



Sea to Sky Intergroup Newsletter

Volume 171
November 2017

I put my hand in yours and together we can do what we could never do alone.

LET PEACE BEGIN WITH ME.

INTERGROUP NEWS & EVENTS

IDEA Day – International Day for Experiencing Abstinence: the Coquitlam meeting is hosting a workshop on **The Difference between Abstinence and a Plan of Eating** on **Saturday, November 18th** from 10 am until 2 pm at the King of Life Church, 198 Falcon Drive in Coquitlam. **BRING YOUR LUNCH!** The program is based on World Service’s materials here: https://oa.org/files/pdf/abstinence_and_plan_of_eating_handouts.pdf. For more information, contact Mikayla at 604-949-0747. Need a ride from the Skytrain? Call Maureen at 604-785-2236. See you there!

Need a Little Pre-Holiday Season Fellowship?

Plan to attend the Cloverdale meeting’s annual holiday **Candlelight Meeting** on **Tuesday, December 14, 2017** at 7 pm. Join this special event at Cloverdale United Church, 17575 58A Avenue, Surrey. Friends and family are also welcome to attend.

All members are welcome to attend our **Intergroup meeting** on **Saturday, November 25, 2017** at 10 am, 1630 Edinburgh Street, New Westminster. Free street parking. Accessible.

The following Intergroup positions are vacant if you are looking for a service opportunity: vice-chair, marathon & retreats coordinator and 12th step within coordinator. More details are on www.oaseatosky.org under the “Sea to Sky Intergroup” tab.

Spreading the Message: If your group has a special speaker coming or is planning a workshop or step study group, please send the details to seatoskynews@gmail.com for the newsletter six weeks in advance and anytime for our OA Sea to Sky website (oaseatosky@gmail.com).

☎ ARE YOU USING THE TOOLS TO WORK THE STEPS?

REGION 1 EVENTS & NEWS

Travelling the Spiritual Path of Recovery! Fall Retreat in Calgary on **November 10-11, 2017** at Glenbrook Community Hall, 3524 45 St SW, Calgary AB. For more information, go to <http://www.oa-southernalberta.com/events.html>



Save the Date! The **Vancouver Island Intergroup Retreat** will be **June 8, 9 and 10, 2018** at the Bethlehem Retreat Centre in Nanaimo. Awesome recovery, great venue. More details will be available online in January. Check out their website at <http://www.oaviig.org/members-page.html>

OA Region 1 is establishing a Speakers’ List so meetings looking for speakers and those planning workshops or a retreat can find inspiring members with strong recovery. **If you have a year or more of abstinence, are sponsored, are sponsoring (or willing to sponsor) and are actively working The Steps and attending meetings, please consider this service.** More information is here: <http://www.oaregion1.org/speaker-list.html>

WORLD SERVICE NEWS

The Fourth Quarter 2017 edition of OA World Service’s newsletter, **A Step Ahead**, has been published. You can find it here: <https://oa.org/files/pdf/asa-q4-2017.pdf>

Interested in a meeting service position? World Service suggests we have a **“Designated Downloader”** who checks oa.org and oaregion1.org for news & events each month. This person then shares this info with their home meeting!

Check out the new video series on each of our 12 Traditions. Find the introduction here: <https://vimeo.com/226014346> and the whole series is linked on the Podcasts page (<https://oa.org/podcasts/>).

SPONSORSHIP GOES TECHNO... 🌐

Did you know Region 1 is the only region in OA to have a **Virtual Sponsorship Program**? At our last Intergroup Meeting, MerleAnn M from Region 1 talked about how important virtual sponsorship is for people who’ve had an unsatisfactory experience with face-to-face sponsorship, believe they will be more honest with a non-face-to-face sponsor, are unable to have face-to-face meetings, and/or can’t find a local sponsor. It also affords one a great opportunity to get one’s feet wet sponsoring.

How to become a “virtual” sponsor or sponsee? Go to www.oaregion1.org and select “find a sponsor/sponsee”. Then fill out the form! Some sponsors require their sponsees to also sponsor others as soon as they have completed the Steps. What’s stopping you from paying this service forward to others?

Subscribe to your Newsletter by following our blog on the OA Sea to Sky website (www.oaseatosky.org). **Contributions** to the Newsletter are very welcome! Please contact Jennifer at seatoskynews@gmail.com. Please send announcements of special speaker meetings, workshops, and step study groups that are forming by the middle of the month. Your newsletter is printed the week before Intergroup (the last Saturday of every month). The opinions expressed in this Newsletter belong to the contributors and may not represent our Intergroup or OA as a whole. **Together we get better!**

PAYING IT FORWARD...

Do YOU and YOUR HOME GROUP have plans for these special days coming up? Send your news to your newsletter editor!



"I don't think less of myself, I think of myself less."

ANY LENGTHS: WILLINGNESS & STEP 6

This month's focus is the spiritual principle of willingness. Step 6 asks us to be "entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character" – the fears, resentments, insecurities, self-seeking and so on – that we uncovered in taking our inventories.

There is a saying in OA that captures the idea of willingness: **"OA is not for those who need it, only for those who want it."** But what does it mean to want to change? To be willing to change? To be ready to change? Willingness comes down to the state of being prepared to do something; readiness.

