

DECEMBER 2020

STEPS OF RECOVERY

OA SOUTH AND EAST ENGLAND INTERGROUP NEWSLETTER



THE GIFTS OF VIRTUAL RECOVERY

Welcome to this newest issue of the OA South and East England Intergroup newsletter!

Our newsletter has been on hold for quite a while, but it's now back with this issue focussing on 'The Gifts of Virtual Recovery' - what benefits have we seen as a result of how fellowship has changed this year?

This newsletter will be produced quarterly, and the topic for the next edition will be "Coming to Believe - My relationship with my Higher Power". There's lots of way for you to get involved - keep reading to find out more!

Please note that the opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of individual OA members and do not represent the views of OA South and East England Intergroup or OA as a whole



A WIDER SENSE OF CONNECTION

As a compulsive overeater my life has been stunted by fear. Fear of others has played a big part and my primary reaction to new people was often one of suspicion.

Joining OA helped me begin to practice a new way of relating to people with trust based on our common experiences and understanding. But I still tended to associate this safety with my home group alone, as if it was the exception to the rule and magically different from other OA groups.

From Spring 2020, as the COVID19 pandemic escalated, more and more OA groups moved over to virtual meetings. Thanks to the technical skills of those who got them started, this enabled people from all over the UK and beyond to join meetings from the comfort of their own homes at a time of day that suited them, rather than being constrained by the availability and accessibility of face-to-face meetings. My home group was greatly enlarged by visitors from around the country, Europe and the US. This brought fresh energy and

interest as we got to meet new people and shared appreciation for the opportunity to connect.

I started venturing into other online meetings around the UK and enjoyed exploring the variety of styles and formats for meetings. This gave me greater insight into the types of meetings that work for me. I would also see fellow travellers on the online circuit as we meandered around the

"This brought fresh energy and interest as we got to meet new people"

numerous offerings, and this too increased my feeling of belonging to a much wider network of fellows.

Disappointed at the cancellation of the OA Cork intergroup Spring workshop that I had been due to attend in person in April, I was delighted when the organising committee worked wonders to put the whole event online over a long weekend of glorious sunshine. The American speaker





generously shared with us a lifetime of wisdom and despite our physical distance the love and inspiration was palpable.

Meetings and workshops taking place in the US suddenly became open to me. I learned a lot from OA fellows in a Central Oregon online retreat held in May which taught me about shame and self-sabotage in recovery. Again, despite the big difference in time and location, I felt uplifted by the connection with these fellows.

"Despite our physical distance the love and inspiration was palpable"

In June I joined the 69th annual picnic at "Stepping Stones" - the former home of the founder of another fellowship and his wife which is now maintained as a museum. A

virtual picnic may not be as pleasurable as the real version, but listening to the speakers and having a virtual tour of the house and gardens where they lived and worked from 1941 until their deaths was very moving. It was certainly something I would never have imagined possible at the start of the year.

I understand and share the longing that many fellows express to be back in the rooms again, able to give each other a hug or a personal message and to feel the physical presence of our home group. But I have also felt closeness and warmth in virtual meetings, combined with a sense of awe that through all the restrictions and suffering of the pandemic we have been able to strengthen our fellowship and welcome many newcomers to the fold.

Personally, I'm very grateful for the discovery of a much wider sense of connection with fellows around the world. Yes, we talk in different accents and idioms, but at base we all share the language of the heart.

Chris WD

Not signed up yet to receive our newsletter directly? [Click here to subscribe!](#)





YOUR NEW INTERGROUP BOARD!

Every November, we elect officers to our Intergroup Board for the following year. Fellows can take on the same officer position for up to 3 years in a row, so some of our officers are new to their roles, and some are carrying on with their existing roles.

Thank you so much to all the outgoing officers who have served on the Board this last year - your time, efforts and dedication are very much appreciated by us all!

All our officers can be contacted by email - visit the Officers page on our website for details

Chair: Darren

Vice Chair: *Vacant*

Executive Secretary: Anne

Treasurer: Natalie

Recording Secretary: *Vacant*

Website Officer: Robbie

Social Media Officer: Charlie

Newsletter Officer: Caroline

Telephone Officer: Linda

**Professional Outreach
Officer:** Hannah

Public Information Officer:
Vacant

Virtual Space Officer: Nik

Service position

Intergroup greeter: Will



**Could you give service at Intergroup?
Please take a look at our vacant roles!**



SHOWING UP WITH GOD'S HELP

Virtual recovery has proved to be a lifeline for me since March of this year. I had never been to an online meeting and to be honest was quite resistant to the idea of it. It has been a priceless gift though and new pathway into OA for me.

