

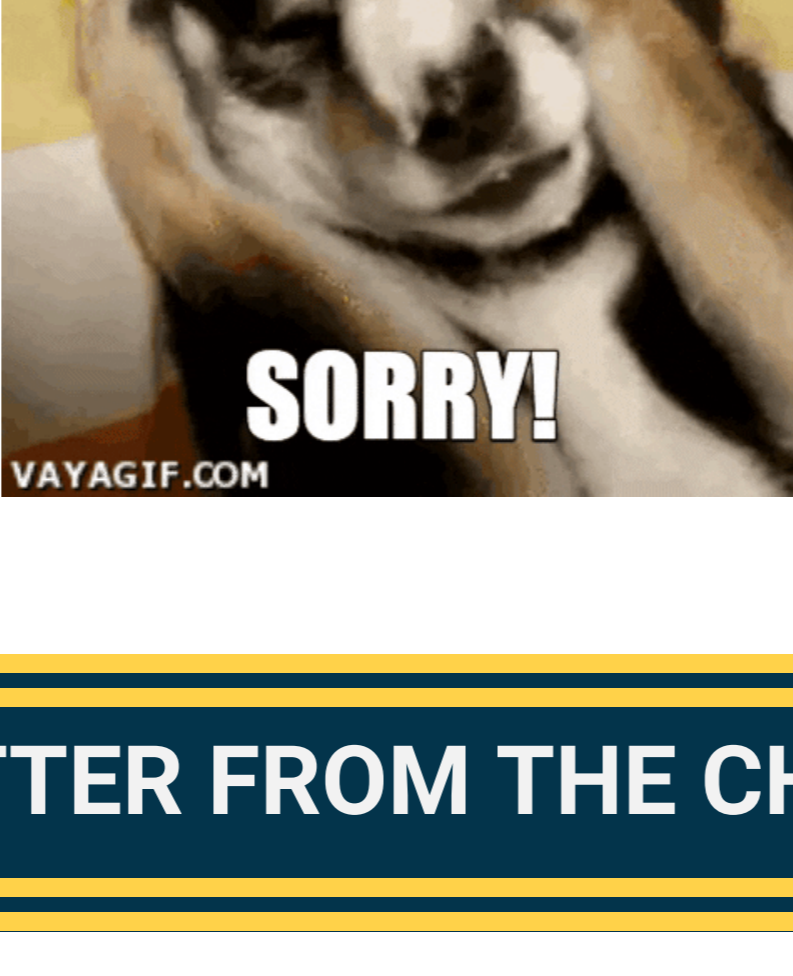


NOVATIONS

SEPTEMBER 2020

STEP NINE: Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE: Love



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

The Ninth Spiritual Principle: **LOVE FOR OTHERS**

I remember reading once that grace broadens our vision and is always communal. That struck a chord in me this week as I found myself mourning with and for friends in various types of loss. As part of my step work in Overeaters Anonymous I have learned not to use food to hide from pain, either mine or someone else's. I need to sit with it, acknowledge and honor it, and now I know from experience that ultimately it will strengthen my program, my growth as a sentient and spiritual human being, and my relations with others.

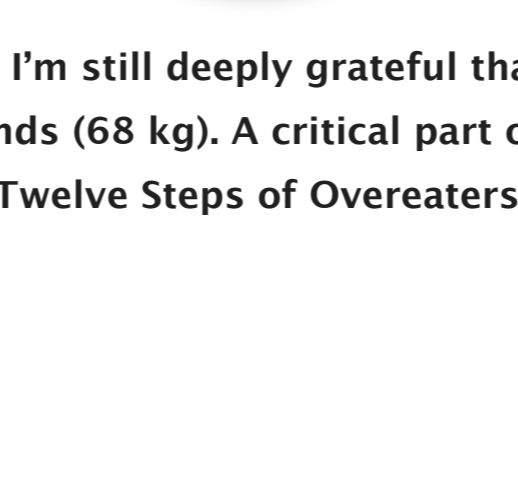
Recognizing someone else's pain, especially if I have caused it, has made me more sensitive to the souls around me. I am more likely to pause before I say a harsh word. I am more apt to walk away before starting a fight I will only need to make amends for tomorrow. I see in the face before me the same frail humanity that resides in me, and I cherish it.

