

The Raven



The History of Overeaters Anonymous



The roots of OA sprouted in 1958 when Rozanne S., looking for a way to lose weight, attended Alcoholics Anonymous and Gamblers Anonymous meetings. At a Gamblers Anonymous (GA) meeting she attended with a compulsive gambling friend. Listening to the GA members share their experience, strength, and hope, Rozanne heard her story, but with compulsive overeating.

From her experience coming to 12 step meetings and witnessing the recovery of members in the meeting proved that that the Twelve Step and Twelve Tradition program worked. In his response to her asking if a 12 step program could help people like her, he said, “I don’t see why not.”

However, it was not until 1960 that Rozanne reached out to Jo S, a neighbor, and in time to Bernice S., and convened the first OA meeting in Los Angeles, California, January 19, 1960. According to our World Service Office (WSO), there are about 6,500 OA groups that meet each week in over 75 countries, with over 60,000 members worldwide. Each day, a compulsive overeater reaches out his or her hand to another. Together we are creating a fellowship of unity that helps thousands of compulsive eaters find new life in recovery.



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When Things Get Quiet

I have been in program for one year, five months, 1 day and 11 hours. During this time I have experienced exuberant joy and utter terror, crippling fear, and soaring hope, focused determination and then baffling confusion. Sometimes in the same day! I have been stunned by paradigm shifts that have wiped away years of oppressive thought patterns and defeating behaviors. I have sometimes worked very hard and at other times have been given unbelievable gifts through no effort of my own. There has been much transformation and much recovery, physical, emotional and spiritual. If I had to capture this period of time in a few words I would choose “productively tumultuous.” That is what it was, but what it is now is...quiet.

After such an amazing first ride this quiet is unsettling. “What is going on? Or worse...not going on? Am I no longer experiencing recovery? Is this what relapse looks like? Is this what it looks like on the other side of abstinence? Should I be working harder?” I struggled with thoughts that I needed to do something to pump up my seemingly deflated recovery. Perhaps I should make a plan? Set some goals? Create a to do list?

This week I was in a topic meeting where reading and shares were centered around the concept of spiritual growth. One of the readings from For Today caught my attention and addressed my questions.

“Moving ahead requires only awareness and willingness. Nothing complex. No figuring out, no master plan, only a desire to change. Growth begins with the

acceptance of myself as I am.” (For Today, February 10, page 41)

Such a refreshing and simple passage. I am not in charge of my recovery. My Higher Power is. This is not my ship to steer. My part is simply acceptance and willingness and desire. I can relax and know that IF I am in fit spiritual condition, I am exactly where I need to be. If I am willing to move ahead in my recovery, I am exactly where I need to be. If I have a desire to change, I am exactly where I need to be. If I am accepting myself just as I am, I am exactly where I need to be.

I am grateful for the tumult. I am grateful for the quiet. All my recovery experiences are just as they should be.

- Charity



“I am not in charge of my recovery. My Higher Power is. This is not my ship to steer. My part is simply acceptance and willingness and desire.”

The Web of Recovery

I am so grateful for my recovery. I am so grateful for the Overeaters Anonymous 12 step program. I think about the thread from my recovery to the very beginning of the program. I think about Dr. Silkworth, working on drunks, realizing the problem, but not knowing the answer. He saw Bill W. twice before Ebby Thatcher spoke with Bill. The thread weaves into a web to include Dr. Jung, who knew the answer, but did not understand the problem, who sees Roland Hazard and tells him the answer, the psychic or spiritual change that must occur in the alcoholic to remove the obsession. Roland prevents Ebby from being committed to an asylum and gives him the program of action outlined by the Oxford Group, for whom he was a member.

I always tear up for three stories of how the thread eventually reached me. The first is Ebby's talk with Bill in Bill's kitchen. Lois is at work, Bill is drunk. Bill has been told by Dr. Silkworth that he is hopeless, that he will need to be locked up and will die from alcoholism. Ebby brings Bill the answer and the program of recovery. Bill was aghast, but he listened, he had to, he was hopeless, and Ebby was in recovery. He wanted what Ebby had. Ebby sold him on an idea. Bill is able to synthesize the problem explained to him by Dr. Silkworth with the answer from Dr. Jung with the program of action from the Oxford Group and come up (in time) with another 12 step program. He begins to use what was given to him and he begins to recover.