We learn in OA that we have a fatal disease. We learn too that recovery is possible: **"If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it — then you are ready to take certain steps"** [Big Book, p.58].

With Step 1, we have started to practice open-mindedness in setting aside our notions that we can "control" addiction, our compulsions and the unmanageable lives that result. We become open to new ways of thinking about powerlessness and strength in Steps 2 and 3. In Steps 4 and 5, we practice honesty: first with ourselves and then with our sponsor or another trusted human being. We lay our lives bare because we want to change. **"Honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness are the essentials of recovery, but they are indispensable,"** the Big Book reminds us in the Appendix titled 'The Spiritual Experience.'

When it comes to addiction, recovery is a decision, not a negotiation. Past experience tells us that we don't negotiate with this disease, we either recover from it or we don't. Do you ask yourself, "I'll have to see what I am willing to do for my recovery today?" This may be why your abstinence is not where you'd like it to be.

As we move to Step 6, we ask ourselves: *Is our work solid so far? Are the stones properly in place? Have we skimmed on the cement put into the foundation? Have we tried to make mortar without sand?* [Big Book, pp.75-76]. Lawrie C talks about how his first sponsor made him go back to revise and add to his inventory more than once when Lawrie equivocated on the answers to these questions! [www.oabigbook.info]. But once we can answer these questions to our satisfaction, we are truly at Step 6.

Then, our willingness is significantly tested: it's time to let go of old ways that do not serve us or our fellows. On page 76, the Big Book asks, **"Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? Can He now take them all — every one?"** In other words, do we want to keep holding on to a few things? A resentment against someone who wronged us deeply? Justified anger? A comfortable old way of looking at the world that we think keeps us safe from its ups and downs? The way we talk to others? The way we listen (or

don't listen)? Aggressive driving? The need to be right? The need to control? All or nothing? The idea that we can rely on ourselves? Eating compulsively to quash our feelings?

These and a hundred-thousand other worn-out ideas and ways of conducting ourselves in the world have to go. Otherwise we will eat compulsively again. Think of our lives like a damaged ship. We wouldn't go back to sea having repaired the boat save for one little hole in the hull. Even if the hole was tiny, eventually enough water would stream in that we would sink. It is the same with our recovery.

We are in the business of giving ourselves to our Higher Power so that we can be fully repaired—by God—and sent back into the world to help others. If we deceive ourselves into hanging onto just a couple little things, then, like the ocean filling the ship, our ego will find that weak point and fill our souls back up with the very kind of junk we'd just disclosed about ourselves in Step 5. The stuff that makes us want to eat compulsively.

As addicts, we have this uncanny knack for hanging onto behaviours that have proven again and again to cause us pain and suffering. Step 6 is about getting honest on this account and being willing to change. It is about finally getting ourselves fully and unquestionably ready to abandon the stuff that doesn't work in our lives. And because we are probably the worst judges of what does and doesn't work in our lives, we have to give it all away to our Higher Power, the good and the bad. That's how we avoid even the potential for hanging onto to something objectionable that can lead us back to eating again.

It's OK if we aren't yet willing. We just need to understand that we will not receive the gifts of this program until we are. If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing. We may focus our prayers on those who frustrate us, for example. We ask for others in our prayers and, in doing so, become willing to change ourselves.

Sometimes people share in meetings that their willingness has left them. That may be. But they can get it back. **Willingness is not a Muse that comes and goes at whim. We need not wait for Divine Inspiration to recover from compulsive eating.** If you have been trying to give up the old ways and have condemned yourself for your failure to do so, *simply be willing to learn how the old ways may be replaced with ways of peace.* [And then do those things!] If you are willing to be abstinent, even 'failure' may be used as a teaching device. If you are willing to be abstinent, you ask for guidance from your Higher Power, your sponsor, from whatever source will help you. When you are willing, there is acceptance... and then there is learning followed by action. And this willingness starts within you. **You can be your own catalyst, reaching out for willingness through your Higher Power and the OA Fellowship. No magic pixie dust or fairy godmother is required.**

Steps 6 and 7 get only a very few sentences in the Big Book, but they are the turning point in our recovery. Up until then, we've been dealing with our problems. Once we get through step 7, we restart our lives in the solution. But for step six, the good news is that we are only becoming perfectly willing, not perfectly able. It turns out that giving away our character defects is a lifelong process, and one that brings us closer and closer to God. **So, in step 6, we have simply to tell ourselves, that, yes, this is something I'm signing up for. I am willing to change.**

We have to go all-in with God or we go nowhere and stay stuck. This is the crucial turning point in the Steps. **If we say yes, and proceed through Step 7, amends are not optional. Prayer is not optional. Sponsoring is not optional. Compulsive eating is not an option. OA is not optional. We go to any lengths.**

-Jennifer S, North Vancouver, with grateful acknowledgment of concepts in the Step 6 blog posts at seacoastoa.org (Portsmouth, NH).

➔ Want more? There's the World Service Podcast on Step 6 - <https://oa.org/podcasts/step-six-june-14-2015/> or Step 6 Writing and Action List - <http://oahow.squarespace.com/2-questions-topics/Step%206%20Q%20%20Action%20Suggestions.doc> ♥