How often when I was in the food did I strike out at someone in anger, judgement, or contempt? How often did I neglect to simply sit beside a loved one and *listen* to them or hug them when they cried? Why was food - *food!* - more important to me than a suffering soul? I know that it's all wrapped up in addiction and self-centeredness (with a healthy dose of self-loathing), but some days I'm still taken aback at the person that I was. The only thing more surprising is the person I'm becoming day by day as I work the 12 Steps and remain in the fellowship of OA. Each day I am thankful, unutterably thankful, for all that my Higher Power has brought me through you.

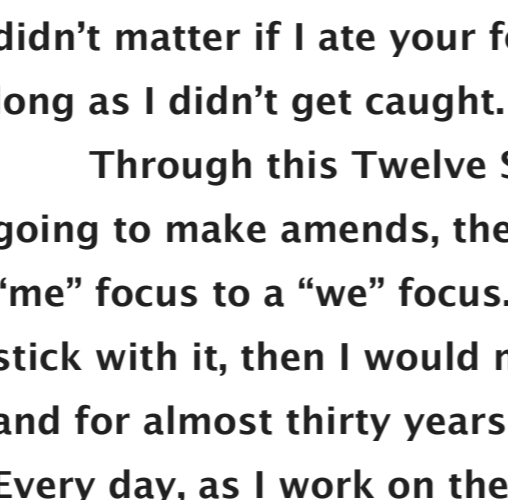
Thank you, dear friends, for letting me share and for sharing with me.

Kate I.
Intergroup Chair

STEP 9: A LIFESAVER!



After thirty years in OA, I'm still deeply grateful that I've been able to keep off more than 150 pounds (68 kg). A critical part of my success has been working the Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous.



When I first joined OA, I was able to quickly work Steps One through Seven. Then came the feared Steps Eight and Nine. Because I had been self-absorbed for most of my life, my Eighth Step list had about seventy-five items on it, and I felt intimidated and overwhelmed.

Here's the backstory: I endured a very difficult childhood by deciding that the only way for me to survive was by getting my needs met first and at any cost. I gave little thought to how my behavior might affect others. It didn't matter if I ate your food, lied to your face, or did something illegal so long as I didn't get caught.

Through this Twelve Step program, however, I realized that if I was going to make amends, then I'd first have to change my worldview from a "me" focus to a "we" focus. My sponsor agreed and warned that if I didn't stick with it, then I would most likely overeat again. I made that commitment, and for almost thirty years, I've been living that choice, one day at a time. Every day, as I work on the "me-we" balance, I consciously consider other people in my actions. My effort is not perfect, but I continue to make progress.

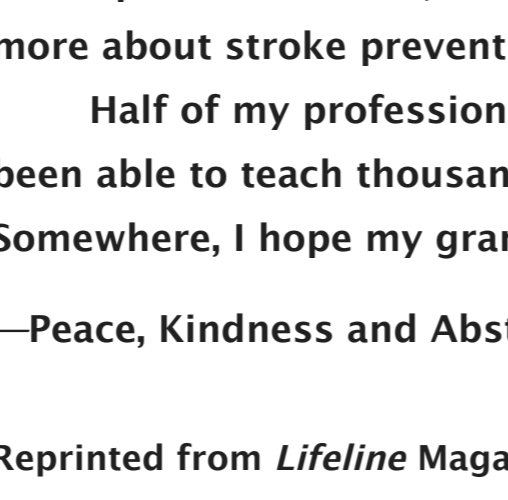
The most difficult item on my amends list was to my grandmother. I was raised by her and my mom, but my mother struggled with depression and couldn't keep a job, and the three of us lived together on public assistance in a dangerous neighborhood.

