



NoVAtions

May 2022

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA INTERGROUP OF OA

What's Integrity All About?

Step Five's principle, integrity, has been on my mind a lot lately. Step Five requires that I admit to my HP, to myself, and to another human being the exact nature of my wrongs. For many of us, this is the "two" of the one-two punch that starts with Step Four, making a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Some of us dread this action so much that we spend our time in the rooms endlessly recycling Steps One, Two, and Three, and sadly never nearing recovery to the point of even glimpsing the Ninth Step Promises.

I spent an extremely long time moving through these first few steps and delayed Steps Four and Five for as long as possible—and I was nowhere near recovery for years. I had some periods of white-knuckled abstinence, but it didn't last long. I had to do the hard work to begin receiving the miraculous gifts of recovery.

What is it about Step Five that's so daunting? For me, part of it is exposing my faults and weaknesses to another human being. It's not just that now someone other than myself will know about them; even worse, saying them out loud makes them more real to me.

In addition, if I try to craft my delivery in such a way that I believe doesn't make me look so bad—In short, if I shade the truth, if I prevaricate, if I *lie*—I hear the truth when it's spoken out loud. If the lie is in my self talk—or even sometimes when I'm talking to my HP—I can fool myself that there's merit to my justifications for doing something wrong. (By the way, this works less and less the closer I've become to my HP!)

But when thoughts become words in the air between me and another human being, they are solid and real and I can't ignore it when the disease is directing my language. Ironically, even with all my talent at fibbing (I can weave a story!) my sponsors hear very clearly when I'm rationalizing, justifying, and lying to myself and have gently and lovingly guided me to reexamine my thinking. Sometimes a

sponsor needs only to ask, "So how's that working for you?" If I'm not coming from a position of integrity, the answer is always, "Not good!"

Being in the Program and working the Steps is gradually shaping me into a person of integrity who speaks honestly and with compassion about myself and everyone I encounter. Like so many gifts OA has given me, it has become about so much more than the food. I do believe it is impacting my relationships with friends and family and my interactions with everyone I meet.

I have faith that as long as I continue to do the work, I will improve. I am nowhere near doing a perfect Step Five yet, but the Big Book of AA itself says that the only step we have to do perfectly is Step One.

I do believe that each time I work a Step Four and Five as part of my daily inventory, I am getting better at it and am moving a little closer to being a person of integrity. When I act with integrity, my spirit is lighter and my conscience is clean. It's much easier to avoid the emotional buildup that leads to a binge if I keep my side of the street swept!

—Anonymous

Step Five

Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Spiritual Principle Integrity

Tradition Five

Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers.

Spiritual Principle

Purpose

A Spring Cleaning Checklist

The Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book states: "Remember that we deal with alcohol—cunning, baffling, and powerful!" (AA Big Book, 4th ed., pp. 58-59) The disease of compulsive overeating and food addiction is also cunning, baffling and powerful. It can creep into our thinking and actions sometimes without our realizing it.

One morning I compiled a list of denials, excuses, and rationalizations I have used to justify my food behaviors:

- ✔ Doesn't everyone eat this way?
- ✔ At least I am not doing drugs.
- ✔ I don't want to feel left out.
- ✔ It won't hurt me this time.
- ✔ I feel strong right now so I can have a taste.
- ✔ I "should" be able to resist; I just need more willpower.
- ✔ I can't refuse it — she made it just for me.
- ✔ The next diet will be the "magic bullet". I just have not found the right one.
- ✔ I can do this. I don't need anyone's help.
- ✔ I can't be that "bad"— I have a good job, house, car, money in the bank, etc.
- ✔ Other people in my life are the ones making me miserable.
- ✔ I am expecting company so I need to have certain foods in the house. I can put them in the back of the cupboard. Out of sight – out of mind. (HA!)
- ✔ I have had a difficult day. I need some "comfort" food.
- ✔ I don't feel so well so I need a pick-me-up.
- ✔ This calls for a celebration (of course, with food)!
- ✔ I am not eating my trigger foods and I am not eating compulsively, so my food plan never has to change.

—Anonymous

**GOD,
GRANT ME A VACATION TO MAKE
BEARABLE WHAT I CAN'T CHANGE,
A FRIEND TO MAKE IT FUNNY,
AND THE WISDOM TO NEVER
GET MY KNICKERS IN A KNOT
BECAUSE IT SOLVES NOTHING AND
MAKES ME WALK FUNNY.**

Cleaning Out the Closet

My first sponsor pointed out that the promises of the program are clear: If we clean up the past (Steps Four through Nine) and continue to take daily inventory (Steps Ten and Eleven), ever relying on God, then we can be free of cravings, restored to sanity and power, and find our will becoming aligned to that of our Higher Power. Today, these promises continue to come true for me, and I'm grateful for thirty years of abstinence, one day at a time.

Important for me was Step Five, the first Step that requires interaction with another human being. I knew I could withhold nothing from my sponsor if I wanted recovery. I wanted abstinence more than I wanted to protect my fantastical image of myself. It was time to let go and trust, time to tell all.

My sponsor and I met for two-hour sessions at the base of a park statue. I followed directions from the Big Book: "We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past" (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th ed., p. 75). Nothing was too small or too big to share. My sponsor used the metaphor of cleaning out a walk-in closet, and my job was to bring everything from that closet (my past) into the light, show it to her, sort it out, and see it honestly.

When it came time to list resentments, all I could see was what horrible things people had done to me. My sponsor walked me through each one, and for the first time I saw how I had let my defects of self-centeredness and dishonesty run my life. I also saw fear as a corroding thread running through everything. I began to see my part in every resentment, and practicing the Big Book's Step Four Prayer (p. 67) for each person began to free me from the bondage of self. What a relief!

