



# TOGETHER WE CAN

A publication of the NYS Capital District Intergroup

March 2014

## SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

### My Higher Power Is Named SAM

I came into OA over ten years ago with zero interest in a Higher Power or spiritual solutions. I had known of OA for quite a while, but had avoided it because of the “God” thing. Only the “gift of desperation” brought me through the doors of my first OA meeting. I wanted to lose weight. I had tried just about everything else. Everything was successful for a while, but eventually, I went “off” and my weight started climbing again. I was totally insane when it came to my eating. I needed something different.

Fast forward to present day, and I am blessed with a wonderful life in recovery that includes a strong belief in an amazing “Higher Power.” I communicate with and depend on this Higher Power in every aspect of my daily living.

Early on in program I had a very difficult time disassociating the God of my religious childhood from that of this new Higher Power in program. I took Step 1 on day 1, but Step 2 was a long process of evidence gathering for me, taking around 18 months before I was able to move on to step 3. I had to follow the advice of “act as if” and accept my sponsor’s strong belief in a supportive, loving Higher Power. My sponsor suggested I name my Higher Power, and I did ... SAM (spiritual advisor and more).

Now I start each day on my knees with a pile of books in front of me. I read the daily entries from *For Today* and *Voices of Recovery* and another addiction-related (non-program) book. I review my list of character defects and ask SAM to remove them for today and replace them with their spiritual opposites. I ask for the willingness to be willing to follow my food plan for the day. I pray for many different people in my life including my sponsor, my

sponsees, and specific people in program who are facing challenges. The list varies from day to day.

I have a spiral book of prayers I copied from someone else early in program because I did not have a prayer book myself. The spiral book reflects my journey in spirituality. I crossed off all the God and Lord entries in the prayers and wrote in SAM instead. As I heard various helpful expressions, I copied those into the book as well, e.g., **PUSH = pray until something happens**. If I particularly identified with a reading from one of the books, I’d Xerox a copy and paste it in my spiral book. The VOR September 5<sup>th</sup> reading was so on point for me that I taped it to the front cover. A key prayer for me is called “Help Me Remember”:

*SAM, help me remember that nothing is going to happen to me today that you and I together can’t handle.*

I talk to SAM frequently during the day, sometimes just to send a quick thank you, sometimes with a request, sometimes with just an irreverent poke. If I get a good break in traffic to make a difficult turn, I give thanks. If I hit a red light, I think of it as a signal to slow down and be present. When I hit several red lights in a row, I know it is a

# Spiritual Advisor and More

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signal from SAM that there is a change needed in what I am thinking about ... a two by four whacking me!

If an annoying challenge comes up, I'll roll my eyes and say to SAM "Really? Give me a break here." I often consult SAM in decision making with conscious thoughts of "What do you think?" When I am hungry at an unusual time, I will ask what I should have. When I am faced with a serious problem for which I have no ready solution, I turn it over to SAM, asking only for SAM to let me know if there is something I ought to be doing about the problem myself. I let it go. The solutions come.

At the end of the day, my last thoughts as my head hits the pillow are a quick 10th step inventory and thanks to SAM for the day, for my partner, for all those in my life who make it so good ... and I'm asleep quickly.

These practices developed over time as did my belief in SAM. They now seem natural, and I am amazed at the serenity that I have in my life.

## My Higher Power Is the Source of Light and Warmth

In the course of working through Step Three as written about in the "Big Book," we came across the Third Step Prayer. We were asked to read it out loud. I scanned it and immediately thought, Um, no, I cannot say this out loud: *"God, I offer myself to thee — to build with me and do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!"*

I know that this is a well-intentioned entreaty for help and guidance in being a good person: a prayer beloved by legions of people. But I am so distracted by the personification and the stilted language, I can't begin to focus on the spirit of the prayer. And don't even get me started on the grammar! To me, words are sacred tools; and finding the exact words to convey one's exact entreaty is a sacred exercise.

