

# The Road To Recovery

The Newsletter of Westchester United Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous

November 2004

## On Anonymity

Upon walking into the rooms, most of us are egomaniacal manipulators and glory-seekers, obsessed and self-possessed. It took a long time and a lot of pain for me to submit to the ego-puncturing process of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. I am glad I have made the journey. Of particular value in this process was this Twelfth Tradition excerpt: "These experiences taught us that anonymity is real humility at work. It is an all-pervading spiritual quality which today keynotes AA life everywhere. Moved by the spirit of anonymity, we try to give up our natural desires for personal distinction as AA members both among our fellow alcoholics and before the general public. As we lay aside these very human aspirations, we believe that each of us takes part in the weaving of a protective mantle which covers our whole society and under which we may grow and work in unity." (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, AA World Services, Inc., p.187)

There is no one definition of Anonymity. In its most basic meaning it may be defined as not using last names or repeating what another has related or done (gossip, character assassination), not revealing the identity of one's sponsor, or not proclaiming oneself as a public spokesperson for OA at any public communications level. At its heart is humility and charity. Humility is the recognition that each person has a function in God's larger plan of which I am but a tiny part. "There is a courtesy of the heart. It is akin to love. Out of it arises the purest courtesy in the outward behavior." (For Today, OA, Inc., p. 233) It is this courtesy of the heart which demands at meetings I use these exact words and simply state, "My name is Priscilla and I am a compulsive overeater" undistinguished from any other compulsive overeater, and that I respectfully refrain from any form of cross talk which usually conceals that "perverse wish to hide a bad motive underneath a good one" (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, AA World Services, Inc., p.94).

Anonymity is the foundation of any spirituality I may have. Spirituality is a gift for which I must work, but cannot earn. Humility is its complement which, as soon as I lay claim to it, illusively slips away as does my sanity and sober thinking. It takes my continued willingness to undergo a conversion experience each time the demand arises (Step 6). When God presents an opportunity, I have the choice of saying yes or no. Saying no, living as a fear-based person, is not lack of courage, but rather a lack of humility and confidence in God. For the sake of my spiritual condition, I consent to give up certain rights as these rights sometimes appear to me. I embrace the difficult. As an addict, I called attention to myself. I loved the limelight and the trance-inducing power of words and persuasion. To become unnoticed is not easy. Giving up delusions of a superior place among others based upon self-accomplishment, a deeply dishonest premise, was not my first choice. It was based upon desperation. I had neglected to acknowledge my gifts are God-given and to remember no credentials are necessary in the spiritual realm but the love of God and man.

Sounds ideal? If this could be easily accomplished I would never deplete my bodily and mental health with these defects of character. I would live forever. Progress not perfection, yes, but I must move towards perfection, thanking and crediting Him with each successful remission. Without fear I must give credit in

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## Westchester United Intergroup

All Welcome To Attend  
First Thursday of the Month  
7:30 P.M. - 9:00 P.M.  
Emanuel Lutheran Church  
197 Manville Road, Pleasantville  
www.oawestchester-ny.org

## Upcoming Events

**IDEA Day Marathon**  
Saturday, November 20, 2004  
10:00 A.M. - 4:30 P.M.  
Memorial United Methodist Church  
250 Bryant Avenue  
White Plains, NY 10605

## 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 January, 2005 is **Acceptance**. The deadline for submissions is December 10th. You may mail your submissions anonymously at WUIG, PO Box 125, White Plains, NY 10603, email to Thunderstorm6@msn.com or call Priscilla at (914) 722-9263.

### Suggested focus:

- What is the meaning of acceptance to you?
- How has acceptance become the answer to all your problems inside and outside of OA?
- What has helped you to practice the principles of acceptance in all your affairs?

The Road To Recovery is submitted to World Service Lifeline Magazine. 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? Contact Priscilla R. at (914) 722-9263.

