

# The Raven



## The First Overeaters Anonymous Meeting



Recognizing the problem of compulsive overeating, Rozanne reached out to Jo S, her neighbor. In time they talked with Bernice S., who join the two and on January 19, 1960, they held the first Overeaters Anonymous meeting in Los Angeles, California, at Bernice’s house from 8 to 10 PM. According to Rozanne, in the book *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams: A History of Overeaters Anonymous*, the first meeting was to be held on January 12, but Rozanne and Jo came down with the flu. She continues, “*One overeater talking to another.*

We didn’t realize it that night, but the spiritual essence of all Twelve-Step groups was present among us. We shared a problem, we identified with one another, and we hoped for a common solution.”

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.<sup>1</sup>

1. <https://oa.org/newcomers/how-do-i-start/frequently-asked-questions/>

To learn what to expect at an OA meeting visit the link below.

<https://oa.org/newcomers/how-do-i-start/what-to-expect-at-an-oa-meeting/>



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## Meetings, According to the Big Book

According to the long version of AA Tradition 5, “Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose—that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers. (563) Each OA meeting is a spiritual entity. It is a spiritual being, in which, according to the long version of Tradition 1, “Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole.” (563) The members are to share the teaching of the Big Book; to carry its message. Members realize that they are a part of a whole; that they are creating “the fellowship [they] crave.” (164)

In the early days of AA, meetings throughout the week were for members to attend and think about how they could approach newcomers, to bring them into the fellowship. “Seeing much of each other, scarce an evening passed that someone’s home did not shelter a little gathering of men and women, happy in their release, and constantly thinking how they might present their discovery to some newcomer.” (159) One meeting a week was for anyone who wanted to live by spiritual principles. This meeting was for “fellowship and sociability.” (160)

The purpose of this meeting was to “provide a time and place where new people might bring their problems.” (160) We meet frequently so that newcomers may find the fellowship they seek... We are growing in numbers and power.” (16) It was not a time for members to share their problems. Newcomers brought their problems, and the members shared the solution. The members are to share their lives and to be able to laugh at their “misfortunes.” The newcomer is to identify with the members, their overeating careers, the members are to

understand his [the newcomer’s] problems. Members are to have “very practical approach to his problems” that is “absence of intolerance of any kind” and employs “informality,” “genuine democracy,” and is filled with “uncanny understanding.” (160) The newcomer “stepped over the threshold ... into freedom.” (160) They are to leave “with an answer.” (160)

The newcomer is to hear the “story of some [member] whose experience closely tallied with” the newcomer. (160) The newcomer is to feel, based upon the recovery of the members, that “here was haven at last.” (160) Recovery is attractive and is “irresistible.” The newcomer leaves the meeting “elated by the thought of what they could now do for some stricken acquaintance and his family.” The newcomer had found the answer and now wanted to pass it onto a friend, family member, or co-worker. “There is, however a vast amount of fun about it all [sharing our recoveries at meetings and practicing these principles]. I suppose some would be shocked at our seeming worldliness and levity. But just underneath there is deadly earnestness.” (16)

The newcomer had entered the Fellowship of the Spirit. “We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit.” (164) Now the new person would leave the isolated life, the self-made prison, and enter a life filled with a host of fast friends. There is to exist a kinship between the members, which now includes the newcomer. We consider other members and how we can help meet their needs. We are in a fellowship of equals; true anonymity, giving importance to our principles, rather than personalities. In the fellowship, we are loved until we can love others. And according to the Big Book, we are “welcomed

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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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## Meetings, According to the Big Book (Continued)

cordially—if he means business.” (161)

The newcomer sees “miracles,” members who have escaped disaster, who have recovered, and one was to come to the newcomer. (160) “They had visioned the Great Reality—their loving and All Powerful Creator.” (160) “Faith has to work twenty-four hours a day in and through us, or we perish.” (16) The newcomer learns that we must practice these principles in all our affairs and trust God. As important tool meetings are, our reliance is always upon God. Our recovery must be more than “attending gatherings and visiting hospitals.” (161). Members must practice the 12 Steps; clean house, trust God, and help others. The Big Book gives us a promise, “Being wrecked in the same vessel, being restored and united under one God, with hearts and minds attuned to the welfare of others, the things which matter so much to some people no longer signify much to them.” (161) Members serve others, so together they can recover.