So I wrote my own Third Step Prayer:

*Light of the World, I close my eyes and open my heart to accept direction.*

*Dissolve my ego, so that I can better feel my oneness with people I love and people I will never meet.*

*Flood me with serenity and energy, so that I can both*

*radiate light and reflect the light of others.*

*Help me do my part to generate peace, justice, and community; today and every day that I experience the gift of life.*

## THE NINTH TOOL: ACTION PLAN

### My Action Plan on Vacation

As soon as World Service created the ninth tool of Action Plan, I fashioned a plan for myself. I am a list person, and my action plan listed very specific things for me to put on my daily "to do" list as well as things that were more sporadic but supporting my long-term goals. Calling my sponsor, attending meetings, and use of the other tools are included in my action plan as well as clear physical exercise guidelines.

Recently, I made another trip to visit my sister and her family out of state. In the past, I have frequently indulged in airplane crunchy treats during travel and fully relapsed once exposed to all the sweets at their home. I wanted to change

#### New Meeting!

A new meeting is starting in Johnstown. In addition to Tuesday evenings at 6:30, there will be a another meeting on Fridays from noon to 1:00. Both meetings are held at the Johnstown Public Library, Upper meeting room, 38 So. Market St.

#### Big Book Step Studies and Workshops Being Planned

For information, contact Kathy G at 365-5660 / [kathygreco@verizon.net](mailto:kathygreco@verizon.net) or Judy G. at 489-1138 / [judyC530@aol.com](mailto:judyC530@aol.com)

#### Next Newsletter Topic: In All Our Affairs

Please write about when you applied the spiritual principles of the twelve steps to any problem in your life. Deadline: April 30th. Also, please send any information of general interest that you would like to be included in the next newsletter to [Kathryn@RaggedRecovery.com](mailto:Kathryn@RaggedRecovery.com). Finally if you received this newsletter via a forward from a friend and would like to be on the main distribution, let Kathryn know.

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all that this time. It was recommended to me that I create a specific *action plan* for while I was away. I became willing to do things while “on vacation” that I had not done before. So, my use of the action plan tool did *not* go on vacation this time. Instead, I created a new specific plan just to address the issues I had faced on previous trips.

I started with a commitment to refrain from any airplane treats. I packed appropriate food for the trip in my carry-on, and that’s all I ate. I had frozen part for later in the travel day, and when it was time to eat, the food was still cold, but thawed. Accomplishing that first step was big!

When I am home, I send my food log to my food sponsor every day, but in the past, that practice has always lapsed while I was away and it was difficult to get back into the practice once I returned. So, this time I made a commitment to send a modified log every day. It didn’t have the detail of my usual record, but it listed what and when I ate. At home I weigh and measure just about everything I eat, but the types of meals made at my sister’s make that difficult ... lots of casserole and “mixed food group” dishes that are difficult to quantify into single categories like protein, starch, and vegetable. So, I adopted my eating out “one plate” rule for there and simply listed in my log what food I ate in reasonable quantities without actual measurements. I did this every day.

It was suggested, too, that I talk to my sister about my food challenges there and my current plan of eating. I did this the

first day of my visit. It did not shift any responsibility for my food to my sister. I still am responsible for what I choose to put in my mouth, but she is generally supportive, and it helped me stick to my plan just knowing that someone else knew what I was supposed to be doing. It didn’t hurt that I try to be a good role model in a family of compulsive overeaters.

I think one of the benefits of creating my vacation action plan is that I became very conscious of what a minefield I was headed into. I actually remembered beforehand the types of surprises I have encountered in the past. So, when I searched out my usual cereal bowl in the cupboard this time, it did not surprise me to find an open half bag of candy hidden in it. I knew every time I opened a cabinet, there might be some inappropriate food item lurking there ready to tempt me, located right next to the item I was looking for. The key was being *prepared*, or at least as prepared as one can be.

There were items on my vacation action plan other than food-related ones. I knew that despite good intentions, when I visit, I just do not set aside an hour a day to exercise, which I do regularly at home. So, I asked my trainer for 10-minute “mini sets” of exercises, and I did at least one of those each day. I did not put walking on my action plan because I just usually enjoy doing that in their milder weather, but it was not conducive to being out of doors this time, and I did not get any neighborhood walking in.

In addition, I had planned to attend an OA meeting that is held in the next town over. Unfortunately, my sister’s car was not available, and the unusual fog they were having would have stopped me from driving over those twisty back roads anyway. So, I did not get to my planned meeting.