The thread connecting us together continued to spin. The second story is when Bill, who travelled to Akron, OH for a business trip, but it failed. So, Bill walks through the lobby of the Mayflower Hotel, and he hears the sounds coming from the bar. He considers going into the

bar. He is only about 10 to 12 steps away from drinking. Instead, he reaches out to someone who connects him with Dr. Bob. Dr. Bob is coming off a drunk and is willing to give Bill about 10 minutes of his time. They talked for hours. That 12 step program was born and the thread was thrown and eventually it came to Rozanne.

The thread continued, creating a web of recovery for countless people. Then one day in 1958 while Rozanne was attending another 12 step program asked her friend if he thought the 12 steps could help people like us. He replied, "I don't see why not." Two years later, in 1960, the year I was born, Rozanne founded the program. Then, Twenty-six years later the program found me. A man named Art sold me on the idea that there was a way out. He convinced me to attend my first OA meeting. The thread that started eighty-four years ago was cast and I was caught. I became a part of the web of recovery.

I think about all the members I have known in the program and sitting around the tables or in a circle. It is truly a wonderful fellowship, and our focus is to carry the message of recovery so that others can achieve recovery. I think about all the fellow OAers who have been a part of my recovery and I theirs. However, I also know, the thread that connects my recovery with Bill, Dr. Bob, Rozanne, and members from my past: Art, Marty, Tom, Jerry, Jeanne, Nickie, Lucy, and others and all the members from the present, too many to name, could have been broken at any point in time.

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"The thread that started eighty-four years ago was cast and I was caught. I became a part of the web of recovery."

The Web of Recovery (Continued)

However, instead, these people played a role in my recovery because they shared their recovery, it was passed on to me. The thread that connects us today in recovery is as tenuous as the thread that binds my recovery to Bill. That thread depends upon our recoveries and how we pass it on. The thread started so many years ago has made connections, one member reaching out

to another, sharing their recovery, creating a beautiful web of recovery. For that, I am truly grateful.

- Randy



The Essentials to Recovery

Recently, I confronted life. Actually, I challenge life a great deal. I am human. Granted, as I practice this way of life, the less I seem to desire deviating from the path. However, life happens and I find myself reacting instead of acting on life. Life and people that I encounter just don't seem to want the same as I had want. Again, I am grateful that I suffer from this rash of self less today than when the program found me. It isn't easy growing up and letting go of those things within my self that cause my separation from God. That is all this program is all about, at least for me: admitting that I am powerless, change my whole entire life by asking God to remove every defect, every hindrance, every barrier, that stands between me and God, and then cleaning up the past, trust in God, and share this way of life with everyone I meet by practicing it.

However, in this particular experience, when I confronted life, the voice of my first sponsor rang in my mind, "You have choices." However, my illness is deadly. It does not care about my choices. With my illness, if left unchecked, the choice made will have been determined by the disease. The choice is always to eat compulsively. It decides that I will close the curtains, order my binge foods, turn on the TV, turn off the lights, unplug or silence the phone, and eat. It becomes my God and master, and I eat alone, in isolation, in the dark, and seeing life through a small screen where I witness a make believe world. The

disease will turn me into a monster that no one wants to be around, cutting people down with my caustic tongue, or my ability to assassinate their character behind their back. It decides what type of life I lead, or am led. It rips away friendships, family, and everything dear to me. It closes the doors in my life.

What do I mean by leaving my illness "unchecked"? Well, for me leaving my illness unchecked means not practicing this program and not trusting God. God is my source, not my sponsor or the fellowship. What God do I pray and meditate? Is it the God of my understanding? Or is it food or self? Once I have a God that can remove the obsession, with me staying abstinent, then and only then can I practice steps 2 through 12. If I am eating compulsively then either I am trying to control my eating and cannot admit I am powerless or God isn't working for me. If it is the God of my understanding, then I was told to fire the SOB and get a new one that can remove the obsession. With the God of my understanding removing the obsession, the choice becomes clear and so does the path; it is revealed.

"If I am eating compulsively then either I am trying to control my eating and cannot admit I am powerless or God isn't working for me. "

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The Essentials to Recovery (Continued)

So, there is really only one choice, live by spiritual principles or die. I must provide the willingness; it is all that I truly supply. Willingness is the foundation for my recovery, it is one of the essentials of my recovery. If I have not the willingness to admit that I am powerless over food—that my life has become unmanageable, then I cannot proceed with the rest of the program. I will not be willing to seek a higher power because food would become my higher power. Not only must I seek my Higher Power, I must be willing to trust and surrender to my Higher Power and follow my Higher Power's Will for me. Thereby becoming anonymous. I lose self and become one with God, and I am at peace with all that exists. No longer must I be better or worse than anyone else.

