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# The Northern Light

## July – September 2014

### ANNOUNCEMENT

**What:** Region One Convention

**When:** September 19-21, 2014

**Where:** Hampton Inn, Bellingham WA

**Check our Region One Website:** [www.oaregion1.org](http://www.oaregion1.org)

### ABSTINENCE. IS

On a daily basis, for me abstinence is getting my body & soul off to a healthy start: planned, sponsor-approved breakfast, spiritual reading, & basic physical exercises.

As negative thinking emerges, as it often does, abstinence means that I seek peace, most often through steps 1-7 (that is for my tenth step). Abstinence most often means I weigh or measure my lunch & dinner. That is another way to have peace with my food. Otherwise my mind is like radar, thinking all along that I surely haven't had enough food, @ of course, then, I can have some more.

Abstinence is generally living & allow others to be adults: making their own decisions, I offer to help, but not too much. I make my own decisions, with consideration of others.

Abstinence is closing the day with a peaceful prayer, that my best will do & that I can continue on an effective spiritual path tomorrow. Depending on God & program, in order to not turn back to food.

# WILLINGNESS

Difference between “being willing” and “trying to be abstinent”

If you are willing to be abstinent, this is a state of great humility.  
If you are trying to be abstinent, this is a state of great confusion.

A willingness to be abstinent implies you do not know how to do it,  
but are willing to learn.  
Trying to be abstinent implies you should be able to do,  
it but are struggling with it.

If you are willing to be abstinent you are open to receive.  
If you are trying to be abstinent, you are closed to guidance.

If you have been trying to give up the old ways and have condemned yourself for  
failure to do so, simply be willing to learn how the old ways may be replaced with ways  
of peace.

If you are trying to be abstinent, you will judge yourself a failure.  
If you are willing to be abstinent, no set back becomes a problem, for you know you will  
be shown.

Trying to be abstinent places the responsibility on you.  
Being willing to be abstinent places the responsibility on God.

Willingness to be abstinent is, in a sense, a prayer.  
Trying to be abstinent is an act of separation from God.

When you try, there is resistance.  
When you are willing, there is acceptance.

If you are trying to be abstinent, everything is interference.  
If you are willing to be abstinent, everything is of assistance.

Outside the will of God there is no such thing as success.  
Inside the will of God, there cannot be any failure.

## THE TOOLS OF THE PROGRAM

The Tool of Writing is very helpful to me. Since I live in a remote area in Alaska I keep in touch with most OAers I know via e-mail. That is using the Tool of Writing in a very broad sense.

The most helpful way to use writing is the daily journaling as a Tenth Step. And early in my recovery writing out a 4th Step and the list of people in the 8th Step have been powerful each in its own way. Putting pen to paper (or fingertips to keyboard) does amazing things. I can gain a degree of clarity that just never comes when only thinking about a topic. I have also tried the writing suggestion of writing with one's dominant hand for a while to express things to HP and then using the non-dominant hand to "hear" back from HP/God. Quite interesting things happen with that idea. As with all the other OA Tools, I find this one works best when I use it.

~~ Anonymous

### USING TOOLS

As a result of attending the recent workshop, I reassessed my abstinence. It had become a bit "loose" and I wanted something "cleaner". So I decided to pray daily, asking that HP help me to desire to work my program of recovery more than I want to practice my disease. It is working! I start my day with prayer and continue the "dialogue" with my HP all day long. I find it especially important to offer up gratitude for everything in my day - the pleasant and the difficult. All are Lessons that help me grow.

I am going back to the habit of writing down my daily food plan in a notebook that stays by my place at the kitchen table. When I think I want to eat certain foods, even abstinent ones, outside of the plan or the time for the meal, this reminds me of my commitment. I have had a week of very clean abstinence and it feels awesome!

I had a day where my stomach was telling me I would die if I didn't have a snack (of abstinent food) in the afternoon. Mid to late afternoon has always been a difficult time for me. So I asked myself what I could do instead of eat. The thought came that I needed to use a tool. So I picked up the phone and called a member I have never called before. It happened that not only was it helping me, but she was in a situation where the phone call helped her as well. Both of us hung up feeling better and not alone anymore.

I also read in the Big Book every morning, specifically pages 83 to 88, along with the daily readings in Voices of Recovery and For Today.

Giving service at my meeting helps me to keep coming back, even on days I don't really feel like it. Having a sponsor and being a sponsor is also very important in my recovery process.

Working the Steps is the most critical part of my recovery. I must constantly be on the lookout for things that try to take the place of my HP.

All of these things work together to give me a strong recovery for which I am extremely grateful. Keep coming back; it works if you work it!

--- Anonymous

### **My Tool of Choice:**

I write. I write because I am a compulsive overeater. I write to unpeel the causes and conditions beneath a slip in my eating and/or an awareness of compulsive food behaviors. I write for the light of understanding when I tell myself, "Just this once won't matter; I'll only eat a little; I don't care; poor me; I'm tired of being perfect; I deserve this; so what?"

I write, because when I call my sponsor to tell her I want to eat and that life is incomprehensible, she asks me, "Have you written about this? What's really going on? What might you need instead of food?" Now, I expect her question and increasingly, I can answer "Yes, I have written," rather than "I haven't, and I don't want to."

I write because it opens a pathway between my mind, my body, and my spirit. Over time, I've found many ways to begin. Sometimes my writing takes the form of prayer through Dear HP letters. At the other extreme, I have written list poems beginning with "I don't want to write today because. . ." When I can't find words, I write out the Serenity Prayer, the Third Step Prayer and/or St. Francis' Eleventh Step Prayer. Most often, I simply put pen to paper or fingers on the keyboard and launch, knowing that there is no right or wrong form, that this conversation is between me and my HP to understand a new piece of the puzzle, my part in the problem (selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, fear?) and the next step to take. Because I am still learning willingness, I schedule 5 minutes of writing into my day. If I set a higher limit, I find excuses and one day off turns into weeks. I am worth the time, and besides 5 often turns into 10 or more! Like today. . . .

Ultimately, I write to learn about gratitude -- for HP in my imperfectly beautiful life, for my sponsor and sponsees, for the support and experience of others in OA, for my abstinence which helps me live in recovery just one day at a time, and yes, for my years of compulsive eating which brought me to this present day and moment. I consider myself so very lucky.

~~Anonymous