As an overweight white kid, I was bullied and beaten up. I remember getting a concussion after being hit in the head with a baseball bat. I also remember a kid, who had just gotten out of reform school for stabbing another kid to death, came after me one day. He got me in a headlock and was hitting me in the face. When my grandmother heard me screaming and crying, she came out with her cane and started hitting the kid until he released me. She was always there to protect me.



When I was twelve, my mother told me one morning that something was wrong with my grandmother. She couldn't move or speak normally. My mother didn't know what was wrong, but she didn't want to call 911. In truth, she hoped it would pass, but it didn't.

Unfortunately, my mother waited several days until I insisted she call for help. Sadly, we learned my grandmother had had a stroke, and because we had waited so long, she would never speak or move again. My mother fell into a deep depression, became suicidal, and overdosed on sleeping pills. She didn't die, but she lost custody of me and went to a psychiatric hospital. I ended up living in a foster home.



I went to my grandmother's nursing home and saw her in a wheelchair, unable to speak or move. All she could do was look at me. The rest of her life, she had to stay in this nursing home for people who were financially destitute. Back then, it was a very scary place for a 13-year-old boy. I never went back to see her again, and a year later, she died alone.

So when I was doing my Eighth Step, I thought back on my grandmother. I thought how much it would it have meant to her if I had made regular visits. I could have just held her hand and told her I loved her. Instead, she died alone. Though I couldn't undo this, I wanted to do something to make amends to the woman who had helped and protected me.

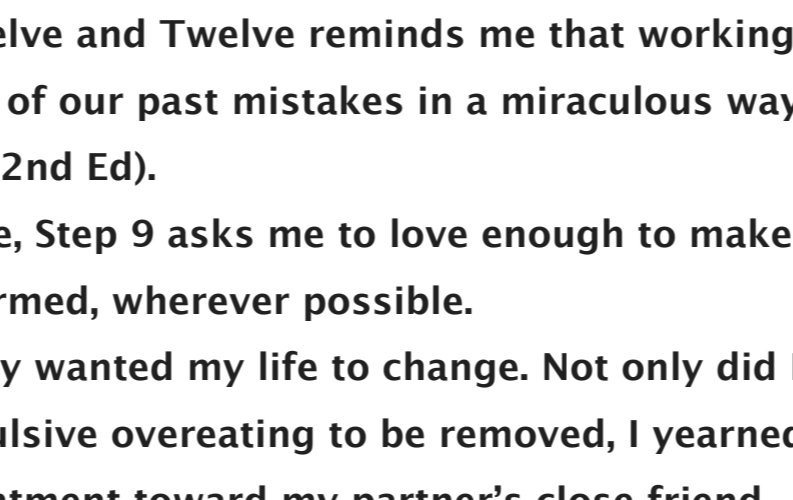
I decided to help other people protect their loved ones from the scourge of stroke. I learned that most strokes can be treated with medication within the first few hours, but most people still don't call 911 in time, because they don't know how to spot a stroke. So for my Ninth Step, I started a public health campaign to teach people how to spot strokes: If you think someone is having a stroke, ask them to smile. If their smile droops, call 911. Ask them to put both of their arms out straight. If one slowly drifts down, call 911. If their speech is slurred, call 911. I encourage everyone to go online and learn more about stroke prevention.

Half of my professional life is now focused on this service, and I have been able to teach thousands. This all came from OA's Ninth Step. Somewhere, I hope my grandmother is smiling.

—Peace, Kindness and Abstinence, Alan S.

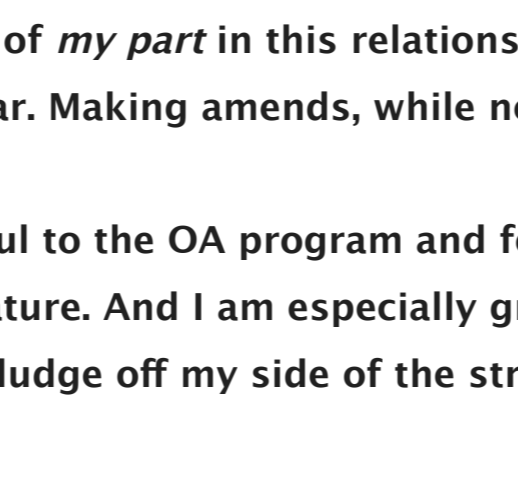
Reprinted from *Lifeline Magazine*, Sept. 2020 Issue, pp 12-14.
Used with permission from OA, Inc. and the author.