My willingness to practice the principles of the program, to walk the 12 steps, to trust and have faith in God determines my recovery. To what degree do I practice this way of life? Well, it is never enough, not enough to show the level of gratitude I have for the program and my recovery. If I want the spiritual, emotional, and physical (yes, I want it too) recovery then I must be willing to practice it. It doesn't come by osmosis, not for me. And I want it ALL! I want everything this program can give me. I can't and won't settle for half measures and live with some or a little of the promises. I want it all. Simple, but not easy, a price must be paid, I have to be willing to be abstinent, trust God, and practice this way of life.

Another essential of my recovery is open-mindedness. I came to OA thinking that I knew it all. I was just fat and wanted to be thin and thought that maybe you could help me with a better diet. Today, I know that I know nothing to what I thought I knew when I came to Overeater Anonymous. As I have heard around the tables, my best thinking is what got me here. I have to be willing to listen to other ideas and ways of thinking and believing. Still today, I connect with my

Higher Power so that I can be inspired and given strength and the direction in my life.

As I open my mind to new ways of thinking, my Higher Power reveals the direction, my Higher Power's Will for me. Then I must ask, because sometimes I still struggle and resist, for the strength to let go and let God, to live God's Will. By staying open minded, God leads me. And my understanding of God changes as God reveals God-Self to me. I must be open minded to listen to how I must change, let go of my self. I learned many moons ago that God speaks through people and through life. I must be open to the symphony. God is always revealing, but am I listening with an open heart and mind? That is the question I must ask myself.

“God speaks through people and through life. I must be open to the symphony. God is always revealing, but am I listening with an open heart and mind?”

Honesty is another essential of my recovery. My Higher Power is communicating with me, revealing my direction, providing my strength, blessing me with the promises, and removing my character defects. However, I must provide the honesty. As I have grown older, I have had to eat smaller amounts of food to survive. I accepted the truth, and I practice honesty by eating smaller portions. That is how it works for me. After listening to God, can I see the truth and practice honesty? My Higher Power reveals my resistance and struggle with accepting my Higher Power's Will for me. I must be willing to be honest, look within and search my heart, and discover the defects that prevent my ability to let go and surrender.

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The Essentials to Recovery (Continued)

Practicing honesty removes the chatter in my mind, trying to think of who I think you want me to be, or the beating my self up for not living up to my expectations of myself. Plus, I don't have to "fake it til I make it" or 'act as if' or pretend to be someone I am not or be afraid of what you think of me. I am not the doer; I am the enjoyer. I can relax and take it easy. Honesty, melts the shield of protection, my defense against the harms I once allowed to hurt me. I can be real with God and you. I don't have to be afraid of you and hide behind a self-made boundary. The truth frees me. It frees me of my self. If I am honest with my self and my Higher Power, then I can be honest with you. My recovery hinges on whether or not I am honest with my self.

I am grateful today knowing that only the

program can be perfect, I am not perfect. I am just another compulsive overeater just like the rest in the fellowship with a desire to stay abstinent. My job each day is just to practice this way of life, to the best of my ability, one day at a time. I certainly don't practice it perfectly, but I truly continue placing one foot of another, looking for perfection, knowing that I never will be perfect. And that is okay with me. It does not stop me from wanting all this program can offer me. I am still selfish in that respect. Today, I enjoy experiencing the promises as I trudge this never-ending journey in recovery from compulsive overeating. I am grateful to be a compulsive overeater, it is changing how I live life, one day at a time.

- Anonymous

"I certainly don't practice it perfectly, but I truly continue placing one foot of another, looking for perfection, knowing that I never will be perfect."

I Rise

I rise above my problem, only when I am willing to stop directing life and people, then I am lifted by my Higher Power. Recovery begins after I surrender, giving up the façade of control. I have a choice. I can either to accept spiritual help or continue the downward spiral to hell and eventual death. According to the AA 12 and 12, I have to "conform to the spiritual principles of recovery." In fact, my "life actually depends upon obedience to spiritual principles." Further, the program reminds me that I am only one compulsive bite away from a binge and that self-knowledge and will-power will not keep me from eating compulsively.

