



Sea to Sky Intergroup Newsletter

July 2018

One doesn't discover new lands without consenting to lose sight of the shore...

HOPE IS THE RISK THAT MUST BE RUN.

INTERGROUP NEWS & EVENTS

"OA Study Hall" is in session! The Northshore OA Recovery group is forming an OA writing and sharing meeting on **Tuesday nights from 7:30 to 8:45 pm** at the Alano Club, 176 East 2nd (at St. Georges) in North Vancouver. There will be a short meditation, time to work on your daily OA reading and writing or individual step study, and then time to share on your work. \$2 per person for rent. Bring your journal, favourite pen and OA literature, Big Book, daily reader, workbook or step study material... 

All members are welcome to attend our **Intergroup meeting on Saturday, July 28, 2018** at 10 am, 1630 Edinburgh Street, New Westminster. Accessible with ample free street parking. Join us!

REGION 1 EVENTS & NEWS

Oregon Intergroup of OA, July 13-15, "Serenity Retreat", Camp Arrah Wanna Retreat Center, Welches, Oregon. USD\$170. Email: serenityretreat@oregon-oa.org

Southern California OA, August 17-19, "OA Men's Retreat", Old Mission San Luis Rey Retreat Center, Oceanside, CA. USD\$250. More info: Dave B at davebirge66@gmail.com

Greater Seattle Intergroup, September 14-16, "Big Book Weekend Workshop," Issaquah Holiday Inn, find the registration information here: http://www.seattleoa.org/bbworkshop_2018/

North Cascade Intergroup and Region 1, September 15, "Relapse – Prevention and Recovery Workshop," Best Western, Everett, WA. 10 am to 3:30 pm, suggested 7th is \$5. Details: http://oa-nci.org/images/2018_September_NCI_Region_Event_Flyer.pdf

Region 1 Convention, October 19-21, Spokane, Washington. Best rate of CDN\$197 for registrations by August 31. More info is found here: <https://www.oaregion1.org/2018-region-1-convention.html>

WORLD SERVICE NEWS

Struggling with connection to a Higher Power? Two resources that may help: the Big Book, chapter 4 "We Agnostics" (https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/en_bigbook_chapt4.pdf) and OA's now free pamphlet, "What if I don't believe in God?" (<https://oa.org/files/pdf/What-If-I-Don't-Believe-in-God.pdf>)



Sponsors

Sponsorship Day is now the weekend of August 18th. Does your home group plan a marathon or other special event? Let us publicize it in the newsletter! seatoskynews@gmail.com

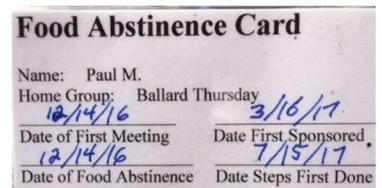
Green Book Step Study? If you are working the Steps with the 2017 Twelve-Step Study Guide (the green book), you can find a chart updating the page references to the new 2nd edition of our 12 & 12: <https://oa.org/files/pdf/Update-to-Workbook-and-Study-Guide.pdf>.

There is also an updated 2nd edition of the Step Study Guide coming soon Intergroup's book table!

The **OA Third Edition (Brown Book)** foreword and appendices are now available for free download. Written by mental, physical, and spiritual health professionals familiar with OA's benefits, these materials are helpful for carrying the message to newcomers and to health care providers: https://oa.org/files/pdf/Overeaters-Anonymous-Third-Edition_Forewords-and-Appendices.pdf

'MEMBERSHIP CARD' IDEA

At the recent Vancouver Island Intergroup retreat, Paul M from Seattle, WA shared that he made himself a **"Food Abstinence Membership Card"** for his wallet to remind him of significant milestones in his recovery. It's even laminated! Paul is actively working the Steps and continuing his >100-pound weight release. Paul kindly agreed to let your Editor publish a photo of his card in case this idea helps others in the fellowship. Thank you for sharing, Paul.



WORKING WITH OTHERS

At the recent OA Retreat in Nanaimo, Sheila J. of Los Angeles led us on an exploration of sponsorship and being sponsored within OA. In her recovery, (18 years in OA, 12 years abstinent, long-term membership in Al-Anon), Sheila has a particular focus on sponsoring those of us who slip and slide in our recovery. Here are some highlights:

A Chain of Being Sponsored and Sponsoring is Key: Sheila talked about how important it has been to her recovery to have lineage of sponsors – each person in the chain sponsors others and is sponsored themselves, so recovery spreads like a web. No silos. No one is on their own in their recovery – each has a network of people in the fellowship.