MY SIDE OF THE STREET



*Not everything that is faced can be changed,
but nothing can be changed until it is faced.*

—James Baldwin



The OA Twelve and Twelve reminds me that working Step 9 "freed us from the shackles of our past mistakes in a miraculous way. Our lives are changed..." p. 63 (2nd Ed).

Furthermore, Step 9 asks me to love enough to make amends to all persons I have harmed, wherever possible.

I desperately wanted my life to change. Not only did I want the shackles of compulsive overeating to be removed, I yearned to be relieved of the constant resentment toward my partner's close friend.

Nevertheless, this effort was one I was reluctant to tackle. I wish I could say that as I worked on Step 9, I addressed my fears of rejection and honestly and lovingly made the necessary amends.

I did not.

At the time, I was blind to the many ways I had clogged the relationship because of jealousy, bitterness, and an enormous need for security.

Fortunately, working the OA program goes on for a lifetime, one day at a time. With the help of my Higher Power, insights and awareness evolved. Gradually, the realization of *my part* in this relationship that had caused me such anguish became clear. Making amends, while not easy, was made with love.

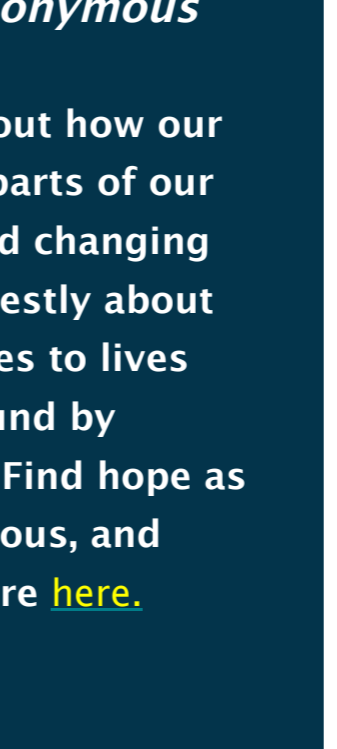
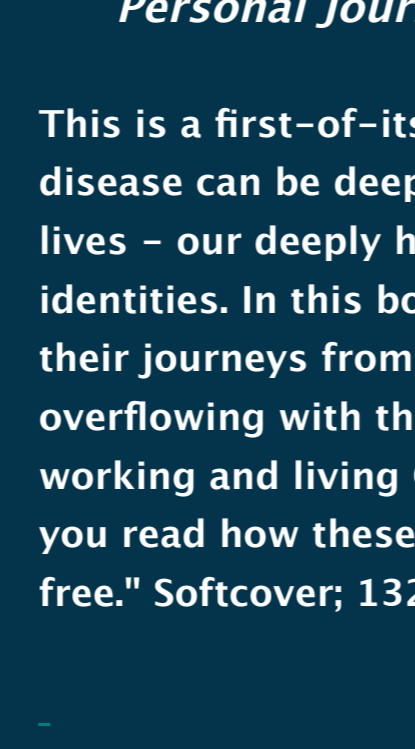
I am so very grateful to the OA program and for the wisdom shared in meetings and in the literature. And I am especially grateful for Step 9 helping me to clear some of the sludge off my side of the street!

*Do your best until you know better;
then when you know better, do better.*

—Maya Angelou

By Anonymous

NEW LITERATURE



BODY IMAGE, RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY
Personal Journeys to Recovery in Overeaters Anonymous

This is a first-of-its-kind collection of member stories about how our disease can be deeply intertwined with the most intimate parts of our lives – our deeply held traumas, personal relationships and changing identities. In this book, OA members share openly and honestly about their journeys from unfulfilled – even shattered – existences to lives overflowing with the acceptance, freedom, and serenity found by working and living OA's Twelve Step program of recovery. Find hope as you read how these OA members became truly "Happy, joyous, and free." Softcover; 132 pages. Available from the OA bookstore [here](http://bookstore.oa.org).

