

Obesity Interview

My name is Rosalyn S (Roz). I am 78 years old, mother, grandmother, and a grateful recovering compulsive overeater and food addict.

I am recovering from my compulsive overeating for over 39 years in Overeaters Anonymous. I have been a vicechair and chair of our local Intergroup (a group of local meetings) and now represent my intergroup at the region level since 2018. Overeaters Anonymous is a worldwide organization for people who have problems with food.

From the time I was young, about three, my mother stated I was supposed to be a boy, as she already had two daughters. That is when I began to truly believe I was not good enough. At age five, I was made fun of by relatives who saw me in the bathtub. Shopping for clothes was an ordeal. We went to one store, where the salesmen would point to the back of the store, where clothing was sold for "chubbettes" or huskies. My mother would serve our meals by walking around the table, offering portions of different foods. That is, until she got to me. The conversation was "You don't want any potatoes, do you, Rozzie?" and would continue on, before I had anything to say.

I was taken to a diet doctor when I was thirteen, at the suggestion of my mother's friend, quite a big woman herself. She told my mother she was bringing her daughter and my mother should also bring me. The doctor tested me for my basal metabolism, gave me amphetamines, handed us a diet paper and said I would be fine. Except I wasn't fine. I didn't understand why I could only eat at certain times, that my intake of water had to be monitored. Yes, I did lose about 25 pounds over the summer break. When I went back to school, no one could talk about my weight, but one nasty boy started to make fun of my ears, and started calling me Dumbo. I have tears in my eyes as I write this. I never fit in. I was never accepted. So, my feelings about myself started to be negative.

Today, it is known as low self-esteem. I ended up regaining that weight plus more and was back at the same doctor for the same pills when I was fifteen. I was not chosen to be head majorette because, as was explained to me by the director of music, that I did not present a good picture. I was size twelve! Instead, he paid me to go to the three Junior High Schools in the city to teach the younger students. I also put together the routines we marched to, even though I couldn't be the leader.

In college, I was called off the clinic floor when the state visitors came. I was at Forsyth School For Dental Hygienists, part of Tufts University. I was called off because of my size. I was five pounds heavier than my application form, which was brought to my attention. So, even though I was eating half a sandwich, a piece of fruit, and a diet soda every day for lunch, I had to parade behind the dietician up to the third floor to be weighed. The director had a serious weight problem, so I did not understand what the problem was.

Graduation time was coming and I really studied hard for my boards. When my boards showed I was third highest, the dean leaned in and said in my ear, "We both know you cheated to get this mark." It took many years, but I have finally stopped crying over the hurt that the comment created.

As a dental hygienist, in the professional catalogs, I would order amphetamines. When I learned that was unhealthy, I started going to the different weight loss programs. The truth is I never cheated on a diet, yet I was a very slow loser. Back and forth. Eat and starve. I was 197 pounds when I got married and 3 weeks later, I was 217. I have become an exercise junky, or exercise bulimic. I have been on doctor diets, at 400 calories per day. I never varied from the rules or amounts. Yet 5 months later, I had only lost 10 pounds. I was starting to get depressed and frustrated about my inability to take weight off, and keep it off. Many physicians have no clue as to how to help the overweight child or adult. I went to a doctor for a sprained ankle, he walked in the room and said, "Wow. You are big." I responded, "I am glad you have good eyes. Please look at my foot." How could a so-called healer be so cruel?

Suicide started to look good. I considered how my mother would feel, like what did she do wrong. How would my children react? I banished those suicidal thoughts.

We had some serious family problems, when my husband had some legal things going on from his business. I became a single mom for a time, working three part-time jobs. Food was scarce, so we lived on pasta and one can of tuna daily. Vegetables were from end cap. I did everything to help my kids feel good about themselves, as I only heard growing up, "what is wrong with you?" Another reason for not accepting myself.

Nothing worked for me. I was beset with a lot of negative thoughts, which lead to negative behavior. One day at work, my coworker pointed out a particular woman waiting to be seen. When this woman first started in our dental office, I was told, she did not fit in the chair. They couldn't raise the chair. She now had lost 285 pounds. I approached her and told her what I had just learned. She told me about Overeaters Anonymous (OA). She left her info, I called, and about one month later I was at my first OA meeting.

My first meeting of OA was on November 3, 1983. How can I forget that date? It changed my life. Actually, IT SAVED MY LIFE! I heard that I had a disease of fear, doubt, and insecurity, which had manifested itself in the way of compulsive eating. It is not a moral issue. I started to weep quietly. They closed the meeting saying, "**Welcome to Overeaters Anonymous. Welcome home.**" I really started to cry aloud.

I believe the core of my obesity started with not feeling good about myself. Once the food intake was down, I had to work on issues. The good, the bad, and the ugly. I needed to create or find a power greater than myself. I needed to trust and give my problems to this power. I was very slow on this, as I had been taught not to trust anyone. I tried. I have explained about my eating, even though I never felt hunger or fullness, I was compelled to eat. I was a grazer, a word I learned in OA. My trust started because I had a curse over my head. I always had food

thoughts for as many minutes I was awake. I went to this Higher Power and asked can you take away these food thoughts for ten minutes. I was so sure I would still have them, but when ten minutes had passed with no thoughts of food, I asked for ten more, than increased the times. It worked. Now I am a believer. I also know if I don't ask, I don't get.

Recently, there were articles in the newspaper about gastric surgery for children of ages preteen and up. I know for sure, unless their mind is willing, surgery won't work. There are always new pills or procedures that everyone is looking for. Take the pills, the weight comes off. Put them down and the weight comes back on. This is a lifelong disease for me. When I see young children with substantial weight, I really feel sorry for them. The parents need to shift their beliefs. You cannot **buy** healthy.

Every day, I ask to be reminded that I am a compulsive overeater. I ask for help to put down the substances and quantities that are harmful to me. My prayers are easy, as I ask for everything I need. Not everyone in OA has to lose as much weight as I did, maybe only ten pounds. But, no one looks at how much or compares. We welcome all, anorexic, bulimic, whatever your circumstances. This program saved my life. The best part is I only have to follow for today.

I do believe genetics plays a part. I was the only one of four who had substantial weight to lose, but my siblings all gained as they grew older. With my healthy food plan, I am the only one still alive.

A lifetime battle for me. I have the solution and do not need to find anything else. I am always available to talk about my journey.