mood. I acquired two, precious, feline roommates that I felt I'd waited a lifetime for! I wake each morning with prayer, meditation, and a planned, healthy breakfast. With the rising sun, I bike an hour every morning to my favorite place of worship, go on to attend to the neighborhood outdoor cats, and run a few errands. Returning home, I commence with OA meetings, sponsor/sponsee meetings, 12 Step service, teach several fitness classes a week, workout with weights, pilates, yoga, and calisthenics, and attend theological courses at various seminaries.

I have felt God's rays of love beam into my heart and soul while praying, have been grateful to have been the recipient of His grace on more than one occasion when danger was narrowly averted, am closer to my loved ones than ever before, and wake up each morning excited to greet the new day doing His will and becoming ever closer to Him, so that I may live and breathe for God alone.

The inner demons of self-abuse and anxiety have mostly quelled these days, and, in their place, I have a giddy joy that reverberates through my every living cell. For this I was born. For this I came into the world: to do God's will and to do it with joy and grace.

More than ever, I am willing to look at my dark side, my defects of character, so that God may help me extricate them and make more room for His grace and the work he wants me to carry out therein.

This year I want to become more childlike, humble, patient, loving, kind, generous, gracious, attentive, wise, helpful, accepting, forgiving, compassionate, courageous, and to hear God's voice with each heart beat and with every breath I take. When His life force flows through me, I am a grateful conduit who passes His grace forward to all my brethren. I cannot imagine a life any better than this. Thank you, God. Thank you, OA.

Diane T

ABSTAINERS AND MAINTAINERS

I've been thinking that a list of the common characteristics among longtime abstainers and maintainers in Overeaters Anonymous might be very revealing and helpful. In my mind, I picture all these members attributing everything on the list below to working the program—the Twelve [Steps](#) and Twelve [Traditions](#)—into their daily lives:

They have a healthy and conscious relationship with a loving Higher Power greater than themselves, and they maintain that relationship on a daily basis.

They like themselves, at least most of the time.

They don't diet.

They don't weigh themselves every day.

They don't judge themselves for the mistakes they make with food or for their body weight, because they know that these are health issues, not moral issues.

They have some kind of structure for their food—some kind of plan as to what, when, where, and how they eat.

They never have to reward themselves with food because it has never been about deprivation for them. It's about freely choosing what they eat.

They remain willing to go to any length to maintain their recovery.

They have learned to take the disease very seriously, but not themselves.

They have the joyful ability to be able to laugh at themselves and their mistakes.

They have learned how to be gentle with themselves, so they are able to be gentle with others a good deal of the time.

(continued on p.4)

ABSTAINERS AND MAINTAINERS (Continued from p. 3)

They enjoy themselves and what they eat, at least most of the time.

They have a positive outlook on life and are not consumed by fear and negativity, though they may experience this at times.

They see their lives as having a purpose.

They are to a very large extent honest with themselves and others.

They know there is nothing to be condemned, only things needing correction.

They exercise on a regular basis.

They eat the same foods most of the time.

They feel comfortable about their bodies.

They go to multiple meetings per week.

They are involved with OA and therefore feel part of OA.

They give back in whatever way they can what has so freely been given them.

They abstain from or eat very little sugar, salt, fat, or flour.

They pray every day.

THE OA PROMISE

I put my hand in yours, and together we can do what we could never do alone. No longer is there a sense of hopelessness, no longer must we each depend upon our own unsteady willpower. We are all together now, reaching out our hands for power and strength greater than ours, and as we join hands, we find love and understanding beyond our wildest dreams.



ABSTAINERS AND MAINTAINERS (Continued from p. 4)

They hold no reservation in the backs of their minds that someday they will return to eating like a normal person.

They are attentive and welcoming to newcomers.

I'm a long timer myself. I entered OA Feb 4, 1981, at 210 pounds (95 kg), got a sponsor quickly, and started working the Steps immediately. I came down to my present weight of 154 pounds (70 kg) in the first five months and have been maintaining close to that weight ever since. All credit goes to my Higher Power, who has gifted me with physical, spiritual, and emotional recovery, which I believe is the direct result of working the Steps.

- *Terry F., Santa Fe, New Mexico USA*

<http://www.oalifeline.org/abstinence/abstainers-and-maintainers/>



THE ROLE OF A PLAN OF EATING IN RECOVERY FROM COMPULSIVE EATING

Maintaining a healthy weight over the long-term is often harder than losing the weight initially. Once they reach a healthy body size, people must increase their food intake to stop the weight loss, and that can be scary. The joy and delight of losing weight is gone, and the effort of struggling with food, eating, and body weight is gone. The Twelve Step process teaches the individual a different way of living—a way to create a joyful and useful life without the food and obsession. This process must be continued long-term.

