

Serenity Times

Feb. 2016
www.oagalveston.org

A Publication of the Galveston/Bay Area Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous
WSO 9342 Region III

Mark Your Calendar

April 8-10, 2016 Irving, Texas:

Dallas Metroplex Intergroup,
"Practicing the Principles in All Our Affairs"
spring convention; Westin Dallas Fort Worth
Airport, 4545 W. John Carpenter Freeway;
Maureen E. 214-826-5335

Friday, April 15 -Sunday, April 17, 2016

Spring 2016 OA Region III Convention and
Assembly

Abilene, Texas at the Hilton Garden Inn
<http://www.oaregion3.org/spring16/>

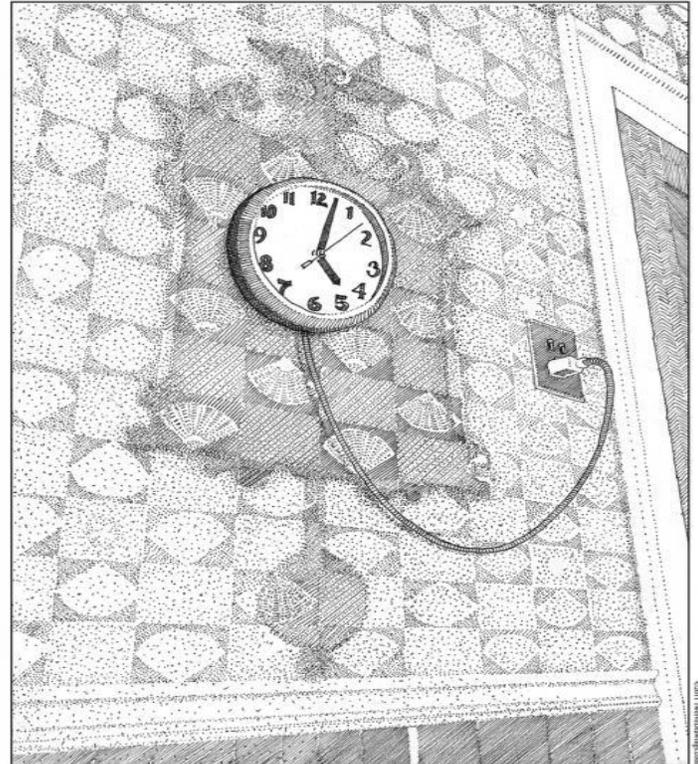
Promise Two

This year Serenity Times is featuring monthly articles focusing on The Promises of 12 step recovery. The articles are taken from a website called *Twelve Drawings* at <http://www.twelvedrawings.com/>

The article illustrator/illustrator is an anonymous contributor who generously shares their insights and gives an explanation of the inspiration for their images and corresponding text, based on their personal recovery.

We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it

I enjoyed creating this drawing, but I find myself having very little to say about it. My image of a new clock hanging where a grand old clock resided for many years illustrates the rather unremarkable definition of the word "past". A silhouette that has aged itself into wallpaper is a sight I have seen sometimes in the homes of elders who were in no hurry to part with the past. My own impulse is to apply a coat of fresh paint, but wiser souls preserve these reminders of memories that now dance only in their hearts. I have always had a strong respect for the past, but my recollection of it is often tinged with some regret. As I write this, my thoughts are taking an unexpected turn. If you will indulge a temporary change of subject here, I will share some healing thoughts about the word "regret". The phrase "shame, guilt and remorse" appears repeatedly in Twelve Step literature. I personally sum up these three feelings with the word "regret". Addicts do struggle with various forms of regret triggered by their own lying, cheating, and stealing.



Promise 2 - We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.
Past n. A former time or state. - WEBSTERS 1934

Sober people assume that MORE regret is needed—that if the addict would just feel MORE sorry then their behavior would quickly correct itself. It came as a surprise to me that I could not get sober until I rid myself of toxic regrets. Put another way, I should surrender all of my disturbed FEELINGS of regret to my Higher Power and focus my actions on correcting the root causes of those regrets.

Since the Big Book clumps the words "shame, guilt, and remorse" together, I assumed that they all meant roughly the same thing. Then I looked up those three words. Their meanings were surprisingly different. Working from memory, I believe the differences were these:

Guilt - Wrongs which violate a civil law (i.e., stealing)

Shame - Wrongs which violate socially accepted behavior, but do not break a law. (i.e., being rude)

Remorse - Wrongs which are socially acceptable and legal, but violate a personal value (i.e., buying something you did not really want or need)

The three words mean three different things. Their definitions helped me see a painful mistake I was making. I often feeling "guilty" about everything I did wrong. Feeling GUILTY about everything I do is dishonest. True guilt should be reserved for violations of the law—for actual crimes I may commit. If I am merely rude to a friend, but do not break the law, then what I feel is actually SHAME. Ordering a fattening dessert is perfectly legal and socially acceptable—it hurts no one but me and so my emotion would be called REMORSE.

