



NOTES OF HOPE



OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS NEWSLETTER

On The Mark

I had a phone conversation with a guy over the past weekend. It was the first time in a long time that I enjoyed talking to anyone of the opposite sex. You see, about eight years ago, I swore off men after one guy hurt me badly. I had no idea how dry my 'no man' season would be but I thought it was all for the best. Did I mention I was at my highest weight of 338 lbs? I was 22 years old attending the one of country's best party colleges. My vow came at a time when people seemed to feel they had never looked better. Women and men were coming into their own bodies... or so it seemed to me.

Back to the here and now: I talked with this guy, 'Bruce' easily and without reserve. Afterwards, I felt what I thought humans should feel like: enriched, incorporated, and special. I remembered there are nice people in this world; some of them are men. For once, around a man, I did not feel like the shy fat girl. Don't get me wrong, it's not pity, its just reality;

'the shy fat girl' it is a self concept resulting in what I've been told and what I see in the mirror. The odd thing is that had it not been for OA and working the 12 steps, I would not have known I had a negative self image because I was not in touch with me. The paradox is perplexing; no one lived with me longer than I have yet I needed to embark on Step 4: *'Make a fearless and searching moral inventory of (my) self'* before I began to understand what some part of me.

It's no secret that compulsive eating can numb food addicts to what's going on inside. In my addiction I learned avoidance. I ate to hide from pain. In OA recovery, I also realize that my addictions took my mind off the isolation that numbness brings. And in isolation, I missed out on developing the savvy necessary for experiencing genuine intimacy. When I first came to the OA meeting and heard the "recovery" terminology I thought, "How can I regain something I never had?" Then I heard one of the meeting leaders talk about

recovery in terms of a 'fuller living experience'.

I can have my weight return to normal. For the first time in my life, thanks to my higher power, I believe that is possible. But a 'fuller living experience', what's that? How in the world was that going to happen for me? Talking with Bruce reminded me of the answer. A fuller living experience can happen for me the same way everything else happened in life: *one moment at a time*. Be it with romantic interests, friends or myself: the opposite of isolation is integration. Cultivating intimacy is a skill that I'll have to learn over time. I missed that in childhood. That's cool. That's why OA got invented. It takes skill to discern which people are capable of sharing themselves (believe me, not everyone is) and I need to be steady enough to share myself with others. For me this is recovery, intimacy is included in my fuller living experience because it was missing before. Where does that leave me? With acceptance, as I become



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stronger in my OA recovery, I cultivate skills necessary for intimacy. The lack healthy relationships people were a huge part of what lead to my first binge. That was before recovery, before my higher power gave me strength to move through pain (if I so choose) and to face reality. I see it like a track and field game: when runners are starting to race, we here, "On the mark, get set, GO!" I had to get on the mark (wherever that mark happened to be) before I could proceed with recovery, with life. Part of getting 'on the mark' in my mind meant accepting that I had a negative self image. The 'mark' also contains the truth – my Higher Power sets the foundation of my life by firmly establishing my identity in love. But I have to communicate with Him through prayer and knowledge otherwise I am cut off spiritually and left out, thinking the same useless thoughts.

My encounter with Bruce left a good impression on my heart. I had no thoughts of food or OA tools I would need to avoid a binge. Our connection was the most genuine

camaraderie I can remember. With the veil of the phone nothing destroyed the encounter. I read somewhere that man sees the outside but God reads the heart. I wish I were more like God. I wonder how much pain and binging I would have avoided if I stopped judging purely based on what I see. Would I not evaluate people so harshly when I notice them carrying more weight than those infamous medical charts say they should. (And let's face it: that's almost everybody!) If I could learn not to judge the outside appearance of a person, would I be better able to forgive them and myself when all of us hurt me, understanding that they're doing the same thing I've done to someone else if I'm honest: look and critique? How many nights of binging and crying and misery could I have avoided?

