

SUMMER EDITION  
2023



# THE SUNSHINER

## Grateful and Blessed

My recovery in OA has allowed me to cherish “the little things” in my life. One day at a time. Things I took for granted are now more front and centre.

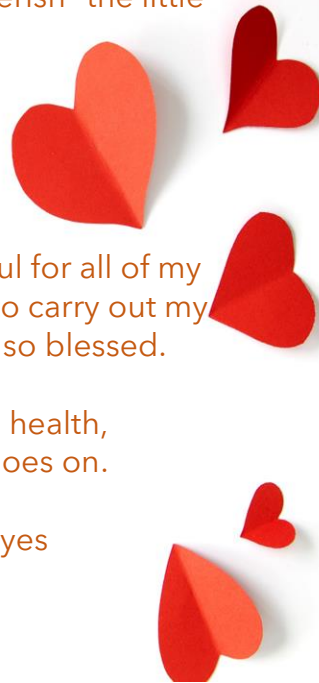
I live in an “attitude of gratitude”.

When I awaken each morning, I’m grateful for all of my senses, my healthy body that allows me to carry out my daily tasks, independently. Many are not so blessed.

I’m grateful for my program, family, faith, health, friends, financial stability ... and the list goes on.

May I never forget “the little things” my eyes see clearly each day in my recovery.

- Paula C



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## Fall’s Sunshiner theme: CHANGE

Submissions are an act of service and are gratefully appreciated by both the Sunshiner editorial team and your fellows.

Please consider sharing your recovery with the Sunshiner by  
September 10th.





# A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

This edition's theme is "The Little Things - Recovery is not about Grand Gestures"

## **This month's topic originated from an OA Whatsapp chat that I'm grateful to be part of.**

We were chatting about the 'little things' that disrupt our sanity and threaten our abstinence - just like the OA 12x12 discusses in step 1 - and how these small things can throw us off course.

Following the chat, I reflected that it is the little things that I sometimes have trouble turning over. I don't usually struggle with turning big life things over to my HP (illness, death, emergencies) because I have no other choice and I am clear that I need help. However, the little stuff - the crack in the windshield, my work computer not cooperating, an appointment running late - these often cause me to lose my serenity and bring me back to a multitude of character defects (or even the food).

## **The little things have the power to potentially to disrupt my abstinence.**

BUT the inverse is also true - the little things can add up and strengthen my program in a big way! For me, coming to OA was scary, uncomfortable, and the act of someone who was desperate. As a newcomer, many of the suggested actions seemed too big, too scary. The little things though - like putting chairs away, putting literature out, maybe even asking someone for their phone number - these were steps I could take that gave me the confidence and momentum to take bigger steps.

## **Still today, it is many small actions that keep me in program.**

It is the habit of sending my food to my sponsor. It is going to my home group. It is texting "hi, how are you?" to a member. It is sending the newcomer a welcoming message during an online meeting. I remember struggling to get abstinent, and coming to the realization that program is about momentum. One little thing became two things, led to three things, led to big things - getting a sponsor, doing the stepwork, becoming willing to take direction. It is not the grand gestures that have kept me program; it is the accumulation of these "little things" that have made me more willing and ultimately have led to bigger steps. These days, I don't always feel like I'm working my program 'good enough', but I do know that there is an easy way to get back on track - by starting with one little thing. Because that little thing will lead to the next thing, which will always strengthen my recovery.

## **For today.**

I know that taking a few minutes to write this piece is an action that will lead me to the next right action (and God willing, carry me through to another abstinent 24 hours).

**Yours in Service - Meaghan H.**

# Entrusting My Camino Journey to Higher Power's Care

Member Cathie S. returns to the pilgrim's trail and discovers **again** the power of taking small, daily steps and trusting in the process.



I am Cathie, a grateful, and still recovering compulsive overeater with 36 years of practicing physical, emotional, and spiritual recovery. Earlier this year my husband and I set out on our **second** walking adventure on the Camino de Santiago. The Camino is an ancient pilgrim's walking trail with webbed routes all through Europe. The trails are well-travelled, with hostels and services that have built up around the thousands of people who set out from various starting points each year, to make their journey to Santiago de Compostela.