Westchester United Intergroup and the fellowship would like to express appreciation to **Dee M.** for her outstanding service as graphic designer of The Road To Recovery. Thanks to all the OA writer-contributors of this newsletter.

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the earshot of others to bear witness to His Power and Way of Life. As I credit God, I do not credit myself for my recovery or any personal attributes. From this premise, anonymity flows naturally.

What is the spiritual value of anonymity? It distinguishes us not just as abstaining addicts, but as people who attempt to make selflessness part of our way of life despite an environment of narcissism and materialism. Recalling that our attitude of service is necessitated by desperation, not altruism, it is a sacrifice to which I fully consent through the completion of the Steps with sponsorship as the capstone of completion, acting as a channel to carry a personal message based upon personal experience and beliefs, as devoid as possible of ego or desire for repayment or personal acclamation. It is giving something for nothing and going against my natural inclination to expect a return on my investments in life.

A great woman said, "The reward of love is love." Anonymity is a loving principle which I must practice in all my affairs in and out of OA. It is the way to soar above the demands of the body and its mental deviations in order to reach the prize I seek, the victory to be won. For me, it is choosing self-responsibility, not comparing with others nor judging, without devaluation of others or elevation of self, with clear gratitude to God for who I am, giving up the credit to enable myself to grow in God's grace. It is choosing life over death. "We of OA believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we should forever live in thankful contemplation of Him Who presides over us all." The practice of anonymity brings the gifts of abstinence, humility, gratitude, contentment, joy, harmony, love, respect, and friendship to me.

*Priscilla R., Editor*

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## Freeing

The anonymity OA offers is very important to me because of the shame associated with my disease. There is something very freeing about being able to go into a room full of people who share my problems and be able to talk openly about my struggles with food. I would not be able to do this if I did not know that what is said in the rooms stays in the rooms. The thought of a fellow OAer running into a neighbor of mine and discussing my participation in the program would certainly prevent me from attending meetings and sharing so much of myself. This would interfere with my recovery and with the fellowship I have come to value. In the program the only one I don't need anonymity with is God.

*Janet B.*

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## Guardian of Recovery

My understanding and appreciation of anonymity has gone through several evolutions. At first, I clutched onto it as the security and safety that no one would tell anyone else that they saw me here. Deep feelings of shame, humiliation, vanity, human respect, all facets of my public face, sought the protection of anonymity. Gradually, I relaxed and began to identify with others and with their stories. I began to tell my own story, discovering the self hidden under the disguise of the image I thought was me. I noticed a courtesy of the rooms which placed a gentle restraint upon my natural and much undisciplined curiosity. I found that the people with whom I shared intimate things about my struggle with addiction did not ask me about my outside life. They did not seem to find that very important. Yet, I wonder still about the rest of their lives, but the spirit of anonymity curbs my curiosity, giving me the ability to direct my attention to what really matters, our experience, strength, and hope as recovering addicts. Months and years later, I finally heard, "Anonymity is the spiritual foundation..." What a revelation when it came! Anonymity keeps me on the right path. The principles of the Steps and Traditions guide my recovery, helping me to distinguish between principles and personalities, myself and my Higher Power. Anonymity has become the guardian of my treasured recovery. Anonymity keeps a watchful eye on the doorways of the rooms and redirects my wandering attention to keep intact the gift of recovery. It is then available to the next person who crosses the threshold of recovery. I know that God, through the people in the rooms, will reveal more to me about how blessed I am to have been led into the Fellowship.

*Ellie S.*

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## Anonymity, A Responsibility

Anonymity provides me with a sense of security in sharing my innermost feelings about my dealing with addiction and compulsive overeating in my life. I do not have to worry about anything I say being spread inside or outside of program. This creates an environment of trust and safety. I also feel the weight of responsibility on me to protect others' anonymity. I understand how equally important it is for others as well as for me. I have witnessed the sad, deleterious effects of not preserving another's anonymity. Not respecting anonymity can produce set-backs and relapse. The Golden Rule certainly applies to protection of anonymity.

