

Winter  
Edition  
2023



# The Sunshiner

## The Meaning of the Gifts

When I am having a bad day, nothing changes my attitude faster than remembering the gifts I have been given through this program. This came from the entire psychic change I underwent working the Twelve Steps. This is but a small part of what I got:

**G:** Gratitude. When I remember that person who suggested to me, "You should try going to OA", I am filled with gratitude. I could have ignored it, but I did not.

**I:** Independence. Before OA, I was dependent on everything and everyone. I needed the approval outside of me to sustain my self-worth. Today, I depend on my HP.

**F:** Freedom. Today I can go into any house, store, mall, workplace break room, and not be completely fixated on the food I may find there.

**T:** Teachable. The longer I stay in this program, the more I realize I do not know. To remain teachable means that I am humble and open-minded.

"The present is precious: that's why it is also a gift"

- Bruce R

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# A Word from Meaghan H.

Co-Editor of the Sunshiner

I had difficulty sitting down to write an article for this edition's Sunshiner. Life has been very demanding, I haven't had enough sleep, and I feel stretched beyond capacity many days. So, I decided to write a list of the gifts of recovery in my life. When I reflected on the things that I wanted from program in contrast to the gifts I've been given, I was struck by an old program adage: *"Had we limited ourselves to what we wished for in program, we'd be selling ourselves short."*

When I came to these rooms, I wanted relief from binging. I wanted to be thin, and I wanted to be able to stop eating and live a 'normal' life. I also had a vague idea that emotionally I was not in tip top shape and could use some help where relationships were concerned.

**"The gifts for recovery for me did not come in the order I wanted. I did not get an immediate reprieve from food when I came to these rooms – instead, I got feelings!"**

I kept eating and found a community of people who understood what I was going through – though I wasn't sure I wanted to be a member of this club.

I was granted the 'gift' of desperation, which at the time, did not seem like a gift. Desperation led to willingness, led to me embracing the program, the people, and the steps within – and that is where the miracle happened.

My physical recovery came as I worked the steps. Today and most days, I am at peace with my body and the food. I no longer go to bed hating myself, planning how to punish myself for overeating. My body is no longer wracked with injuries from overexercise. I have faith that the clothes that fit last winter will fit this winter. I have trust that my HP will take care of my body weight and size if I take care of my abstinence and spiritual wellness.



Emotionally, the gifts have been many, and have led to a very full life. I have been given the courage to move across the country, travel around the world, start my own family; the ability to have boundaries (imperfectly), and participate in meaningful relationships. I feel my feelings instead of numbing them with food. I have a tried-and-true process that helps me deal with life on life's terms – the steps.

I was not interested in the spiritual solution until I had to be. Today, I have a Higher Power I turn to (when I remember) – before a big meeting, a hard talk, at the beginning and the end of my day. I accept that my relationship with my HP is a work in progress, and that it is absolutely necessary if I want to keep the gifts I have been given.

**"There are so many other gifts I have received through this program, that I didn't know I wanted. A Higher Power to help me navigate life. The fellowship – folks who 'get me' but have also become life-long friends and who I lean on when times get tough."**

Sponsees – who help me give back what I've been given (and teach me in the process). A sponsor – who listens without judgement and brings me back to the steps and God. And finally, the steps – the 'book' on how to do life! We're so lucky to have found it!

When I am focusing on the stresses in my life- I forget the many gifts I've been given. When I look for the gifts of recovery – they are plentiful and continue to grow.





# The Gifts of the Program

- Ann S.

I think about this often. These are the gifts I have received from this beautiful program of recovery:

**Physical Gifts:** fitting into my clothes from one season to the next; freedom from the scale and weighing myself obsessively every hour on the hour; looking at myself in the mirror and instead of saying, "You fat...", I look and say, "Thank you, HP"; being in a body that feels good because I am fuelling it with healthy food also makes me grateful.

**Emotional Gifts:** I am free, for today, from the absolute insanity of being an addict and living in the hell of this disease. My brain is free from the obsessiveness of thinking about food and my weight all the time. I have happy, healthy relationships in my life because of this program; my children see and feel a kind, regulated Mother; I love myself enough to spend time only with people who I can be myself around; I can do service; most days, I am Happy, Joyous and Free. I have learned more about people-pleasing this year and I now understand why I USED to be a people-pleaser (someone recently described people-pleasing as being a form of manipulation – I used to try to manipulate people into liking me/giving me what I want so I would say 'yes' when I didn't mean it).

**Spiritual Gifts:** The Big Book says, (p.41) "Quite as important was the discovery that spiritual principles would solve all my problems": now, if THAT is not a gift, I do not know what is. I can turn my will and life over to the care of a loving Higher Power; I can turn the people I love over to their HPs and my HP; as long as I work the steps, I can feel faith and trust instead of fear; I can live a life of no regrets; when I am troubled by situations and people, I can say, "Change me. Bless them".

**My Sponsees** are gifts to me; I learn so much from them.

**My Sponsor** is a gift to me; she is my Earth Angel.

For the past year and a half, I have had the privilege of serving on the 12 th Step Within Committee; working together with this wonderful team to spread the message has been a blessing to me.

My OA Sisters and Brothers are gifts to me; they remind me every day that we CAN do this together, one day at a time.

What gifts have YOU received from the program?

## Update from Intergroup:

A new year brings new Intergroup membership!

