



NoVA tions

April 2020

**Step Four: Made a searching and fearless moral
inventory of ourselves.**

Spiritual Principle: Courage



Letter from the Chair: The Gifts of Step Four

In the March 26 For Today reflection, it quotes Mark Twain as saying “Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear – not absence of fear.” I remember perfectly reading this in my regular Acceptance for Today OA meeting at Fairlington United Methodist Church and sitting around the table talking with my fellows about dealing with fear – “Face Everything And Recover.” Now we’re in a world where many of our meetings are virtual, if not cancelled outright. Most of us are separated from loved ones, many struggle with unemployment, and some of us have even lost a loved one.

How do I deal with the fear I’m feeling when I think about

my parents, quarantined in their retirement community, who I haven't hugged since mid-March? When I think about my sister, brother-in-law, and nephew, all of whom work in the healthcare field and are essential workers? When I see continually empty shelves at the grocery store and wonder how long until I can't get the abstinent, healthy food I need? The short answer is that I can't deal with it. I can't make it go away on my own. It ebbs and flows depending on how busy I'm keeping myself, but it will always come back if I try to fight it on my own.

The good news – no, the amazing, life-saving news – is that I'm not alone. Although I may seem helpless, I'm not hopeless. I have a higher power that I found through Overeaters Anonymous, and if I turn over my anxiety through meditation and prayer, work the 12 Steps, and reach out to others, I will be protected from fear one day at a time. I read once that an early definition of courage didn't refer to physical bravery, but "to speak one's mind by telling all one's heart." To speak honestly and openly about who I am – that I'm an addict, that I can't recover alone, that (today) I'm afraid – actually somehow relieves the sick feeling inside that I get when I try to shove fear aside and deny it's there. Facing the truth about my addiction and my emotions, and turning them over to my higher power, leads to abstinence and, more importantly, recovery.

Thanks for letting me share.

--Kate I.

In Step Four we take an honest look at the beliefs, attitudes, values, and behaviors that lead us to the food. How we choose to look at and deal with our lives and the world lies at the core of the

disease.” The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous (Second Edition), Step Four, p.25.



Letting Go and Completing Step Four

For the longest time after coming to OA, taking Step Four was not a priority for me. Even though I had a sponsor, attended meetings regularly, read OA literature and had both a working food plan and a daily plan of action, the thought of examining my “beliefs, attitudes, values, and [especially] my behaviors” had no appeal. I just wanted to stop eating compulsively. After taking the first three steps with the help of my Higher Power, I became abstinent and began experiencing some relief from the misery of food addiction. I felt blessed and grateful; but I still balked at doing a Fourth Step inventory.

Over time abstinence became harder, and I struggled more and more with food obsession. It took me a while to accept the fact that taking the Fourth Step would free me to go deeper in the recovery process. But of course, first I had to figure out *the perfect way to do it*.

Finally, I admitted to my Higher Power that I was powerless over my resistance and asked for help. HP

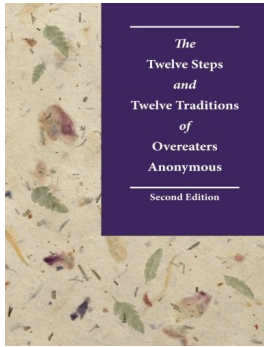
then helped me see that I was terrified of the shame and self-blame that I felt inevitably would come up once I started taking a Fourth Step inventory. I began to see that avoiding those feelings was how I maintained my self-esteem and ability to function day-to-day; it became clear I would have to change.

In the end, I only managed to take a Fourth Step inventory by asking HP for help each and every step of the way. I asked for help when I couldn't seem to get myself to sit down and start writing. I asked for help when I didn't know where to start or what to write. I asked for help to stay with it when writing about the real or imagined faults, sins and failures from my past or present brought painful feelings of guilt, shame, anger and fear into my awareness. Most important, I asked again and again for help to accept the pain of feeling those feelings and to trust in my HP's unconditional love for me – past, present and future. Each time I asked for help, somehow it came.