Invest Time in Those Willing to do the Work: Sheila J. says her sponsees can either give her abstinence and the work, or just the work. Abstinence will come if we do the work, she says, but we will get nowhere in our recovery without doing daily work. **She reminded us that we are powerless over the food, but we are not powerless over the work.** We are not powerless over our choices. Sheila expressly rejects the idea that "my body [or weight] is none of my business". Of course my body is my business, she says. "I'm done selling out my life, my body, for compulsive eating."

Sheila J. talked about how a person entering recovery needs to be "done", so emotionally and physically bankrupt, that they are willing to try anything to heal themselves. **This level of surrender to doing whatever it takes she calls being "Pine sol and toilet brush ready"**. The person who is done will be there, Pine sol and toilet brush in hand, if in order to recover s/he needs to show up at 5 am to a mansion with 10 bathrooms that need cleaning. Remember the Big Book says, **"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"** [p.58].

The Big Book is very clear about what steps we need to take and the daily work required for recovery. The Big Book often couches the program as

"suggestions" but in Sheila's experience, we need to follow these directions to save our lives. When sharing what a sponsor has learned with a sponsee, they need to be loving and give clear directions.

A sponsee who wants to recover will only have one response to a program suggestion from their sponsor: "Yes." The only exception, in Sheila's experience, is a sponsor contradicting medical advice. Otherwise, the answer is "yes, I will do the work." **We are practicing surrender in our daily lives. Our sponsor is a conduit from our HP.**

People who do not want to follow their sponsor's directions are rejecting their sponsor's experience, strength and hope. Often, they think they need to get a new sponsor. Maybe. But Sheila J. says the problem is usually not the sponsor, but not following directions, not doing the work.

If someone does not want to do the work, they are not ready. The Big Book speaks directly about only working with others who want to work the program. That is:

*Do not be discouraged if your prospect does not respond at once. Search out another [addict] and try again. You are sure to find someone desperate enough to accept with eagerness what you offer. **We find it a waste of time to keep chasing a man who cannot or will not work with you.** If you leave such a person alone, he may soon become convinced that he cannot recover by himself. To spend too much time on any one situation is to deny some other [addict] an opportunity to live and be happy. One of our Fellowship failed entirely with his first half dozen prospects. He often says that if he had continued to work on them, he might have deprived many others, who have since recovered, of their chance. [BB, p.96].*

If a sponsee is ready, anyone with 12 Step experience is useful. The magic is not in any particular sponsor. If a sponsee insists on working with only you, they are not ready. They are not clear about Step 3 because they still have a specific idea that someone else can get them abstinent. That is simply not true. We have the directions in the Big Book, those do not change. The sponsee is going to have to do some radical work to change their lives.

Hopelessness and despair brings people into the rooms. However, hopelessness is not enough for many people. That's why there are skid rows in every major town. If people are not done with their addiction and ready to do the hard work, there is not a lot we can do.

Accountability for Doing the Work: Sheila's program is rigorous. Sheila talks to her sponsees for 15 minutes, four times a week, by appointment. She expects sponsees to send a daily email reporting: ❶ what the sponsee ate that day, including quantities; ❷ who they made three live outreach calls to (or six message calls) (for we all need to build a real community around us in OA); ❸ at least five minutes and up to 15 minutes of daily meditation; ❹ ten things the sponsee is grateful for that day; and ❺ three things the sponsee did right today.

Sponsees can fail, they can make mistakes... but they have to be honest and do the work. The sponsee needs to feel safe to do the work and be held to their commitment to do it. If they do not do the work, Sheila J. clarifies, again, what the work is. She repeats the direction. She does not engage in conversation about all the life stuff with the sponsee ("it's too hard, I'm too busy...") because that is a distraction. Instead, she says, "first things first (do the work) and we'll talk tomorrow." The sponsor has a responsibility not only to the sponsee but to him/herself to hold the sponsee accountable. Otherwise, Sheila J. says, she will start thinking she doesn't have to do the work either.