Following recent elections, please see below for Ottawa's Intergroup as of January 2024:

### **Officers:**

Chair - Karin H

Vice-chair - **Lynda P**

Secretary - **Shauna H**

Treasurer - **Debbie K**

WSBC - **Bruce R**

Region 6 Rep - **Susan P**

### **Committee Chairs:**

Literature - **Cathy E**

Publications - **Luci S**

PI/PO - *VACANT*

Twelfth Step Within - **Ann S**

Thank you to everyone on the intergroup for the gift of service!

You will notice that Intergroup is still looking for a **Public Information Officer**. This person helps spread the message of OA to the public so that those still suffering know that OA exists! If you're interested, please contact Luci S (our outgoing president) or Karin H.

In addition, **many OA groups are looking for Intergroup reps** – this is a great opportunity to see how OA business is run – and to feel 'a part of' the fellowship in a very real and concrete way!

Last but not least, Intergroup recently did a survey of Ottawa OA members to help Intergroup identify the priorities of the Fellowship and to develop its strategic plan for the next three years.

**The results of the survey will be published on our website**

**([oa-ottawa.ca](http://oa-ottawa.ca)) in early January 2024.**

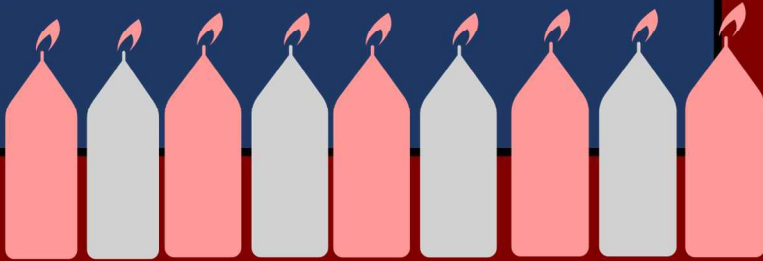
The women.  
- *By Deb.*

Without a doubt they've come the longest way  
tonight we celebrate the strongest ones  
If time's a river, never did they stray  
their oars held steady through the year that's  
gone.

Though rivers tossed and turned within their beds  
the women's abstinence remained unbowed.  
Though sheets of rainstorm darkened into lead  
they left them clean, the silver of a cloud.

We call them. Heroes, peace at your command,  
the mighty conquerors of Steps and Tools,  
like diamond heads that drill through stony lands  
the sharpest weapon is a precious jewel.

Four born survivors row the river's test;  
you're fine examples of recovery's best!!



**Announcement:** are you  
interested in participating in  
a weekday, daytime meeting  
in Kanata?

If so, please contact Shirley B,  
who can put you in touch  
with members who are  
looking to start one up.

Special Congrats  
to **Milner G.**  
(Potsdam NY)

who celebrated 11  
years on  
November 24<sup>th</sup>

The Theme for the Spring Sunshiner is

**"Together we get better."**

Tell us about fellowship of O.A. has helped you recover in  
mind, body, and spirit.

Sharing your recovery through the Sunshiner is a  
wonderful way to do service.

Email submissions, suggestions, and feedback to

[sunshiner@oa-ottawa.org](mailto:sunshiner@oa-ottawa.org)



# We Are the Message

By Dorit

Almost five years ago, I weighted almost three hundred lbs, had a bad case of diabetes, sleep apnea, a pre-cancerous condition in my uterus due to too much fat in my blood... and suddenly my kidneys stopped working. I was overwhelmed by fear, shame, and self-loathing. And the worst part of my life was that I was obsessed with thoughts of food. I felt that I was losing my sanity.

In a state of total desperation, I came into OA and heard recovered people speak of serenity and peace of mind. I was willing to go to ANY LENGTHS to have what they had, so I mustered up the very last of my courage to work the steps. It was a brutal effort. My disease was one of secrecy and isolation, and I had to FIGHT my way into doing the opposite action of what my diseased mind was telling me to do.

But I persevered, and to my great surprise, I had a spiritual awakening that took away my fear and self-loathing. I also received the gift of food neutrality, and therefore I regained my sanity.

Now I work the steps every day, and my life is full of blessings. I feel safe: I am loved, I am accepted, I feel worthy, and I have maintained a healthy body weight which has cured my physical ailments. The promises from the Big Book are all coming true for me.

“My story of recovery is my message because I am no-one special and if following the steps led to my recovery, it can also lead to yours. The solution to our common problem is in the Big Book.”

In my understanding of step 12, I believe that I have to share this message every day, because my continued recovery depends on it.

Here's what I do, to work step 12:

- “RECOVER, RECOVER, RECOVER!” Are the words my mentor uses, and I heed his advice, so I work all the steps every day with commitment and diligence
- I share my experience strength and hope at meetings, on zoom and in person
- I leave my contact information and answer every email or text that is sent to me
- I participate in “Newcomer Parking-lot Meetings” and answer questions about the program
- I lead a face-to-face meeting in my community
- I speak about my experience in OA to EVERYONE who will listen
- I write articles
- I sponsor others
- In January 2023, I shared my Experience Strength and Hope at the OA Birthday Party in Los Angeles

My mentor says that this program is like a vending machine, and you get from it what you put into it. If you want something from a vending machine that costs a dollar, put the full dollar in or you will get nothing and if you want the promises from the Big Book to come true for you, I encourage you to work the steps –all twelve of them— honestly and thoroughly every day.

Together, we get better!

