

The Road To Recovery

The Newsletter of Westchester United Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous

March 2003

A Physical, Emotional, Spiritual Equation

It has been some time since I discovered that my physical body and the state of my body are intrinsically connected to my emotions. One of the major driving forces in my decision to come to OA was the knowledge that until I took care of the emotional, there could be no physical recovery. However, only recently have I come to realize the spiritual aspect of it. I am just beginning to see its importance in the whole equation.

In the past, the only recovery that mattered to me was the physical recovery. I could make the body-body connection. When I lost weight and exercised, I felt great. It was that simple: eat right, exercise, lose weight, look great! Apparently, that was not enough since time after time the pounds came right back. The emotional weight which went along with those pounds made it harder and harder to even attempt to lose weight. Thus I have come to terms with the difficult decision to try to deal with, as best I can, the two other aspects of the equation. Deciding to come to OA has helped me with that.

It has been about a month since I began. Part of me expected to lose twenty pounds right away. That hasn't been the case. I made the decision to abstain from weighing myself, something I did daily, so that my physical recovery or lack of it will not affect the work on my spiritual and emotional recovery. I've come to see that they are equally important. I've learned to live life one day at a time.

Janet B.

The Joy of Abstinence

Oh, how do I put down on paper the joy of being abstinent and how I got there? It's been a hard journey. My will has blocked my recovery repeatedly. Today I wish I had taken an English class on the definitions of such words as compulsive, obsessive, relapse, and defiance. This is what it was and I had no clue.

What came first for me was a loving sponsor. She led me, carried me, with such tenderness. I stayed in the rooms searching for more and more of the good stuff which was not in the food. I found Step 2. I found God. Yes, I call my Higher Power God. I don't know what He looks like; yet, I know how He feels. He is loving, caring, and forgiving. He lives inside me - I am His temple. He has given me free will - to do good or bad. He gives me choices - I need to make them - the choice to eat, think, love and live in the Twelve Steps of Recovery. Yes, without his grace, I cannot recover.

My disease is between my ears. As I think, I live. My threefold disease hinges on my honesty. I hear in my head, "You are powerless and you have been empowered with the teachings of this wonderful OA program." I have been empowered. I need to continue this and pass it on.

Anonymous

Power of Example

For me, physical recovery is directly related to honesty. I may feel that I'm working my program and improving emotionally and spiritually; however, if I'm not demonstrating visible physical improvement in my medical checkups and achieving a healthy weight, I haven't been honest with myself. I haven't honestly accepted the fact that physical recovery is completely my responsibility.

Although I know that this is a "we" program, I am the only one who can achieve the willingness to go to any length to recover physically. The willingness to do what it takes to recover physically is my job. I want to recover optimal health so that I can be all that my higher power wants me to be.

I have been given a most sophisticated and wondrous gift....the human body. I can show my gratitude by praying for willingness, surrendering and admitting that I am powerless over food, taking time to seriously work out a personal food plan, committing my food each day and using all of the tools of the program to achieve daily abstinence and sustain my physical recovery.

The questions that demand honest answers are these: Am I a power of example that the OA program works? How credible will I seem if I am the only OA member a desperate compulsive overeater finds at a meeting?

I once heard this response when OA was suggested for someone who was seeking help for her problem of obesity: "OA? I went there once. That's where a lot of fat ladies sit around and discuss their problems." As with many of us, this woman came initially seeking physical recovery and, unfortunately, didn't see evidence of it at her first meeting.

For today, I am willing to do what it takes to achieve physical recovery for my own health and well being. I want to be a power of example that the OA program works.

Anonymous

I Haven't Got It

I know what abstinence is - I haven't got it. I understand all of this, but I haven't even begun to get it.

I know that for me until the abstinence takes hold, working changes and the willingness to fight for all the good things simple isn't there.

I would love to be free to dance and sing. It's inside there somewhere but, oh boy, is it well hidden - I might make a mistake and look foolish, God forbid! Actually, I feel as if I were in a fortress and well-guarded from the outside and more so as the years go by. I went to a retreat once where they danced and I simply couldn't. Family dogs have died after many years and my family is in tears just talking about it and I simply couldn't. I feel as though I am angry inside.

Anonymous

The Road to Recovery is a bi-monthly publication of Westchester United Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous. Dates of publication are January, March, May, July, September and November. We reserve the right to edit submissions for spelling, length and clarity, but not for content. Articles may be submitted by e-mail or U.S. Mail and may be typed or legibly handwritten. Submissions must be received by the **10th of the month preceding publication**. Include your name and telephone number or email address. **Name published upon request. Send to Priscilla at: Thunderstorm6@MSN.com or call (914) 722-9263 for mailing address.**

From the Editor

The topic of physical recovery, like many topics among compulsive overeaters, stirs up controversy - not on its necessity, but on its definition. Abstinence is at the heart of physical recovery - this we all recognize is a common denominator for a threefold recovery. However, questions of food plans, when to begin the Steps, the role of Sponsorship, how to handle relapse in respect to the Steps, and the relationship of physical to mental and spiritual recovery are largely left to individual or group interpretation.

