

Slender Steps to Sanity:

Twelve-Step
Notes of Hope

by OAStepper
Compulsive Overeater

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Introduction

Recovery's inherently personal path paradoxically requires company; the Twelve Steps can't be walked alone. Come with me.

Nobody speaks for Overeaters Anonymous. I certainly don't. I've not been in these rooms long enough to do anything but sit back and learn. Yet as I've blogged, including drafts of these notes of hope, you've been kind enough to encourage my sharing them. I'm honored to offer them, hoping they may do for you what other OA members have done for me – sharing recovery, inspiring leapfrog realizations.

If anything I say doesn't ring true for you, find your own truth. I learn as much from those with whom I disagree as from those whose words I wish I'd said. I have tried to remain true to the message of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*. I would suggest if you find I have not, seeking your own consistent truth certainly is the better course.

The Twelve Step programs work for people of all beliefs. Find the higher power consistent with your own search. Mine is God of the Christian faith. I attended two United Methodist schools of higher education. While I learned of him in school, as church staff in three churches, and as a volunteer in others, I felt him move from my head to my heart through walking the Steps. Scripture suggestions from the Bible accompany these notes of hope.

Recovery requires company. Find an Overeaters Anonymous group through the website, www.oa.org, or join

an online group like www.TheRecoveryGroup.org. Find a sponsor, and read OA approved literature.

I welcome your comments and an opportunity to visit with you. My blog is www.oastepper.blogspot.com. My email address is oastepper@gmail.com.

I wish you peace, serenity, recovery, and joy.

OAS stepper

The Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over food – that our lives had become unmanageable.
 2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
 4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
 5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
 6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
-

7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
 8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
 9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
 10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
 11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to compulsive overeaters and to practice these principles in all our affairs.
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How It Was

Hello. I'm OAStepper, a compulsive overeater, gratefully abstinent. When speaking in writing or orally, we in Overeaters Anonymous tell what it was like, what happened, and what's happening now. Short answers: Whoa! Wow! Whee!!!! I could close, but what about the rest of the book?

My life had become unmanageable before I found Overeaters Anonymous and abstinence on December 17, 2006. I was powerless over food, computer games, procrastination, resentment, piles and piles of stuff to get around to, and hate. For my wedding in 1974, I reduced from about 210 to 165. No other program or effort ever brought me that close to an acceptable weight. By the beginning of 1977 my weight had climbed back to 180. Pregnancy and life changes grabbed hold and took flight. After that year I never again saw less than 200 on scales until I walked through the doors of Overeaters Anonymous.

From October 1996 through November 1997, my "hell year," family medical and emotional crises brought me to my knees. I seriously examined the possibility I might not live if I didn't reform. Shocked, I began to seek healing. I consulted various programs and professionals for help directed to stress relief, both physical and mental. Taking a blood thinner by the end of the year necessitated regular checkups, and of course you can't go into a doctor's office without being weighed. Obviously I tried softening the edges of my pain with food, for in the spring of 1998 the doctor's scales yelled my weight in big bold numbers: 300. Whoa!

That scared me enough to let some of what I eventually would recognize as “tools of recovery” work, and I got about 35 pounds off, probably more, but I maintained a 35 pound loss for years, never getting (much) above 265. Yet I never got below 235, despite the best intentions and plenty of time to get ready for a formal wedding as the mother of the groom, among many other motivations and goals.

I sought professional help a third time, attempting to sort through my psychoses (my term, not a clinical diagnosis). Something this time was prodding and piercing my protective wall. The gift from my counselor of the second edition of the book *Overeaters Anonymous* finally cracked through it. I read the whole book, thought it would be something I would look into after the holidays, and plowed ahead. Until December 17, 2006.

Driving to Sunday school where I’d taught the same class more than 20 years, I stopped at a convenience store. The routine, both Sundays and weekdays, varied only in the name over the door of the dispenser of sweet gooey treats. Sundays included cappuccino with the sweet roll. Back in the car, I addressed God aloud, a custom sometimes embarrassing when I think I’m alone but I’m not. “This is stupid.” So, I threw it out, yes? No. I ate it all. But, had I known it would be the last, I would have held out for an apple fritter from AM Donuts and Croissants, not a greasy old convenience store sweet roll.

That afternoon I Googled Overeaters Anonymous, found the website at www.aa.org as well as The Recovery Group, www.therecoverygroup.org. I joined the Newcomers’ loop in TRG, found a wonderful food buddy a thousand miles away as well as other supportive OA members, one even half a world away. With them I started my recovery. I had taken my last thoughtless bite.

