

# NOVATIONS

## Step Two: Came to Believe....Spiritual Principle: Hope

### We need you!

Intergroup meetings are held 10 am - 12 pm on the third Saturday of each month at Hope Lutheran Church, 4604 Ravensworth Rd, Annandale.

**Next meeting is 21 March.**

### Meeting Spotlight:

Monday and Wednesday literature meetings at Trinity United Methodist Church, 1205 Dolly Madison Blvd, McLean.

Monday 7:50 am—*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. Room 122 in old building. Enter back of parking lot at "Office" sign.

Wednesday 12 pm—*Abstinence*. Downstairs classroom in the new building. Enter from portico.

Contact Kristin 571-331-5163 (Monday) or Beryl 703-307-5611 (Wednesday).

*Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are strictly those of the people who shared them and not of OA as a whole.*



Northern Virginia Intergroup  
of Overeaters Anonymous

## Letter from the Chair

"'Hope' is the thing with feathers," Emily Dickinson famously said. "It sings the tune without the words - And never stops - at all." This has always been one of my favorite Dickinson poems, because it encapsulates in a few brief stanzas the two most striking

characteristics of hope: its fragile outer appearance and its inner strength and persistence.

For me, hope is one of the most important spiritual principles of my life in OA. When I first came into the rooms, broken and desperate, it was the hope I felt listening to the recovered people in the room that brought me back to a second meeting, then a third. When I was searching for my sponsor, it was hope that kept me asking people that had what I wanted if they would take me on as a sponsee. Hope didn't let me stay discouraged for long when a desired sponsor couldn't take me on, and eventually I found the sponsor I needed. When I stumbled and fell, it was hope (muddied and with ruffled feathers, but still singing) that encouraged me to reach out to others rather than isolating myself, and to accept their loving understanding and experienced suggestions as to how to get back up and continue my trudge down the road of happy destiny.

I don't always understand the message my Higher Power is

## Be on the lookout for our new NOVA IG website!

The website is in the final countdown and is expected to go live in the next several weeks. In addition to a calendar of events and Intergroup news, we will post new locally produced literature. *A Short Workbook on Getting Abstinent* is in the final stages of editing and should be available online soon!

## More on Hope

"The hope and belief that things will get better is not a tangible commodity that I buy; it is something that I must earn. I believe it is possible for everyone to be abstinent, to recover, and to have all of our dreams come true. We get what we expect, so 'expect a miracle.' We are all miracles." *Voices of Recovery*, p. 139.

Came...came to...came to believe...came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

## Be part of NoVAtions!

We'd love to hear from you—articles, letters, jokes, complaints and images. No writing experience needed. Send items to [k2lovesrabbits@gmail.com](mailto:k2lovesrabbits@gmail.com).

sending me—how I wish it communicated in plain English!—but the tune never stops. A power greater than myself can restore me to sanity. "I've heard it in the chilliest land—And on the strangest Sea." If I'm only open to a higher power and willing to listen, whether that power is communicating through meditation, the voices in the rooms, or even a poem I recited in school years ago, I will be filled with hope and it will carry me through the "sorest storm," as Dickinson says. I wish all of you, most sincerely, the hope that comes with working your recovery and especially Step Two.

Kate I.

## Relapse Prevention Process

I recently passed the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my first OA meeting. Since that time I have been abstinent for 25 years, which means that I was in relapse for five years. Working with others who have either had relapses or avoided them, I learned that it is a process—not an event.

I originally put this material together for a NOVA Intergroup workshop. As a number of people said it was helpful, I am sharing it here. By focusing on a process rather than a traditional article, I hope to share this knowledge with other OA members to help them prevent relapse.

**When a compulsive overeater has a relapse, food is typically the last thing to go.** Working with others we came up with the following principles, goals and a process to prevent relapse.

### Principles:

There are predictable warning signs that precede relapse. Relapse can be prevented, if we learn to recognize and manage our warning signs. If I am going through a crisis, I should work a crisis-level program, which means more OA in all forms.

## Goals

Identify your relapse warning signs  
Learn to recognize them as they occur  
Make an action plan to address the warning signs and get OA support to succeed in your action plan.