Cravings and difficult food situations will continue off and on throughout recovery. This is normal; recovering people need to learn how to handle these issues. They need to plan for times in which they will be confronted with large volumes of food, binge or trigger foods, or difficult food situations. OA provides a range of tools to handle these situations.

H. Theresa Wright, MS, RD, LDN, 2013

Overeaters Anonymous, 3rd edition, Appendix A, pp193-194.



MAINTENANCE IN MOTION

By the time I reached Overeaters Anonymous in December of 2005, I weighed 110 pounds (50 kg). I was about 20 pounds (9 kg) below the ideal weight for my age and height. I had never been overweight, but for years I struggled with undereating and experienced a brief stint of anorexia during high school.

Since I joined OA, I have worked with different food and Step sponsors. After reaching my goal weight, I was abstinent for my first three years in OA. However, as I neared the end of my third year in OA, I began having occasional slips, accidentally eating spoiled food and then getting rid of it. These slips occurred after big bouts of self-pity or gratitude deprivation.

My sponsor, the editor of our local OA newsletter, was gracious and reminded me to write a gratitude list, pray, and write about what led to each slip. When I stopped to look at how I had contributed to my slips, I realized I had stopped calling my sponsor, reading the OA literature, and using the [Steps](#) in my daily life.

When I used the [Tools](#) a little bit each day, I stayed abstinent. What an amazing way of life! I then started emailing my food to my food sponsor. I reached my goal weight and have stayed there, thanks to OA. This is the longest I have been at my goal weight, and I am grateful.

Our [Dignity of Choice](#) pamphlet states on page one, “The basis for stopping our compulsive eating behaviors—and staying stopped—is spiritual growth. We achieve this by working the Twelve Steps of OA and learning to live according to the principles underlying them.” This is so true! In order to stay abstinent, my spiritual growth must continue, no matter what.

When a recovery-from-relapse group started in my area, I gave service as the group’s timekeeper. In giving this service, I heard many members share their experience, strength, and hope. I came away from the meetings knowing in my heart I am not alone, and a better way of life exists than what I had before OA. I used to hide, eat food out of trash cans, drive miles in the middle of night to satisfy a craving, starve myself, count calories, take diet pills, binge and purge. Now I eat three moderate meals each day and email my sponsor accurate lists of the foods I eat. If I have a slip, I don’t beat myself up with criticism. Instead, I humbly pick up the spiritual Tools of OA.

Slips are God’s way of reminding me that I still have room for spiritual growth in OA, and that is why I keep coming back. I hope this helps!

— Marga K., San Mateo, California USA



ACTIONS AND ETERNAL VIGILANCE

I don't often quote letters from *Lifeline* or *Lifeline Weekly*. But this one I couldn't resist. It's 90% of the program in one sentence. "I have learned to get a sponsor, have a food plan, make phone calls, do service, attend meetings, work the Steps, write, share what I write, sponsor others, meditate, make amends, pray for the people with whom I have problems, exercise, and turn everything over to God. It's amazing how doing these things, one step at a time, has brought me to not wanting to overeat anymore." [*Lifeline Weekly*, Vol. 6, No. 29 July 20–26, Reprint of a letter to *Lifeline*, 2003].

Freeing myself from the prison of food obsession was the result of a series of actions, actions, actions. The actions – like powerful drugs with only positive side effects – ultimately resulted in a new way of eating, a new way of thinking, and a new way of believing. This is what OA has been for me – a rebuilding of myself that led to a second chance at life. Finding the freedom was the result of the actions required in the 12, 12 and 9 – also known as the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions and 9 tools. But holding on to the freedom for all these years has required a daily treatment plan called Step 10 (ongoing self-assessment and correction), Step 11 (prayer and meditation), and Step 12 (helping others). Endless actions, eternal vigilance, aligned with the spirit of the universe. Freedom definitely isn't free.

<https://doncoa.wordpress.com/2015/07/29/actions-and-eternal-vigilance/>

THE OA PROMISE

I put my hand in yours, and together we can do what we could never do alone. No longer is there a sense of hopelessness, no longer must we each depend upon our own unsteady willpower. We are all together now, reaching out our hands for power and strength greater than ours, and as we join hands, we find love and understanding beyond our wildest dreams. <https://oa.org/working-the-program/prayers-meditation-2/>

MAINTENANCE AND GRATITUDE: MORE THAN A PANTS SIZE

When I first saw the topic for this newsletter, I thought of how grateful I was that for years I have not had to be afraid of putting on my jeans when they came out of the dryer, or I don't have to "lose weight" anymore as a New Year's Resolution, year after year after year.