We go to meetings, not so much for ourselves, even though we enjoy seeing our friends and like the fellowship, but instead, we attend meetings because we “have discovered the joy of helping others to face life again, there will be no stopping until everyone in that town has had his opportunity to recover—if he can and will.” (164) It was their experience that if we shared our recovery, the principles of the program in action, that “more than half of those approached will become fellows of [Overeaters] Anonymous; they would recover of a hopeless state of mind and body. (163) At meetings, members are to share their recovery, to teach the principles of the program through their example.

Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us. Ask Him in your morning meditation what you

can do each day for the man who is still sick. The answers will come, if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven’t got. See to it that your relationship with Him is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the Great Fact for us.

Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us., we shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit. and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny. May God bless you and keep you—until then. (164)

Our responsibility is to recover, recover, recover so we can pass on what was so freely given to us. As a result, others will recover and continue passing on the message. And in doing so, together, we shall create the fellowship we crave. “We commenced to make many fast friends and a fellowship has grown up among us of which it is a wonderful thing to feel a part. The joy of living we really have, even under pressure and difficulty. Most of us feel we need look no further for Utopia. We have it with us right here and now. Each day my friend's simple talk in our kitchen [Bill W. and Ebby Thatcher] multiplies itself in a widening circle of peace on earth and good will to men. (16) It our hope that every compulsive eater seeking a spiritual solution to his or her problems finds the Fellowship of Overeaters Anonymous.

- Anonymous

## For the Love

There are many reasons to go to any given recovery meeting. It is where I go to find experience, strength and hope in my disease. It is where I go find fellowship and understanding. But the ultimate reason for me to get myself into a chair at the Overeaters Anonymous table is for the love. I do it for the love I feel, the love I receive and the love I give.

From the very first meeting I attended, I knew I was in a safe place of love and unconditional acceptance. I qualified myself for a chair, and that was all it took. There was an immediate sense of belonging in a disease that consistently isolated me. The empathy in the room was a warm and welcome thawing of the shame and blame I had been frozen in for so much of my life. I immediately felt love radiating off of people who know my truth and my pain.

As I began working a program of abstinence, I gained an awareness of the love I received through the service of others. It was often in the form of sponsorship, outreach calls and simple caring about my victories and failures. By attending meetings, I gained a fellowship that could love me when I could not love myself. They showed me new and wonderful truths

about myself, and great examples of who I wanted to be without judgement.

Quite possibly the best part of attending meetings is the opportunity to give love. To share my own experience, strength and hope brings meaning to my pain, and value to my journey. By sharing what I have been given, I can reach and maintain levels of love and recovery that I didn't know were possible. I find joy in being connected to myself, my HP and to others, and it wouldn't be possible without the fellowship I find in my meetings.

Love is a powerful gift, and one I was incapable of providing for myself in my disease. Meetings are a safe and wonderful place for me to learn to love myself and others rightly. They are a beautiful part of my recovery, and a great blessing in my life. I sincerely hope that anyone considering attending a meeting will find the courage to seek the love. It is there, and you are worth it!

- Anonymous

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*“Quite possibly the best part of attending meetings is the opportunity to give love.”*

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## Threshold of Freedom

I recall my first meeting. While working, an OA member, some guy I did not even know, told me about an OA meeting that met at a church across the downtown bridge. However, after crossing the bridge I discovered that there were two churches; one on the left and the other on the right. The first church I chose had a bunch of cars in the parking lot. Since I did not like crowds, I decided that if this was the OA meeting, then OA would not be for me. Yet, I decided to try the other church. The

parking lot held only four cars. So, I entered.

I had arrived a bit late, so I was a little reluctant about going inside. I stood that the doorway of the library, where the group met. The meeting had begun; they were reciting the Serenity Prayer. I stood there, my heart sank, they said the word “God”. I was an atheist. I had been since I was about 10 years old. I did not need a god. Besides, what had God done for me? What had God done for anyone? But there I stood. They saw me, so I could not simply

## Threshold of Freedom (Continued)

walk away. I guess I could have said something like, “Oops, wrong group” and remove myself from the Jesus freaks, but I did not think that quickly. So, I entered the room and sat down on the couch. Little did I know that as I crossed the doorway of the room, that I was entering the threshold of freedom. Nor did I know that I was becoming a part of a spiritual entity.

