

Mark These Dates!



**- The Promise of Transformation -
OA Silent Retreat
Lake Pecos, New Mexico
Sponsor: OA Intergroup
Northern New Mexico
October 4th-6th, 2013
Brochure at oaregion3.org**

Living Abstinent in a Non-Abstinent World An OA HOW Workshop

Saturday, September 28, 2013 | 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Chapelwood United Methodist Church
11140 Greenbay, Houston, TX 77024
Williams Center | Room 203

TOPICS COVERED: Living in a non-abstinent home,
Working in a non-abstinent workplace,
Travel including long airplane flights and cruises,
Non-holiday celebrations, birthdays, events, etc.

**The Hills Are Alive with the
Sound of Recovery**
October 4-6, 2013
Loveland, Colorado
info@oacolostateconv.org



2013 OA Convention
"Beyond Our Wildest Dreams"
October 11-13, 2013
Holiday Inn Resort on the Beach
Galveston, TX

NOTE: If you would like to have a monthly copy of Serenity Times emailed to you, please send your email address to: serenitytimes@hotmail.com

Still Learning

I keep coming back so I can hear those scouts who leave and return to report on what it was like without the program. When I was a kid, I saw older kids come to church without parents, and I wondered if I would come to church when I was older. Something continues to draw me back. That has been my experience with OA. I don't know if I'll keep coming when I am in my 80s or 90s. I've been coming back at least two or three times a week since February 1985, and that's not long enough. I still have a lot to learn and relearn. I was lucky enough to get a sponsor the day after my first meeting. She gave me a time to call every day to commit my food for the day and receive a question to answer that required reading the Big Book or "Twelve and Twelve." This introduced me to the phone, a plan of eating, literature, writing, attending three meetings a week, giving service, sponsoring after 30 days of abstinence and taking the first three Steps.

When I came to OA, I knew diets didn't work for me because I was 44 years old and had been dieting since grade school. My hope was that I could stop gaining. I was surprised and delighted when I lost weight following the food plan I received that first night. When I got within 10 pounds (5 kg) of a healthy weight, someone suggested a maintenance program, which led me through the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. Maintenance was scary because I had never maintained a healthy weight for long. I'm happy to say my weight has remained the same since July 1985. That is a miracle.

So why do I keep coming back? The grace of God! I believe I had taken Step One before I came to that first meeting. I knew I was powerless where food was concerned. Something I heard from the speaker or a member sharing instilled hope in me that God cared about my addiction and these people understood me. Any willingness to follow direction is a gift from my HP. I work and rework the Steps. I especially like Steps Ten and Eleven. The simple five-point formula for Step Ten in the Big Book is easy for me to follow, and I love the promises after Step Ten. Prayer comes easily; the Serenity Prayer was my first program prayer until I memorized the Third-Step and Seventh-Step Prayers. For me to have the willingness to say the Eleventh-Step Prayer has taken time, but I do say it sincerely every day. Meditation has been a journey. Over the years, I have tried different styles of meditation. In the last few years, I've been meditating with a group twice a week and at home twice a day. No one is more surprised than I am that I have a genuine desire for humility today. I've had spiritual awakenings as a result, and now my job is to stay awake, carry the message and practice the principles in all my affairs. This program is a way of life.

— Janet C.

OA is a fellowship of individuals who, through shared experience, strength, hope, and the 12 steps of this program are recovering from compulsive overeating. We welcome everyone who wants to stop eating compulsively. There are no dues or fees for members; we are self-supporting through our own contributions, neither soliciting nor accepting outside donations. OA is not affiliated with any public or private organization, political movement, ideology or religious doctrine: we take no position on outside issues. Our primary purpose is to abstain from compulsive eating and to carry the message of recovery through the Twelve Steps of OA to those who still suffer.

Serenity Times is a publication of the Galveston/Bay Area Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous. The editor reserves the right to edit for space and style. Reprinting of this material is permitted provided proper credit is given the source. Please send submissions to: serenitytimes@hotmail.com

Longtimers Share Recovery Is the Gateway Free Is Better

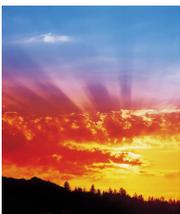
People who meet me are taken aback if I mention that I am a compulsive overeater. "But you're not fat!" they protest. Yes, and the alcoholic who hasn't had a drink in 20 years isn't drunk, but he's still an alcoholic. My last eating binge was 28 years ago. (I'm going to pause and breathe that in. I forget sometimes the enormity of it.) I hated my life when the food was out of control. The up-and-down weight was a lot of it; to be seen at one size in June and a different size in September is embarrassing. But bondage was the real agony. I experienced no freedom entering the drive-thru when part of me didn't want to but a stronger part did. I was a slave to trying the next diet just because it was Monday, even though I hated diets and knew they didn't work.

