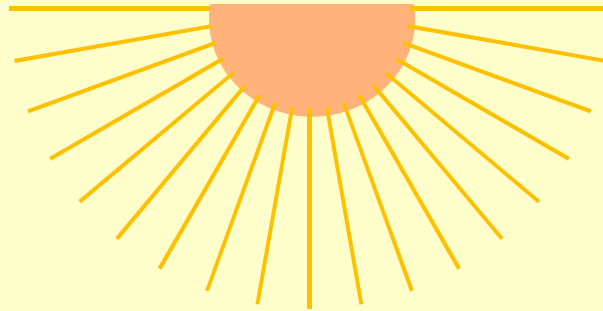




The Sunshiner

Summer
Edition
2024



Honesty,
Open-
mindedness
and
willingness

A Plan of Honesty

I have been a member of OA since October 2009. I knew I could not pursue a graduate degree while compulsively overeating. Food ran my life; I had to plan everything around it.

I walked through the OA doors looking for relief from the pain of compulsive overeating. My HP paired me with a sponsor right away. My sponsor asked if I could email her my food for the day. I was resistant. Food is a private matter! I was afraid to write down my food because it made me feel accountable to someone besides myself.

However, I was also willing to try anything to recover. By submitting my plan of eating to my sponsor, I became more honest with myself. I slowly became honest about other aspects of my life as well, such as my feelings, relationships, and past.

I realized being honest is the foundation of my recovery. It can be frightening, but the more I can face and sit through with the truth, the freer I am from it. I never have to face the truth alone. My Higher Power, sponsor, and OA fellows are here to support my recovery!

— E.M.

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— E.M.

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A
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from
Meaghan
H.
Co-Editor
of the
Sunshiner

HOW is one of the pillars of our recovery - Honesty, Open-mindedness, and Willingness. What this means to each of us may be different, but for me, when considering my path to recovery - I had to funnel each of these words into action.

HONESTY: As a newcomer, this meant showing up to meetings, and sharing what was going on. I am so grateful to the groups I used to go to, who gave space for newcomers to share. I talked about the food, about my obsession, about my waning will to keep going on. And in return, I received love, and hope from my fellows (with the phrase that has never left me "don't leave 2 minutes before the miracle happens)."

When I relapsed, honesty meant going to a meeting the next morning after a binge/purge and sharing. It meant calling my sponsor right after. Being honest was acting the opposite to my shame, which helped me to release it.

As an 'old timer,' honesty still reigns. Yes, I send my sponsor my food on a near-daily basis, and I still share at meetings. But to me, it means also not lying by omission - being forthcoming about what's happening and when I need help.

OPEN-MINDEDNESS: Open-mindedness to me was the admission that (perhaps) my way was not the solution, and that others in these rooms might know better. In terms of food, it meant letting go of the food and listening to those in recovery that eating regular, balanced meals would actually stabilize my weight (and help me stop bingeing). It meant listening to old timers and trusting that program-math somehow worked - that contrary to what my brain told me, working the steps would bring me peace (and stability with the food) vs. 'working' a food and exercise plan. It often meant a giant leap of faith - with food, with weight, with life.

Today, my brain is still programmed to 'solve' problems on my own. When I think about open-mindedness, I'm reminded of my former sponsor who, when I was stuck with a problem, would tell me to turn it over to my HP, and ask to be open-minded to what the universe would bring. Rather than tell me to "work harder, longer, and do more analysis," the answer was, and still is, to "let go."

