

September 1

Friendship needs a certain parallelism of life, a community of thought.

Henry Adams

We OAs sometimes feel defensive that our best friends are in OA. But what is so strange about that? Where else can I find people with whom I have so much in common? Who else do I know whose purpose is the same as mine? Do any of my other friends and associates know the bottomless despair of compulsive overeating?

Yes, I am grateful for my friends in Overeaters Anonymous. I have traded loneliness for closeness, standoffishness for warmth, and selfishness for giving. I am grateful to OA, not only for my abstinence and growth, but also for my friends. May I treat them with the consideration and care they deserve.

For today: I cherish my OA friends; because of them, all my relationships are improving.

Question: How have my relationships in OA altered my relationships in other areas of my life.

We are in a 5 minute meditation. Stay tuned...

September 2

*Noble be man,
Helpful and good!
For that alone
Sets him apart
From every other creature
On earth.*

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

One person helping another is a practice as old as humanity. Help is not telling another what to do, or even suggesting it. Help is being there for someone; to share experience, to lend support, to do what needs to be done when a friend's burden becomes crippling. I need the awareness to keep my ego, my advice, my good intentions out of another's life, even though they appear in the guise of help. If I want to help others develop their own strengths and realize their full potential, I cannot do it by telling them what to do.

For today: I am an instrument of my Higher Power. I carry the message, but I do not interfere with it.

Question: How can I best support my fellow OA members without meddling or giving advice?

We are in a 5 minute meditation. Stay tuned...

September 3

Indecision is like the stepchild; if he doesn't wash his hands, he is called "dirty," if he does, he is wasting the water.

Madagascan proverb

Indecision stems from fear of doing wrong—with dire consequences. Oh dear! I must make the right choice, but what *is* it?

I am so used to being in charge, I forget that I turned over control of my life to God; that my rule is to try to know God's will for me and then do it. To keep indecision from throwing me into a panic, I keep repeating, "Thy will be done, not mine." Always, my burden is lifted. I feel lighter. I realize that God's will for me is not to make the "right" choice, but to feel free to make mistakes; to be sane.

For today: Beginning this very moment, I turn my life and my will over to my Higher Power.

Question: When I make decisions, what helps me accept the outcome as God's will for me?

We are in a 5 minute meditation. Stay tuned...

September 4

The present time has one advantage over every other—it is our own.

Charles Caleb Colton

I have all the wealth in the world right now, in this moment, when I can live free of anxiety about the future and the pain of the past. There is power in the present moment. It has the strength and substance of reality, not the will-o'-the-wisp of illusion. When I live in the world as it is, one minute, one hour, one day at a time, I lose all thoughts of plans and blueprints. The present is mine today, and I claim it without hesitation. I open my mind, take leave of worry and free myself of all that keeps me from enjoying the beauty of the world.

For today: Nothing that happened yesterday or that may happen tomorrow is more important than NOW.

Question: What is special and unique about this moment or this day?

September 5

What is dignity without honesty?

Cicero

Who says it is undignified for a grown woman or man to play ball with neighborhood kids or rollerskate down the middle of the street? Dignity is a quality achieved by freeing myself of arrogance and self-importance. When I present myself to the world as I really am, I attain an effortless dignity. True dignity depends on honest self-respect that is without lies and without the temptation to see myself as better or worse than I am. Accepting myself as I am confers a natural dignity upon me that is free of all pretense and is close to the humility I strive for on a daily basis.

For today: If I feel lacking in dignity, I look for incidents in which I may have been less than honest.

Question: What can I do today to cultivate humility and the dignity that comes with it?

We are in a 5 minute meditation. Stay tuned...

September 6

*When one door of happiness closes, another opens;
but often we look so long at the closed door that
we do not see the one which has been opened for
us.*

Helen Keller

It's the end. I had such hopes. What happened?

What happened was that God has other plans for me. If I cling to what wasn't—and can never be—I won't see anything else. If I keep moaning about what I thought I wanted, I'll miss what is unfolding before my eyes.

My Higher Power knows what I need. I can remember other closed doors; in each instance my life took a turn for the better, even though I may not have thought so at the time. It will be no different now.

God is the producer of this show, not I. When the next act begins, I want to be ready.

For today: I am willing to let go bygone happiness, and know that by letting go I become free to experience something new. I may not see it now, but I have faith that it will come.

Question: What is going on in my life right now that could be a blessing in disguise?

We are in a 5 minute meditation. Stay tuned...