In OA the I perceived very quickly: there's no use wasting time fantasizing over life's 'what ifs.' The fact is I'm not God- I'm visually oriented and I see people. I'm not

psychic and I can't read hearts or someone's true intentions. As a human being, heart reading isn't my job. My task is to relax and acquiesce in whatever situation I find myself. Of course, I can't do that- that's why I have- you guessed it... a Higher Power.

"Recovery brings clarity, friendships, and joy. It draws people into union with life. Serendipity shows up, again and again." Anne Katherine When Misery Is Company p. 7.

- Nila J.



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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Monthly Mixer

On the first Friday of each month several OA Members are meeting for supper. This is a way of getting to know one another outside OA. We would like anyone to come. If you are interested and think you would like to come, please contact Sarah G. at 615-383-7860 or Melinda at 479-692-9012 or Tina at 615-473-7907. Each month we will decide on place for the next month. Please join us!

OA MEETINGS

Meeting Cancellations:

Effective 01/29/2009 the following meetings have been cancelled: Wednesday noon at the Middle Tennessee Intergroup Office and the Early Bird meeting on Tuesdays at 6:30 am.

100 Pounder Meeting:

This meeting congregates each Saturday at 3:30 pm at the

Middle Tennessee Intergroup Office. On the 1st and 3rd Saturday, the topic is 'Sex and Relationships.' All are welcome to attend. Please contact Angie B. for more info @ 931-215-6832 or by e-mail at angieboo401@yahoo.com

Getting Abstinent:

Features a new speaker on the subject of food plans the 1st Saturday at 10:15 to 11:45 am each month at the Middle Tennessee Intergroup Office.

Spring 2009 Retreat:

See flyers at the Intergroup Office. The actual retreat is scheduled for May 15th – May 17th.

Step 1 Workshop:

Step 1 Workshop - February 28th - 1:30 - 3:00 pm at Middle Tennessee Intergroup Office. A workshop will be held the 4th Saturday of each month on the Steps.

Region 8 Convention:

The OA Region 8 convention will be in Little Rock, Arkansas March 27-29, 2009. Fliers are available in the MTI Office.

Intergroup Meeting:

Come one come all!
Representatives and other interested parties meet here from OA Nashville on February 16th at 6:30 PM Middle Tennessee Intergroup Office. All are welcomed and encouraged to attend.

ARTICLES/ QUOTES

Do you have creative juices flowing? Would you like to share on topic of forgiveness and gratitude for the April Notes of Hope edition? Go to the OANASHVILLE.ORG website by 2/28/09 and click on the Notes of Hope tab and submit anything you have. Also you can contact Nila J. at 901-603-1422. We look forward to hearing from you!!



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NEWS

Physician Awareness Campaign Underway:

There is much hullabaloo in the news media these days about the fact that so much of our country's health problems are due to obesity. Doctors often are quoted as saying they just don't understand why those with heart disease, diabetes, etc. can't control their weight. Those of us who have the honor of being OA members, and are obese, understand all too well. Rather than simply observing a moment of silence for those who are still suffering, Middle Tennessee Intergroup decided to do something proactive. Our Public Information Chair was charged with coming up with a way to carry our message to the health care community. The challenge to overcome was the fact that medical offices are overwhelmed with mailings plugging one or another product or program, hence most such mailings join

the "circular file" without being opened, let alone actually read. Together, they came up with a strategy to ask OA members to personally deliver to each of their health care providers the brochure, **INTRODUCING OA TO HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS**, along with a brief personal testimony. We are trying to reach nutritionists, therapists, school nurses, and others health care providers in addition to physicians. For those who feel comfortable do so, we also ask that you leave behind several OA business cards with your name and phone number that can be given to patients/clients who express interest in exploring the OA program. Many groups have already had a brief presentation and opportunity to get literature. The remaining groups will be visited over the next month or so. If you missed out on the visit, ask your Group Rep to bring you some literature, or email Doug G. who can be reached at Wesebago@sover.net. Many Thanks to all who help make this effort a success.

