

SEPTEMBER 2021

# STEPS OF RECOVERY

OA SOUTH AND EAST ENGLAND INTERGROUP NEWSLETTER

## WORKING WITH OTHERS: BEING A SPONSOR, HAVING A SPONSOR

Welcome to this newest issue of the OA South and East England Intergroup newsletter! Our theme this month is all about the topic of sponsorship.

If you'd like to catch up on our previous issues, you can find them on our website [here](#).

The topic for our next issue will be Celebrating Recovery: How has recovery changed my life? and we'd really love to have your contributions - email your story of 500-600 words to:

[\*\*newsletter@oasouthandeastengland.org.uk\*\*](mailto:newsletter@oasouthandeastengland.org.uk)

*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*



## THE GIFTS OF SPONSORSHIP

Hello, my name is Natasha and I am a grateful compulsive eater. Throughout my recovery I have been gifted different sponsors who have generously and lovingly shared their recovery so that I may find freedom from my dis-ease. By working with others, I learned that we are unwell, and getting well, and that I need only be consistently honest, open and willing to give myself the best chance. Humility and positive action have been vital to my wellness; asking for help in the right places, at the right times, and allowing others to help me discern the next right thing, has saved my life on more than one occasion.

Choosing a sponsor who had what I wanted and had a recovery that was attractive to me, and asking them how they got to where they are now and if they would be willing to work with me, taught me how asking for and accepting help can be a wonderful and empowering thing. How this was a sign of my strength and how I am not expected to have all of the answers and simply 'fix myself'. Having a sponsor, in conjunction with sharing

with fellows, and eventually becoming a sponsor, has been transformative. I have become more loving, compassionate and kind to myself; I borrowed the love from the fellowship to allow me to start changing my relationship with myself and my body; to no longer punish myself for being a human being with human feelings and thoughts; to seek help in the form of therapy to address the trauma that

**I have become more loving, compassionate and kind to myself**

underpinned my need to 'use' on my feelings by underexercising, overexercising etc. to try to control the only thing that I once thought I could.

My body is not mine to abuse into submission anymore or to be manipulated or contorted so that it may be attractive to others; my second OA sponsor taught me how my body deserved compassion and deserved to be celebrated for its strength and for what it allows me to





do, including the difference I make in the world (nb. affirmations saved me). By fixating on ‘fixing’ my body, that was never really ‘broken’ or never really a project for me to complete, I had turned my attention away from where I could be useful and also away from being able to experience my life in a present and potential-filled way.

Sponsorship instilled hope in me, and, by diligently (repeatedly) working the steps and traditions, to the best of my ability, and restoring myself that had been partly beaten into submission, I was able to see that I am a child of a loving being and that I have something to give; to sponsor so other fellows could find freedom from the bondage in their lives. Allowing myself to get well meant that the more I put into my recovery, the more I then was equipped with to then give away.

The privilege of sponsoring others and freely sharing what I have lovingly been given, further strengthens my recovery and gives meaning to the

pain that preceded my healing journey.

Less helpful sponsor relationships remind me that we are all in recovery, to not put anyone on a pedestal, to meet sponsees as equals, and to change sponsor when needed, but to

**Sponsorship instilled hope in me...I was able to see that I am a child of a loving being**

approach endings lovingly; for all involved. And, to do what I do best, get up and try again; to allow others into my life and to find the next right sponsor for me; no one person outside of me is responsible for my recovery; that’s my job; with the help of my HP and my fellows.

*Natasha*

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## VALUING MY BEST QUALITIES

August 27th's "For Today" is headed by the quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Every man has a right to be valued by his best moment". Having replaced "man" and "he" with "person" and "their", I was freed to ask myself, what has been my best moment? I could certainly think of plenty of my worst moments, cringe-making scenes that still have me gritting my teeth after repeated Step Four-to-Nine work on them.

But my best moments? I haven't rescued anyone from drowning, nor raised millions for the poor; and in OA I can't point to a row of happily-recovered sponsees, and my service record is "could do better". I felt irritated and discouraged.

The reading exhorts me to value myself for my best qualities and actions (and other people by theirs), though, so I tried harder, and was struck by a thought: I might not recognise my best qualities and actions. They might not be big things,

nor have immediate and obviously brilliant consequences. They are most probably from those times when I got on with my job, whatever that happened to be at the time, without a fuss. So when I was a lecturer, I taught students and marked their exams; as a trade unionist I negotiated with management; as a secretary I wrote minutes; as a treasurer I added up the accounts; and when I was OA group secretary I led meetings.

**Only my Higher Power knows what my best moments are**

All of these might have helped people indirectly or directly. Only my HP knows which of these moments, or some other one, was my very BEST. Likewise I can't tell what anyone else's best moment might have been or might be in the future, from what little I know of them.

*Sheila P*

**Our next Intergroup meeting is on Sat 6th November – all are welcome to attend!**





# INTERGROUP NEWS

It's election time!