September 7

*No man can justly censure or condemn another,
because indeed no man truly knows another.*

Sir Thomas Brown

It is easy to condemn those who transgress, but there is no justice in such judgment. I cannot know how another person feels, what the life experience of that person is. Much as I do not want to think about it, child abuse and neglect are evils that have been with us a long time. Am I so sure of the inherent “badness” of a person who lashes out in unprovoked attack? To be sure, I am not obligated to stand still and let myself be used as a doormat, but I am bound to apply a single standard to all persons. As I learn in OA to admit my errors and misdeeds, and ask my own and others’ forgiveness, I can do no less than extend the same humanity to others.

For today: It is not for me to judge anyone.

Question: What attributes do I condemn in others that reflect my own shortcomings?

We are in a 5 minute meditation. Stay tuned...

September 8

True freedom is to share All the chains our brothers wear; And, with heart and hand, to be Earnest to make others free! James.

Russell Lowell

I am thankful for what I have received in Overeaters Anonymous. But if I am to keep it, I must remember my sisters and brothers who are still in the chains of compulsive overeating. I am willing to break my anonymity, to share my experience with those who are still sick. The love and compassion in my heart was poorly expressed in the lonely habits of compulsive overeating and the accompanying feeling of self-contempt. I am thankful today that I have been relieved of my chains, that I have discovered a Higher Power, experienced a spiritual awakening, and can tell my story to others.

For today: It is through the love and friendship of others in OA that I have found freedom. Only by working with those who are not yet free do I fully realize that freedom.

Question: What actions can I take today to demonstrate my willingness to help another suffering compulsive eater?

We are in a 5 minute meditation. Stay tuned...

September 9

Minds, like bodies, will often fall into a pimped, ill-conditioned state from mere excess of comfort.

Charles Dickens

Excess kills the very qualities I seek in anything, be it possessions, activities or food. Compulsive overeating gives the illusion of comfort, but what begins as an attempt to fill unmet needs soon takes on a life of its own, demanding more and giving less in return.

True comfort is to be found in the balance and sanity of abstinence. So deep and pure is this comfort that it is well worth whatever trouble or pain I might have to pass through to attain it.

For today: Abstinence from compulsive overeating is a state of mind, not a diet. God grant me abstinence today and, if need be, the willingness to go to any length to get it.

Question: What areas of my life still reflect a desire for excess?

We are in a 5 minute meditation. Stay tuned...

September 10

Resolve to find thyself; and to know that he who finds himself, loses his misery.

Matthew Arnold

As a child I had to hide from myself my own troubledness. I needed to escape the seeming lack of love and inadequate nurturing of my small world. No matter how many people were around me, I was alone with my fears and anxieties. Compulsive overeating and fantasy were my survival.

Today I am not alone. With fellow OA members, my Higher Power and the twelve-step program of recovery, I can go back to look at that world—to explore feelings gently, without judgment, and see truths revealed. I can look with love and understanding at the unattainably lofty ideals and expectations I carried into adulthood.

I no longer need the illusions of my childhood. As I give them up, I get in touch with myself and I live with a joy that is incomparable.

For today: I know and accept that who I am and what I have—my family, friends, job, home—are exactly what I want for today.

Question: Which of my OA friends help me see the blessings that my old ways tend to obscure? How can I bless these friends today?

September 11

Tomorrow's life is too late. Live today.

Martial

A good mind is no defense against the insanity of compulsive overeating. If OA hadn't found me, I would still be saying "tomorrow"—despite repeated proof that tomorrow is a pipe dream and my only chance is to act today.

I am abstaining TODAY because it is today's life I am living. I do not know if I can binge today and say, "I will abstain tomorrow," but I have absolutely no desire to try it.

For today: Whatever I want to begin doing, I will do today. Tomorrow is too late.

Question: What plan of action do I have for living well this day?

We are in a 5 minute meditation. Stay tuned...

September 12

Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Enthusiasm must be encouraged, beginning in earliest childhood. Give the crawling baby space to explore; it is a crime against nature to squelch that curiosity, that eagerness to learn about the world.

Mothers who dream of their children growing up to do great things must give those children the freedom to develop their powers. If parents use their own God-given intelligence, they can provide a child with both room to grow and a reasonable degree of safety.

Aware parents may also meet with their children's teachers. Look first for enthusiasm in a teacher; everything follows from that.

It is equally important to show enthusiasm at home. There is endless beauty and mystery to share with a child, to marvel at and explore together.

For today: Enthusiasm is contagious. It is a gift I give to everyone around me, especially children.

Question: In what ways does my action plan make room for opportunities to express my enthusiasm today?

We are in a 5 minute meditation. Stay tuned...