*Anonymous*

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## The Message, Not the Messenger

Anonymity means that I can tell my own secrets, but you cannot tell them for me. If I say something you think is interesting, you can share my message, but not the source nor messenger. I have heard that Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of a Twelve Step program. When I began thinking about this concept, I realized that Anonymity provided me with a feeling of safety I have never experienced anywhere else. When I shared that while in the grip of the disease, I was a bad mother to my children, I was given unconditional love and acceptance from the people in the rooms. I learned that we all do things we are not proud of, but we can make amends for wrongdoing and live useful and productive lives. I have learned I am no better or worse than any other person on earth. What is important is I am willing to do the footwork to change my behaviors and character defects. I have learned it is wrong to judge people by their outsides. Now that I no longer have to worry about what people will think of me, I have received the gift of friendship. I have learned to love and be loved because, through Anonymity, I have learned intimacy. Sometimes, after someone shares, I want to say, "I really liked your share." However, I have learned that responding directly to another's share is against Anonymity. All I can share at a meeting is my own experience, strength, and hope. It is not my business to comment on yours, even if it is a positive comment.

*Andrea R.*

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## The Word Not Said

If I were asked the major factor in my compulsive overeating disease, I would have to choose the lack of feeling safe about whom and what I am. My life as a young child was filled with painful memories of being poked fun at and ridiculed because I was fat. Every area of my life was affected, from fear about doing physical activities to just being larger than my peers. There was nowhere to go. I was in a constant state of defense and waiting for the ax to fall in the form of jokes and name-calling.

Anonymity creates a safe place for me. No matter whom I am, what I look like, or how I feel, it is okay. I don't have to worry about what I share being passed on to others and becoming a painful experience. I don't have to hide or be afraid. I don't have to wait in dread for the word "fat" NOT to be said. I can be me. I can fall down, make mistakes, and be imperfect. I am relieved and safe thanks to Anonymity.

*Anonymous*

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**Topic of this issue: Anonymity**

## Applied Anonymity

I believe the most important tool in program is anonymity. Using this tool I was free to grow and seemed to change my opinion on any given subject once a week. At first I cried at every meeting, God's way of shutting my mouth so my ears could open and get a handle on my new-found freedom to begin to learn who I was. I never heard criticism or condemnation for my changing opinions. When I heard I would be asked to give back what I had gotten, that meant leading and qualifying, fear was instant. Could I trust others, unlike my family, to not repeat all I said? I heard at meeting, "Do you practice anonymity?" and "Do you have faith that God will help you?" The first year was full of wonders and blessings as well as the pains of growing up. The second year I walked through the Steps and with God's help gradually opened up, sometimes in giant steps, sometimes in baby steps. As I grew, anonymity's meaning broadened into every issue. I applied anonymity to each Step as I worked it which kept at bay comparing and judging others. I began to learn what respect meant. As I claimed my part in the process of doing Step 4, anonymity became more and more important. I tried out things I heard, being positive and trusting anonymity would keep me safe to continue growing. I now pass along what God has given me in safety. It is the reason I have remained in program and I am able to pass it on.

*Anonymous*

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## Right to Privacy Principle

Anonymity is my right to privacy. It is sharing things about myself with others and the breaking of my pattern of isolation and holding things in. It is saying I am like you and you are like me, and it is safe for each of us. It is showing me that I am not different from anyone else. That is important to know because I have always compared myself unfavorably with others, or, conversely, felt superior to them. Anonymity is a humbling reality. I am no better or worse than anyone else in OA. We are all trying to recover. We have more in common than we ever imagined. Anonymity makes it possible to speak from my heart and soul, not an easy thing for me to do. I was afraid to let people know me because I feared their judgment and criticism. Most of all, I feared they would not like me. Now I have learned through program to accept and love myself so I am not afraid to be rejected by another. Now it says more to me about who the other person is than who I am. I do not take it personally. I remain grateful for anonymity. It is therapeutic and healing to share knowing that those in the room unconditionally understand and care for me.

