

“We come together not only to vote on motions, but also to give direction to our Fellowship in the coming year, returning to our meetings and service bodies with renewed energy and new resources.” I copied this from one of the WSBC “welcome” documents before I left because I felt it was a great beginning for my report. Although what we talk about at Intergroup in preparation for Conference is very business-oriented (what do we think should be discussed, how do we feel about it?), the experience is so much more.

My experience is being in a hotel surrounded by approximately 200 others in recovery from compulsive eating, sitting in OA meetings with people I haven't yet met and hearing the same message of recovery that I hear at home, and listening to discussions on how we can best carry out our primary purpose, which was just expanded upon: to abstain from compulsive ~~overeating~~ eating and to carry ~~this~~ the message of recovery through the Twelve Steps of OA to those who still suffer. The underlined portion is new. There were three separate motions to revise our preamble, which is where this text appears, showing how strongly we as a fellowship feel about our recovery. The other two “preamble” motions proposed adding text to stress the importance of “sustained” or continued abstinence, and, although the final motion did not address this, I think it is something to keep in mind. I want continued abstinence as a way of life. I don't want an on-again off-again diet.

The next sections of my report will describe the workshops, my committee meeting, the business sessions, and finally some personal notes. I have included a lot, and omitted little, from my memory and from my scribbles. Before you find yourself falling asleep, please skip to the Personal Notes section!

2013 has been designated “The Year of Abstinence Awareness” and many of the workshops that were presented revolved around abstinence and carrying the message of recovery. I will try to summarize here some of the experience, strength and hope shared at the workshops.

“Twelfth Step: What Message Are We Carrying?”

Purpose: To emphasize the importance of carrying the message of OA's program of recovery and to discover ways this can be shared personally, locally and worldwide.

1. What IS the OA message of recovery?
2. How do we personally carry this message of recovery?
3. What are some effective ways service bodies and the WSO can further carry OA's message of recovery?

How to get people to your meetings? Put signs up at the meeting location (on bulletin boards, etc) announcing what, when and where the meeting will be. Advertise in local papers, put up announcements on grocery store bulletin boards, possibly with a map showing meeting locations. Hold PI events for your meeting to attract newcomers. Intergroup can reach out to struggling meetings; regions can reach out to struggling intergroups.

How can we let others know about OA? Health care professionals don't know about OA, so we need to educate them. We need to have booths at health fairs, both for consumers and for professionals, and at career days for health care professionals. Note there is funding available for professional exhibits. Sometimes the intergroup can send health care information to doctors if members can't or won't. Other ideas were to have booths at craft fairs, flea markets, county and/or state fairs...county and state fairs. Leave Lifeline magazine in waiting rooms. In the schools, we need to let teachers, school nurses, counselors know about OA.

How do I carry the message personally in and out of the rooms? Steps One, Two, Three are linked to Awareness, Acceptance, and Action. Reach out to members who you haven't seen lately, Welcome newcomers at meetings; there is always time to talk to your friends later. Does your meeting have a greeter? Put a QR code to go to the OA website on your personal card. Walk the walk. You get the confidence that program works by working the program. You want program real and vibrant in your life. Do you carry a positive message, are you

attractive to newcomers? What is the message I am carrying? I can live my life without eating because I found something better. There is a way out, there is a solution. Am I helpful, welcoming, practicing principles in all my affairs, especially when I'm not being watched? Practice an elevator speech or pitch for 1 minute and 3 minute pitches. Accept life on life's terms. How do I act? How do I represent the program?

Things to be overcome: What kind of message is it to say "you have to eat what I eat" or "I can't sponsor someone who does it differently". What about long-time members without long-term abstinence? It is easier to be in denial in OA than other programs; this is not life and death! Says who? We must be working an effective program to sponsor others effectively. What's the difference between abstinence and a food plan?

"Shining the Light on Sponsorship"

Purpose: To share the importance and benefits of abstinent sponsorship and encourage others to sponsor.

