

# The Raven



## Definitions



Allergy, according to the dictionary, a damaging immune response by the body to a substance, especially pollen, fur, a particular food, or dust, to which it has become hypersensitive.

Obsession—an idea or thought that continually preoccupies or intrudes on a person's mind.

Abstinence, according to the dictionary—the practice of not doing or having something that is wanted or enjoyable.

Abstinence, according to OA, “Abstinence in Overeaters Anonymous is the action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight.”

Abstinence, some have defined as “guilt-free eating.”

Sanity, according to the dictionary—the ability to think and behave in a normal and rational manner; sound mental health.

Sanity—“soundness of mind.” AA 12 and 12, Step Two, p.33

Recovery, according to the dictionary—a return to a normal state of health, mind, or strength.



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## Just the Facts, According to the Big Book

The main purpose of the Big Book is to show us “precisely how [they] have recovered” from a “hopeless state of mind and body.” We have an illness. Our illness consist of a mental obsession and a physical allergy. Our mind tells us it is okay to eat compulsively, and then once we eat compulsively, the compulsive eating triggers the allergy and we cannot stop. We are then doomed to a life of hell.

We like to eat because we “like the effect produced by eating compulsively. We eat compulsively even when we know that “it is injurious.” Once we begin, we “cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false.” Our compulsive overeating “life seems the only normal one.” We are “restless, irritable and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few” compulsive bites.

After we have “succumbed” to the obsession, the craving develops. We cannot control it, we are powerless over it. Automatically, we go through the cycle of a binge. After we “come to”, we are remorseful, promising ourselves that we won’t do that again, but we do. This pattern will be repeated until we have a spiritual awaking or experience. We cannot do anything about the physical craving, this program addresses only the mental obsession.

Diets, shots, doctors, weigh-loss clubs, treatment programs, psychologists, and family and friends with their “Frothy emotional appeal seldom suffices.” We need another compulsive eater to share their story, what it was like, what happened, and what we are like now, so we can identify as a compulsive eater, so we can hear the message of recovery. We need a Higher Power, so that we can “re-create [our] lives.” We need the program

of action, to be changed, to have a spiritual experience or awakening.

According to the Big Book, we “ought to be freed from [our] physical craving for more food... before psychological measures can be of maximum benefit.” We must be freed of the craving before taking the steps. We aren’t necessarily freed from the obsession in the beginning, but we must be abstaining before taking the steps. “These allergic types can never safely [compulsively eat] at all. Once we eat compulsively “and found they cannot break it, once having lost their self-confidence, their reliance upon things human, their problems pile up on them and become astonishingly difficult to solve.” If we eat, we trigger the allergy; our lives become unmanageable. It happens automatically.

He does absurd, incredible, tragic things while drinking [eating compulsively]. He is a real Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. He is seldom mildly intoxicated. He is always more or less insanely drunk. His disposition while drinking [eating compulsively] resembles his normal nature but little. He may be one of the finest fellows in the world. Yet let him drink [eating compulsively] for a day, and he frequently becomes disgustingly, and even dangerously anti-social. He has a positive genius for getting tight at exactly the wrong moment, particularly when some important decision must be made or engagement kept. (21)

However, there is a solution. Once we become abstinent and begin applying the steps to the way we live life, the process of the 12 Steps changes us. “Spiritual, emotional and physical recovery is

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*“We need another compulsive eater to share their story, what it was like, what happened, and what we are like now, so we can identify as a compulsive eater, so we can hear the message of recovery. ”*

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## Just the Facts, According to the Big Book (Continued)

the result of living the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve-Step program.” If we are painstaking about our recovery, and we are willing to let go of old ideas, motives, and emotions, and follow a path that leads to our spiritual experience or awakening, then the obsession is removed. “The very same person who seemed doomed, who had so many problems he despaired of ever solving them, suddenly finds himself” or herself freed from the obsession. Once freed of the obsession, that person becomes sane when it comes to eating compulsively. The problem has been taken from us. The only requirement is that we must be willing to have our whole life changed, live the 12 Steps, and share what was passed onto us.

[W]e have had deep and effective spiritual experiences which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward

life, toward our fellows and toward God’s universe. The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous. He has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves. (25)

Freed from our obsession and the bondage of self, each day is a day when we must carry the message of recovery into life; to those around us. Today, if we are in recovery, we live in the spirit of the universe and we will be “rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence of which we had not even dreamed.” We are only in recovery because of the grace of God.