Unless I am spiritually fit, there will always be those "mental blank spots" when the thought of eating compulsively will sound sane. At that moment, I cannot differentiate between the false and the truth, I am beyond human aide, and only be given strength and direction from a higher power. So, I must adhere to spiritual principles or if I "deviate too far" from these spiritual principles I will "sicken and die."

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I Rise (Continued)

One of the principles that I must practice is “to keep it, I must give it away.” My first sponsor told me, “freely given, freely give.” As I practice this way of life, I must share it with others, to sell someone on the message, there is a way out of compulsive overeating, it is the 12 Steps of Overeaters Anonymous and trust in a Higher Power. Sharing my recovery reminds me of where I once existed and the life I lived before the program. It allows me a chance to examine what others and God has revealed to me. I am able to reaffirm the truths in my understanding. If I am open-minded, others can share their lives, I can hear God speak through them, and have an opportunity to identify with their share and see myself and, if I am honest, be able to ask God to remove flaws in my thinking.

Live and let live is a principle which must guide my recovery. Recently, someone shared her experience at a party with me. Even though she spoke of the particulars; she didn't like some people, the food was bad, and the discussion was only small talk, I could see the principles, fear, anger, resentment, and wanting to isolate. As she shared, I saw myself in her. I saw how I do the same thing, maybe at a lesser degree, but it is still there. Instead of telling her what she should have done or even to try to fix her, I shared my experience. I shared the principles of the program. Later, I examined myself. Where was I still like the woman? I have enough to deal with looking at me and how I live life than to focus on the lives of others. I must realize how these defects are still with

me, but I can continue allowing God reveal them to me and ask for them to be removed. Today, I want to be free of my defects of character.

I have found a way of life that has solved all my problems. It is as if God lifts me out of the hell I created, the problems that I have made, rising above them and the pain they cause, and God sets me on a path that is so much more freeing and serene as I practice it. It is a way of life that today, I want to live. It is satisfying. I have been given peace of mind, serenity, joy, and happiness. Instead of defining these promises, I allow God to define them for me. I don't seek them, I seek God, and God defines and provides these promises. They naturally come as a result of my trudging the road.

And as I walk this path, the road narrows: God is asking more of me. God reveals my flaws, even those defects that I practice at a lesser degree than I once did. Resistance to life and people only means that more is being asked of me, more is being revealed to me, and more God is reminding me that must I change and give up. The path narrows. God is reminding me to do my job. My job is to give up, trust in God, examine myself, ask God to remove my flaws, clean-up my past, surrender, share what has been shared with me, and live one day at a time. And as I give up and let go, I rise. I am so grateful for this way of life, it is changing the way I live life, one day at a time.

- Anonymous

“Resistance to life and people only means that more is being asked of me, more is being revealed to me, and more God is reminding me that must I change and give up. The path narrows.”

Nothing to Fear

At my very first meeting, I realized I was home. The members shared their stories, what they were like when they ate compulsively. I was just like them and could identify with them. I had always wanted to fit in with others, but felt that I was the square peg trying to fit into a round hole. There were times I felt, that I was living in a bizarre world. Nothing seemed to make sense to me. It was as if I had been beamed down to this world of strangers, and I did not fit or understand why I was so different. But here was a group of people who felt about food and did what I did with food.

I always felt that there was some knowledge that I missed in school or somewhere in life. I felt that was the reason that I couldn't fit in with other. I sought an answer to life, for I simply did not know how to live it. I recall reading wordy etiquette books as a youth hoping to learn how to live. Later, I sought an answer in heroes. While they helped me understand some things about life, they failed to supply me with a solution to the problems I experienced. Besides, they had not no program of action in the message they departed. Also, I was to learn, that my problem was deeper than simply not knowing how to live life. I have discovered that not knowing how to fit in was simply a part of the life of a compulsive overeater.

I learned in the program that I have a void within myself that I tried to fill with food. All my life I had wanted to fill the void within myself, which I have discovered that it was a spiritual void. I lacked a God of my understanding. So, since my sponsor opened the spiritual door by telling me that I could come up with my own God, I began to seek my own Higher Power. I consulted the advice authors of philosophical books, and yes they were wise, but their philosophical arguments and premises failed to fill that spiritual void. I delved into spiritual books

and the enlightened. While reading them broadened my understanding on spiritual matters, my understanding did not fill my spiritual void. I have learned that God does not exist in the philosophical and spiritual books or spiritual leaders. God speaks through books, people, but also in all in life. God exists in the moment. I sought and still seek God, but God is here, now.