1. What are we doing to ensure there are enough abstinent sponsors available to sponsor?
2. What can service bodies do to emphasize the importance of sponsorship, as well as giving sponsors effective tools to sponsor?
3. What ways can we introduce our sponsees to abstinent sponsorship and the various levels of service?

Sponsors can set expectations for sponsees: honesty, calls, meetings, service, meditation, time to spend on step work; expectations that they will sponsor when qualified. You are a sponsor after 30 days or three steps.

What can service bodies or meetings do? Talk about it at meetings, hold workshops, list of available sponsors, promote pamphlets, make working with a sponsor as a requirement for service positions. At events put "S" on name tag if available to sponsor. Have sponsors and/or available sponsors stand up. Sponsor a workshop on training sponsors.

General comments: There is no chapter in the Big Book "Into Thinking," "Into Prayer," "Into Talking." Behave better than you feel. Take away the fear of sponsorship. We need abstinent members to have abstinent sponsors. Remove the negative expectation that if you break your abstinence it will happen again. Do away with the idea that breaking one's abstinence is not that bad. Sponsors who pick up shouldn't be sponsors. Sponsoring benefits yourself because it's a joy, you receive so many gifts, learn so much, and learn to relate to people. A temporary sponsor is better than no sponsor, and may become permanent. This is a disease of isolation, and recovery/sponsorship creates relationships. For your first year, learn the basics of staying abstinent, using the tools, shopping, dealing with food. Don't just ask "how was your day," ask "what will you do about it?" We need to encourage newcomers to find a sponsor and work with them, have a plan so they don't leave the room without an OA friend, if not a sponsor. Don't give sponsees a reason to quit. Set limits so you don't burn out.

"Self Supporting Through Our Own Contributions"

Purpose: To re-emphasize the importance of the Seventh Tradition by increasing contributions and literature sales on the OA Web site, and through face-to-face meetings

1. How can we integrate virtual services into OA's financial structure to encourage contributions and service?
2. Does your group suggest a specific donation amount and what can we do to encourage members to contribute? Why is 'service' considered an important part of the Seventh Tradition?
3. After paying group expenses, including a prudent reserve, why is it important to forward Seventh Tradition funds to region and the WSO?

Give more financially: How much money did you spend when you were eating? Have a suggested donation at meetings, such as \$3. Your life depends on it. One community has a suggested donation of \$6 and people pay it.

On the other hand, it was suggested to pass the basket at events rather than suggest a donation; some have found this generates more income. Integrate your virtual meetings into your seventh tradition donations, either donating online or at your face to face meetings. Online meetings may not pay rent but they have other expenses, and need to support their service boards and world service. OA is valuable, treat it that way. OA saved my life, did the other charities I donate to? Donate a certain amount for each year in program or each year of abstinence. Instead of giving sponsors/sponsees gifts, donate to OA in their name and send them a card. Remember your donations are magic money, you get back what you put in ten-fold!

Give more of your time: Why do service? Meetings will die if we don't, but sometimes we have to step back and let a meeting die if it's not important to others. Stress why service is part of the seventh tradition and the importance of forwarding the excess to your region and to world service. We learn a lot by doing service. Money isn't enough. Service bodies need members to do the service; for example, having the money to have a trade show booth without members to staff it. If your meeting doesn't have an intergroup rep, you're not being self-supporting; others have to do it for you. Contribute to Lifeline, don't just subscribe. A few new people can regenerate a meeting or an intergroup. How much time did you spend eating/binging? What would go away if we didn't have the intergroup? The region? World service? Show their importance in your reports. Make sure they are important. People find us from the OA website. Rotation of service is important, share the wealth by sharing the service. It comes back to sponsors and sponsees; make sure your sponsees are doing service. Remember your service is magic; you get back what you put in ten-fold.

“A Healthy Meeting: What Are the Characteristics”

Purpose: To focus on the elements of healthy meetings, which help members and newcomers find lasting recovery from compulsive eating

1. Are we promoting or emphasizing the necessity of working OA's Twelve Steps as the way to recovery from compulsive eating?
2. Are we promoting or emphasizing the importance of service in meetings?
3. How do good meetings get better?