WHERE DO I START?
Everything a Newcomer Needs to Know

Where Do I Start? Everything a Newcomer Needs to Know is now available as an e-book on Amazon Kindle, Apple Books, and Barnes & Noble Nook. Where Do I Start? packs key information about OA's Twelve Step program of recovery into a single pamphlet, including the Fifteen Questions, Tools, Plans of Eating, OA Promise, AA Third and Seventh Step Prayers, "Welcome Home" story, and so much more. Help newcomers get started in OA with this comprehensive pamphlet, now available as an e-pamphlet. Print copies (#705) are also available from the OA bookstore at bookstore.oa.org.

SEVENTH TRADITION

"Every OA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."

While individual meeting costs have gone down during the pandemic as we meet virtually, please keep in mind that Region 7 and OA World costs continue as they support our recovery. The OA NoVA Intergroup requests each meeting consider temporarily redistributing the percentage of its 7th Tradition collections to increase support for Region 7 and World Service.

To donate, please visit [World Service, OA Region VII](http://WorldService.OARegionVII.org), [OA Virtual Region](http://OAVirtualRegion.org), or [NOVA OA Intergroup](http://NOVA.OAIntergroup.org). As always, however, we need you more than we need your money.

FUN & FELLOWSHIP!

Intergroup has launched a new committee to encourage and promote social activities among our Northern Virginia OA members, especially needed during this time of COVID-19. Two events are currently scheduled to occur monthly:

- (1) An IN-PERSON WALK (with masks and social distancing) will take place each second Saturday from 11:00 AM until Noon. Explore local trails in the company of fellow OA-ers while enjoying the fresh autumn air!
- (2) Craft & Chat along with other OA members via Zoom each third Saturday from 3 to 4:30 PM.

The Fun & Fellowship Committee also offers several opportunities for service as well as participation. If you're interested in either or both of these, or would simply like to learn more, please email funandfellowship@oanova.org. Put "FNF" in the subject line; include your phone number and state if you wish to receive the currently ongoing events list. More is being planned! Email if you have any questions.

UPCOMING EVENTS

(All events are virtual unless otherwise noted.)

- Sept 25-27: PHILADELPHIA AREA I.G. ANNUAL RETREAT
Fri 6:00 pm – Sun 12:00 pm [SEE EVENT](#)
- Oct 10: BEACH RETREAT 2020
Sat 11:00 am [SEE EVENT](#)
- Oct 10: IN-PERSON, MASKED, SOCIALLY-DISTANCED WALK
Sat 11:00 am – noon [EMAIL MORE INFO](#)
- Oct 16-17: 2020 REGION 7 FALL ASSEMBLY
Fri 6:00 pm – Sat 7:00 pm [SEE EVENT](#)
- Oct 17: OA INTERGROUP ZOOM MEETING
Sat 10:00 am [SEE EVENT](#)
- Oct 17: DEMYSTIFYING THE OA SERVICE STRUCTURE
Sat 3:00 – 4:30 pm [SEE EVENT](#)
- Oct 17: CRAFT & CHAT
Sat 3-4:30 pm [EMAIL MORE INFO](#)
- Oct 23-25: 2020 REGION 6 CONVENTION
Fri 8:00 pm – Sun 12:00 pm [SEE EVENT](#)
- Nov 6-8: 2020 REGION 7 CONVENTION
Fri 6:00 pm – Sun 1:00 pm [SEE EVENT](#)

NOVATIONS

It takes a village to produce a newsletter. THANK-YOU to all who have contributed to this issue!

Do you have some useful feedback or something you'd like to share with fellow OA members in Northern Virginia? Send us your thoughts, jokes, pictures, articles, artwork, poetry--anything that reflects your experience, strength and hope to novations@oanova.org.

October topics: Step Ten; Perseverance. To be included in the October issue, please send items by midnight, October 15.

Edited by
Kristin & Marie