With those exceptions, I am delighted to report that with help I stayed on plan and came back still abstinent. I would say that the three most important elements of my “vacation action plan” plan were:

- ask for help
- ask for help
- ask for help

I needed to ask my sponsor and OA friends for help with planning, I needed to ask my trainer and my sister to help me stay on track, and I needed to ask my HP for help at every decision point. I feel great, and my transition back to my regular practices was amazingly easy. Having a vacation action plan made all the difference!



## Action Plan: A “Just Do It” To Do List

- Three meetings per week at the very least. When body image issues or compulsions to overeat surface step up the number of meetings.
- Talk to my sponsor or someone in my posse discussing any personal issues that may have an impact on my serenity that day. Sharing thoughts that I really don’t want to share. Making it a “we program” so I’m not in the sludge alone. I have a tendency to isolate and think I need to solve my problems myself. E-mailing my sponsor immediately if I have had even a slight break in abstinence.
- Start the day with readings from *For Today* and *Voices of Recovery* and *One Day at a Time* and one spiritual daily reading.
- Meditate for 20 minutes and pray to know God’s will and to surrender my will.
- Do yoga for about 45 minutes at least 6 days a week. Go to one yoga class per week.
- Schedule one hour of fast walking at least 4 days a week with people who work a good program. This is another way I avoid my preference to isolate. When I walk with someone, I have to talk with them.
- E-mail my sightings of abstinence from codependence and slips in this area to a recovery person.
- Work on step work at least once a week, reading from the *Big Book of AA* or from the *OA 12 & 12*. Write a daily gratitude list (part of a 10th step). Notice at the end of each day if I have been dishonest, resentful, self serving, judgmental, grandiose, or fearful and decide if I have an amends to make (2nd part of 10th step).
- Never weigh myself. Decide with a nutritionist and my sponsor if my food plan needs to change.
- Always return phone calls from OA people. This is against my nature. I want to isolate.
- Talk to someone for a few minutes after every meeting. I want to bolt out the door.

## Action Plan — A Very Important Scrap of Paper

Many years ago, I was going through a major life change — a break-up of a live-in boyfriend of 4 years, a cross-country

move, and feeling like a failure and uncertain about my future. I didn’t feel up to much; I was sad, lonely, and depressed; and the last thing I wanted to do was get out of bed in the morning and face my new life.

I was determined, however, not to slide further down into the toilet bowl of despair and thankfully, I had a big realization that I needed to change. One of the first things I did was to reinvest in my OA program.

It occurred to me there were so many things I needed to do on a daily basis. If I accomplished those, I was a success. Anything more was extra credit. I wrote them down on a scrap of paper while at work, and began to carry the scrap with me in my back pocket; this scrap became my action plan.

The list on the scrap of paper included daily prayer to my Higher Power, making my bed, exercising, writing a gratitude list (10 on the list, minimum), contacting my sponsor, reading a piece of program literature, journaling as needed, answering my phone, getting dressed, and brushing my teeth.

It sounds basic — who doesn’t get dressed in the morning or brush her teeth or answer the phone? Someone like me, who needed a really basic, but firm structure to my day. While I didn’t always accomplish everything on the list every day, I was able to do most things most days — and in the process, move forward with my life; develop better habits; and advance my spiritual, emotional, and physical health.

I carried that little scrap of paper with me for years as a reminder of what was essential and important to my well-being. I have now lost that piece of paper, but many of the requirements for daily living — exercise, prayer, gratitude, reaching out to others — have stayed with me and helped to maintain a base level of recovery. Additionally, I have a better sense of how to structure my day (i.e., create daily action plans) when I’m feeling overwhelmed or lost — I start with the basic essentials, turn the rest over, and move through my day in a more sane way.

## Planning and Doing: A Life of Wonder, Miracles and Beauty

As I considered what I might say on the topic of Action Plan, I thought it could be as simple as Do (action) Something (plan). Before I got to OA, I had already begun to have a better relationship with food. I had done things we

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encourage folks to do — write down what I eat, weigh and measure my food — to mention a few. Over time it has changed. I think that is the gift and it also can be the challenge. I have had and will continue to have to modify things as I age physically and grow emotionally and spiritually. Here is what I do now.