Welcome newcomers, don't visit with friends. Study the steps and uphold the traditions. Emphasize the tools and the importance of a higher power. Encourage meetings to do group inventories; use the OA Handbook, the OA website, the Twelfth Step Within Handbook. Go over the healthy meeting checklist. Start and end on time. Offer hope. Contribute financially and through service. Identify sponsors. Remind members of the importance of anonymity. Hold regular group conscience meetings. Fill positions and rotate service. Spend one minute on the problem and two minutes on the solution. You can't sell this, you have to experience it. Take advantage of the Group Support section on oa.org. Ask people to do the job you think they would be good at. Carry the message. If necessary, use words. Service is Miracle Grow for your character defects. It makes you stretch and grow. We do the possible, Higher Power does the impossible. Do you, your meeting, your intergroup attract or repel? Do I give hope? Meeting should be solution and positive focused, not group therapy. Meeting are where the power is. Allow for open discussion for group support at intergroup where people can get ideas and resources. Have a monthly “take-away” which has been downloaded from the web. Members have to speak up at group conscience meetings. Brainstorm after an event along with or instead of a written evaluation. Put open positions on board at meeting to see where the group stands.

“All About Conference”/“Strategic Planning: Into Action in OA”

I started out attending the introductory session because it's always a good refresher and I wanted to support the new person I was mentoring. A long-time program friend asked what I was doing there and almost forced me into the Strategic Planning workshop. I was so grateful! We broke up into groups to discuss the Strategic Plan goals and tasks. A lot of what was discussed was mentioned earlier, but it was good to hear things again and in a different way. An intergroup-level sponsor list was discussed. Can our intergroup benefit from that?

Sponsorship role-playing was discussed to help increase comfort level of sponsors. A mini sponsor discussion at a regular meeting can help promote sponsorship. Having some kind of sponsor training was brought up, not to be confused with a sponsorship workshop. Sponsor speed-dating? Interesting thought but need pools of sponsors and sponsees! Job descriptions for Region and WSBC positions may help delegates be more effective. Spreading out the World Service report over several meetings may make it more interesting and effective. The focus of the new Strategic Plan will be “Our Primary Purpose” and there are three goals: 1) How to get abstinent, 2) Work all Twelve Steps and 3) Increase the focus on individual responsibility to carry the message. Slogans corresponding to these goals are: 1) Abstinence is #1, 2) It takes all twelve and 3) For this I am responsible. What does our primary purpose mean? There will be information on the strategic plan available on oa.org on the Board of Trustees page. Perhaps our intergroup can create a strategic plan based on the OA plan. Watch “A Step Ahead” for more details.

“Forum: Searching and Fearless: A Good Look”

Every year the Region Chairs Committee leads a forum for all delegates to attend and participate in. The purpose of this year's forum was to review the information derived from the recent OA survey and use that information to develop action plans. The forum began with a cute skit revolving around some seedy-looking trusted servants managing a warehouse of OA literature. There were several things that were pointed out to be kept in mind regarding literature and the traditions; in particular, make sure your literature is up to date and that it is all OA board-approved or OA conference-approved.

We divided into groups and were given a topic to discuss. Our question was “Is Twelfth Step Within Helpful?” Apparently our group decided it was, because we ran out of time discussing different activities that have been done or can be done to support this concept. Included were having regular TSW meetings and/or recovery from relapse meetings, making sure members have sponsors, calling members who are struggling, calling those we haven't seen, and emphasizing the steps. We then reconvened, and a representative from each group summarized the discussion for all to hear.

Most respondents selected meetings as their favorite tool and telephone as their least favorite. Ironically, many members said that they wanted to be called that week by a member from the meeting and that they wanted to receive phone calls!