Which came first? Which does the Big Book, our text for recovery, tell us? In Chapter 5, How It Works, Bill writes, "When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically." I have pondered this statement for many years with changing conclusions - the Steps and Big Book continue to be instructive. My most recent thoughts are that physical recovery alone does not constitute Recovery. Emotional or mental improvement alone is not possible and, if it were, it would be transient. And finally, as I could have plainly seen if I looked honestly and openly, it is only when the spiritual sickness is overcome that Recovery begins!

In practice, putting down the substance first allows for the willingness and honesty. I would have little success in talking to a "drunken" spouse just as I would have little success if I were compulsively overeating, lying to myself and others at the most basic level for me, a compulsive overeater, and talking to my sponsor. At the heart of recovery of any kind is honesty, the most fundamental of which for me, as an addict, is about my substance of choice.

There can be no exclusion of any of the Twelve Steps for recovery to progress. The Steps are constructed in a specific order and will "work" only if done in that order. That is why they are numbered! As many others, my first glance at the Steps resulted in my thinking I had a grip on many of them already, so I could be in the advanced class. Not so, my sponsor informed me.

I, of course, learned of the deceptive simplicity of the words which required a spiritual awakening - a true conversion experience - for me to simply survive. This is the simple message I was told: Change or die. The Steps, all Twelve as carefully worded and written, hold the immutable truth about HOW to survive, change, recover.

We are only as strong as our weakest link. OA is deeply affected by each member's physical recovery as the foundation of our common denominator - We are compulsive overeaters who carry the message. Bill W. and Dr. Bob sought out each other as "buddies" who deeply understood each other despite their superficial differences - it was the spiritual malady which they had in common and the spiritual solution which they freely chose to seek out together. Physical recovery is required for us to even "hear" each other and our selves. We in OA strive to be spiritual "buddies" and in doing so affect OA as a whole.

It may have been my stinking thinking which perpetuated my disease; it is truly my best thinking which brought me into program; and, the best thinking of all has me unquestioningly remain. What was once a formidable chore has become a source of contentment. I have truly learned to do what I must do because I want to do it.

Our thanks to Karen S-A and Phil S. who have given so freely of their time and knowledge in service to WUIG. We wish God's blessing for each of you. We look forward to seeing you at future OA gatherings. We shall miss you!

Thanks to **Dee M.** for The Road To Recovery graphic design, **Jim B.** and **Steve F.** for editorial assistance, and all the OA writer-contributors of this newsletter.

Priscilla R.

Westchester United Intergroup

All Welcome To Attend
First Thursday of the Month
7:45 P.M. - 9:30 P.M.
Emanuel Lutheran Church
197 Manville Road, Pleasantville

Upcoming Events

East Coast Services Convention
March 14-16, 2003
Hudson Valley Resort & Spa
For info call (914) 626-8888

OA World Service Convention
August 7-10, 2003
New Orleans, LA
www.oa.org

Region 6 OA Convention
October 31- November 2, 2003
Sheraton Fallsview, Ontario, Canada
www.oaregion6.org

Pass It On

Share your experience, strength, and hope with Westchester and Putnam OAers in the next issue of The Road To Recovery. The topic for the May, 2003 issue is **The Power of Prayer and Meditation**. Suggested focus:

- How have prayer and meditation aided your recovery, changed your life, and taken form for you?
- Describe your daily practice of Step Eleven and how you stay disciplined to do it.
- Give examples of the power of prayer.
- Do you use prayer if your Higher Power is non-traditional?
- As an atheist or agnostic in OA, how have you reconciled the Higher Power concept?
- Has your Higher Power supported your recovery and Twelve-Step work?

The deadline for submission is April 10th. Send to Priscilla at: Thunderstorm6@MSN.com or call (914) 722-9263.

The Road To Recovery is automatically submitted to Lifeline and World Service. Submission of an article constitutes permission for possible national/international publication. Each article is the sole opinion of the individual author and does not represent the opinion of WUIG or OA as a whole. Comments or suggestions? Call Priscilla R. at (914) 722-9263.

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A Better Father, A Better Husband, A Better Man

My name is Jim and I am a compulsive overeater. My journey towards recovery has led me down many paths, some of them over and over again. I think my skull is thicker than the ordinary person's and it takes me much longer to absorb certain lessons regarding the way I look at and live my life.