Here are some examples of relapse warning signs broken into four categories—program, food/physical, emotional/spiritual, life events/triggers. Neither the categories nor the examples are meant to be exhaustive, just food for thought.

### Program Warning Signs:

- fewer/no meetings
- less/no contact with sponsor
- failure to work the Steps, including the maintenance Steps
- not making/returning/taking phone calls and texts
- coming late to meetings and leaving early
- not sponsoring
- doing little or no OA service
- not reading literature or doing any writing
- not following the Traditions, such as anonymity
- not making an action plan
- reducing self care routines
- reducing or stopping prayer and meditation
- reducing/abandoning other program activities that have previously supported your abstinence

### Food and Physical Warning Signs:

- eating between meals, eating at night, or grazing
- rationalizing food choices and behavior –“red light” foods turning yellow and “yellow light” foods turning green
- portion creep—not measuring foods you used to
- eating out more than normal
- choosing higher risk food situations, such as buffets or potlucks
- purging through compulsive exercising, fasting, laxatives, or other means
- unexpected weight gain/loss
- excessive weighing yourself or reluctance to weigh
- obsession with “free foods,” such as sugar-free gum, low-calorie sweeteners, diet soda
- using other addictive substances or engaging in personal compulsive behaviors, which for some may involve alcohol, cigarettes, sex, TV or social media
- medication side effects
- insomnia/exhaustion
- health issues that impact your emotions, such as lack of exercise because of injuries
- engaging in any particular foods or food behaviors (standing while eating, taking samples at supermarkets) that weaken your abstinence

### Emotional/Spiritual Warning Signs:

- loss of connection with HP
- experiencing a spiritual crisis or alienation from your chosen religion
- loss of emotional balance—overflow of anxiety, frustration, resentment, argumentativeness, defiance

- failing to treat depression or other mental/emotional issues
- forgetting gratitude and engaging in self pity, complacency, cockiness, and impatience
- practicing denial/dishonesty/lying
- paralysis in grief and sorrow
- neglecting anything related to your spiritual and emotional well being

### Life Events:

- holiday food traditions
- holiday time with challenging relatives and difficult food choices
- loss of job or other work issues, such as conflict with coworkers
- illness or injury, either your own or that of loved ones
- financial trouble
- anything that undermines your serenity
- loss of a loved one
- travel—particularly to new places—or moving, even locally
- family problems, especially if they involve your children
- pregnancy and caring for a baby
- relationship problems, such as divorce or breaking up with a significant other
- eldercare issues
- any stressful situation that is currently, or will soon be, in your life

### Process to prevent relapse:

1. Review the examples above.
2. Think about what your relapse warning signs are in general, even if you don't have any right now.

3. Write down the warning signs you CURRENTLY recognize in yourself.

4. Write an Action Plan to manage the warning signs.

5. Write out the support you need to carry out your Action Plan. Be specific: who, what, when, where. Find accountability support from sponsors and/or others in program.

If you do not have any relapse warning signs now, that is great. Consider this an opportunity to put together a list of personal risks that might arise as part of upcoming life events, such as retirement, moving, medical procedures, vacation and so forth. Consider repeating this process on a regular basis—perhaps with a sponsor, with other OA members, or in a group of OA members.

**Relapse is a process, not an event. It can be stopped, if you recognize it and make a course correction.** I am very grateful for this approach and it has help me catch several relapses before I picked up the food. I have seen others attain 30 years' abstinence using these simple tools.

Alan S.

### *Finding HP in Ocean City*

Have you ever been to an Overeaters Anonymous Region 7 Convention in Ocean City and had a new spiritual awakening? I have. Have you ever felt that you were on a pink cloud for about three days following the convention? I have.

One share was particularly inspirational to me. Speaking from the heart, a panelist

delivered a compelling message about her journey to developing a close personal relationship with her Higher Power. As the daughter in a religious house, she never doubted her faith, but as a teenager, she considered God—if in fact God were real—to be either Santa Claus or 911. She called on God when she wanted something or was in trouble. Reaching out in fear to her HP was not effective, and the best way to connect was to reach out in love.