My **first** Camino experience was in the fall of 2010, when my husband and I began a 31-day, 800 KM hike from St-Jean-Pied-de-Port, France, to Santiago de Compostela, Spain. The route is clearly marked by yellow arrows that guide travellers through villages, farms, and vineyards that have stood for hundreds of years. As a traveller on the Camino, you quickly become part of a fellowship of other pilgrims along the way. Friendships are struck up easily and help and support are offered freely with no strings attached.

The life lessons learned on that 2010 walk took several years to process and have continued to positively influence my perspective on life to this day. So, it is not surprising that in the last few years there was a persistent pull in my heart to get back on the Camino Road. My husband and I decided to follow our heart's desire and on April 2, 2023, we began the 250 KM Portuguese Camino. We started in the medieval coastal city of Porto, Portugal, and once again ended in the Spanish city of Santiago de Compostela.

In the time that had passed since our first trip, much had changed in the world, in our lives and in my program. This time I brought the enlightenment of the first trip to this one. I knew it would be a very different experience in a multitude of ways but what would remain constant was the need to put all my affairs in God's hands one moment (step) at a time. As I traveled the Camino road and practiced trusting my Higher Power, I learned some things which I share with you in gratitude and hope.

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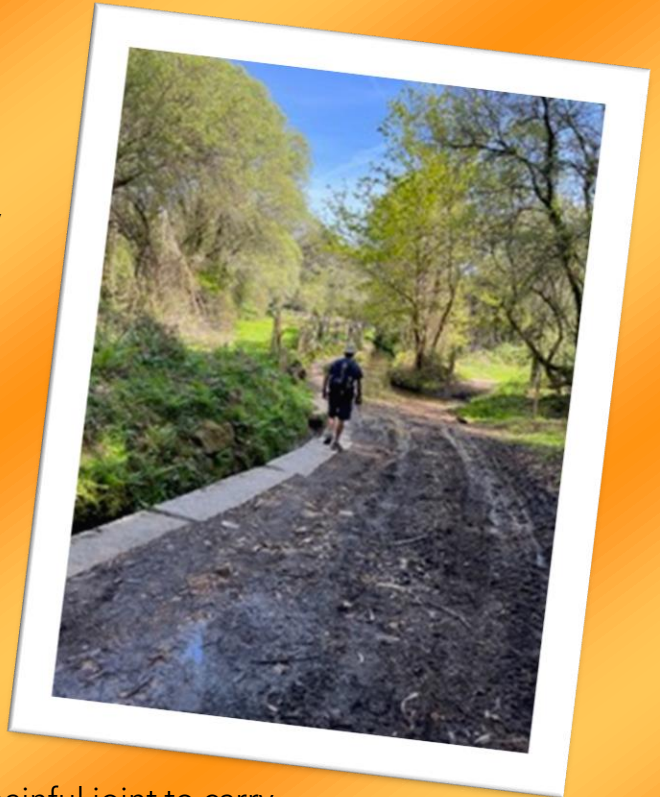


## ***The body is a marvelous machine!***

My first walk taught me a lot about physical stamina and how the feeling of pain and joy do not exist simultaneously. My stiff and grinding arthritic hip was a constant source of discomfort. Mornings were filled with my efforts to surrender to the path of the day and to the pain that the day's walk would surely bring. The joys of the walk were muted by the physical discomfort, however, being driven by pride and determination, I kept going in spite of it. Often, it seemed that my body was letting me down. The truth is that my body never let me down. It climbed and descended mountains bearing a heavy backpack. Amazingly, it carried me 800 km!

Thankfully, a few years later my body healed well after having a hip replacement and I began to consider a return to the Camino trail. After all, the body is made for movement! This time I looked forward to having one less painful joint to carry around although there were other areas of my marvelous, aging body that commanded my attention when walking long distances.

On the second day of the Portuguese Camino, I had a fall on some hard marble stairs. Fortunately nothing was broken but for several days I felt the effects in my back, and on my left side and knee. Immediately after the fall I worried that the injury might prevent me from finishing the journey. But once again, my Higher Power invited me to practice acceptance and trust. I trusted my marvellous body-strong, arthritic, and healing. It carried me another 200 km, growing stronger with each step!