When I finished Step Five, the promises mentioned on page 75 came true for me—I had withheld nothing and was indeed "delighted." For the first time in my life I knew "perfect peace and ease," and I stopped hiding. My fears fell from me as I began to "have a spiritual experience." I often had complete relief from cravings and compulsions. Amazing!

My sponsor did point out two small but important words in those Step Five promises: "We begin." There were no promises about "always" or "finished" (and here I thought I had arrived at the finish line). Right away there was more work to be done, explicitly described.

I did it. I wanted my arch to be strongly built, for I was stepping through into a new life. I've never looked back.

—Anonymous (*Lifeline*, May 1, 2017)

Upcoming Events

MAY

6-8 Fri, 6 pm to Sun, 3 pm

45th ANNUAL IG BEACH RETREAT

"Finding the Power Within the Steps"

8 Sun, 3 to 4:30 pm

VIRTUAL REGION 2ND SUNDAY WORKSHOP

"Dealing with Guilt & Shame"

14 Sun, 9 to 11 am

RELAPSE PREVENTION WORKSHOP

Region 7 VIRTUAL

21 Sat, 10 to noon

INTERGROUP ZOOM MEETING

Do you need to publicize a flyer or news item about an OA event? Send it to 12stepwithin@oanova.org and "The 12 Step Within Committee" will post it via group email and on the website.

Please include your contact information so you can be reached for any questions.

Sunday Longtimers' Meeting Moving

Effective Sunday, April 24, the Longtimers (20+ year) meeting on Sundays at 4 p.m. is moving to the Intergroup Zoom Line. Their information has been updated on our website at <https://oanova.org/meetings/>.

A "SHORTCOMING" IS LIKE A FLAT TIRE. A "CHARACTER DEFECT" IS LIKE DRIVING ON IT.

Intergroup Board of Directors

Chair: Amy A
Vice Chair: Nicole L
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Personal stories express the experience, strength, and hope of the individual member, and not OA as a whole.

Stories of Service

OA Region 7 Intergroup Renewal Committee is looking for your stories of how service has strengthened your recovery. Stories will be compiled to share with others in OA.

Suggested guidelines: A few sentences to a few paragraphs (less than 350 words). Include your name and the first initial of your last name, or sign your writing anonymously.

Suggested topics: "why service is important to my OA program of recovery," "how service saved my OA recovery program," or "how service kept me coming back to OA."

Send your response to:

r7intergrouprenewal@gmail.com by Wednesday, June 15, 2022. The Renewal Committee reserves the right to edit. It is understood that all submissions may be reprinted by other OA groups without permission.

World Service News

Stay in the loop with world service news! Read *A Step Ahead!* The Second Quarter issue of *A Step Ahead* is now online and features:

- a complete account of items up for vote on the WSBC agenda
- a sweeping survey on the state of sponsorship in OA
- an important audiobook announcement for *Overeaters Anonymous, Third Edition*
- What's New From WSO
- and more!

Go to <https://oa.org/a-step-ahead/> to read the newest issue.

Editor's Note

Thank you to all who have contributed to this May issue of NoVAations. And thank you to all who are reading this!

NoVAations is published on the 1st of each month; submission deadline is midnight on the 20th of each preceding month.

Submit to: NoVAations@oanova.org

Yours in Service,
Marie L. (571-429-2352)

Murder?!

This is a word search puzzle that contains a hidden message.

- Find all the words in the list. Words can go in any direction and share letters as well as cross over each other.
- Once you find all the words, copy the unused letters starting in the top left corner into the blanks to reveal the hidden message.

S S R S S M R S E S E E E S N N
 P E O U N T E M E M G H E O N
 R R S R I T I M E R A S I L I
 I E N U B K P R O R V T E Y N
 N N O A O U A W I R A I T D R
 G I P T R L T N R T I I C I O
 N T S P D H G K I I R A N E H
 G Y O P Y E O D I G S O L N T
 A S N Y M O E R E H T O M D W
 E E A I T M J T X P E C T I A
 N G N L S S N S R E W O L F H
 O I M E I I E E V I F O N E E
 S L S E T V O N F R E E D O M
 D I E J R L E V O L F L E S I
 S E N I L E F E W H R I S Y Z



A WISE SQUIREL ONCE SAID "YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT." HE WAS NUTS.

Why did the diet coach send her clients to the paint store?

So they could get thinner there.

—Submitted by Diane M.

I discovered a shortcut today. I put my Fitbit in the dryer and got a head start on my steps. I had 3,800 in before I put on my shoes!

—Submitted by Diane M.

ANSWER TO APRIL'S PUZZLE
 THEY'RE LIKE BAD BACTERIA:
 "Isolation is the dark room where resentments are developed."

ALIVE	EMERALD	FELINES
FIVE	FLOWERS	FREEDOM
GEMINIS	GROWTH	HAWTHORN
HONESTY	INTEGRITY	JOY
MEDITATION	MEMORIAL	MOTHER
PURPOSE	ROBINS	SELFOLOVE
SERENITY	SERVICE	SHARING
SPONSOR	SPRING	TAURUS

A photograph of two women walking away from the camera on a beach at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and light blue. The women are silhouetted against the bright light. The woman on the left is wearing a light-colored sleeveless top and a dark skirt. The woman on the right is wearing a dark sleeveless top and a dark skirt. They are walking on the wet sand, and their reflections are visible in the shallow water. The ocean waves are breaking on the right side of the frame.

Fifth Step Prayer

Higher Power,
my inventory has shown me who I am,
yet I ask for Your help
in admitting my wrongs
to another person and to You.
Assure me, and be with me, in this Step,
for without this Step
I cannot progress in my recovery.
With Your help, I can do this,
and I do it.