I can almost see a reader rolling their eyes. *What difference do these labels make?*

(continued on pg 2)

The Big Book says that all alcoholics suffer "a lack of proportion". That means that big things seem small, and small things seem big (i.e., driving while intoxicated seems small, but spilling a drink seems big). To make progress in recovery, my blindness to proportions eventually had to be replaced with an ability to see the true proportion of things. To the non-addict, this may sound like a simple feat but for alcoholics and addicts, it requires Divine assistance.

What does this have to do with the Second Promise? I'm getting to that. As part of the Twelve Steps, I inventoried things in my past that I regret. As part of that inventory, I had to carefully consider the true proportion of the things I regretted. Finally and most importantly, I had to consider whether I had truly HARMED that person—damaging them in some real way. I always used prayer and a good sponsor to do that part. If I did not harm the person, then it is incorrect to say I feel GUILTY. Sure, I can still feel SHAME or REMORSE, but I never need to feel GUILTY about that again. My old habit of blowing my regrets wildly out of proportion created unnecessary pain and increased my craving for painkilling addiction.

As I went through the Steps, I did sense my unbearable feelings about the past slowly dissolving. I could more easily see who I had harmed without exaggerating it. I never realized that exaggerating a wrong is as dishonest as ignoring it. I soon learned that facts were my friends in recovery. I no longer feared the honest facts about anything coming to light. I knew how to see each fact into its correct proportion and—IF I actually harmed someone—to channel my guilty feelings towards making amends for that harm. Sounds so easy; yet it nearly killed me trying to learn that simple lesson.

For me, the Second Promise came true when I no longer feared running into old acquaintances. If I was GUILTY of harming them, I knew I owed them an amends and I would promptly make it. If I felt ASHAMED for something I had done to them, I would deeply apologize. But sometimes (and this part is amazing) I could see I had not harmed them at all. Whatever lingering and harmless REMORSE I felt was something private between me and my Higher Power. No further action was required. I no longer shut the door on the past. If someone asks me, "Weren't you the guy who screwed up that day?" I no longer feel irrational guilt. I think about it for a moment, decide what the honest answer is, and give it. In my case, I didn't need MORE regret to get better. I needed my regrets to be in true proportion to whatever I had or had not done wrong. That way, I no longer have to shut any door (or use any form of painkilling) to avoid painful regrets.

Like my drawing of the clock on faded wallpaper, our memories linger for a long time. New ideas, attitudes, and beliefs can take their place but the past remains. When I see people shuffling in and out of a Twelve Step meeting at a local church or rehab center, I feel a lot of respect for them. They are on a long journey to recover some simple truths that everyone else takes for granted. With the help of the Twelve Steps, a sponsor, and a Higher Power, we can make that journey in light of—not despite of—our past.

TRIVIA: How many people use the word "guilt" in the exact way I described above? Not many. Who hasn't sometimes said things like: • "I feel so guilty for ordering dessert" • "Watching TV is my guilty pleasure." • "I feel guilty about not spending more time with my kids" • "You should feel guilty about living so well when so many people in the world are suffering." I have said all of those things. I knew what I meant, and I'm sure you know too. But people in recovery are on a 24-hour watch to prevent what we affectionately call "stinkin' thinkin'". That happens when I lose my inner sense of proportion and straight thinking. It's more than a slip of the tongue or a poor choice of words; it is a slip into addictive thinking. All hell can break loose if we don't quickly realize it is happening.

I see strong evidence that Bill W., the writer of the AA Big Book, carefully chose his words to prevent "stinkin' thinkin'" among his readers. I try to follow his example by using correct words to the best of my abilities. So, I try not to use the word "guilty" unless I am referring to legal matters. It is never accurate to say, "I am breaking the law by eating this dessert" because that is simply not true. Instead, I say exactly what I mean: "I am going to REGRET ordering dessert when I step on the scales tomorrow." Guilty as charged.

anonymous www.twelvedrawings.com



Telephone Events

Virtual 12 step workshop. 2nd Sun. of the month 3-4 CDT
Dial 1-424-203-8405, enter access code 925619#
Or it is available in edited version 2 weeks later at
<http://www.aa.org/oapodcasts/#workshops>
For more info: Stephanie D. 1-727-641-3437

Serenity Times Publication of the Galveston Bay Area Intergroup Meeting List 2015

MONDAY

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

New! Galveston
Literature/Discussion 11AM
Rosenberg Library -Randall Rm
2310 Sealy Ave
Contact: Anita S (713) 540-5355

Santa Fe (52400)

Topic/Discussion 4:30 PM
Rosa May Catching Annex Bldg.
12045 15th (on corner of Hwy 6 and Ave K)
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

Galveston
Westminster Presbyterian Church Annex 7:15 PM
5127 Ave U
Contact: Anita S (713) 540-5355

Webster (30093)

Big Book Meeting 6:30 PM
Up the Street Club
508 W. NASA Parkway, Rm #2
Contact: Chuck B. 281-770-7539

SATURDAY

League City
Bay Area Club 9:00 AM
2111 Webster
Contact: Claire A. 832-453-5604

Clear Lake (12635)

For Today/Discussion, 10:30 AM
House of Prayer Lutheran
14045 Space Center Blvd. Rm 210
Contact: Marcia (281) 782-5363

For Additional OA Meeting Information go to
www.oagalveston.org

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 overeating and to carry this message of recovery to those who still suffer.

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