- Anonymous

## An Abstinence That Grows When I Do

When I first joined OA, I was told that my personal observation of abstinence would change as my time went on in recovery. This baffled me. Change? Why would abstinence change? I was either abstinent or I wasn’t.

Now I understand more clearly what was meant. It only makes sense that as I grow and change, that as my understanding of recovery deepens, that as I work the steps and become spiritually fit, that my definition of and practice of abstinence would likewise change. When one part of the equation changes, the solution changes as well. And my abstinence, has indeed, evolved along with me. The primary change these last few months has been the breath of focus.

When I first started this journey, my abstinence was entirely about the food. I would eat only what my Higher Power told me to eat. I would eat when my Higher Power told me to eat. I would stop eating when my Higher Power told me to stop eating. Straight-forward. I was told to create an abstinence I could live with. Bearing

responsibility to manage my compulsion was destroying my mental well-being. An abstinence that freed me from that was such a gift. I immediately began to feel freer. The relief was palpable. This was no longer my problem to solve.

However, after working the steps it became clear that the problem was not solely food. There were a host of other issues that were causing me distress as well. In my disease I had not only assumed that it was my responsibility to manage food, but I also believed it was my responsibility to run the universe, manage other people’s emotions and well-being, insure that holidays were a Disneyesque extravaganza, to read rooms and alter their energies, to determine the safety of each situation and arrange for the best possible outcome, to stop conflict as soon as it began and much, much more. No wonder I was exhausted, stressed and depressed!

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## An Abstinence That Grows When I Do (Continued)

My Higher Power began to up the abstinence bar. The definition was renegotiated. I was now being asked to not only be abstinent with food but to approach life and relationships with the same utter dependence on HP that I had learned to do with my daily nutrition. Instead of managing life, people, places and things, abstinence would now mean that Higher Power managed these things for me, just as He does with food. My job would be solely to ask Him, every day, for the ability to discern His will and the power to carry it out. When I faced an angry person, a fearful situation, a tense room, a birthday celebration, a hurting offspring I was to ask my Higher Power if I had an role to play and if so to enable me to do my part in a way that was of the greatest possible service to others. But abstinence required that I no longer

insert myself into situations and that my emotions were no longer attached to people, places and things but to our relationship alone.

This is a far more challenging abstinence than simply putting down a sandwich when Higher Power points out that I am no longer hungry. I understand now why abstinence evolves. I could not have abstained from managing life, people, places and things until this point in my program. Now that I know more, more is required of me. That is the nature of growth. What reassures me when facing such a seemingly difficult challenge, is that my ability to be abstinent is not dependent on me. My Higher Power will not require what He does not enable. I am at peace with my abstinence.

- Charity

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## Spirit is Awakened

Today, because of abstinence, the Power of God, and the process of living the steps and traditions, I am changed. God provides me with everything I need as long as I stay close to God and perform God’s Will. It is true; I lose interest in myself and my little plans and designs. My life does have meaning and purpose when once it did not. I do feel a new power flow in, just as the Big Book promises me. Since God is in charge, I can only succeed. I feel the presence of God. As a result, I have peace of mind. As I practice this way of life, I lose my fear of today, tomorrow, and forever. My past does not haunt me, nor do I regret it. As the Big Book says, I have been reborn. I am not the same person who

walked into my first meeting.

For today, and I don’t do it perfectly, I place my will and life, my thinking and actions, in the hands of God. Constantly, I am reminded that of myself, I am nothing; that God is in charge and is my source and that I must abandon myself utterly to God. My job is to take action, to follow and practice, to the best of my ability, the remaining steps. God does with me as God wants; as it is stated in the 3rd Step Prayer. God provides life. I am simply the actor in the play designed by God. I am to live, as God wants me to live. As God removes from me those things that block me from God, God reveals more changes for me. God

## Spirit is Awakened (Continued)

provides further insight in the ways that I still block God off from me. He relieves me of the bondage of self, so that I can better serve God and others. God takes away my difficulties, my defects of character, my self-induced pain, my self, so that I can show how God can and will take them away. Any victory is God's. I bear witness to what God can do. I bear witness to how and whom I can help by God's Power, Love, and Way of Life. God provides my path to follow.