The speaker says she readily accepted that her relationship with food had become unmanageable after joining OA. Seeking HP was like walking through a dense wood along an overgrown path, but the tools of prayer, meditation, study and sponsorship cleared the way. In her conception, HP can change and grow. Each OA finds his/her own understanding of HP, just as a blind person explores an elephant. All of us leave the experience with a different impression, depending upon whether we felt the elephant's trunk or knee. The panelist declared, "Finding your own HP makes life worth living! Discovering joy and compassion gives us a wonderful freedom and makes us a better person."

With the help of a sponsor, she has found a new openness and awareness of other people's ideas about their relationship to their HP. "Remember a Higher Power is always there for you, but you or your sponsor are not it. Using the Fellowship is certainly alright, but using an individual is very dangerous because we are addicts, we are human, and we fail each other—even though we do not want to." Daily practice of

meditation, gratitude for family, music, art, nature and things that lift her up bring her closer to a source of light and love. Sometimes HP's answers may be a little vague at first, but "One thing that always comes through clearly is that I am not alone. There is always a comfort, a source, a power that is always available to save me. Something that was a mental exercise before is now a truth and part of my existence." The speaker concluded, "I never ever thought that I would ever say that I was grateful for the disease of compulsive overeating, but I would not be here on this panel today and I would not be talking about a source of light and love, if it were not for this disease. And my life would be so much poorer for it."

As someone committed to recovery from compulsive overeating and sugar addiction, I felt myself ascending to a pink cloud right from the panelist's introduction. When she ended by saying, "Anything that brings selfless joy is a connection to your HP." I instantly thought of a quotation from the "Big Book" (p. 25): "We have found much of heaven and we have been rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence of which we had not even dreamed."

Ed W.

*NOVA Intergroup:*

Chair: Kate I., chair@oanova.org

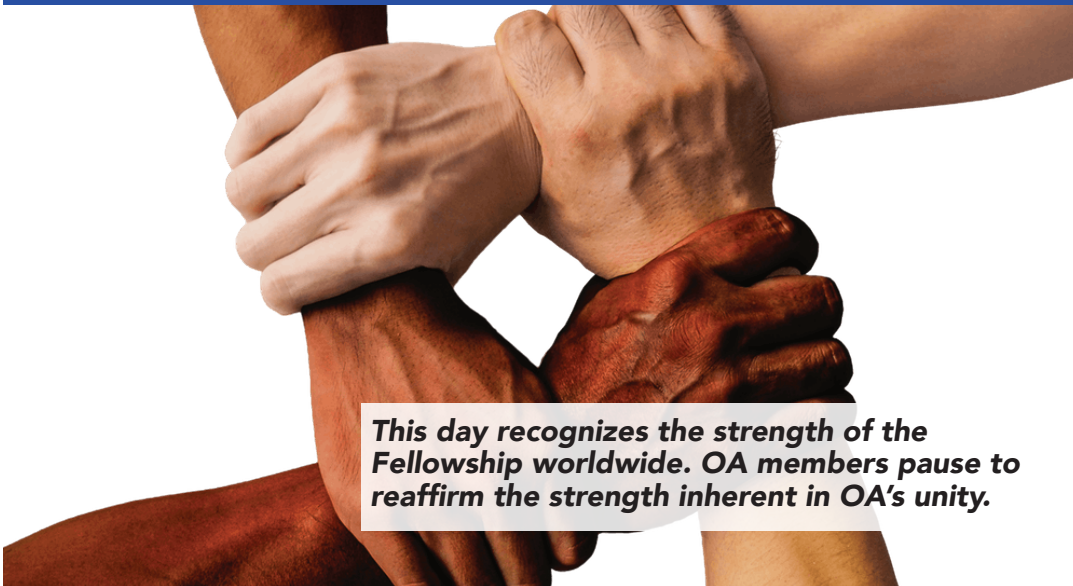
Vice chair: vacant

Secretary: vacant

Treasurer: Jennifer C., treasurer @  
oanova.org

Communications: Kristin L./Cecilia W.  
k2lovesrabbits@gmail.com

Come Join US for  
**UNITY DAY**



*This day recognizes the strength of the Fellowship worldwide. OA members pause to reaffirm the strength inherent in OA's unity.*

**Saturday**  
**February 29, 2020**  
**2 - 4pm**

**Serenity Center**  
**Harmony Hall**  
9650 Basket Ring Road  
Columbia, MD  
21045-3421

Suggested donation: \$5