Immediate global access to other compulsive overeaters sharing experience, strength, and hope, in a time of great challenge, stress, hardship, and isolation. Hearing the solution in such a broad way, having an OA family to plug into each day, opportunities to try new areas of service, meet new people, learn new technology and skill sets which have supported my employment as well, making new friends with intimacy and depth to the relationship.

Having a sense of purpose spiritually which is still being renewed every day, and the privilege of service at workshops and meetings I have never been to before. Access to diversity, different cultures, countries all seeking the OA solution. So many newcomers, bless God!

Service has strengthened, challenged, widened, and deepened my recovery to a level where isolation mentally and emotionally has not been an option for me. I thank God for this 12-step program giving me sanity and grace to live life on life's terms without picking up the food.

I may have been physically isolated however I have been richly connected, choosing to show up with God's help

"Service has strengthened, challenged, widened, and deepened my recovery"

and take part in the virtual experience this year. I have met and served with committed, hardworking, loving, kind fellows at Intergroup, been challenged, triggered, and had to look at my side of the street to keep it clean. I have seen OA numbers increasing, fellows' step into officer roles, more intergroup





reps attending IG and felt blessed to learn from their experience, passion, and innovation. I had the privilege of an afternoon in Iran! I was blown away hearing the Persian and Arabic translation of tradition nine, “OA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or

"I have taken out eight months of OA insurance for my own recovery"

committees directly responsible to those they serve.” Such polite, gracious fellows all seeking the solution and hungry to learn about this amazing fellowship and how it works.

I have travelled to America and

Scotland attending virtual conventions, and this year’s National Assembly, all from my living room sofa with my feline companion! Gifts I would not have been able to reach had it not been for virtual access.

God has been guiding me and giving me a willingness to show up virtually and in turn, and unbeknown to me, I have taken out eight months of OA insurance for my own recovery, which is the bedrock to helping me with deal with challenges at present.

Someone told me once, you can only keep what you have by giving it away so for me, the biggest gift of virtual recovery has been a global platform to practise and uphold OA’s Tradition 5 that “Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers.”

Thank you God for this amazing fellowship!

Charlotte D

Our next Intergroup meeting is on 9th January 2021 – all are welcome to attend!



FUN AND GAMES!

How much do you know about the history of our fellowship and OA around the world? Try our quiz and find out!

- 1) OA was founded by Rozanne S. after she attended attended a meeting of which other fellowship and saw similarities with food?
 - a) **Alcoholics Anonymous**
 - b) **Narcotics Anonymous**
 - c) **Gamblers Anonymous**

- 2) The first OA meeting took place at Rozanne's house which was located in the state of...
 - a) **California**
 - b) **Texas**
 - c) **Arizona**

- 3) Around the same time, another 12 step fellowship focusing on food was also started, which later merged with OA. Was it called...
 - a) **Gourmets Anonymous**
 - b) **Gluttons Anonymous**
 - c) **Gorgers Anonymous**

- 4) In the early days of her recovery, Rozanne thought she was qualified to rewrite the 12 Steps because she worked as...
 - a) **an author**
 - b) **a copywriter**
 - c) **an English teacher**

- 5) The first ever OA Conference took place in...
 - a) **1960**
 - b) **1962**
 - c) **1972**

- 6) The OA World Service Office is located in the state of New Mexico, in the town of....
 - a) **Albuquerque**
 - b) **Santa Fe**
 - c) **Rio Rancho**

- 7) OA now has meetings in over...
 - a) **35 countries**
 - b) **55 countries**
 - c) **75 countries**

- 8) The worldwide membership of OA is estimated to be...
 - a) **30,000**
 - b) **60,000**
 - c) **90,000**

Answers on the back page!

NEWCOMER'S CORNER

We asked some questions to a fellow in their first year of recovery to find out about their experience of OA so far!

How did you find out about OA?

About three years ago, I said to my husband who is in other fellowships, "Wouldn't it be great if there was somewhere like that for food?" He told me about OA and I looked it up online. I saw that there were meetings locally, but I thought that OA was just for people who'd had really difficult lives and I didn't really need it, I just needed to try harder.

Then about a year ago, I got chatting to my beautician who told me that she was in OA. I told her I had issues with food, but I didn't actually need to go to OA and her response was "Yes, everyone says that!" I started to question my thinking - I've tried everything else, my way isn't working and perhaps I do need some help.

I saw how much my husband loved his fellowships and recovery, and when lockdown started, he began attending meetings online. In July, after having put on quite a bit of weight in lockdown, I decided to give it a go myself and attended my first meeting.

What did you think of your first meeting?

If it wasn't on Zoom I don't think I would have come. With the meeting being online, I knew I could try it out and if I didn't like it, I could just quietly leave without anyone noticing. I'd spoken to the group contact in advance, so I knew a little bit about what to expect.