September 13

To err is human; to forgive divine.

Alexander Pope

If I am unable to accept the fact that people make mistakes, am I not rejecting them as human beings? Even more to the point: does my inability to accept my own failings cause me to see myself as not measuring up?

For my own peace of mind, I need to forgive even the most damaging transgressions; but forgiveness of others can only come when I have learned to forgive myself.

For today: I pray for a forgiving heart and the willingness to let go bitterness.

Question: Which of my personality defects make it difficult to forgive others and myself?

We are in a 5 minute meditation. Stay tuned...

September 14

Man is not the sum total of what he has already, but rather the sum of what he does not yet have, of what he could have.

Jean Paul Sartre

How do I know what I can be, or have? Is greater understanding of others possible? I am open to deriving more from experience, to relishing simple things and living with a kind of hale and hearty pleasure. If I am willing to give up being quite so special or different, I may be able to give up my protective cover for a new way of seeing and believing and being. An awareness of the shortcomings that remain shows me what I do not yet have—and could attain.

For today: My history as a compulsive overeater is not the sum total of what I am. I am the sum of what I am reaching for in Overeaters Anonymous.

Question: What qualities do I see in other OA members that I would like to enjoy for myself?

We are in a 5 minute meditation. Stay tuned...

September 15

He that will not sail until all dangers are over, will never put to sea.

Thomas Fuller

Fear keeps me from reaching out. There is always the danger of being rejected, and until such dangers are over, I can't risk it.

It is easy to think the world has rejected me but, as I look at past experience with the honesty this program teaches, I see that it's the other way around: it is I who does the rejecting, in subtle ways, to be sure, but it is rejection nonetheless. My disease is one of isolation, and closeness is the risk most feared.

Today, with the support of my fellow OAs, I do not need guarantees that I will be accepted every time I reach out. I just go ahead and do it.

For today: I am ready to walk toward the world, to risk becoming a part of it.

Question: What are three "risky" actions I can take to grow a little today?

We are in a 5 minute meditation. Stay tuned...

September 16

You can't pray a lie.

Mark Twain

Just as it is impossible to deceive that part of me that keeps a running tally of my misdeeds, so is it impossible to deceive God.

The OA meetings, the one-to-one sharing helps me to see myself with honesty. As I become more aware of my defects, I become more accepting of them, seeing them as human failings, not unpardonable sins. If I can talk about them, I can pray to have them removed. Keeping my shortcomings covered up stops growth dead in its tracks. Honesty rids my life of illusion, rationalization and self-justification. It looks and discovers and accepts.

For today: Just as truth freed me of my obsession with food, so it can free me of other living problems. I am not afraid to seek the truth.

Question: How do I share those truths that used to cause me shame and block my progress?

We are in a 5 minute meditation. Stay tuned...

September 17

Fair and softly goes far.

Miguel de Cervantes

“Tough love” means different things to different people, but the meaning of the word “love” never changes. If I have a loving attitude toward myself and others, I will treat everyone fairly whether I am “tough” or “soft” about it. Speaking so as not to wound a person can convey a difficult truth more effectively than caustic criticism and ultimatums. As I let go my perfectionism, it becomes easier to treat myself and others with respect.

For today: I have an obligation to myself and those around me to speak and act with fairness and consideration.

Question: How can I express "tough love" in a kind and gentle manner?

We are in a 5 minute meditation. Stay tuned...

September 18

No passion so effectively robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear.

Edmund Burke

Fear wears many masks. It is what often lies behind my facade of silent scorn, passive refusal, a half-dead state of no feeling. I can wrap the cloak of fear around me and say No. No, I will not go. No, I have nothing to say. No, I can't do it.

I can remain locked away, or I can reach out, take action. Action can change my outlook, break through the fear. As I do the footwork, I regain contact with my Higher Power and, with God's help, come back to life.

Yes, I will share at the meeting. Yes, I will go to the children's school party. Yes, I will give thanks to God for my release from the bondage of fear.

For today: The courage to reach past my fear is within me, but in this Fellowship, I do not have to make the trip alone.

Question: What are some of the masks my fears still like to wear?

We are in a 5 minute meditation. Stay tuned...

September 19

Much learning does not teach understanding.

Heraclitus

The OA program is not an academic one. No amount of learning and academic achievement ever enabled me to deal effectively with my illness.

OAs tell of reading books by the score to learn how to stop overeating, going through volume after volume on psychology, philosophy, theology, metaphysics—to say nothing of diet and exercise books.