It was clear that many people come for the physical recovery and stay for abstinence (sanity), but there are also those who come for the sanity. There is a critical need for sponsors, and especially for abstinent sponsors. Members enjoy the fellowship aspect of OA, and expressed that they appreciated attending retreats and other events. Some areas even sponsored monthly events!

A number of delegates were seen wearing large buttons showing their “Before” pictures. This was a great way to show the program works. The sponsorship pamphlets that OA offers are both excellent tools for sponsors and sponsees.

A full report on the forum will be available at a later date, so stay tuned! There is a lot of great information on www.oa.org and members would benefit from checking it often, and being reminded of what is out there. The World Service Office is getting ready to launch a mobile-friendly website, so watch for that.

The workshop on **“Parliamentary Procedure”** is always a good refresher for how things work on a scale ten times larger than intergroup. I know we loosely follow Robert’s Rules, and I think the larger the group, the tighter the rules need to be! I am always inspired to read more in order to be more effective at intergroup.

The **“Literature Q & A”** session was meant to answer questions that delegates had about the two literature proposals in order to save time on the conference floor. The first piece of literature was the For Today e-workbook, which will only be available as a download from WSO due to financial considerations. Many of the questions revolved around this issue. The Voices of Recovery e-workbook has been available for several years. Both books provide questions to accompany the text of our daily readers. This proposal was adopted during the business session and the document will be available soon. The second proposal was for a Unity With Diversity Inventory checklist. This proposal was not adopted. There were many concerns about the list of various “diversities” of which we ought to be inclusive, some taking issue with what was included/omitted, and some showing concern that there was a list and it would probably be omitting at least one “diversity.” Wording was an issue to many. When a literature proposal fails, the procedure is to allow delegates to fill out an “evaluation” in order to determine the next course of action.

“2013: The Year of Abstinence Awareness (“Taking Action”)

To be honest, this was at the end of a long day. I was content to sit and listen without taking too many notes as people shared their experience, strength and hope. A few tidbits I heard follow. The tools are the handrails to the Steps. Promoting abstinence has to begin with me. It is important to stress the definition of abstinence. When you qualify, share your weight change and length of abstinence. Practicing this program brings success, not perfection. We have one abstinence but many food plans. We hear to stay away from the first drink. What is my first drink? If I take it, I have lost my abstinence. And of course, bring the message to your meeting and the mess to your sponsor.

Conference Literature Committee Meeting

When delegates register for WSBC, they are given a list of committees from which they can choose. There are five hours devoted to committee meetings on Wednesday and another short meeting on Saturday afternoon to complete unfinished business. The committee is expected to work on various projects throughout the year, which is a challenge to do remotely, but I can’t imagine how it was done before the internet and free conference calls came along! I was chosen for the Conference Literature Committee, which was my first choice. This committee performs the reviewing, revising and creating of Conference-approved literature. It also reviews literature proposals that are received from service bodies and other WSBC committees and determines what to do with it. The Board of Trustees also plays a role in the process in terms of reviewing and approval. Two subcommittees will complete documents that only need a small amount of work: an update to the OA Handbook, and a new version of the Overeaters Anonymous book. Three subcommittees were created to work on documents that require a large amount of work. A proposal to create a document listing the “promises” of the OA 12 & 12 was accepted and will be developed. The committee discussed many ideas for new literature and voted to create a document to support small meetings and/or small towns. This subcommittee will be soliciting ideas, questions, stories and concerns from members. I am part of the third subcommittee, which is continuing the development of an intensive step study workshop. It will certainly be an exciting year! All five of these documents need to be reviewed by the literature committee as well as by the Board of Trustees and will hopefully be brought to WSBC within the next couple of years for approval.

Business Sessions

Thursday, Friday and half of Saturday were spent in Business Sessions. At the beginning of the first session, delegates stand by state, as way of calling the “roll.” Region 6 was well-represented, as always, and I am very grateful to be in an area of the country that has such strong and dedicated recovery.