In fact, I actually loved the meeting. I thought, if there's this kind of

atmosphere and connection just on a Zoom meeting, what must it be like to actually go to the meeting in person. When I heard people speaking, I thought "You're all like me, I'm normal here."

I heard "Welcome to OA, welcome home" and I just thought to myself, why didn't I do this three years ago? It was a magical feeling. It came across as a group of people who genuinely cared about each other and had a connection that was really special.



Are you working with a sponsor? If so, how did that come about?

I had a temporary sponsor for a while who was a friend of my husband's, but I knew I needed to find someone myself. I spoke to the newcomer greeters after the first meeting who advised me to keep an eye out in the chat box when people shared their numbers to see if anyone was available, and also speak to people in outreach and see if there is anyone you click with.

After a few weeks I still hadn't found anyone. I emailed for a sponsor list,

and there was someone who was available but she was in the States so the timings wouldn't really have worked. I started thinking I was never going to find someone, everyone is too busy and I don't know what I'm supposed to do next in the programme or what I'm supposed to be eating. Then I was in the meeting one evening and saw someone say they were available – I didn't even wait til the end of the meeting, I messaged her straight away and she said let's have a chat about it tomorrow. It came at exactly the right time and if I'd ever had any doubts about a Higher Power, that overcame them and we're just about to start on Step 3.

What has changed for you since starting in OA?

I no longer look into the mirror and tell myself I'm the worst person in the world, I just look and think "There you are". I'm so much calmer, my head has gone from constantly thinking about food to thinking about what's actually going on in the present moment.

I don't jump to conclusions or get angry all the time the way I used to.

Also, I know now that my weight is going to take care of itself, I don't have to worry about it – if I'm in contact with my Higher Power, work the steps and look after myself, all will be OK.

What would you say to other newcomers just starting in OA?

Just breathe, and listen, and be open-minded. It's very easy to come in and feel this is far too much. Most people end up in OA after a lifetime of diet clubs and this is a monumental shift,

because no one tells you what to do, there's lots of big words, everyone's talking about steps and God.

I'd say take the suggested 6 weeks to see if OA is a good fit for you, and don't be shy to say hello to people!

Phillipa B





NATIONAL ASSEMBLY 2020

Our delegate Sheila attended the first ever virtual OAGB National Assembly in October - here are some of the highlights!

The Assembly was attended by 67 delegates - representatives from groups and Intergroups all over Great Britain as well as members of the National Service Board.

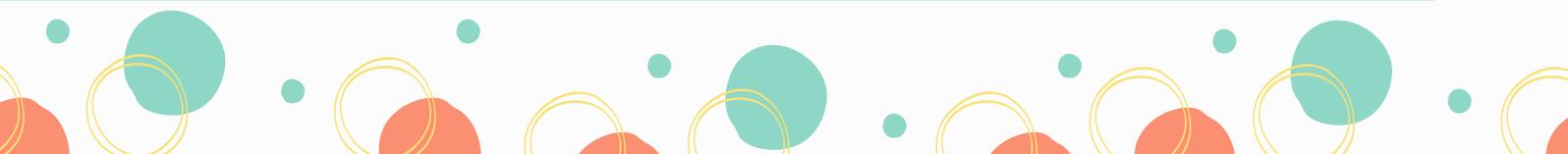
Two National Service Board (NSB) members came to the end of their term of service - Juliet from our Intergroup, and Sam from the North West IG - thank you so much for your service!

Three members were elected to the Board - Theresa from Heart of England IG, Caroline from North West IG, and Chic from Caledonian IG (re elected for a second term) will join Janet from our IG who is continuing her two year term to make a Board of four members

Both motions for discussion were passed - Motion A reduced the number of spaces on the National Service Board from 15 to 10, and Motion B asked the NSB to investigate hosting the National Assembly as a hybrid in-person and virtual Assembly in future years

News from other IGs - Caledonian have changed their meetings to run every month for just an hour. Heart of England will host their annual Convention 9-11 July 2021 either in person or online, and collaborated with a crew who filmed an OA meeting for a TV documentary

Caledonian, the organising IG, put on a wonderful Convention on the Sunday following the Assembly, as well as hosting various OA meetings, workshops and some entertainment on Saturday night. They will be hosting again in 2021, hopefully in person!





VIRTUAL SERVICE IN A TIME OF COVID – THE WORKSHOP COMMITTEE AND ME

When Covid-19 struck and the world went into lock down, we had to quickly adjust to the idea of not seeing our (recovery) friends and (recovery) families for the foreseeable. But the disease of compulsive overeating doesn't take a day off, even for a global pandemic.