It was a topic meeting. The leader shared her story, experience, strength, and hope; she qualified herself as a compulsive overeater. She told the things she did while eating (the sneak eating, hiding wrappers in the car, stopping at different fast food places and ordering one of everything and three soft drinks so the person wouldn't think all the food was for her, eating frozen or too hot food, eating out of the garbage or off the floor) and the amounts of food she ate. It seemed as if she was telling my story. I began to identify with her story. She spoke of the guilt, shame, and remorse that always came after waking up from a binge.

She talked about the obsession that was so strong that she could not break the spell food had on her, at least not on her own will-power. She said it was an illness. It was not a moral issue; I was not a bad person. It was not a matter of will-power; she said that OAers were very willful people, but it is not enough to break the obsession. As she spoke, I kept identifying with her story. I began to accept that I was a compulsive overeater, that I had this illness.

More importantly, I had found others who were just like me. I cannot describe the feeling knowing there were other people who were just like me. I thought that I was the only person who thought and did as I did when it came to food. Moreover, they were not shaming me, making me get on a scales to applaud if I lost weight and booed if I gained, lecturing me about being fat, or moralizing me. She wasn't doing that; she was only

sharing her story. But then she shared the solution. She said that she needed a Power greater than herself to remove the obsession. Well, that is where I departed with her. She spoke of the 12 Step. “Nope, don't need those either,” I thought.

She shared for about 15 minutes, announced the topic, and opened the meeting for sharing. I cannot remember the topic, but the other three people talked about powerlessness, so it could have been on Step One. I kept waiting for someone to lecture me about me being fat or making me step on a scales or prescribing pills or getting a shot or giving me a diet to follow or ask me for a bunch of money, but they did not do any of those things, the things others and other programs had done. Each member shared about the obsession, the lives they lived as compulsive overeaters, and the solution they found. One guy talked about the allergy of the body in addition to the mental obsession. He said, “Once I take that first compulsive bite, Katey, bar the door, I am in for the duration.”

I sat there and listened. I thought, “Have they been watching me? Did they see me doing those things?” But I realized that was crazy thinking, I never had seen these people in my life. All my life, I thought that I had had been the only person who did those things while eating or had eaten as they shared. I had always felt alone, that no one understood. I did not understand why I ate. I just did; I had always overeaten. I couldn't remember a time that I didn't. Something happened inside me that night as they shared, I felt like I had found home. Here was a bunch of people who had done what I had done with food. Here were others who felt the guilt, shame, and remorse after eating and tried to hide. Here were others who felt the way I did and were powerless, on their own, to make it stop. But they seemed happy. And they were all thinner than me and that impressed me.

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## Threshold of Freedom (Continued)

After the meeting, they all hugged me. I liked that. Most of the people were women. They told me to keep coming back. I waited for the diet, but got none. Then I checked out the literature on the table. I was still looking for the catch and I figured that they were making the money on the books and pamphlets. All the literature was cheap, the most expensive book, the Big Book, was only \$5. As I was looking over the literature, the guy came over and talked with me. I asked him what he thought I should buy. He pointed at the Big Book and told me that it was the only book that I would need. He was right.

He asked me to go out for coffee. He called it the meeting after the meeting. Still looking for the catch, I accepted his offer. It was during coffee that he “closed the deal” and he sold me the simple idea in the Big Book. And in one remark, he took away any excuse for not using the program. I told him that I was an atheist. He responded that they did not care what I believed in, it could be the cup of coffee in front of me or the door knob of the restaurant, just that I believed that there was a power greater than myself. Further, he said that I could come up with my own God, and fire the SOB if it didn’t work for me and get another. That floored me. He told me that there was no diet, no shots, no pills, no scales, just a power greater than myself and the 12 Steps. That was all. I asked him to sponsor me and I accepted Step 1.

As I drove home, I knew that this was going to be different. I felt that if they could do it,

then so could I. I had hope for the first time in my life. Looking back on that meeting nearly 33 years ago, I see that those members did everything correct according to the Big Book. They shared their stories so that I could identify with them. They told of the hopelessness of the illness. They explained the illness, the mental obsession, which we can do something about (with God and the 12 Steps), and the physical allergy, which we cannot.

Then they shared the solution, the substitution; God and the 12 Steps. They didn’t lecture or moralize, nor did they proselytize. I could, they said, come up with my own God and abstinence. They approached me; simply placing before me the kit of spiritual tools, the 12 Steps, at my feet and encouraged me to follow their example. But most of all they offered me hope. There was a way out of the compulsive overeating hell. All I had to do was to do what they did and based upon my willingness, that I would get the same results. The only charge, they said, was to pass this solution onto others. On that day, September 4th, the day I walked into that meeting, was the day that I walked through the threshold of freedom. I began my path of recovery, one step at a time, one day at a time. I began my path of recovery, one step at a time, one day at a time.