## ***Walk in a relaxed manner, because it does not matter how fast or how slow I go compared to others. The destination is still the same. (A metaphor for living well one day at a time)***

During my first Camino I was often in a big hurry to get to the next destination because I wanted to make sure we had a place to stay for the night at an 'albergue' (hostel). It felt like a race to the finish line. Next I wanted to know, if we did secure a bed, would I get a good night's sleep? Would there be hot showers and privacy? What about finding a place to eat...? It was very stressful to worry about things I could not control. My Higher Power kept calling me back to surrender to the present moment taking one step at a time-literally and figuratively. Things always worked out. We got what we needed. At the end of each day's walk, there was a bed, some food, and a group of fellows who were eager to share their stories of the day.

***I don't need nearly as much as I think I do. And if I can do with so few material things, then it may be possible to do with less food and still be OK.***



Much about my food routine was disrupted on the Camino. The most challenging meal was breakfast. At home, I have a well-balanced smoothie every morning. In addition to providing me with nutritious body fuel, the smoothie gives me a sense of security...a safe food foundation for the rest of the day. Since a smoothie wasn't an option on the trail, it felt like I was breaking *my* rigid breakfast rule. There were other challenges around eating that stirred up fear and insecurity, too, such as, unintentionally not eating enough throughout the day or finding that restaurants were closed when we were ready to have a complete meal, or needing to eat more often throughout the day. Program had taught me that I had to place my reliance on God for acceptance and guidance. I had to trust that I could find the balance between nourishing my body and not eating compulsively. My recovery plans shifted to be more about listening to my body telling me when it needed nourishment, and how much it needed. The outcome of prayer and doing the best I could was serenity!

***I can't always have what I want, but I always get what I need.***



As I was planning my second Camino trip, I wondered about the lessons I was going to learn or relearn this time around. It was a relief to discover that this was another wonderful opportunity to take my physical, emotional, and spiritual recovery on the road. My practice in each of these areas would be different than at home but that would be OK if I was putting everything in God's hands.



In general, I wake up in the morning on the *agnostic* side of the bed. By this, I mean that I wake up each day believing that I have to take control of my life and am weak in faith in the existence of a Higher Power who can relieve me of such an enormous responsibility. Through the process of recovery, I have come to believe in a Spiritual Power that runs my life far better than ME. But in order to flip the switch from self-reliance to God reliance I must spend time each morning in prayer and meditation.

While on the Camino my self-reliant tendencies were still ever-present as I stepped into unknown territory (FEAR) each morning. My body was sore and sluggish. I saw the glass as half empty. So, it was necessary for me to plug into my Higher Power in a different way than I would at home where I sit comfortably in my meditation corner with the door closed and my meditation music quietly transmitting through my headphones. But even without those things, I was able to have an intimate prayer experience. I prayed with my body and my feet. As I moved, I would pray for myself and for others - starting with others. For myself I would be pulled into gratitude. My gratitude list was long! I asked God to help me a lot. And the help always came.





## **Connecting to others is at the centre of being human.**

I noticed this so much on the trail. We interacted with people from all over the world, some of whom could not speak English. So we would try our best to communicate because we all had something to say, some stories to tell. We would go to great lengths to get our message across. We used gestures or guidebooks, or even looked around for volunteer translators. There is such a driving desire to connect to others in order to learn from, to share resources, or to help one another even in the smallest of ways.

My experiences on the Caminos have highlighted the idea of 'earth angels' or, God-with-skin-on, being everywhere. They are people who cross paths/connect with us for varying amounts of time to show us "the way".

*"Today is a wonder-full day because I haven't seen or heard or felt this one before. So, Cathie, keep your eyes and ears open to all the surprises along the way."*



## **How far can I go? Beyond my wildest imagination!**

When I felt worried or doubtful as I trudged along, I would remind myself that God would do for me what I could not do for myself. I concluded that if God brought me to this particular place at this particular time, then I would be given the willingness, the strength and the courage to move forward. Each morning I would say to myself as I set out for the day, "Today is a wonder-full day because I haven't seen or heard or felt this one before. So, Cathie, keep your eyes and ears open to all the surprises along the way." Of course, there were many as there always are when I'm living in the moment.