Thank goodness that the Big Book provides a method to inventory myself. I inventory myself, searching for those flaws that prevented a close contact with God. Again, I suffer a spiritual malady. There is more action to take, Step 5. I share my faults to another and God. I hide nothing. Where can I hide? I always take me wherever I go. Next, I observe myself as I walk this path. When do I become restless, irritable, or discontented? Am I trying to play God again? Am I trying to direct the play again? Have I stepped on the toes of my fellows? What instinct is threatened or what trait has overextended itself. Have I become upset or resentful? Where am I afraid, dishonest, selfish, self-seeking, or inconsiderate? The pain will cause me to reach out to God, to seek the solution. In time, I become entirely ready to God have all my defects of character. Then and only then can I humbly ask God to remove my shortcomings. Sometimes, however, I see clearly the principle, or I see someone practicing a principle, or God reveals the way, and I desire it. It is like a gold prospector finding the mother lode, and God changes me. I become willing to be changed by either great pain or great love or desire, but God does the changing, not me. I am no longer in charge.

I confirm the change, by making amends to those I have harmed. I made the list of people I harmed when I made my inventory. As the Big Book states, I started the ball rolling. I stepped on other's toes and they reacted to

me. Sometimes, however, they hurt me seemingly without provocation. Perhaps I was a child or unable to defend myself. But did I not hold onto a resentment? Was I honest with myself about it? Did I try to get back at them? Did I try to hurt them in retaliation? Did I use the club of anger on them, and in turn used it on myself? Also, I must remember the inventory is mine, not the other person's. By this time, I can forgive them. I see them as sick people. It is not my job to determine their fate, their path, or the reason for what happened.

I make amends, I don't simply mumble I am sorry. This is an attempt for me to mend a fence, to correct my relationship with this person, principle, or institution. I am demonstrating the Power of God. It is a time to attempt to repair the damage of my past. By attempting to clean up the past, it confirms that I have been reborn, that I have been changed by God. I go to them with a forgiving, loving, and respectful heart. I never talk about what they did; instead, I share my faults. I share, not always with words, but more by my behavior, how God has changed me. My restitution may include paying back money. Once I begin, I am amazed at the results. I will receive the 9th step promises.

Each day, each moment, I must seek God. I must look for ways that I allow the clambers of the world to divert my attention from God, ways that I defy God, ways that I play God, and ways that I express selfishness, self-seeking, dishonestly, fear, and when I am inconsiderate of others. I ask God to remove them from me. I am not improving myself, I am allowing God to remove self. According to the Big Book, I will cease fighting anything or anyone. By this time, the obsession will leave me. Of course, I am abstinent, for abstinence is how it must start, that was back

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## Spirit is Awakened (Continued)

in Step 1. But today, I don't even think about food, it has lost power, its power has been removed, it does not exist for me. The power of food has been replaced by the Power of God. I don't fight food or anyone. Sanity has returned. As long as I practice this way of life, as long as I seek God and do God's Will, God provides me with sanity, peace of mind, intuition, strength, direction, and serenity. God does for me what I cannot do for myself.

At night, I again review my day, I look for ways I was not expressing God. I ask God for forgiveness if I deviated from the path, and ask God to give me strength and directions to do God's Will. My thoughts turn to helping others. I look for another who may want, need, and do what I have done and whom I can share my story, demonstrating what God

has done. Today, I can see how my experiences will help another compulsive overeater. So, I must share this way of life to others, so that I can keep it. By following this way of life, I have had a spiritual awakening, my spirit has been awakened so I can receive God's Will, strength, and directions. It has been awakened so that I can express God and express this way of life to everyone in life. Simple, but not easy. I price must be paid. The price is self. It means that I give up compulsive overeating. I must seek and do God's Will. I must surrender to the Spirit of Light, to God. I am so grateful to be a compulsive overeater, it is saving my life, one day at a time.

- Anonymous

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*“By following this way of life, I have had a spiritual awakening, my spirit has been awakened so I can receive God's Will, strength, and directions. It has been awakened so that I can express God and express this way of life to everyone in life.”*

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## Abstinence: A Ticket to the Way Out

An OA member sold me on the idea that there was a way out of my misery. So, I came to OA. I learned, much to my dismay, that the OA program is spiritual. There was not a portion or part of the program that is spiritual, it IS a spiritual program. I did not like that truth when I came to the program and fellowship. But I had hit bottom, and the pain of compulsive overeating, the cycle described in the Doctor's Opinion, made me willing to believe that there was a Power greater than myself. I was desperate. So, I kept coming back.