There was a question about the proposed tool of prayer and meditation which didn’t make it to the agenda. The response was that the group conscience of OA had spoken in not putting that item on the agenda, and that considering it a tool would not be abiding by the group conscience. I think this is a good way to look at myself when I want to do something my way.

OA appeared on the internet on VoiceAmerica which provides talk radio. The show “Sound Bites” is available through www.oa.org and will continue on the OA website after the end of the year. There will also be a virtual traditions workshop available on oa.org.

As everyone knows, late this summer the World Service Convention will be held in Cleveland, Ohio. In three years (2016) it will be held in Boston!

One delegate stated that OA members rotate through service positions, not out of them. It was an interesting thought to consider.

Elections were held to fill positions on the Board of Trustees. Our delegate materials included the applications of the nominees, letting us know who they were, what kind of service they had done, why they wanted to be a trustee and their OA “story.” Reading the applications always fills me with awe, seeing where these folks came from and how much service they have already done. I am reminded that the trustees are just OA members like me who are willing to take the next steps in service. The afternoon before the actual elections were held, each nominee was asked to give a short speech. They were then asked to field questions from the delegates, which made me think of a job interview but with 200 interviewers! There were four nominees to fill two General Service Trustee positions. There were five regions for which Regional Trustee elections were held. Region 5 had three nominees and the other regions had one nominee. All positions were filled, which isn’t necessarily a given, because a candidate needs to have a majority of votes, not just the most votes. Karin Hepburn, who had been appointed last November to fill the position of Region 6 trustee which was vacated when Mary Rose Dallal stepped down, was elected to a full term.

There were a number of significant motions to amend the bylaws and policies, although motions of a housekeeping nature were adopted as part of a consent agenda; in other words, they were voted for in a block. If there were any objections to an item being part of this block, the item was removed and handled separately. Some of the motions I have referred to earlier in this report. The proposal to amend the Twelve Concepts to apply to service bodies other than the WSBC failed. The intent of the motion was to show that the Concepts are applicable and important at all levels of service, and discussing the motion raised the awareness level of the delegates. One of the delegates who spoke against this proposal said that the concepts were actually developed only to apply at the World Service level. Another proposal that was defeated would have incorporated virtual service boards (who serve telephone and on-line meetings) into the regional structure of OA. There is now a virtual service trustee to support the virtual service boards. A very close vote failed to adopt several motions which were voted on together. These would have required intergroups and other service bodies to update their bylaws to comply with OA policies in the same way that OA bylaw amendments are handled.

At one of the breaks in the proceedings, we were asked to do a little writing. The first question was “How has this experience of serving at WSBC changed you?” and the second was “What would you share with your sponsor or sponsee about giving service at this level?”

Every day, a Seventh Tradition was collected. The total for the three days was \$4,599.44

Personal Notes

One of the great parts about being an experienced WSBC delegate is that I get to share my experience, strength and hope with “newcomers.” I was assigned a “Green Dot,” named for the marking on a newbie’s name badge. Let’s just say that my Higher Power has a great sense of humor! I probably learned more from my “green dot” than she learned from me, and we are now great friends! Never say no to working with another OA member if you can help it!!

Not all of WSBC is spent working. We need down-time! I took advantage of the trolley tour offered for conference attendees and learned a lot about Albuquerque. On our “free night,” two carloads of folks drove over to the Sandia Mountains to take the tram up to the top and have dinner. By the way, Albuquerque itself is over a mile above sea level, and the top of the mountain is over a mile above that! The hotel is pretty isolated, so shuttle buses were available to take attendees to Old Town, where there are restaurants for dinner and tourist shops to browse. And Saturday night is always the banquet dinner followed by a little entertainment and dancing.

I know I’ve written a lot of words about what happened out in Albuquerque, but words can’t describe the gratitude I feel for Overeaters Anonymous, and the gratitude I feel for having had the privilege of experiencing the World Service Business Conference. WSBC is the group conscience of OA as well as an opportunity to join with over two hundred other members of OA to give service and to make a difference in how we can carry the message of recovery to others.