Understanding of the true nature of my illness came in the meeting rooms of Overeaters Anonymous. The people who spoke were not there as scholars or experts of any kind; they were compulsive overeaters like me, except for one thing: they had found a way to become free of the obsession.

For today: This is a spiritual program, not an academic one. To understand myself and my illness, I attend OA meetings and follow the directions of the twelve steps.

Question: What can I do to make sure that I'm processing my OA experience through my heart rather than my mind?

We are in a 5 minute meditation. Stay tuned...

September 20

Take the place and attitude to which you see your unquestionable right, and all men acquiesce.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

I am surrounded in this modern world by influences that would serve self-defeating ends. Whether I am reading a magazine, watching television or listening to the radio, I am constantly being importuned to run out immediately and buy something on which to snack—or with which to lead someone else down the primrose path (“Bake someone happy”). Neither I nor anyone I love will benefit if these siren songs succeed in diverting me from my path. The strength to turn away from harm is directly related to my contact with my Higher Power. I need only remember how many times I said, “Just this once,” and the subsequent feeling of being invaded.

To serve my Higher Power is to serve myself—the healthy, strong, *growing* part of myself.

For today: There is no need to separate myself from the world to stay abstinent, nor must I submit to those influences that can destroy me. Neither I nor anyone I love needs junk food.

Question: In what ways do I still tell myself that it is all right to eat destructively?

We are in a 5 minute meditation. Stay tuned...

September 21

We lop away, that bearing boughs may live.

William Shakespeare

If I kept the same ideas with which I came to OA, where would I be today? Values I acquired as a child and still follow today need questioning. The child I once was can no longer run my life. I want to give up what no longer serves me—the escapes and fantasies, the fears and the need to control. The changes that have come about since I arrived in OA are evidence of growth and hope for a still better life. If love and friendship, spontaneity and closeness are to be nurtured, dead branches must be cut away.

Working this program helps me distinguish what I no longer need from what is important, to cut away old beliefs so that new truths may be revealed and a light and useful spirit may grow strong.

For today: Cutting away old growth to make room for the new is what steps four through ten are all about. Am I doing it?

Question: What old beliefs do I need to cut away so new truths may be revealed?

We are in a 5 minute meditation. Stay tuned...

September 22

There are occasions when it is undoubtedly better to incur loss than to make gain.

Plautus

Winning is something I go after out of pride: I'm right! I've won! Now what? I need to differentiate between what is important and what is not; what habit tells me is necessary and what is really essential.

I want to look beyond the immediate, minute-long gratification of victory to measure by another yardstick: one with humanity in mind, where values of kindness, consideration and usefulness wear well and long, and contribute to my feeling good about myself.

That is what living is all about.

For today: In situations involving winning and losing, being right and being wrong, what is really at stake?

Question: In what ways can I channel my competitive energies to opt for enduring lessons over short-term relief?

We are in a 5 minute meditation. Stay tuned...

September 23

To disdain today is to prove that yesterday has been misunderstood.

Maurice Maeterlinck

I love today because this program has given me such a deep understanding of and gratitude for yesterday. I look back at what I was with a sense of triumph that I could have come through such spiritual impoverishment and hopelessness to the sustaining faith I have today.

The “newfangled” aspects of my life today—my abstinence, my good looks, my joy in living—are direct descendants of yesterday’s realities: the overeating, the fat, the demoralization, the sickness of spirit, mind and body.

Thank God for what I was, and what I have become!

For today: I may feel nostalgia for yesterday, but it is never at the expense of my appreciation of today.

Question: How am I working the program to better understand the past so I can see my progress in the present?

We are in a 5 minute meditation. Stay tuned...

September 24

True miracles are created by men when they use the courage and intelligence that God gave them.

Jean Anouilh

“I have been granted a gift which amounts to a new state of consciousness and being,” wrote Bill W. With the courage and intelligence God gave them, the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous created the miracle of the great A A Fellowship — and changed the lives of millions.

As a member of Overeaters Anonymous, I owe my recovery—and my life—to that miracle. To think of the efforts of these early AA members to share the gift of their spiritual awakening is to be filled with awe and inspiration. There are surely as many thousands of compulsive overeaters who are open to this same simple message, and who have yet to hear it.

For today: It is my responsibility *to* carry the message of spiritual awakening and recovery to compulsive overeaters, wherever they may be.

Question: How am I carrying the message of spiritual recovery to other compulsive eaters today?

We are in a 5 minute meditation. Stay tuned...

September 25

Patience and diligence, like faith, remove mountains.