Fast-forwarding to now, I've been both free and thin for a really long time. Free is better, but I won't lie: thin is nice too. I don't diet or agonize over food. Sometimes I eat too much, but I'm not "going off" of something because there's nothing to go off of. I look healthy and normal. I am healthy, but I'm not normal. I am, as I said, a compulsive overeater. Isn't that negative and inviting disaster? No. For me, knowing who and what I am is the path to emancipation. And I need to take certain actions to maintain the gift I've been given:

- Have some kind of spiritual life. I'm no saint, but without contact with a Higher Power, I'd still be looking for God in a bag of snack food.
- Be willing to help other overeaters. I can feel bad for people who are homeless, terminally ill or abused. But other than giving money, I can't do anything for them because I don't understand their experience. I do understand hiding food, stealing food, bingeing alone and hating myself afterwards. I can help people who do those things.
- Eat within some gentle, flexible parameters. For me, that's natural foods three meals a day—if you only start to eat three times, you only have to stop three times. Anything beyond that gets diet-like and crazy-making. I'm a committed vegan, and I know that helps keep me thin, but I wasn't able to let go of animal products until after I got the gift of no longer needing to eat for a fix.

If I gave up on the simple actions listed above, I'd almost certainly binge again. That's who I am. I could reject my spiritual life and not turn to drugs or gambling; I don't relate to those. Food, however, I get. Besides, this is a syndrome. Overeating and binge eating are just the extreme ends. When I don't want to go to the gym for days, I'm not overeating, but I'm in the syndrome. When I want to stay in and watch TV instead of go out to a networking event that would further my career, I'm in the syndrome. When I'd rather eat alone, even if it were the most nutritious, moderate, and beautifully balanced meal ever prepared, that's the syndrome. As an imperfect person, I dance around with this syndrome and recognize it. In all these years, thanks to those actions I'm committed to taking, it hasn't gone as far as bingeing or gaining back weight. I'm 60 pounds (27 kg) lighter than I used to be. But that's not the point. I'm a compulsive overeater. That fact will remain as long as I live in this body and have this brain. I used to think it was a curse. Now I know it's a gateway to understanding myself, depending on a Higher Power and being of some use in the world.

— Victoria M



New OA Meeting Starts September 9

RECOVERY FROM RELAPSE
MONDAY 6:30 pm

Up the Street Club, 508 W NASA Pkwy, Webster
Contacts:

Rebecca M. 832-297-4114 or Donna S. 409-935-5663

Great Question

One evening after our OA meeting, a member asked me, "Why do you still go to meetings after being abstinent and living in recovery for 33 years?" Great question, so I began to write out an answer. • I came for the vanity but stay for the sanity. • "There is never an end to change, to growth. I have seen selfish desires vanish, self-pity disappear" (For Today, p. 276). • I give service by listening to others and sharing my own growth and feelings. • I hear my Higher Power speak through other people. • "This is our twelfth suggestion: Carry this message . . . You can help when no one else can" (Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., p. 89). • "Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives" (Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., p. 89). • I can give others hope. "It never has to hurt like this again" (Voices of Recovery, p. 295). • I want to keep changing. • "As I grew in the program, I, too, had something to share. I often find that what I share in a meeting is just what I need to hear. Yes, I do indeed carry the message to myself" (Voices of Recovery, p. 109). • I like having a place to go where people listen and don't interrupt each other. • I like being in the company of other loving witnesses who are continually striving to be better people and enlarging their love and understanding of their Higher Power. • I am reminded by every newcomer and member who keep my memory green what it was like to be in the throes of my disease. • I learn from those who are abstinent and living the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions to the best of their ability how to continue to live happy, joyous and free. • I want to remain free of my food obsession. • I remember that "repetition in recovery is a wonderful gift . . . OA's repetition has a beauty and a rhythm. It adds a life-saving structure to my day on three levels: physical, emotional, and spiritual" (Voices of Recovery, p. 93). • I want to become more loving and compassionate and less self-centered. "We are not cured . . . What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition" (Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., p. 85). • I want to "intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle [me]" (Alcoholics Anonymous, 4th ed., p. 84) • I want to live in calm serenity under all circumstances. • I feel OA is truly the course in miracles. • "Thank God I'm here; pray God to keep me here" (For Today, p. 204)/Barbara T., West Palm Beach, FL

Serenity Times, Publication of the Galveston Bay Area Intergroup Meeting List 2013

MONDAY

Deer Park (51567)

Open Meeting, Literature 11:30 a.m.

In His Presence Fellowship Church

1202 East P Street (Fellowship Hall)

Deer Park TX 77536

Contact: Bekki S. 409-454-5720

Intergroup Business Meeting

Jan., April, July, Oct.

3rd Monday, 5:30 p.m.

Bay Area Community of Christ Church

Travis @ Austin Street

Contact: Kay H. 281-557-3881

TUESDAY

Santa Fe (52400)

Topic/Discussion 6 p.m.

Rosa May Catching Annex Bldg.

12045 15th (on corner of Hwy 6 and Ave K)

Guest Speaker on 5th week of a month

Contact: Linda 409-457-9517, Laura 281-507-4968/409-925-8353

WEDNESDAY

Clear Lake (13244)

Literature (Big Book/12&12), 10 am

Clear Lake United Methodist Church

16335 El Camino Real Rm. 311

Contact: Kay 281-557-3881

THURSDAY

Webster (30093)

6:30 p.m. Up the Street Club

508 W. NASA Parkway, RM 2 Discussion Meeting

Contact: Chuck B. 281-770-7539

SATURDAY

Clear Lake (12635)

For Today/Discussion, 10:30 am

House of Prayer Lutheran

14045 Space Center Blvd.

Contact: Marcia 281-488-7684