Rigorous Honesty is Required: If we really believe the *Doctor's Opinion* about the allergy of the body and compulsion of the mind [BB, p.xxx] – and *Bill's Story* is true – then we can only compulsively eat on a lie today. The lies are: ❶ the food won't bother me; ❷ it's going to bother me but I can control it (or I can stop Monday, on the 1st of the month, on New Year's Day...); or ❸ my life has no value anyway, I may as well eat.



OA Sound Bites

Between Meetings, the Roving OA Reporter asks, "How did you develop your Plan of Eating?"

🗣️ I listened to other members.
– Sarah

🗣️ I asked a dietician.*
– Laurel

🗣️ I chose a weighed and measured plan [because] I believe it's the solution for every aspect of my food addiction.
– Mikayla

🗣️ My sponsor told me I should choose a food plan at which I could be successful. I chose something I knew I could do.
– Marty

🗣️ I'm not eating sugar because once I start, I can't stop.
– Anonymous

Thanks to Alicia D, our reporter this month, and the members of the Coquitlam Tuesday night meeting for sharing. **Did you know there's an article on food plans in OA in our newsletter archive?** Find the March 2017 issue in our archive here: <https://oaseatosky.com/newsletters-literature/>

*You can call the free "Dial-a-Dietician" service from HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 or 604-215-8110 with your nutrition questions [Ed.]

As the days lengthen and the nights stay warm, meditate on this: "There is a rhythm to life: growth comes from a winter of rest, spring rains, a summer of wildflowers and fireflies. If everything in nature follows God's plan, why do I think I have a better one for myself?

To live according to nature's laws, ... I turn my will over to God in the matter of food." - *For Today*, August 11.

We can do whatever we like but we have to stop lying to ourselves about it to recover from addiction. If we are triggered, our task is to talk about how we feel, not avoid the trigger. We remind ourselves that this is safe, our foundation in OA is safe. Sheila J. spoke about how she grew up feeling unsafe and food was her way to soothe herself, like a person with autism may rock to comfort themselves. Now that she knows how to keep herself safe, she can tell the truth about how she feels (and not eat over it). With difficult emotions, better out than in.

Stay in the Boat, Any Boat: Sheila J. is candid that her sponsoring is not for everyone. She says it is not running a tough, hard program to set clear expectations in a kind way. In following the Big Book directions, the sponsor is not being mean; s/he is gloriously obedient.

Requiring a sponsee to follow the sponsor's directions is not empowering the sponsor, it is disempowering the disease. These aren't the sponsor's directions; they too are surrendering their will to their Higher Power and the directions in the Big Book. And they require their sponsee to do the same.

Sheila J. will let a sponsee go (lovingly) if they won't do the work (or if they are abusive). But she can help someone find a different style of sponsor in her network if need be. **Sheila talks of sponsors as boats, as life-saving boats, in a harbour of addiction. The harbour is full of boats.** She says: "If you're not in the right boat with me, let me help you get into another boat. Any boat in the harbour will work. Just don't get back in the water. The sharks circle and they are hungry. If you are flailing, you attract the sharks. Stay in the boat. Any boat. Any sponsor."

Sheila J. shared how she asks all her new sponsees to read and journal for 15 minutes on "Working with Others", chapter 7 in the Big Book first and then again after Step 9. Then, compare the writings! Its message is good for those who are new and those who familiar with the program:



Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends – this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. [BB. p.89]

Even so, sponsees will dart away from the program at three key times: ❶ right away, when confronted with having to do the daily work; ❷ during the 4th Step inventory; or ❸ 9th Step amends. Let them go. Work with someone who is ready to do the work.

One of the moving parts of the retreat was when Sheila J. spoke about the **two key issues in life: forgiveness and love.** In the food, we neither love nor forgive ourselves. If we don't love and forgive ourselves, what chance do others have to get love and forgiveness from us?

To recover, we need to work ALL the Steps, look in the mirror and say, "I did that work" and feel safe. Only then will we not hate ourselves anymore for who we are and what we have done. We learn to lean into our Higher Power, into love, in the process. **There is joy in helping others learn to do the same.** – Jennifer S., North Vancouver

>> Thank you to Sheila J. for sharing her experience, strength and hope, and to the members of Vancouver Island Intergroup for all their work putting on an inspiring and useful retreat!

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*You don't just choose recovery.
You have to keep choosing
recovery over and over again*