Who starts weight loss a week and a day before Christmas? God. I began reporting my food daily, reading,

learning, growing (and shrinking) through Christmas. After one Christmas celebration with my extended family, I returned home where husband had been ill more than a month. His family would gather on Christmas Day. On December 24, I fell in my kitchen, injuring my left rotator cuff. Badly. I knew what I'd done because part of my hell year included severing the right rotator cuff in one fell swoop, that time not by falling but by sheer stress. I hurt, but husband was in no shape to help. I could have driven to the emergency room, or gotten family members to help me, but I didn't. I toughed it out, even finishing my baking. Christmas Day I got through the meal not eating anything I didn't think through first.

I could have gone to the doctor on Tuesday the 26th but, scheduled to leave the country on the 27th, I feared the doctor would say I couldn't go. I declined to give him the opportunity. My husband remained sick enough he passed up the pre-paid trip to London, and I went with my son and daughter-in-law. On the plane, separated from them and in a window seat, my getting in and out was excruciating.

Sharing the kids' first European adventure dulled my pain. Always mindful of Internet cafes, I emailed my OA buddies, reporting I'd allowed myself bread pudding, which even then I expected would make my trigger food list, counting as victory declining to return for seconds. My husband and I had a favorite London cafe where the kids needed to experience tea and scones, and those, too, were laid out for the email team.

Back home, the scales reported I'd gone through Christmas and a week in London with no change in my weight. Victory!

I established my membership with a face-to-face group of Overeaters Anonymous and a year later became the group's Intergroup representative.

I've worked through the Steps all the way, and I'm on my third time through, leisurely, working with the bunch of people I'm sponsoring. I've had three sponsors, one in Israel, and a second in my state though about a five-hour drive from home, and a third in an adjacent state but a long way away. They've all helped me as have the people I sponsor, my local face-to-face group, my friends from TRG, and my friends on my blog, www.OAS stepper.blogspot.com. I readily tell people I'm in OA, and it's delightful to have people not recognize me. The scales now start with a 1 instead of that awful 3. I used to wear a size 28 and now I'm wearing a 12. I lack another 40 pounds or so, but the weight isn't the big deal. The big deal is, I have a life, a life that's large and marvelous, awesome! I'm pushing my comfort levels, discovering the talents I've worked to hide, perhaps hoping to avoid overshadowing other people. I've been told for years, "I can't believe you do all the things you do." That has embarrassed me tremendously. Now – finally – I'm DOING what they thought I was doing before, and I welcome the comment. I can't believe it, either. And I'm not. God is. Thank GOD!

Step One

We admitted we were
powerless over food – that
our lives had become
unmanageable.

Getting Started

Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." – Matthew 19:26 (NIV)

Have you given up on weight loss? I had. Then I found the path. I hope to assist you in your search for it.

Mrs. Kinnon lived across the street, down at the end of the block when I was growing up. She firmly believed in cleaning out her whole house before leaving for any trip – down to the drawers – so nobody would come in and find *anything* out of order. She had whiskers that stabbed little girls when she hugged them, and she did and they did. And every single Monday she started a diet. She'd ended it by Tuesday, or maybe even Monday evening, but the next Monday, she started a diet. Again.

When I was thirteen, Mother took me to Dr. Brooks to get a prescription for weight control pills, and I started dieting. I didn't know I was fat until then, though after that I remembered Mother had been suggesting I cut down what I ate. From that day until December 2006, something in the neighborhood of forty-six years, I was on a diet. Probably like people watching Mrs. Kinnon, most of those days observers couldn't tell it, but I was. Or I was feeling guilty, one or the other. Forty-six years, one day at a time, is 16,808 days, give or take a day because of leap years. If I was following the diet a seventh of the time, like Mrs. Kinnon, I felt righteous about 2,400 days. I felt guilty and miserable something like 14,400 days.

Since December 17th, 2006, I've felt guilty about my food darned close to zero days, though I haven't had perfect abstinence from overeating since then. But the guilt, the burden, the shame is gone. It's time you, too, lay aside your guilt, shame, and burden and rely on Jesus' words, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." Those 46 years I believed the words because Jesus said them. I didn't live them until I walked into the rooms of Overeaters Anonymous. I walked through the digital door on the Internet. You may already be frequenting a group with physical doors. Perhaps your door is this book or your telephone book. Maybe it's several of them.

What's today? Write down the date. You can find the kind of peace, that level of freedom from guilt and shame I encountered December 17th. His burden really is easy, his yoke light. I know, because I finally got it from my head to my heart. With God's help, I'll walk you through learning how to move it from your head to your heart as well, no matter where you start.

Slimming Steps

Write down the date. Relax. Make yourself a sign and put it on your mirror – or make it into your computer wallpaper. Put it where you'll see it. Write, "Jesus promises a light burden and an easy yoke. I want to find them."

Icy Fire

Fear consumes
with icy fire,
tendrils vapors
clutching souls
with absolute zero.
Glacial fear creeps,
a smoldering floe
encasing mummified
embers glowing dimmer
by half-lives.