But then I thought about emotional and spiritual maintenance, and the gratitude I have that those words are even in my vernacular. I now have some checks and balances, when it comes to my emotions, because of this program and my Higher Power. I work on maintaining a state of equilibrium, calmness, and acting and responding in a manner that makes me proud. I don't do this always, but I have Step 10 when my humanness flairs up.

The formal definition of maintenance is, "the process of maintaining or persevering someone or something." It's a process, not flipping a switch and just being. This gift of maintaining recovery is something that I was so graciously given by OA and G-d that I must work to preserve.

During the Covid pandemic last year, my daughter was supposed to graduate college and go to Europe, but that didn't happen. She was planning to move to NYC and attend Columbia grad school, but that didn't happen. My daughter is now going to school remotely from home, is getting A's at Columbia, and I get to see her every day! My husband had to apply for unemployment for the first time in his life. Due to Covid, there has been an extended unemployment benefit that he has been recipient of. I work in health care and was able to get the Covid vaccine.

We are healthy, we are together, I'm in recovery, and, for all of this, I am so incredibly grateful.

Lisa A



GRATITUDE FOR 2020



After moving out of the WUIG area four years ago I landed in an area where upon first glance recovery was good. I wasn't hearing any drunkalogues in meetings, and sharing was positive. I soon realized that things aren't always what they seemed, and that concept was alive and well down here. I had been very excited about bringing some of the amazing recovery I knew was thriving in WUIG members down here. As the pandemic was building, I was sad that I hadn't yet found a crack I might crawl through to get to the other side of that brick wall. I'd been giving all the service I could (I was and still am occupying half of the intergroup's board positions), without making any headway.

Then it happened! From the global tragedy, when it was at its zenith in our country, emerged the most wonderful gift I have ever received, the absolutely most colossal, cosmic, silver lining I have ever and will ever know: ZOOM! It took me a moment to realize that I can go to meetings wherever I wanted. Instead of spending time in meetings that left me spiritually drained, I could come back home! When I did, I felt like a homecoming queen from the vast difference in feedback I received. I'd been gone three years, but it might have been three minutes, for the warm, toasty welcome I received from my New York family! It took me months to stop sharing about the huggy feeling I got just by seeing my beloved peeps again. Now, every meeting I go to replenishes the spiritual hole that was growing for lack of sunlight.

I have renewed vigor to continue the substantial battle in front of me down here, and it's working! I've made great friends where I live who are happy to attend WUIG meetings. They understand my purpose and we now stand united on this mission to invigorate recovery where we live.

I'm filled with gratitude for Zoom, this one simple vehicle for recovery. Every moment of gratitude brings me so much joy that I keep finding more reasons to be grateful, reminding me how important gratitude is for my program and for my happy, joyous freedom! Any time I'm down, I just have to remember that gratitude boosts my recovery ***beyond my wildest dreams!***

Cynthia C

2020, WHAT A YEAR!



Angst, fear, and isolation were all working together to bring me down. I was prepared though, because I had OA! Working the program for six years was like Boot Camp for Covid living.

My marriage was in deep trouble. I had left my home and was basically crashing at my buddy's place in the middle of the pandemic. I was in emotional and spiritual relapse. I struggled, wavered, and cried, but I kept going, because I became aware of just how much I had to be grateful for. I found strength in gratitude.

I am grateful for working my program with my sponsees and sponsor, as they helped take me through the roughest patches. I am grateful I found a name for my Higher Power and that my higher power guided me through when all seemed hopeless.

Acceptance. Without acceptance I would be raging at the insanity and unfairness of it all, and I am grateful for that. I remained healthy and was able to enjoy the gift of nature's bounty, all around me, on a daily basis.

Technology became a huge part of my recovery and has helped me sustain recovery and broaden my horizons in program. It brought me fellowship! It brought me love, understanding, and compassion from around the world, as well as in my own backyard. It has helped me to communicate and to take care of shopping and health related issues, brought my family to me from miles away, and to reunite us.

I am grateful I didn't have to work and worry about bills and for providing for my family. To be honest, I can't even list all I am grateful for. A great deal of it is unexplainable and impossible for me to understand. I know I am extremely blessed in every aspect of my life, and that knowledge is something to be very grateful for.

I maintain my recovery by following the 12 Steps as best I can. Staying grateful, humble, and accepting, and by doing the same things every day that brought me sanity... the work. I maintain gratitude, so I can maintain recovery. I strive to wear my life like a loose garment; that is to say, "Don't sweat the small stuff, and it's all small stuff."

Life is good in recovery!