Luckily OA groups, and the intergroup, worked tirelessly to move meetings online, to enable the powerful healing and connection that they bring to continue. In fact, the intergroups' response to dealing with the situation extended even further, when they began to set up weekly workshops that brought together fellows from all over the UK and beyond.

I was fortunate to be brought onto the committee to help and give service at a time that couldn't have been more perfect (thanks HP!). It was May time and nationally we were all coming to terms with the holidays we were having to cancel and hearing about the daily rise in cases.

In my inner world I was struggling with working from home, desperately trying to accept that my imminent wedding plans were going to have to be changed and trying to stay in the middle of the boat and not be swept away with the fear of the unknown. Giving service to the committee gave me a focus, a purpose and most importantly a feeling of connection to my fellows that I so desperately needed at that time.

"The disease of compulsive overeating doesn't take a day off"

I met some fabulous new OAs that I may otherwise have not come across if our paths hadn't crossed in a meeting, and together we tackled the beautiful diplomacy of group conscience working all via the wonders of WhatsApp!

I learnt new IT skills and overcame some of my (still troubling) perfectionism. I exercised some of my least worked muscles by making



suggestions and expressing my opinion in a gentle way and I was listened to and met with loving acceptance.

Most importantly, I was able to be a part of the powerful workshops that took place week on week where new

"To see people coming back week on week ... was very rewarding"

topics were discussed in depth and newcomers were given the centre stage. To see people coming back

week on week, listening and soaking up the programme, was very rewarding. Shares from those workshops were recorded each week and are available now for you to listen back (see below)

It is truly a gift that we have been able to keep connected through this unprecedented time. Compulsive overeating breeds in isolation, it loves it.

I remember the height of my bingeing days when I would pray to be left alone so I could get down to a good old binge. Today, I pray for the vaccine to be rolled out so that I can get back to my meetings and give my wonderful OA family the biggest hug! Oh, and I also thank God for giving us Zoom!

Sarah T

Want to catch up on the shares from our Intergroup workshops?

Visit www.oagb.org.uk/audio-shares





Your newsletter – How to get involved!

Deadline: 20th Feb 2021

Write an article

The topic for our next newsletter is "Coming to Believe – My connection with my Higher Power" - could you write 500-600 words on this topic? Alternatively you could interview another fellow, asking them three or four related questions.

Or send in a contribution for our Newcomer's Corner!

Get creative!

We also welcome other contributions such as poems, art work, games etc that are related to recovery - we'd love to see what you can come up with!

Make suggestions for future newsletters

Do you have any ideas for improving the newsletter? Or ideas for future topics? Please get in touch!

Get in touch at

newsletter@oasouthandeastengland.org.uk

Please note: Contributions may be edited for length or for adherence to the Traditions. Depending on how many contributions are received, it may not be possible to publish them all.



FUN AND GAMES! – ANSWERS

- 1) The first OA meeting was started by Rozanne S. after she attended a meeting of **Gamblers Anonymous** with her husband to see if it might help a friend with his addiction, but she saw a similarity there with her own eating.
- 2) The first OA meeting took place at Rozanne's house in the state of **California** on 19th January 1960. Rozanne decided to start a meeting when she had not been able to find a 12 step group to help her with her food. The first meeting was attended by Rozanne, her neighbour and the wife of one of the members of GA.
- 3) Around the same time, another 12 step fellowship was started called **Gluttons Anonymous** by a man called AG. In June 1962, the AA Service Officer put Rozanne and AG in touch and the two fellowships decided to join up together.
- 4) In the early days of her recovery, Rozanne thought she was qualified to rewrite the 12 Steps because she worked as **a copywriter**. Rozanne admitted herself that this was definitely a case of self will run riot, and was eventually convinced by her friend Jim W, the founder of GA, to go back to the original wording of the Steps.
- 5) The first ever OA Conference took place in **1962**, bringing together fellows from OA and Gluttons Anonymous for the first time. They voted on a name for their newly joined organisation - there were 16 groups in OA and 5 in Gluttons Anonymous, so the vote was 16 to 5 in favour of OA!
- 6) The OA World Service Office (WSO) is located in the state of New Mexico, in the town of **Rio Rancho**. The first ever WSO was actually in Rozanne's living room! As the fellowship grew, it moved into an office and then moved from California to New Mexico.
- 7) OA now has meetings in over **75 countries** - we really are a global organisation! You can find meetings anywhere from Barbados and Bahrain to Uruguay and the Ukraine.
- 8) The worldwide membership of OA is estimated to be **60,000 people**. This is an estimated number as we don't keep meeting records but WSO regularly send out a survey, and at the last count our 6000 groups had an average of 10 members each.