

ANONYMITY is the spiritual foundation of our program.

When I first began OA six years ago, it confounded me what that meant. It seemed to me that if anonymity was the foundation of the program then it must be a pretty big deal. But I could only see its obvious value. I appreciated that we didn't use last names so that no one could run and tell the media, their friends, etc. that I was attending a twelve step program. But as I continued to go to meetings I saw anonymity listed as a tool. I heard over and over again that anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all program traditions. What was spiritual about anonymity? What I have come to understand about the spiritual foundation of our program is what I would like to share. Take what is useful and leave the rest behind as they say.

One of the ways I connect with others is to be "curious" about your life. It is genuine but it is also a way for me to feel instantly intimate without having to reveal myself too much. It is people pleasing and self seeking which on the positive side can make people comfortable and on the negative bars me from true intimacy-honesty. When I first started OA, I met other people this way and would share personal details but not necessarily talk program, in fact we rarely talked program. I found that this wasn't working for my recovery.

I started to work the tools of the program and make phone calls, connect with other OA members and what I found was that the members who refused to get sidetracked with personal details (where they worked, where they lived, who they were partnered with etc.) were the ones who talked program. I remember one conversation with a fellow OA talking about the stress and expectations of going on vacation. I asked the OA where they were going – an innocent question. In answer, they said it wasn't important, that detail had nothing to do with their stress. I was so impressed by that response. I had an "aha" moment, not the Oprah kind, but the OA kind. This is why anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our program.



Am I living in the details, or am I giving the details over to my Higher Power and connecting to what is going on for me in terms of my defects? Steps 4-9. For me, if I am talking about details, my job, my particular dilemma, I get mired down in the details of the "specialness" of my problem – my terminal uniqueness. If I talk in general terms, the irony is that it becomes more specific to what is going on with me emotionally. I can talk about the fear I am feeling, or the anger, without justifying it in the details. It's become a big lesson for me that if I can't tell the story straight up without the details it's because I haven't taken responsibility for my part and I need to do a step 4-9 where the details can get worked through. It is not enough to just chat about them.

I am also learning how anonymity works through my relationships with my sponsor and sponsee. Conversations are firm, frank and friendly but more importantly to me are focused on the program. It's all I am qualified to offer; it's the only thing I know. I often struggle with being friends in OA but I think right now the greatest gift I can give is to share what I know of the program. So I value those relationships that allow me to do that. I have a real challenge with making phone calls, because I don't know how to be firm, frank, friendly and focused, and what I want to do is be chatty so the other person will like me. Then I get resentful of all the time I spend on the phone, so I don't make the phone call. Insanity!

What anonymity is teaching me is that to work the tool I can call with just a program message. "Hi, this is what I read in the For Today." Or "here is the defect I am working on, do you have experience with that." "How is your program going?" is my favorite. I still struggle with that...but spiritual progress not perfection. I now have four and a half years of abstinence. Abstinence I define as commitment to my food plan and to working the steps in my day-to-day life. I am grateful for the program and all the support I receive.

Anonymous
Toronto

Upcoming OA Events

New Living Abstinent Retreat - September 16-18 2011
The Promises, speakers, rural setting near Orangeville.
\$220 for double room \$250 for single. Contact Pat G.
647-520-2742 p.guillet@sympatico.ca
Debi H. 905-717-1735 debih@rogers.com

Western New York OA Intergroup Fall 2011 Retreat –
September 23-25. There is a solution: A weekend walk
through the steps. \$109 before Sept 9 and \$129 after.
Contact Paulette, 716-465-3127 plvsbflies@yahoo.com

OA Public Information Event – November 6, 2011
2:00-3:00 p.m. North York Public Library, 5120 Yonge St
Toronto.

Literature

Literature pickup at intergroup 830 Bathurst St, Toronto.
For a price list please e-mail literature@oaontario.org

For **OA public information materials** to share with
your doctor, library or grocery store please email Public
Information chair Pat at pi@oaontario.org

Central Ontario Intergroup service elections will take
place on November 12, 2011. Please
consider if you or someone you know
is called to give service as Intergroup
chair, Vice chair, Literature committee
chair, Outreach chair, Technology
chair or Abbie chair. Six months of
continuous abstinence is required for each position
except Intergroup chair which requires one year of
abstinence. For more information connect with your
intergroup representative or current COI chair
chair@oaontario.org



Audio recordings from the COI Convention “You Are
Not Alone” are now available on the COI website
http://www.oaontario.org/convention_2011.php

OA World Service News

New podcast episode: The latest
episode of the Overeaters
Anonymous podcast features a
reading of the pamphlet Tools of
Recovery and is available free online
at [http://www.oa.org/podcast/2011/07/overeaters-
anonymous-podcast-23-tools-of-recovery/](http://www.oa.org/podcast/2011/07/overeaters-anonymous-podcast-23-tools-of-recovery/)



Index for *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous* now available. From
“abstinence” through “wrongs,” this comprehensive
index will guide you quickly to the important concepts
and key words found in the OA 12&12. Free online
<http://www.oa.org/pdfs/1212Index.pdf>

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Monthly Intergroup Meeting

Central Ontario Intergroup meets on the second
Saturday of each month at 830 Bathurst Street (main
floor), Toronto 10:00 a.m.-12 noon. This is an important
meeting where issues of OA as they pertain to Central
Ontario Intergroup and the program as a whole are
discussed. Each OA group is asked to send someone to
represent their meeting in the discussions and to bring
back information to the group. All OA members are
welcome and invited to attend.

Niagara South Group formerly Fort Erie Group
meets on Mondays at 1:00 p.m. at St. John's Lutheran
Church, 3837 Netherby Rd, Snyder ON.
Contact: Janet 905-941-1556

New Meeting

Monday 7:30 p.m. at Scarborough Missions
2685 Kingston Rd (at Brimley), Scarborough