*Physically.* I avoid wheat and sugar (sucrose). I read a lot of labels. If either of those are listed as the first four ingredients, I don't eat it. I weigh and measure as much of my food as I can. I do not weigh and measure in restaurants though. I employ "the one plate" rule as best I can in those times. I generally have five meals a day. I have a certain number of servings in each category — milk, starch, fruit, vegetables, and protein. I have a little sheet of paper each day that I list the category and then how many ever servings I can have after it (1 2 3 4 for example). When I eat a serving, I cross it off. When I have no more servings left I am done with that category for the day. I would love to say that I exercise three times a week, but for various reasons that has not happened in a while. I hope to "do something" about that at some point.

*Emotionally.* I get outside help. For although Our Invitation to You says that the reasons for the illness are unimportant, I know them. There is a lot of trauma in my history and I have needed professional help to sort that out. It definitely was "under" my eating. I seek out the support of friends and receive it when they reach out to me. "I can do this myself" was a bit of a theme throughout my life that just doesn't work very well anymore! I started to compulsively eat when I was about 4 or 5 and therefore stopped growing emotionally. I began to get things into perspective when I

was about 28. So now that I have been working some sort of program for about 26 years that means that emotionally I must be around 30 years old, even though my body is nearly 54 years old.

*Spiritually.* This has been one of the greatest gifts of Recovery for me. Through my Recovery, I have been able to develop an intimate relationship with a Higher Power whom I choose to call God. "The God of my Understanding" counts every tear I cry, holds me when I am scared, and dances with me when we are most content. I do my very best to set aside at least 30 minutes a day. I wish I could say they were always quiet minutes, but at the very least I do my best to sit. I read Scripture, 12 Step page a day books. or journal. The most important thing is that I show that God is important by giving him some of my day. When I do that, my day definitely goes better. I see a Spiritual Director (a Sponsor type person) regularly. I attend a yearly weeklong silent retreat and day or weekend programs through out the year as well.

I have not mentioned a Sponsor anywhere. I had a Sponsor for many years until she left The Rooms. Now there is a person who I go to especially with my food. She was one of the two people that I sent my food to when I traveled to Ireland in the fall. When I am thinking of making changes to my food plan, I consult with her. I think that we all need someone to be accountable to, no matter what title that person may have in your life.

I truly am a "grateful, recovering, compulsive overeater." I have a life full of wonder, miracles, and beauty. I have a great life thanks to God and the fellowship of Overeaters Anonymous!



## Action Plan = Not Winging It

When this topic came up for the newsletter, I had realized that I didn't have an action plan written down. I had made a commitment to write one.

When active in my addiction, I've always winged it, going from one extreme to the other, using a very rigid diet (that always fails), or just feeling like a hopeless failure and thereby diving into the food and my disease. I would swing to and fro, feeling like a success or a failure depending on the number on the scale.

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When active in my recovery, winging it is not an option.

Recently, I realized I had to reach out to my sponsor and let her in regarding my action plan; going solo is also NOT part of my recovery. For me to be in active recovery, I must be willing; willing to allow others into my life, and willing to hear others suggestions. As long as I'm willing to at least listen to another's suggestions, mine won't be a life winging it.

For today, I'm willing to make a commitment to my recovery and have a written Action Plan that is created with help from a sponsor and my Higher Power, Grace.

## Action Plan: As Short and Sweet as an E-List

I do a daily action plan the night before on my e-reader. I put down each thing I plan to do and check each one off as I do it. It's not a big deal if I don't get to all of them, recovery is about progress, not perfection.

By doing this every night, it helps me to organize my day better.

## Your Public Information Committee at Work!

The following letter was sent to Employee Assistance Program (EAP) coordinators at state agencies:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Many people in this country struggle with issues around overeating. There has been a rapid rise in the incidence of obesity in our children as well. We are writing today to make you aware of Overeaters Anonymous, a 12-step fellowship based on the program pioneered by Alcoholics Anonymous.

We are not a diet and calories club. We approach the problem from a spiritual and emotional basis to deal with the underlying issues that drive us to use food as a means of coping with life. We've enclosed select pamphlets to help explain who we are and what we're about.

It is our hope that you will find this information helpful in the care of your patients who suffer from either obesity or other eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia. While there is an obesity epidemic in America, there is an answer.