William Penn

All the plans I made, all the resolutions I vowed to keep were poor substitutes for patience. At times, doing nothing but waiting is harder than writing lists and following schedules and doing this and that. Always, I need to remember: in God's time, not mine. I am not running the universe; the world does not bow to my wishes.

I turn my life over and do the footwork. Little by little, defects crumble, stumbling blocks are pushed aside and my path becomes smooth—until the next bump in the road. That is how growth happens: with patience and diligence, and faith in a Higher Power.

For today: I accept God's timetable. If I don't know what footwork I should do, I can let it go for now, confident that an answer will come.

Question: How often during the day do I feel frustrated over time moving too slowly or too quickly to suit me? Where do I still have difficulty accepting God's timetable for me?

September 26

Man is a born child, his power is the power of growth.

Rabindrath Tagore

Addiction stops emotional and spiritual growth, stripping its victims of fully half their potential. As a compulsive overeater, I grew physically and intellectually but remained stunted emotionally, unable to provide sustenance for that part of me which food and academic learning cannot nurture.

When I heard the words, “I am powerless over food,” I felt a surge of relief, a letting loose of a heavy burden, and my spirit danced with joy. With the obsession broken, I am all lightness and hope, reaching out like a child toward the growth that was lost to me.

I thank God for the miracle of recovery—a second chance to work toward all that I may become.

For today: There are no limits to growth. Abstinence and weight loss are just the beginning.

Question: Where have I seen real advancement in my emotional recovery since I joined OA?

We are in a 5 minute meditation. Stay tuned...

September 27

Clever people seem not to feel the natural pleasure of bewilderments, and are always answering questions when the chief relish of life is to go on asking them.

Frank Moore Colby

It has been said that children are the true explorers. Filled with wonder and curiosity, they set forth each day on a journey of discovery, completely open to the new, asking questions without fear of looking stupid.

In the world of grownups, not knowing is too often regarded as lacking intelligence. Luckily, one of the first lessons I absorbed in OA was a gut-level understanding that it was OK not to know how to manage my eating, my weight and my life. Everyone there freely admitted they didn't know either. Since that time I have been freed of many old hangups, among them the idea that I should have a fund of information that enables me to answer any and all questions about any and all subjects. How delightful it is to have a child's willingness to question, to approach the new without regard for appearances.

For today: I want to be free of old patterns that stifle growth. I treat myself to the pleasure of admitting ignorance and the fun of asking questions.

Question: Where is my life out of balance due to my difficulty in accepting help from someone with more experience, strength and hope?

We are in a 5 minute meditation. Stay tuned...

September 28

You cannot create experience. You must undergo it.

Albert Camus

I tried to fabricate my own experience, to make my life a never-never land of no pain. Instead, I brought compulsion on myself, stifling all growth, blocking out joy along with pain, the good feelings along with the bad.

Today, though I naturally want to avoid painful experiences, I much prefer to own my feelings in all their intensity, to feel alive and struggling through whatever there is before me, to freedom. I am willing to go through all that I escaped from, experience each moment as if it were the first, like a child learning about the world.

For today: I no longer evade experience or try to create it out of fantasy. I willingly undergo what life puts before me.

Question: What powerful emotions am I facing today instead of running toward distractions?

September 29

Today is yesterday's pupil.

Thomas Fuller

My history of compulsive overeating is precious to me. It teaches me how to live today. The moment I set foot on the OA path to recovery, I knew that conventional ideas about controlling my food and my weight were out of my life forever. If it were not for my great and good teacher, yesterday, I would never have learned that wonderful lesson, which is largely responsible for keeping me abstinent, thin, happy, joyous and free today.

The fourth-step inventory, taken not once, but repeatedly, allows me to keep yesterday as a teacher on an ongoing basis; and everything I learn advances my recovery.

For today: What my experience as a compulsive overeater teaches me is priceless when I use it as this program directs.

Question: What life lessons from yesterday have I been reluctant to learn?

We are in a 5 minute meditation. Stay tuned...

September 30

There is only one success—to be able to spend your life in your own way.

Christopher Morley

Success has nothing to do with pleasing or impressing others. When I listen to my innermost self, I know what is best for me. Accepting and staying aware of who I am makes me less dependent on what other people think. When I trust myself, I have the backing of my Higher Power. To go through life my own way, attending to the things that are important to me, is to free myself of the chains convention would have me wear. Only then can I call myself a success.

I am thankful that this program shows me what is truly necessary in my life: contact with my Higher Power, closeness with those who love me for what I am, and confidence in my own choices.

For today: I am healthy, free and independent of all that is harmful for me.

Question: How is my OA recovery helping me today to be healthy, free, and independent of all that is harmful to me?