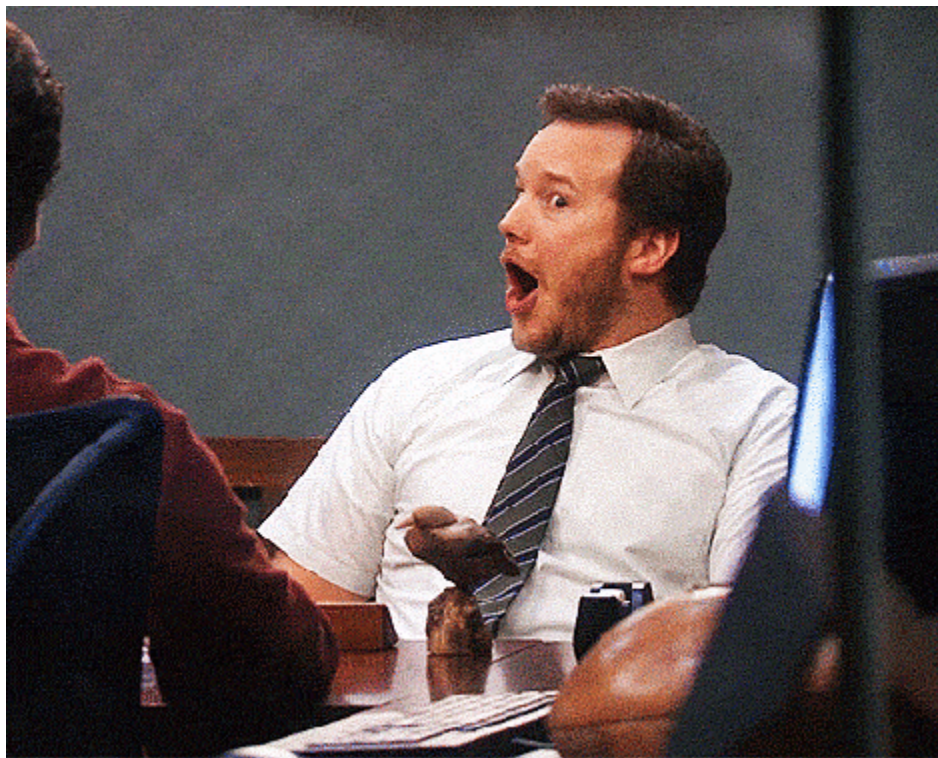
Completing a thorough Fourth Step inventory has given me a deeper level of awareness, acceptance and forgiveness of myself and others. I am grateful to my HP for OA, for this milestone in my recovery and for more freedom from compulsive eating and destructive food behaviors than I could have imagined. One day at a time I am learning that reliance on help from my HP, in matters large and small, makes this daily reprieve from my disease possible.

--Kathleen RB.

You know you're taking Step Four seriously if:



- Your Big Book automatically opens to pp. 65-66
- Your first reaction to an emergency evacuation at work is to run back to your desk to get your inventory.
- You keep flipping through your high school yearbook, trying to remember all the people you dated.
- You dream about the questions in the OA Twelve and Twelve.
- Your sponsor reassures you, "If there's a word for it, then other people have done it too."



Surprises from Step Four

I've done many Fourth Step inventories using many different formats. Looking back, several memories stand out:

- The shock of realizing that, deep inside, is a hurt, prideful, scared child jumping up and down and shouting, "They

can't do that to *me!*"

- The recognition of how pervasive self-centered fear prompted negative behavior toward others and myself.
- The relief of discovering that I was actually no worse—and no better—than anyone else.
- The insight that my inner turmoil had blinded me to others' struggles and needs.
- The realization that preoccupation with food and weight wastes time and energy. I can't appreciate positive events and the beauty of the present moment when obsessed with my appearance and my food addiction.

I've never had a dramatic spiritual experience as a result of past inventories. However, getting rid of the "junk in my trunk" has reduced my inner shame—a major trigger for irrational food behavior—and helped me let Higher Power into my life. I also hope Step Four has made me a more compassionate person.

--Anonymous

Please comment on Draft Literature on Relapse Prevention!

Relapse is always a possibility with our disease, and the coronavirus has created new challenges for us, including social distancing and doing without in-person meetings. The Literature Committee is developing a short piece on relapse prevention (including a worksheet) to assist compulsive overeaters, and we would like your input. The draft document is based on materials that have been used in workshops for Region 7 and OA NoVA. We will post the draft very soon on the new www.oanova.org website in the "news" section. We would love your feedback. Please

e-mail any comments or recommended edits to literature@oanova.org."

Announcements, Announcements!

Check out OA Virtual Region 2020 Workshops from 3:00-4:30 on the second Sunday of each month.

4/12--Spring Cleaning: Inventory and Assessment

4/19--**New!** Additional running of the Virtual Region's Zoom How-to Workshop

5/10--Utilizing OA Tools in a Virtual World

6/14--Recovery through Grief and Traumatic Times

Click [here](#) for more information on Sunday workshops and [here](#) for more information on the Zoom workshop.

Get the latest on NOVA's Zoom meetings [here](#).

WRITE FOR US! No writing experience required. Send articles on Step Five (Spiritual Principle: Integrity) to novations@oanova.org BY MAY 13, 2020.

This newsletter is also available in PDF form on our website oanova.org.



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