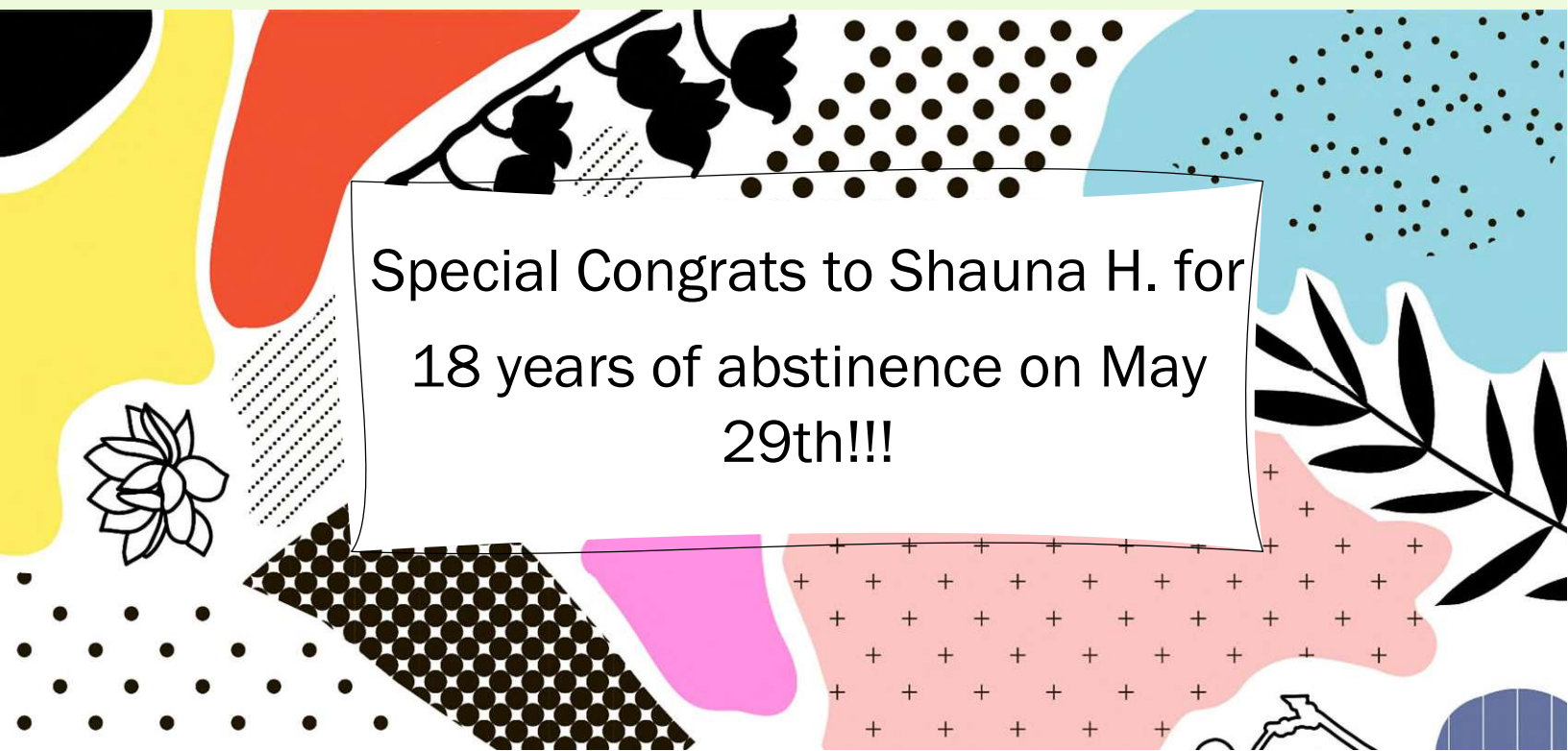
WILLINGNESS: Whenever I think of willingness, I think to step 3 in the AA 12x12 which talks about willingness as being a crack in the door. All we need is a seed of willingness to push that door open to let the light in.

In my experience, willingness must not be confused with wanting. However, prayer can help align these two things.

Willingness meant going to OA for the first time. It meant getting a sponsor, and then doing what she said, even if I didn't want to do these things (number of meetings, making outreach calls, having a hard conversation, adding in/taking out a certain food, doing my first step 4, etc.). Frequently, willingness was the product of pain and desperation.

However, I will also share one of my favourite prayers that my first sponsor taught me, when I have been asked to do something I didn't want to do: "God, please help me be willing, to be willing, to be willing, to be willing..." to do whatever thing it is I was resistant about. I still rely on that prayer today - with various repetitions of "to be willing." And the beauty of willingness is that however small at first, it multiplies. So that the next right action leads to the next right action, which leads to the next right action. (Which is how today's Sunshiner article came to be!)

-Meaghan H.



Special Congrats to Shauna H. for
18 years of abstinence on May
29th!!!

H.O.W. - Food Specific

- Kim S.