After becoming abstinent, I soon discovered that the purpose of the Big Book is to enable me to find a Power greater than myself that will relieve me of my obsession to food. At first, I just wanted to be thinner. But I learned that I have an illness that centers in my mind, which only a spiritual experience will solve. I was to seek a God that would allow me to live life without the need to eat compulsively. In step 2, I discovered that there was a solution to my binge eating. There is a substitution to eating compulsively, God. Self-knowledge, will power, and diets will not solve my overeating.

## Abstinence: A Ticket to the Way Out (Continued)

By starting my abstinence, I could seek God. I wanted to see God with cleared eyes. How in the world would I be able to turn my will and life over to a God of my understanding if food is still my God? There would be no way for me to reach the fourth dimension of existence, as promised in the Big Book, if I were still eating compulsively. I was told that either I was practicing my illness or practicing recovery, there was no in-between. My first sponsor told me to become abstinent, seek God, and God would then restore my sanity, I would then straighten out mentally and then physically. The Big Book says that same. Once the spiritual malady is overcome, the Big Book says, I will straighten out mentally and physically, but I must be out of

the compulsive overeating and food behaviors first.

Today, abstinence means so much to me. It is more than sticking to a food plan and not using the same food behaviors from the past. It means freedom, sanity, and peace of mind. My spirituality is bound to my abstinence. I cannot have a relationship with God while overeating and I cannot remain abstinent without God. It becomes one with me. The time that I meditate and pray is part of my abstinence. Today, I am not troubled with the obsession with food. Abstinence is the ticket to the way out of the hell I once lived. Thank God for the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions.

- Anonymous

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*“My first sponsor told me to become abstinent, seek God, and God would then restore my sanity, I would then straighten out mentally and then physically.”*

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## Abstinence Is the Beginning

Before this program, I was told that I was weak-willed, stupid, immoral, and that I could stop eating if I wanted to, if I really tried. I was taken to doctors and diet clubs as a child. I was given diets (by MANY people), heavier shoes (they felt that lifting heavier shoes would cause me to lose weight), pills, shots, shakes, Aydes (chocolate diet supplement), and a variety of “dietetic” foods. I was bribed, beaten, teased, and lectured to keep me on a diet or some type of reducing program. None of it worked. I was a phenomenon. They could not help me.

I later learned in OA, that I was not stupid, weak-willed, or immoral. I am not a bad

person. I am a sick person. I have a disease. I have an illness. I could not stay on a diet or reducing program on my own power. Those people could not help me because I am beyond human aid. They could not understand me; nor could I understand why I ate. I just did. That is what I did. I did not know there was another way to live. They could not help me because they were normal eaters. Today, I know that only a compulsive overeater, by sharing his or her story, what it

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## Abstinence Is the Beginning (Continued)

was like, what happened, and what he or she is like now, can break through to another compulsive overeater. Not until the suffering compulsive overeater can identify with the horrors of another who has gone through it and now is in recovery, so that the sufferer can hit bottom, can a seed be planted and hopefully take root.

It was not until I started OA did I learn about the illness. I had an obsession of my mind. In addition, I reacted differently bodily when I ate compulsively. They said that I had twisted thinking. My obsession was very strong. I thought about eating all the time. My obsession was so strong that I could not break it. Once I ate, it caused a craving. They called it an allergy of the body. After the craving kicked in, I was lost. Katie bar the door, I turned off my lights, closed the blinds, turned on the TV, unplugged the phone, and I ate.

My life became unmanageable by me. I changed. I am not a nice compulsive overeater while eating. I become mean, egotistical, nasty, and inconsiderate. I cannot control my nature. Sometimes I would be nice, but only to get what I wanted. I could not control eating, not could I control life. They told me that that is the very definition of a compulsive overeater. I want to control everything, but I lack the power. But if I eat compulsively, I will revert back to that person, I am powerless to control it. It is the very nature of the compulsive overeater while eating.