## We're on the Web!

Check It Out:

[nycd.oagroups.org](http://nycd.oagroups.org)

Meeting Lists

OA Information

Inspiration

Event Calendar

Links

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**World Service**

[www.oa.org](http://www.oa.org)

**Region 6**

[oaregion6.org](http://oaregion6.org)

**Capital Region  
Answer Line**

Meeting Information

Local News and Announcements

General Information

(518) 292-0666

Please feel free to call 292-0666 or go to [OA.ORG](http://OA.ORG) for more information.

Sincerely,

Public Information Committee  
New York State Capital District Intergroup

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## *Overeaters Anonymous - Region 6*

New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Maine,  
Vermont, Central and Eastern Ontario, Quebec, Newfoundland,  
New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Bermuda

**Memorandum:**

**Re: Twelfth Step Within Day – 12/12/2013 and every 12<sup>th</sup> Day of Each Month**  
**From: The Region Six 12<sup>th</sup> Step Within Committee**  
**To: The R6 Member Intergroups**

**The Region Six 12<sup>th</sup> Step Within Committee invites your intergroup to engage in important 12<sup>th</sup> Step Within action. Mobilize as many OA members possible within your meetings to telephone those still-suffering OA members on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of each month**

*Our primary purpose is to abstain from compulsive eating and carry the message of recovery through the Twelve Steps of OA to those who still suffer.*

Twelfth Step work isn't only about introducing the OA program of recovery to those compulsive eaters who have never heard of OA. Among us, we have still-suffering compulsive eaters who are already in the rooms. Members in relapse suffer greatly and are in need of a caring connection and our support. As the saying goes, *Relapse isn't contagious but recovery is.*

There are also those members who may have taken a break from program and recovery who may just need a phone call from a familiar voice saying, *"We've been missing you at meetings"* in order to feel welcomed back into the fellowship.

**Please distribute the attached flyer to all meetings in your intergroup, and encourage members to make telephone calls on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of each month.**

The Region Six 12<sup>th</sup> Step Within Committee welcomes your feedback, comments and suggestions. In March 2014, the Region Six 12th Step Within Committee will send your intergroup a short survey so that we have the data available at the R6 Assembly Spring 2014 on Saturday, April 5 We can then utilize this information in order to understand what has worked in this initiative and how we might improve our future efforts.

**For more ideas please browse the resources at the OA World Service Website:**

[Click Here for More Ideas on How to Reach Out to the Still-Suffering OA Member](#)

Consider purchasing **12<sup>th</sup> Step Within Handbook** for your meeting or service body:

[Click Here to Purchase 12th Step Within Handbook or go to Bookstore.OA.org](#)

***Together we can do what we could never do alone.***



## Reach Out to Suffering Members in Fellowship

### Telephone on the 12<sup>th</sup> of Every Month

Commit to a simple **12<sup>th</sup> Step Within** action on the 12<sup>th</sup> of every month. Let's encourage one another to pick up our telephones. Call at least one member who hasn't been seen in your meeting in a while. Call an OA fellow who you've noticed drifting away from program. Look through your meeting's *We Care* book and phone lists and select just one name. Let's each make just *one* phone call, *one* day each month. Imagine the numbers of compulsive eaters we could reach!



Not sure what to say? Here are some suggestions:

*"Hello, is this \_\_\_\_\_? It's \_\_\_\_\_ from the meeting. I've been thinking about you and I'm reaching out to let you to stay in touch."*

*"Hi \_\_\_\_\_, this is \_\_\_\_\_. Is this a good time to chat? I'm just checking in to see how your day is going."*

*"Hi \_\_\_\_\_. It's \_\_\_\_\_. It's great to hear your voice today. I'm calling to wish you peace and serenity in recovery today."*

*"Hello \_\_\_\_\_. This is \_\_\_\_\_. I saw your name on an old page in the We Care book at the \_\_\_\_\_ meeting. So, I'm calling to let you know that I'm thinking of you."*

### Make a call on the 12<sup>th</sup> of this month!

Please remember OA's Tradition of Anonymity when making phone calls.

For more ideas and suggestions on how to reach out to the still suffering compulsive eater in the rooms please browse the resources available at the OA World Service Website: [www.OA.ORG](http://www.OA.ORG)



[Click Here for More Ideas on How to Reach Out to the Still-Suffering OA Member](#)