Chuck P.

IT NEVER STOPS, AND I'M GLAD



I have remained abstinent for eleven years. A large part of this is my spirituality. I make sure to pray, meditate, and write every day. I make my service calls. I do service. It is not lost on me that when I have done these things, I have remained abstinent and serene, and that when I don't do them, one or the other, or both, is in jeopardy. Gratitude is a great part of my spirituality. I always thank God, as I understand Him, for everything, no matter how small, that goes my way during the day. No day is without something for which I feel some gratitude. I am grateful for every day, every moment of my abstinence. I am grateful I have people in program who love me, who are happy to hear from me. I am grateful my last weigh-in, at 49 and 8 months old, was the same weight as on my 40th birthday. I am grateful I don't have to catastrophize everything that goes the slightest bit astray in my life.

I could go on and on, but I think you get the picture. My good fortune brings me to tears with gratitude, even when I don't think a particular situation will work out as I had hoped. There is no reason to change a thing, because my life -- my food plan, my spiritual disciplines, what have you -- produce serenity, which, in the long run, is exactly what I love! A lot to be grateful for!

Eric P.

"AFTER THE MIRACLE

Before OA, food overfilled and expanded my body.

Now food and exercise nourish my body.

Before OA, food covered a hole in my heart.

Now people fill my heart.

Before OA, food filled my time.

Now service, friends, and relaxation fill my time.

Before OA, food covered a hole in my spirit.

Now grace fills my spirit.

Before OA, food covered my feelings.

Now I feel my feelings.

Before OA, food masked my low self-esteem.

Now I believe I am worthy just because I was born."

– *Lifeline* <https://oa.org/working-the-program/strength-hope/>



MAINTENANCE IN RECOVERY



Before I came into OA, for my entire forty years of life as a fat person and dieter, attending a decade of Weight Watchers meetings, the Holy Grail seemed to be "maintenance." Maintenance was an ever-elusive dream, off in the distant future, where I would reach my goal weight; a point in time where I would theoretically stabilize the food I would eat, feel comfortable in my body, have none of the problems I attributed to being fat and self-conscious, and stay at that weight forever/live happily ever after.

Since coming into OA in 2010, I have learned a completely different paradigm. My top weight was 284 pounds, not including when I was pregnant at over 300 pounds. When I came into the OA program, I had no idea that the self-criticism, self-loathing, blaming of others, feeling overwhelmed, and self-pity were all symptoms of my condition of compulsive overeating, not to mention my preoccupation with my first love--food. Food and what people thought about me were my Higher Power in the sense that they were all I thought about. If I went to a social event, such as a wedding, or a dinner party, or even a family meal with my extended family, all I thought about was the food. I wanted to eat, as much as I could get away with, without feeling outlandishly different from others. That meant I actually ate somewhat more than those around me, but was never satisfied, since I wanted more. So, after such events, I would go home and eat more.

In this spiritual program, as outlined in the Twelve Steps, I have lost/let go of so much of my pain and struggle along with (as of today) 117.6 pounds. Through admitting my powerlessness and unmanageability, relying on a Higher Power, taking ongoing inventory of my defects ("cleaning house"), sharing with G-d and others, seeing and making amends for harms I have caused others, praying ONLY for knowledge of G-d's will for me, and working with others, I have recovered to a much better life every day. Each day I make an action plan for my day in writing. I do it during the course of the day, little by little. I easily list ten things I am grateful for. I write out my prayers and say all Twelve Steps, thoughtfully and out loud. I use the First Step, the Third Step, and the Eleven Steps as prayers. Those prayers help me to remember the condition I have, and I ask for G-d's help to turn my entire life and will over to Him. I beg G-d to help me know and to do ONLY His will for me--I pray for nothing else. All else is what I have to accept.

Almost every day I speak to my sponsees. We work on the Steps, the Traditions, and how to practice program principles in all our affairs. We apply program principles to their lives. I attend three meetings every week. I speak to my sponsor each week. I send her my food, including total calories every day. I weigh and measure the food I eat. I weigh myself once a month. I see every program action I take as an offering to my Higher Power. Small and big actions, transformative ones, or even mundane daily ones, are all offerings. I think my Higher Power appreciates these offerings to Him and to myself. They are each a declaration of my gratitude for life, and love, and freedom from the bondage of food and self.