I can now see why they said that we elect members to service positions who are abstinent. Members in relapse or those who are not in recovery, who are not abstaining, will practice the disease. A compulsive eater not in recovery is an “unlovely person.” That is what it says in the Big Book. He will be a Dr. Jekyll, Mr. Hyde. He will lead a double life, one he presents to his fellows, and one he keeps deep within himself. He will be eating

all the time. He will lie and steal. He will be restless, irritable, and discontented. He will want to control, to do things his way. He will want to be God. He will not care about the feelings, desires of others. So, forcing members to serve when they don’t want to or so they can become abstinent, just does not work. How can I be selfish (because I am eating compulsively) and unselfish (be in recovery) at the same time? I can’t. I will try to fake til I make it, act as if, and pretend.

They told me their stories. They told me what they had done. At last, I found others like me. I could identify with them. They told me how they have recovered from the hopeless condition. They said that OA is a Fellowship and a Program of Action. First, they said, I had to find abstinence. It was guilt-free eating. I could define my abstinence. I got a food sponsor and began calling her every day. They told me that I could not recover from compulsive overeating while eating compulsively. I cannot live these 12 steps, to the best of my ability, and eating compulsively. I deny myself recovery, to improve my conscious contact with a Higher Power, if I am eating compulsively. If I am eating, food is my God.

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*“I had to find abstinence. It was guilt-free eating. I could define my abstinence.”*

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Abstinence is the just a beginning, as the Big Book states. A demonstration of our principles in my everyday life and seeking God: that is my path. I lost the obsession early in my recovery. However, the Big Book states, that some of us lose our obsession by or in step 10. It is not saying that I can eat compulsively until step 10. No, the obsession, the mental twist, is removed by

## Abstinence Is the Beginning (Continued)

this time. Dr. Bob said that he couldn't shake the obsession at first. For Bill W. it was removed immediately. But by this time, for most of us, by step 10, the problem is removed, it does not exist, and we neither afraid nor are we fighting it. Of course, there is a condition for this promise; I cannot rely upon my past spiritual gains. I cannot bank the spiritual contact I had with God from yesterday or last week. Each day is a day that I must seek God and humbly align my will with God's.

Today, I am not getting better; I am getting well. I have an illness, I am not practicing the steps and seeking God to better myself. I don't have that power. **God** removes the obsession. **God** is doing for me what I cannot do for myself. **God** removes those flaws in my make-up, in my character, that blocks me from God. But, as I have been told, God is like a perfect gentleman, He does not go where He is not wanted. I have to do my part. I must surrender, surrender, and surrender to God. I have to practice, practice, and practice this way of life. I must recover, recover, and recover. Simple, but not easy. A price **MUST** be paid. It means the

destruction of my selfish, self-seeking, dishonest, frighten, and inconsiderate ways of living life; life on MY terms. And I would be unwilling to let go of self, if I were still eating compulsively.

Today, I am a successful member of Overeaters Anonymous (it is God's victory), as long as I remain abstinent. Then and only then will I be able to practice any of these principles that I hold so dear, live in recovery, and the disease can go into remission. God takes my difficulties so that "victory over them will bear witness to those I would help of thy Power, Love, and Way of Life." If I surrender to God, practice this program of action, then God can "build with me and do with me" as God wants. God will fashion me to be what God had intended me to be. Each day (sometimes each passing moment), I am reborn. May I do God's Will always. I am so grateful to be a compulsive overeater. I have a God that I can trust. God has provided me with a Way of Life, the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions, and a Fellowship with a host of fast friends. I am truly blessed. Thank you!

- Randy

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*"Today, I am not getting better; I am getting well."*

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## Voices From the Past

"What do you have to lose? We aren't asking for your money. You don't have to listen to lectures or preaching. You don't have to step on some scales. You don't have to follow a diet. All we're asking for is your fat and your misery. What do you have to lose?"

- Tom O.

"I could stop eating compulsively. I just couldn't stay stopped. That was my problem."

- Marty W.

# 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 414-8882
Thurs	6pm	In the Shields Center, at the St. Michael's Parish, 432 E. Fireweed, Palmer  (We meet at the office building, in the Knights of Columbus Rm., there is a dumpster nearby)	OA and AA 12 and 12	Randy 745-7485
Sat	9:30am	Alano Club, Snohomish & Wasilla Fishhook	Big Book Study	Sierra 354-5016
Sun	6pm	In the Shields Center, at the St. Michael's Parish, 432 E. Fireweed, Palmer  (We meet at the office building, in the Knights of Columbus Rm., there is a dumpster nearby)	MP3 Speaker/ 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.