Recently, my understanding of God's presence is in the moment deepened. A bat had found its way into my house. I freaked out. I tried to capture it, but lost it. Tired and sleepy, I fell into bed. I covered myself with a blanket even though it was a warm evening. With only an eye exposed, I searched the room for a bat sighting, but it was not revealing itself. I thought to myself, "How can I sleep with it in my house? I was frightened that at any moment it would fly to me. I realized that at that moment I was powerless and I could not control the bat. And then it hit me, God spoke to me. I cannot control the bat, but more significantly, I cannot control the next moment. I cannot control anything. I cannot prevent something bad from happening nor make something good from happen either. But in this moment, God is with me, and I don't have to fear the next moment. What comes will come, but I don't need to live in fear.

"I cannot control the next moment. I cannot control anything. I cannot prevent something bad from happening nor make something good from happen either."

I don't want to cheat myself of all this program has to offer me. In that moment that I realized that I wanted to live boldly, to live deliberately, and accept my fate. Come what may come, that God is with me in this

Nothing to Fear (Continued)

moment, and I have nothing to fear. I want to trudge this road, free of fear of the future, facing life, walking through what God has to present me. Each moment is an opportunity to change, to make a choice from the options presented me. What is there to fear? My choice has no moral attachment. My choice is neither good nor bad, it is simply a choice. I can be free from living in indecision and free from thinking that I control outcomes from a choice. I need to let go of thinking that I know what is good and what is bad. I don't need to fear making a choice.

“Come what may come, God is with me in this moment, and I have nothing to fear. I want to trudge this road, free of fear of the future, facing life, walking through what God has to present me. Each moment is an opportunity to change, to make a choice from the options presented me.”

I do not truly know if a choice will be bad or good. There is a story of a farmer and his horse that reminds me that I cannot fear making a choice because I believe it will result in a good or bad outcome.

One day his horse runs away. His neighbors visit him. Realizing his loss, they tell him, “We are so sorry about your horse running away. That is too bad.” The farmer says, “Maybe, who knows what is good or bad?”

The next day, the horse comes back and he brings with him 12 feral horses. The neighbors come back over to celebrate and say, “Congratulations on your great fortune!” And the farmer replies again, “Maybe, who knows what is good or bad?”

While the farmer's son is taming one of the

wild horses and he's thrown and breaks his leg. The neighbors come back over saying, “We are so sorry about your son.” The farmer repeats, “Maybe, who knows what is good or bad?”

A war breaks out and the army comes through their village and is conscripting able-bodied young men to go and fight in war, but the son is spared because of his broken leg.

I make a choice and let go of the consequences. Based upon experiences of making similar choices, I recognize similar outcomes. If I am aware and mindful, then I may notice that a choice I made was beneficial or not. Did it benefit my recovery or not? Was the outcome of my choice harmful to others? It is a learning experience, surely, but nothing to fear. Also, I can relax and take it easy, God is in charge. Besides observing the consequences of my choices and learning from it, I can use God's inspiration to assist me with a choice. I can use this method when I am disturbed and or face an indecision. I can choose and then let go and let God take care of life.

Was the bat entering my house a good or bad thing? I do not know. It helped me realize that I cannot fear the future. A bat might enter my house, a something else may happen, no kidding, that is life. Something is always going to happen. God is with me; I don't have to live in fear. Nor must I fear the future or regret the past. I can live in the moment, that is where God exists. God does not exist in the past or future, nor does God exist in books. God is here and now. To be spiritual means only being real, honest, and open to change, to be free of self, and to live in the presence of a Power Greater than my self. I am so grateful for the OA program.

- Anonymous

Alaska Intergroup Schedule

<u>DAY</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>TYPE</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
Wed	6pm	Alano Club, Snohomish & Wasilla Fishhook	Topic	Charity 357-7123
Thurs	6pm	St. Michael's Parish, (At the office building, in the Knights of Columbus Rm.), 432 E. Fireweed, Palmer	OA and AA 12 and 12	Randy 745-7485
Sat	9:30am	Alano Club, Snohomish & Wasilla Fishhook	Big Book Study	Jody 376-3593
Sun	6pm	St. Michael's Parish, (At the office building, in the Knights of Columbus Rm.), 432 E. Fireweed, Palmer	MP3 Speak- er/Topic	Randy 745-7485

Serenity Prayer

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the
difference.