Like the 12 Step Program, my Camino travels have shone a spotlight on the need to grow in God-reliance if I want to move onward in my physical and emotional recovery. I keep learning that no matter what happens, things will be OK. And OK does not mean that the path of my life will be smooth-sailing, comfortable, and pain-free but that I will be able to manage the hard knocks if I am Higher Powered.

With gratitude,

Cathie S

The Sunshiner wants to include your voice! Email us at [sunshiner@oa-ottawa.ca](mailto:sunshiner@oa-ottawa.ca) with questions, suggestions or contributions.



# My God Box

- Chantal G.

I remember when I first heard about a God box. It's a great tool to consciously connect with my HP, writing down my worries before bed and putting them in the box, or a gratitude list, or whatever else comes to mind. I thought it was a fantastic idea.

The only problem I could see, was the box. What kind of box should I get? People mentioned using a shoe box, or an empty oatmeal carton, but I didn't like that. It just didn't seem special enough for my HP. I needed something nicer, maybe with a hinged lid? I anticipated how satisfying it would be to close that lid, how connected I would feel to my HP

But nothing I found seemed to measure up. The boxes I found were too gaudy, or too small, or too expensive. Nothing was right. Finally, I settled for a box with a pretty wallpapered cover, that had the all-important hinged lid. Not what I wanted, but still.

But I never used it. It sat in the spot I had reserved for it, with a pad and a pencil right there, but I never opened it once. Finally, I put it in a box with other assorted junk, destined to be neither seen nor heard from again.

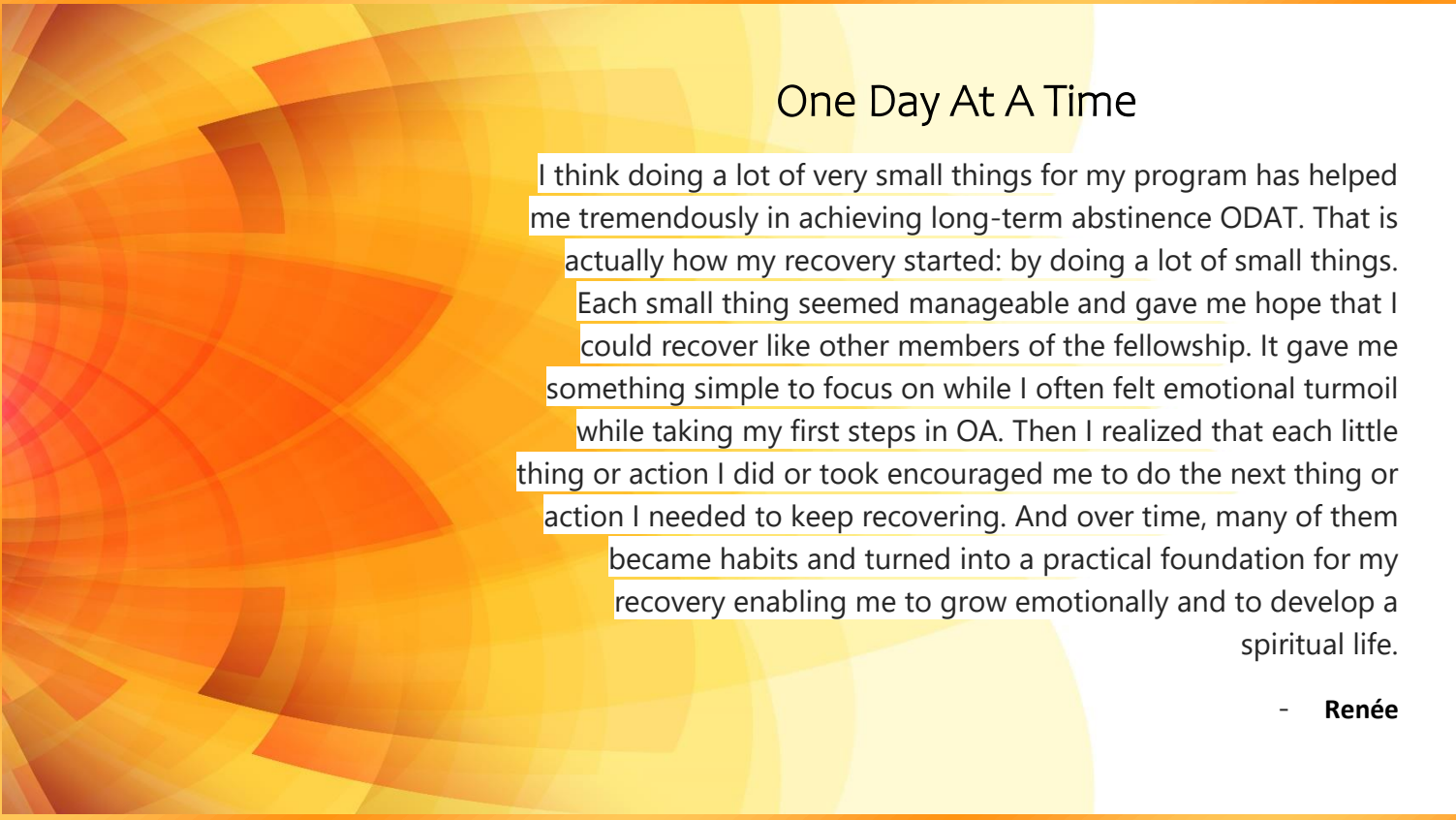
Life went on, as it always does, and soon I found myself in a very stressful situation. I worried all the time, even at night, which meant I wasn't sleeping. I wrote stepwork, and that helped, but it didn't get rid of the worry. Finally, my sponsor asked me, "Do you have a God box?"