Honesty

This includes self-honesty. The Big Book promises that I can and will recover if I have the capacity to be honest. I want the truth, even if I don't like it (I have searched and searched the Big Book for the part that says I only have to take the recovery steps that I like). I recently heard that if I am relapsing or slipping frequently, I must take a long hard look at my food to see (TRUTH) what foods I am consuming that are triggering the obsession. Sometimes it is not only a particular food item, but the volume of meals that is triggering to me. Food is cunning, baffling and powerful! It is too much for me, but not too much for my HP.

Open-mindedness

My best thinking got me into a checkmate with food. I pray to keep an open mind on the possibility of an HP who can restore sanity and create wholeness for the first time in my life. OA has an answer and a guarantee. I didn't get here by mistake. I am here for a reason. I can and will recover if I consistently do the work suggested before jumping to conclusions and predetermining wrong or right.

Willingness

I will race to the gates of insanity or death if I cannot find the willingness to let go of certain foods or certain food behaviours. Or I can let go and live happily ever after. In step 3 when I made a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of my HP, I demonstrated willingness to accept the saving grace of the OA program and let go of the torture of food addiction. Willingness is a most powerful ally because it means I accept the lessons and progress I get from getting out of the way and letting HP handle all my food choices and food plan.

This all sounds simple but it is not easy.

The most important thing has been consistent, day-to-day working of my program to keep my food amnesia at bay. The amnesia that keeps me forgetting that I have peace and Serenity because of my consistent, daily recovery activities. The Amnesia that says I can have just one, just a taste, just a lick, just one time, just one extra serving, miss just one meeting, just omit that this 'thing' is bothering me...

Reach out and call another member today, especially someone different than your usual contacts. Ask them what Honesty, open mindedness and willingness means to them.

“Recovery During Recovery”

After decades of being overweight and obese, as well as serious injuries to my knees from when I was a teen and twenties athlete, I found myself with severe osteoarthritis of the knees culminating in both knees bone on bone. Years in OA, with abstinence and relapse many times landed me in a situation where I was too heavy to have full knee replacement surgery. I had become complacent with my weight and now needed to drop 50 pounds to relieve the pain in my knees. Recommitted to OA, my Higher Power, my sponsor, and food plan allowed me to lose that weight and then some. So now I await the day of my first surgery.

Of course, concerns of keeping my abstinence while recuperating filled my head. So, as in many aspects of my life, I made a plan – an Action Plan – for my recovery. I considered who would be helping me with meals, and how much I would be alone to prepare my own meals after initially getting out of the hospital, so I made a new Food Plan that would work for my new situation. Frozen foods, canned foods, fresh fruit with a good shelf life, and finally a premade food delivery service that conveniently provided nutritional information so I know it will work with my plan.

Next in my action plan is the tool of the Telephone. I started collecting numbers of OA fellows to call each day during my possibly 14-week recovery (I am having both knees done 7 weeks apart). Knowing I can call OA fellows, family and friends will reduce my isolation and strengthen my program.

Another aspect of my Action Plan is to continue to work the steps with my Sponsor and with my sponsees, although I have encouraged them to beef up their use of outreach calls as I may not be as available at times.

Literature is key to my recovery, and I think it will be key in dealing with the pain and discomfort of my surgical recovery, as will Writing about my daily experiences, challenges, and communications from my higher power. I have done a lot of writing, lists of things I needed to get in order to have my surgeries, from walkers to toilet raisers! I have made food lists for my pantry and lists of people to call and activities to stimulate my mind.

The most important thing I have done is to surrender the outcome of the surgery to my Higher Power. I am no longer afraid of what is to come or whether I will be able to remain abstinent. Using the tools of the program and knowing that my Higher Power is creating my highest good has given me a very unexpected peace. Overeater Anonymous has been a miracle for me. I was an obese woman with little hope for the future, in pain and with no recourse than trying some diet program where I would probably gain all the weight back after the surgeries. Now I am a Spiritual Light, maintaining an 80-pound weight loss with a life made meaningful by living the steps, traditions, and tools of Overeaters Anonymous. I am joyously looking forward to my OA recovery during my surgical recovery.

Stephanie G.

The Theme for the Fall Sunshiner is

“Back to basics.”

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

Email submissions, suggestions, and feedback to sunshiner@oa-ottawa.org by September 21st