To the extent that I no longer live in clinging bondage to selfishness, the food, and to what others think of me, I am maintaining my recovery. Am I finished? No. Have I reached some permanent, clear destination? No. Of course not. The journey is lifelong (maybe even through this lifetime and into a next life). My current sponsor has encouraged me to think of maintenance in OA as not a finish line that we cross. Rather, she suggested, I need to start thinking about maintenance as a process that I have already entered. I am maintaining my serenity and freedom from the food, and I am maintaining my conscious contact/ongoing connection to G-d. There is no pressure to "reach" maintenance anymore. One day at a time I feel freedom and serenity, and LOVE for G-d, myself, and for all of my fellow humans.

I want to mention how much my fellow OAers have contributed to my learning how to recover. And I want to mention that I have been through/gotten through/thrived through some difficulties in life, such as losing my husband to cancer when I was forty-one (and he was forty-two). I have recovered throughout that and other losses and challenges, but life has only gotten better and better the longer and more I practice all of the 12 Steps. If I can do it, anyone can. If G-d can help me, he can help you, too.

Thank you for listening.

Michelle JB

MAINTENANCE

The definition of “Maintenance” in the context of recovery is intricate. If we were only a diet program, we would be maintaining a number on the scale. Since we are not a diet club, we can only maintain our recovery if we grow spiritually.

We are never cured of this disease and cannot afford to stay stagnant.

To maintain my recovery, I have learned to be pro-active and resilient. Embracing my imperfections have been key to my spiritual growth.

I have learned over time that to keep what I have, I must give it away.

The following practices have helped me live a life that is free from food and weight obsession. I know that God has graced me with this freedom because of my dedication to certain practices:

Attend meetings at least once per week.

Sponsor fellows through the 12 steps

Have a clear food plan, so that I know where my abstinence begins and ends

Weigh and measure certain foods

Read and study spiritual literature

Write down my thoughts regularly and practice step 10: was I selfish, dishonest, resentful, afraid? Do I owe an apology? Was I kind and loving towards all? Did I keep something to myself that I need to discuss with another person?

Make amends as needed

Meditate

Pray

Engage in Physical Exercise

Do good works for others without having to get the credit

Practice gratitude and composure

Speak kindly to myself

Expose my negativity, disease thoughts, and behaviors to others

Speak to my sponsor at least once a week

Participate in meetings and do service

Accept the fact that I am a compulsive eater without question

Be attentive to newcomers at meetings and to fellows who are having difficulties

If I do nothing else, abstinence and following my food plan

is an absolute must and everything else is gravy— no pun intended!



Swans are beautiful creatures on top of the water. However, their webbed feet must work hard to stay afloat!

—Barb

SEVENTH TRADITION CONTRIBUTIONS:



WE ARE FULLY SELF-SUPPORTING THROUGH OUR OWN CONTRIBUTIONS, DECLINING OUTSIDE DONATIONS.

60% WUIG, P.O. BOX 125, WHITE PLAINS, NY 10603. INFO@OAWESTCHESTER-NY.ORG (914) 633-2988

30% OA WORLD SERVICE OFFICE. P.O. BOX 44727 RIO RANCHO, NM 87174-4727

10% OA REGION 6. P.O. BOX 644. PEABODY, MA 01960

For increased security you are encouraged to make online donations to region 6 via **PayPal**; https://www.paypal.com/webapps/shoppingcart?flowlogging_id=118befaf76dd0&mfid=1589652888366_118befaf76dd0#/checkout/openButton

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES:

Would your meeting like to sponsor a workshop?



Topics are: A Day in the Life of a Recovered Person; Surrender or Come All the Way In and Sit All the Way Down; Maintenance; Defining Abstinence; and Finding Your Higher Power. Email Donna L. at dloomba121@gmail.com

HYBRID MEETING SURVEY

Please have your meeting/s complete the **HYBRID MEETING SURVEY** by 4/30 and return to: wuigchair@gmail.com

WUIG TEXT MESSAGES:



IF YOU'D LIKE TO RECEIVE TEXT UPDATES ABOUT EVENTS, MEETING CLOSURES, ETC., TEXT @OAWUIG TO 81010. TO STOP RECEIVING WUIG TEXTS, REPLY @LEAVE TO THE NUMBER YOU ARE RECEIVING MESSAGES FROM.

THE SERENITY TIMES

NEEDS YOUR SERVICE! IT IS WRITTEN BY LOCAL MEMBERS FOR LOCAL MEMBERS. THE THEME FOR THE THIRD QUARTER OF 2021 IS **TRANSFORMATION OF CHARACTER DEFECTS**: SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES BY WORKING THE TOOL OF WRITING AND HELPING FELLOW OA'S. YOUR ANECDOTES, POEMS, FAVORITE QUOTES, AND LITERATURE ARE AMONGST SOME OF THE ITEMS YOU CAN SUBMIT. SHARE WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO:

WUIGNEWSLETTER@GMAIL.COM

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