This is not true when it comes to food, however. Whenever I find myself in a new town or city, I am blindingly fast in being able to know the best bakery, ethnic, and fast food places within a five, let me make that a ten-mile area. Not only that, I know their hours of operation and all the specials and I'm on a first-name basis with the delivery people.

I say this by way of trying to explain that physical recovery has not been easy for me. My food addiction is complete. One of the few things I am sure of is that without my spiritual recovery, i.e., my relationship with a higher power, my physical recovery would not be possible. Everything else is just a diet. Experience has shown me diets do not work. To me, physical recovery means...let me just tell a short story.

When I was 300 pounds plus (I am 5"10"), I went to an

The Three-legged Stool

The image that most clearly represents OA for me is that of a three-legged stool, much like my childhood memory of the stool my Uncle Ed used for milking his cows. Each leg represents one aspect of recovery - physical, mental, and spiritual. The stool will not stand unless all three legs are sturdy.

My journey began with going to meetings and listening. Until I felt better emotionally, nothing else was going to happen. Although I had grown up with religious beliefs, they did not provide the spirituality I needed to aid my overall recovery. It took four months and dozens of meetings to believe there was hope. Only then did I get a sponsor, start a food plan, and begin working the Steps.

I was amazed I was able to lose weight so easily as I had been concentrating more upon the spiritual and emotional healing I was seeking. As I lost weight, I felt incredibly better. My feet, knees, and hips no longer ached. My thinking became clearer. I was able to concentrate better and focus on one task at a time, even to completion! Before OA, I felt overwhelmed. My thoughts were scattered. I procrastinated and panicked, often in a state of paralysis, often accomplishing nothing. As I felt better, I more easily focused on the process of my own recovery, striving for progress, not perfection, trusting God would help and sustain me on my journey.

Like the three-legged stool, I know I must take care to nurture each aspect of my recovery. If one part falters, my entire recovery is at risk. I nurture the spiritual with prayer, meditation, readings, and an ongoing dialogue with God. I support my emotional recovery by reaching out, attending meetings, talking to others, and by giving and accepting support. Only then can I take care of the physical part of my recovery by writing down and following a food plan.

amusement park with a batch of friends. We waited for over an hour to get on one of the rides. When it was our turn, the attendant could not close the harness around me. I was too large. No matter how hard he tried, the laws of physics could not be altered, even for me. I was mortified as I walked the "gauntlet" back to the exit, listening to the comments of the crowd who were frustrated by a long wait made even longer because of me.

That was a very painful day. Physical recovery means that, for today, I can fit on that ride. Physical recovery means I can fit in a regular airplane seat without an extension. It means I can keep up better with my five-year-old daughter (Even if I could run the marathon, I could never totally keep up with her!). Physical recovery means that, for today, I breathe easier, move faster, and manage my diabetes without medication.

What I am trying to say is that, thanks to my spiritual, emotional, and physical recovery, for today, I am a better father, a better husband, and a better man. I could never find these gifts in a diet, but I have found them in OA.

Jim B.

I wish I could say it is easy, but it takes effort every day to stay in the day and to take care of myself. However, it is a simple plan. All it takes is my willingness to do my part and to rely on my Higher Power, whom I call God, to guide me.

Virginia

The Gifts of Energy and Free Spirit

The benefits of abstinence are thinness of body and a clearer healthier mind. I love the gifts of energy and the free spirit of the mind which abstinence gives me. If I am not abstinent, it means being bogged down with body weight with no energy or will to move anywhere. Without my physical recovery, I am unable to be a responsible person.

Physical recovery brings my being aware and honest with myself and others. I become willing to prepare my own food, take action to avoid lethargy whether to food, people, places or situations. If I make even the smallest effort to change, I see results. I have to stop hiding and dare to become vulnerable. I must take action to be my God-given self.

The requirements for physical recovery are staying in OA and working the Steps to learn how to ask the God of your choice for help, being willing to say, "No", when you mean no, giving up fear of being unpopular, speaking up not out in the OA way of life.

Most of all, through my physical, mental and spiritual recovery, I have personally experienced more acceptance, love, and gratitude towards God and man since joining OA. Knowing what makes me happy and trusting God helps me to keep that positive spirit one day at a time in OA.

*An OA Member of the Friday Friendship Group
of Overeaters Anonymous*

Speaker Bank: Looking for a speaker? To be or find a speaker, contact Kathy D. at (914) 381-4989.

A Challenge To Be Honest

My physical recovery definitely relates to my emotional and spiritual recovery. When I am not watching my abstinence or I compulsively overeat, my body becomes very uncomfortable and a reminder of my addiction. Then I am away from my program and I am emotionally and spiritually unbalanced. I begin to feel self-hatred. I become overly sensitive and stop trusting my Higher Power because I have taken my will back and become "soul sick".