- Anonymous

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# As a Result of Resting on My Laurels

The first time I came to an OA meeting I weighed 450 pounds. I felt that I was living on borrowed time. A doctor had told me at age 13 that if I continued eating as I had that I would be dead by 25. I was 26 years old. Recovery came quickly. I accepted Step 1, I was powerless to stay stopped and when I ate I couldn't control the amounts that I ate. My life was totally unmanageable, it had always been unmanageable, but I wanted to control every aspect of it. Step 2 was harder for me, but I became willing to believe there was a power greater than myself, and I was told that was enough to begin, so I continued.

Since I had tried everything else out there, making a decision to go through the steps was not so difficult. What did I have to lose, but my fat and my misery? I sought a Power Greater than myself, practiced these principles, and remarkable things began to happen. I received emotional balance and in two years I weighed 170 pounds. I had been reborn. Not only did people not recognize me physically, but also I was not the same person emotionally or spiritually. I had been changed by the practice of the principles of OA and my Higher Power. I had recovered from a hopeless state of mind and body.

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*“Instead of keeping the focus on my recovery, my life began to be filled with my job and living. I began to stray from the principles of the program.”*

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After 13 years, I began to rest on my laurels. I lost my conscious contact with my Higher Power. Slowly but surely, I would reduce my prayer and meditation time. I knew the Big Book backwards and forwards, so I didn't

need to read it, I thought. I lived too far from a meeting, so I had cut myself off from the fellowship. I did not keep a sponsor. I didn't use the tools; I didn't have time. Instead of keeping the focus on my recovery, my life began to be filled with my job and living. I began to stray from the principles of the program. Soon I began to have problems dealing with others; some people were out to get me, others were not doing as I demanded, and no one was doing my way. I was discontented, irritable, and restless. I felt feelings, overwhelming feelings.

Food became my friend again. But it was different this time. This time I knew I had an illness, but knowing that I am ill is not sufficient to recover. And I was no longer recovered, nor was I in recovery. The illness returned and it began to take life from me. This illness takes life from me. I was to fall deep into the pit of a personal hell.

Emotionally, I was a wreck. I was again to experience self-pity, fear, anger, remorse, and incomprehensive demoralization. Physically, I could barely walk, clean myself, work, and in the end, I could not lay down on a bed and slept in a hard chair resting my head against a wall or couch. People feared for me.

Everyone knew how this was going to end, so did I, but I felt I could control it. I just needed to do what I had once done. But I couldn't. The illness had progressed and it dominated me, it ruled me.

I lived in that pit of hell for about 10 years. Each year getting worse, never better. I lost a job because I could not perform CPR. I couldn't get on the floor and get up. I could no longer go to movies. I relied upon some people too much, giving up my will and life

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## As a Result of Resting on My Laurels (Continued)

to them. Others, I dominated. I practiced all the compulsive overeater behaviors: selfishness, seek-seeking, self-centered, irresponsibility, inconsideration, fear, anger, and dishonesty. I couldn't pay my bills on time. I gossiped about others, tearing them down and building myself up, and assassinated their characters. I sought out sordid places seeking companionship. I really didn't care about others, and I didn't really care for myself either. I was sneak eating, overeating constantly, stealing food, and lying about the amounts I was eating. I was hopeless.

At the end of my overeating career, I fell a couple of times, but could not get up. Eight men with a tarp had to lift me off the ground. Eventually, I was taken to the hospital. I woke to see a nurse telling me that I had to have my heart stopped and restarted. They wheeled me back to a room on a bed. They had to order a larger bed from Anchorage because they feared that I would damage the one I was in. At some point, they weighed me. I weighed 720 pounds. The same nurse who told me about my heart was an OA member. She visited me and told me about a meeting. After a couple of weeks, I left the hospital, but within a week I had to return again. I could not take care of myself. After returning home, I knew that I was close to death. I was scared, but almost welcomed the idea. I could not work for the next month because I could barely walk.

