

CONVENTION

By Anonymous

I am always encouraging other OA members to go to convention. Recently, an OA fellow suggested that I share today about this topic:

"What does the OA convention offer that I have found to be so helpful?"

So, I'd like to start by telling you my first convention story. In October 2015, I had just returned to OA after 25 years of trying to recover from my eating disorder "by myself," and failing over and over again. I was getting bits and pieces of understanding of the program in the rooms, from my fellows, from literature, etc.... but it just wasn't coming together for me. I felt like I just "didn't get it." My HP blessed me with the gifts of frustration and desperation, so when I heard about an upcoming convention at a weekend meeting, I was hoping that maybe it could help me. That Monday, three days before the convention started on Friday, (I couldn't have been any later trying to put this together!), I called for a reservation. They told me there were no more rooms in the hotel where the convention was being held, so I would have to find another hotel to stay in. I didn't have any one to travel with, or room with, but HP gave me the willingness to go to any length to get to the OA convention in Hartford, Ct. About two days before the convention, I received a phone call from one of the convention organizers. She told me that someone had to cancel for medical reasons, and asked if I wanted one of the discounted rooms in the OA block. It was another gift from HP, and just in time. Since I was rooming by myself, it was reassuring to know that I was in the same hotel as the

convention, with all my meals, and in the same block of rooms where other OA members were staying.

Once I arrived to the convention, I attended every workshop I possibly could. There were so many I wanted, and needed, to go to, that it was hard to pick. The keynote speakers were incredibly inspirational. One of the best parts for me, at that time, was eating my meals with my OA fellows. I asked anyone who would talk to me about his or her food plan, and I learned a lot about how they managed their food.

When I left that convention, I drove home with my first two days of physical abstinence, and I also had an action plan as to how I would begin my journey towards emotional and spiritual abstinence. For the first time ever, I had hope. I felt like I was doing exactly what I needed to do. It all felt so much more approachable. Plus, I knew that if I had any trouble, I didn't need to worry... because at that conference, I also got a sponsor! In short, that convention changed my life.

Here is a list of some of the workshop topics from last year's OA convention to show what kinds of things are offered that you can choose from.

There were two strands:

*A step study going through all 12 steps over the course of the weekend

*A Big Book study across the weekend

There were special interest workshops:

*Anorexia/Bulimia

*LGBTQ

*Young people

***M**en

*Newcomers

There was something for everybody, focusing on any and every aspect of recovery you could focus on. Some of the other workshops were on topics like:

- *Spirituality
- *Abstinence-physical, emotional, spiritual
- *Tools of recovery
- *Slogans
- *Sponsorship,
- *Attitude of gratitude
- *Traditions
- *Body image
- *The Promises
- *How to 12 step a problem
- *Relapse vs. a Slip
- *Virtual world in recovery
- *Relationships in recovery
- *Acceptance
- *Managing triggers and compulsive food behaviors
- *Aging in recovery
- *Sex and recovery
- *Long timers panel
- *A Vision For You

Plus, if that's not enough-

- *awesome keynote speakers
- *special focus meetings
- *writing workshops
- *lots of raffle baskets
- *sponsorship speed dating (a fun matchmaking process where you meet a large number of eligible sponsors in a short period of time)

I see the conference as a chance to grow deeply in my recovery over a short period of time, due to the breadth of the experience. Attending is an action that I feel is an important commitment to my recovery. I have made a promise to myself that I will do anything I need to do to make sure that I can attend every year. Attending also provides me the opportunity to do service, by bringing back what I have learned to the OA meetings at home.

One thing that I know for sure is that I cannot recover from this disease in isolation. Going to convention provides me with a great opportunity for fellowship. I have met people there that I enjoy seeing every year. It is an incredibly friendly and welcoming environment to connect with other compulsive overeaters. And the best reason to attend of all...is it's a lot of FUN and lots of laughs!