I do not emphasize one aspect of recovery. The physical, emotional, and spiritual have to be balanced as they are interrelated. These fluctuate at times, but if I am spiritually fit, my food and emotions fall into place.

I have been working the Twelve Steps in two programs and my experience in each is different. My trust in my Higher Power was the first thing that gave me hope and the strength to gain physical recovery. In OA, I had to become abstinent first. Although my spiritual foundation was in place, it needed to be refocused and the Steps needed to be applied to my compulsion to overeat. It is only when I am working all aspects of recovery towards my various addictions that I feel balanced spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

Physical recovery is more than weight loss. It is my feeling good about my physical self - not measuring my recovery by the scale or by what society dictates as acceptable or even by what I see in the mirror (my eyes deceive me). I do this by remembering where I came from, who I was, and by acknowledging the progress evident in my life. Today, I exercise on a regular basis, sleep comfortably, and enjoy activities with my family. I fit in my clothes and no longer punish myself for not being the size society says I should be. I use the scale to keep me "real" and to confirm I am not deceiving myself with larger portions.

All of the Steps helped me reach and maintain physical recovery, but the pivotal ones were Steps 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, and 10. Steps 1, 2, and 3 are basic and absolute and without these it is impossible to work the remaining Steps. What working Steps 6, 7, and 10 triggered for me was my ability or inability to be honest and to view my character defects from an entirely new perspective: while I was honest in another program, I was dishonest in OA. It was painful to see how I desperately wanted to hold onto my disease. Barriers, never there in my prior experience, seemed to be everywhere in defense of my relationship with food. While I could apply the first three Steps, I had great difficulty in dealing with denial where my food was concerned in Steps 6, 7, and 10. Step 10 challenges me to be honest on a daily basis.

Imagine a room where no one is abstinent or in physical recovery. There would be no spiritual growth in the rooms. It would be nearly impossible to work the Steps because physical recovery is a by-product of abstinence. Physical recovery is a power of example to newcomers that there is hope in the rooms of OA.

Soledad

The Newsletter will publish group anniversary announcements upon request when submitted by the 8th of the month preceding publication.

Temporary Sponsor Bank: Looking for temporary sponsorship? To be or find a sponsor, call Priscilla R. at (914) 722-9263.

With Abstinence, Trust, Honesty

When I came into OA, I felt as though all my troubles were over. I found out I was not at fault for my compulsive overeating and I was not alone. I embraced my new food plan and rapidly starting losing weight. I felt wonderful and others looked at me as though I had the answer.

It took gaining half the weight I lost and over a year's time to realize I didn't have the answer - only God does. I worked hard to build a relationship with my Higher Power and welcome Him into all of my life; but, still I struggled with my physical recovery. I thought that if I continued to talk with God and kept my emotions on an even keel, the weight would come off naturally. It didn't. I had to embrace what I knew intellectually all along - God will guide me, but I have to do the footwork.

Today, abstinence feels good rather than being the chore it once was. I'm no longer on a "pink cloud" nor do I have to work so hard. I am closer to God and can accept my emotional "ups and downs" with clear thinking and an honest, open heart. Life may not seem as wonderful as when I first came into program, but I know it is better. I know in my heart and soul that with abstinence, trust in my Higher Power, and honesty with myself and other OAers, there is nothing I can't get through and overcome.

Yes, I still want to lose weight, but I have grown enough to know I can when I accept how my disease affects me physically, emotionally, and spiritually. I cannot fully recover unless I recover in all three areas of my being. When I eat poorly, I think poorly. I make bad choices and decisions. I isolate and push away those who would help me. I cannot recover unless I embrace the physical aspects of my disease. When I gain weight, my physical ailments intensify and my tolerance for pain and discomfort send me to search out comfort in my drug of choice - food. It is a vicious cycle that only with God's help and my own determination can I break.

D-White Plains

A Step One Reflection:

When I am bored, sugar and flour products I partake to feel less ignored.

When I am sad, sugar and flour I intake to make me glad. When I am hate, I ingest sugar and flour thinking it will change my state.

When it is late at night, sugar and flour come to sedate and assuage my fright.

When I am depressed, then sugar and flour promise to make me unrepressed.

Oh, how unaware of the true purpose of my emotions, somehow they are not my magic potions.

I think my feelings rather than feel and as a result I fail to heal. So what might I do as a strategy to avoid personal tragedy?

Ingesting sugar and flour are not the way. They only betray. O God, I am so arrogant and controlling, help me come to, to understand that You are elegant and consoling.

May my true admission, open my mind and heart to permission.

May refusing and abusing become fusing and amusing.

May my sadness become my gladness as You I come to love and know.

May I admit I am finite and allow You to dispel the darkness of night and infuse healing light.

When I am blue, may I not turn to sugar and flour, but to You.

Anonymous