*Leah*

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## Saving Grace

Since becoming a member of OA, I have found my feelings changing as my ideas change. At first, I was upset by the emphasis put upon Anonymity. I thought, "Everyone should be spreading the word, helping others, and talking about this great program! People should stand up as examples of how it works!" I could not understand what the secretiveness was about. I have greatly changed my thinking since then. OA is not a sudden fix or cure that must be announced to nations. OAers are not perfect specimens of conquering humanity who need to say to the world, "Look what I can do!" The words I hear at meetings about OA being a program of attraction ring truer to my ears than ever before. I needed to get a sponsor and work a program, not repeat things we hear others say or talk about others. I felt fragile during my first nine months in program. Never having succeeded previously at losing weight and keeping it off through a lifetime of dieting, I was scared to open up and share my fears and talk openly about my experiences. I had come to believe that my problem went far beyond food, but I was afraid to share this belief for fear of it getting back to someone. It took a long time to build trust and to share openly and, thereby, receive the gifts that program offers. I know in my heart that if one word of what I said ever come back to me from an OA source or from a source outside of OA my trust would have been annihilated. Contrarily, if I were talking about someone else, I would not be taking care of my own business. I have found the need to speak with my Higher Power constantly, turning over issues of food and life daily. If I am talking about someone else, I am not doing what I should be doing. Pointing fingers, making comments or repeating what others have said are ways of evading responsibility for my own recovery. Anonymity has been the saving grace that has allowed me to open up.

*Anonymous*

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## OA Meeting Location Change

The Wednesday night How It Works Big Book meeting will return to St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, Mamaroneck Avenue and Carhart Avenue, and will meet at 7:30 PM beginning on November 3, 2004. It will NOT meet at the Ridgeview Congregational Church as of November 3.

### Group Anniversaries

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

## IDEA Day 2004

The Westchester United Intergroup will hold a marathon in celebration of IDEA Day, International Day Experiencing Abstinence, on November 20, 2004 from 10:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. at the Memorial United Methodist Church, 250 Bryant Avenue, White Plains, N.Y. 10605. Panel discussion and workshops will include the topics of Relapse to Recovery, Coping with Life in Recovery, Meditation and Listening to your Intuition, Attitude of Gratitude, Sex and Body Image, and Spiritual, Emotional and Physical Recovery. For more information visit The WUIG website at [www.oawestchester-ny.org](http://www.oawestchester-ny.org).

The OA World Service Board of Trustees has approved the **2007 World Service Convention** dates. Start planning for the gala worldwide convention in Philadelphia, PA, USA, August 29 - September 1, 2007. Update available at [oa.org](http://oa.org).

WUIG has **OA Care Packages**, designed to help members who are still struggling, which include various literature and pamphlets, a meeting list, and a copy of the Lifeline. Ask your Intergroup Rep.

**Twelfth Step Within Call-A-Thon:** The 12th of the month has been selected by the Region Six delegates as the day to make five calls to reach out to those in the rooms, past members who have left the fellowship, and members needing support during a tough time.

## Listing of WUIG Open Meetings

**Monday**, Pelham, Huguenot Memorial Church, last week of the month

**Tuesday**, Pleasantville, Presbyterian Church of Pleasantville, first week of the month

**Wednesday**, White Plains, Memorial United Methodist Church, third week of the month

**Thursday**, White Plains, Temple Israel, first week of the month

**Friday**, Friday Friendship, Ridgeview Congregational Church, last week of the month

**Friday**, Ossining, Ossining Community Center, second week of the month

**Saturday**, White Plains Presbyterian Church, 12/18/04, and the last Saturday of each month

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](mailto:Thunderstorm6@MSN.com) or call (914) 722-9263 for mailing address.**