

## Steps 4, 5, 6

My first meeting of Overeaters Anonymous was on November 3, 1983. How can I forget that date? It changed my life. Actually, it saved my life. I heard I have a disease of fear, doubt, and insecurity which had manifested itself in the way of compulsive overeating. It was not a moral issue. I planned an abstinent day, and went to a meeting the next night, where I met my first sponsor. I followed everything she suggested, including attending a 12 step intensive meeting, which was starting soon after I joined OA. So, I followed her suggestions and never looked back.

I knew I was powerless over food, but I never identified that my life was unmanageable (step 1). Step 2 taught me that I needed a power greater than myself to help me in my daily life. (Really??) Okay, I will try to resist being in charge. Step 3 was making a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of G-d, as I understood G-d. I have done this for 38 years, always stating after the first 3 steps: I DO TURN MY LIFE AND WILL OVER TO YOU TODAY.

I am saner, happier, more peaceful, all the positives I didn't know I was capable of feeling about myself, having freed myself from the shackles of compulsive overeating. Today, I am happy, joyous, and free. So, now action begins. I thought step 4 was a punishing step, but it isn't. It asks me to look at myself, to make a searching and fearless inventory of myself, including both assets and defects of character. (What are those?) I learned in a lengthy list given out that I had positive assets and things I had to work on (negative things) if I wanted to feel better and have better behaviors.

So, I wrote an autobiography from what I could remember, the good, the bad, and the ugly. A lot had to do with low or no self-esteem, always being called out for being fat. When I was 13, I was sent to a diet doctor who put me on amphetamines. I went back to school in September 37 lbs. lighter. Of course, B.C. made fun of my ears and called me Dumbo, because he couldn't mention my weight.

I come from a shame, blame, guilt and resentment home life, fearful of life itself. So, a lot of what I was feeling at age 39 were the negative feelings I was used to. By opening my thoughts to prepare me for a better life, free of fears, guilt, etc., I needed to claim my part and write it down. I cannot begin to tell you how freeing it was, how light I felt in my heart and my head when I shared my writings with my sponsor (step 5). I was scared to share my story, that she would fire me as a sponsee, that I was a bad person. No, I was only a sick person, trying to get better. Instead, she was kind and patient in her remarks to me when I finished speaking. She reminded me I was a preteen when I was under 18 and I was not in program when other things happened. She then asked if I would have the same behaviors now. No way!

Now, having cleansed and purified my thoughts, I needed to ask HP to remove all these defects of character (step 6). So I read and reread all I had written. My behaviors needed to change (negative thoughts allow negative behaviors). I lived in the past: always with low self-esteem and negative feelings towards myself. If I wanted to get better, I needed an attitude adjustment and these steps were the best teachers to change.

I learned to forgive myself is to hold on to the future more tightly than the past. I learned to practice kindness to myself, as well as others, then perhaps kindness will be returned to me. So, when HP saw the right time was there, I worked on removing these shortcomings, reviewing my daily life, and making amends when necessary.

So, every day, I do turn my life and will over to HP. I question my direction: Am I going forward or back? Only I can make that choice. I ask for HP's help and guidance all day. I remember if I don't ask, then I don't get. It's about willingness. See page 317 in AA Big Book. What did I find out? I am my only problem. Everyone else and everything else are only situations. Am I willing to release all that gets in the way of my serenity and my peace of mind? I didn't choose to be a compulsive overeater. I am what I am. I just do not practice what my disease wants me to do. I do not wake each day, wondering and thinking about food. Instead, I think about working my program, offering myself to HP if He feels I am worthy enough to help a suffering person.

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