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*“I was filled with guilt and shame. Some of the members had known of “that Randy,” the Randy who had recovery to share with those who still suffered of this illness, who once had recovered and lived to serve God and others, but that Randy was dead. ”*

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It took another month before I could attend an OA meeting. I was a mess. I couldn't get my hair cut because I couldn't fit in the chair. I wore house slippers outside, even during the winter. I couldn't clean myself; I could no longer lift my leg high enough to get in the shower. I could only walk 6 feet before getting winded. I felt terrible. No longer did I have any of the spiritual understanding and connection that I once was given. I had nothing. I was filled with guilt and shame. Some of the members had known of “that Randy,” the Randy who had recovery to share with those who still suffered of this illness, who once had recovered and lived to serve God and others, but that Randy was dead. I did not remember any of them, just as I could not recall any spiritual awakenings from my first recovery. But the members accepted me.

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*“For a while, I tried to return to that Randy, but I realized that I would never be that Randy again, nor could I, so I gave up trying. My recovery had to start anew. ”*

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For a while, I tried to return to that Randy, but I realized that I would never be that Randy again, nor could I, so I gave up trying. My recovery had to start anew. This time, my recovery has come slower. It has given me, along with my relapse, compassion for members who still struggle with the program. My understanding of the program and the fellowship has deepened and has become richer, and continues to grow as I seek. I have expanded upon the approved literature I read, but the Big Book is my core textbook, but now I included listening to it via an app. I listen to new members sharing their recovery; Howard I (AA), Chris (AA), Joe and Charlie (AA), Clancy (AA), Scott and Bob (AA), Ira (OA), Ken G (OA), John K (OA), Roy (OA), and Harlan (OA), while continuing listening to members I listened to when I came in the first time; Milton (AA), Marty (OA and AA),

## As a Result of Resting on My Laurels (Continued)

Tom O (OA and AA), and Richie K (OA).

However, I have gained a greater appreciation for meetings. Yes, meetings are only a tool, but now I realize how important meetings are to recovery. I don't recall missing a meeting in the past 9 years, perhaps I did after returning to the hospital a couple of years ago. But I have made attendance at meetings a priority in my recovery. I go for me, but more; I go for others. Meetings are a means for sharing my recovery with others, to pass on what was so freely and generously been given to me. I share how, by practicing these principles in all my affairs, how I have been changed, how I have recovered from a hopeless condition of mind and body. That is my charge for my spiritual awakening. I must pass on the message of OA. Meetings are a place where I become part of a spiritual entity, where we are to share the teaching of the program, so that those suffering from the illness may hear and see what is necessary for them to say, yes, I have this illness, and if they can do it, so can I. I am charged with sharing the solution to their problem.

It was at a meeting that I learned to be responsible. I learned to be responsible financially. They taught me how, as a treasurer, to pay bills on time. They showed me how to split the 7th tradition, 60%/30%/10% and pay the rent. They taught me to be responsible to bring my 7th tradition to every meeting, otherwise the meeting may not exist as a result of not paying the rent. I was taught how to follow the rules, the rules applied to everyone, that it was principles before personalities, that it was my responsibility to voice when the traditions or rules were not followed, but in a loving voice (I am still learning to use a loving voice).

They taught me that I was responsible for my part in my recovery. No one else was going to recover for me, nor would my Higher Power do for me what I could do for myself. As Clancy said, I have to get into the invisible boat with others like me, grab the invisible oar, and row. I have to trust that by taking the action, practicing the principles and seeking my Higher Power, that I will be changed sufficiently to recover. It is by me rowing that the invisible boat appears.

Lastly, it was at meetings where I was taught to be responsible and give service. They taught me when to give service: when I was asked. They taught me how to give service: sharing my experience, strength, and hope, to tell what I was like, what happened, and what I am like now, to tell my story, to qualify as a compulsive overeater. They taught me where to give service: in all my affairs. They taught me who to give service: to those who still suffer from a hopeless state of mind and body, but to practice these principles with everyone. I feel as Dr. Bob, that passing on what was given to me and giving service is my responsibility and I do it because: 1) of a sense of duty, 2) it is a pleasure, 3) I am paying back a debt to the guy who shared it with me, and 4) it is an insurance against going back out there. Giving back, giving service is a result of recovery. As I practice the steps, I want to give to other. It was at meetings that they loved me until I could love others. As a result of practicing these principles and trusting my Higher Power, my life has taken on a new meaning; seeking to fit myself to be of maximize my usefulness to my Higher Power and others.

- Randy

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*“Meetings are a means for sharing my recovery with others, to pass on what was so freely and generously been given to me. I share how, by practicing these principles in all my affairs, how I have been changed, how I have recovered from a hopeless condition of mind and body. That is my charge for my spiritual awakening.”*

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# 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.