I ran to find my God box, and there it was, waiting for me. It was smaller than I remembered, the cover was peeling, and I only now discovered that the hinged lid opened the wrong way. But I didn't care. I wrote down my worries on little pieces of paper and tucked them inside. And it helped. I needed to be desperate enough to use it but use it I did. I slept better that night than I had in a long time.

Life kept going on, and the stressful situation passed. I kept using my God box, because now I knew that it didn't matter what it looked like, or how special it was or wasn't. My HP didn't care about any of that. My HP cared about me! Now I know what's really important, and it doesn't matter what kind of box it's in.







## One Day At A Time

I think doing a lot of very small things for my program has helped me tremendously in achieving long-term abstinence ODAT. That is actually how my recovery started: by doing a lot of small things. Each small thing seemed manageable and gave me hope that I could recover like other members of the fellowship. It gave me something simple to focus on while I often felt emotional turmoil while taking my first steps in OA. Then I realized that each little thing or action I did or took encouraged me to do the next thing or action I needed to keep recovering. And over time, many of them became habits and turned into a practical foundation for my recovery enabling me to grow emotionally and to develop a spiritual life.

- Renée

Shared at the OA World Service Business Conference:

### STATEMENT OF SPECIAL FOCUS GROUPS SUBCOMMITTEE (UWD COMMITTEE), April 10, 2023

We all come from different backgrounds and experiences. The OA program is for everyone with a desire to stop eating compulsively. We are meant to be inclusive and welcoming to all.

**In our contact with some members of Special Focus Groups, including BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and Health Issues, we have found that despite all of the previous statements on inclusivity, there are still members who don't feel safe or included. We were distressed to hear that some members, while sharing their life realities, were told that their life experiences were considered outside issues and shut down. How will we ensure that everyone is included?**

Our primary concern is that all OA Members, in all meetings, feel safe while sharing their experiences, strength, and hope and not be told that it is an outside issue. Everyone needs to be able to share at meetings about factors in their lives that could cause them to act out with food. As a subcommittee, we are frustrated and discouraged that findings from contact with Special Focus Groups have not brought about change.

**It is an urgent matter that people are not silenced at OA meetings. Action is required from the Board of Trustees and the whole fellowship to create a safe space for all to share.**

***Always to extend the hand and heart of OA to all who share my compulsion; for this I am responsible.***