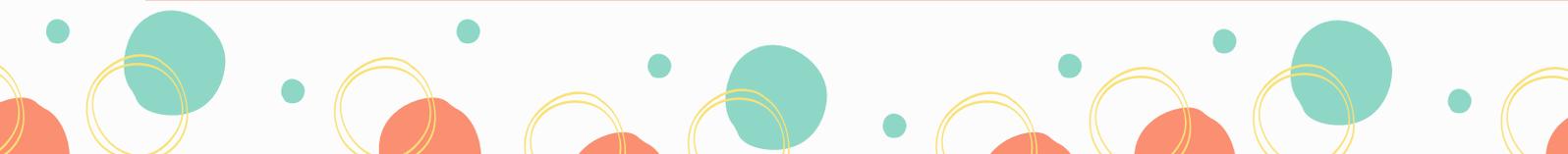
At the next Intergroup meeting in November, we'll be electing officers to serve at Intergroup for 2022.

Would you like to be part of the team? Positions include:

- Chair
- Vice Chair
- Treasurer
- Executive Secretary
- Minutes Secretary
- Website Officer
- Social Media Officer
- Newsletter Officer
- Telephone Officer
- Public Information Officer
- Professional Outreach Officer
- Virtual Space Officer
- 12th Step Within Committee
- Group Guidance Committee

Click [here](#) for more details, including requirements for roles

When you start a role, you'll be given a handover by the previous officer, or another Intergroup officer if the position is currently vacant, so there's lots of help and support available - we'd love to have you on board!





## FINDING A SPONSOR IN THE LEAST LIKELY PLACE

My story of finding a sponsor (my stop & think button!) is different, I didn't find her in the rooms but literally through our houses being joined together. Just imagine if your sponsor lived next door to you! This does come with advantages and disadvantages: I think the long disadvantage list is written by my 'illness.' For example, as well as food, exercise is one of my addictive behaviours, it means I can't sneak in an extra bike ride for, like a spider in a web, she's at my garden gate before I can say the Serenity Prayer! I call her 'Mrs CCTV!' We have found how to balance the relationship of sponsor, best family friends and good neighbours.

The 'recovery' relationship started after years of being neighbourly and polite. She came to me in emotional pain and with my fellowship hat on I was able to take her to a meeting and support her in a similar role to a sponsor, then it all reversed! Amazing things happen when you start this journey of recovery but like any good power tool, for sponsors to work properly, one must plug them in! With my sponsor, and with my sponsee, sometimes we surprise ourselves with

the wisdom and knowledge we pass on, I do believe someone works through us to reach out to others.

I also believe to keep recovery you have to give it away, which is why sponsor/sponsee works so well. Some sponsors have an 'intuition', knowing something's going on before you do! In the words of my sponsor, "Oh no,

**Sometimes we surprise  
ourselves with the  
wisdom and knowledge  
we pass on**

you're not starting that off!" and the chain is broken even before it can link itself together. Often, I'm given the power of choice, the choice of what path to take, something not even God's angels are given for they are not free to choose sin.

If I've already started on the wrong path, she takes my hand and leads me back to the place where I have the choice to take a different path, sometimes I take the same wrong path, she simply offers her hand again, leads me back and I'm given the chance to start over. When she's fed





up with doing this, when the `nice' isn't working, she'll give it to me straight and I respond, taking her hand with a smile and going down a different path. She then leaves me to continue until I need her again. Sometimes I'm so far down the wrong path she calls out, makes an `intervention,' and is willing to drag me back! Why? Because the `recovery me', has given her permission to do so.

**By facing my past,  
acknowledging it,  
feeling it, I can let it  
go and move on**

She never abuses her power as a sponsor, she never makes me do anything I don't want to do, nor has she ever asked of me what she wouldn't (or hasn't) done herself. She knows how to coax me out of myself. It's like there are two of me, sometimes I think I have a glass head and she can see everything that is going on, her patience and commitment to me often leaves me feeling `bad', that I'm not worthy, I hate to `bother her' but we work on this, the pieces fit together often rooted in childhood. By facing my past, acknowledging it, feeling it, I can let it

go and move on, she's with me all the way.

A little summing up story: I went round to mum's after yet another of her falls. She's suffered a stroke which means she shuffles along, she also has macular eye disease, leaving her with severely limited eyesight. I walked past her walking frame in the hall to bring her a cup of tea. "Mum, why don't you use your frame when you are out to avoid falls like this, you can also use it in the house you know!" I said, somewhat puzzled. "I don't like to!" she said, `Why?' springs to mind again but we've been here before - several times.

"So even after another fall, you still feel like you want do it by yourself!" and I raised my eyebrows, wondering why buy the walker in the first place? I tried to explain that using the walker would make her more independent, that it's taking responsibility for the situation she is now in, admitting where she is at.

Then I realised something, I was trying to make the point to my mother my sponsor has been trying to make to me for years! I hear her voice, "I can't help you if you don't let me!" "Little point telling me after!" or "If you don't use me, I'm of little use!" I get it! Do I want to make a change, or do I want to turn into my mother?

**Christine**





## WHAT IS A SPONSOR?

S = Sincere

P = Patient

O = Optimistic

N = Noble

S = Safe

O = Observant

R = Realistic and Reliable



# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY – COMING SOON!

*This year's National Assembly will take place via Zoom on **15th-17th October 2021**. Not sure what it's all about? Read on to find out more!*

## What is the National Assembly?

The National Assembly is the annual group conscience for the OA fellowship in Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales). It is a weekend long event, which includes a business meetings to vote on motions, ask questions of the National Service Board officers, and elect new officers to the Board. It also includes recovery workshops, OA meetings and social activities.

## Who attends National Assembly?

Every OA group and Intergroup in GB can send a voting delegate to take part in the Assembly - we need at least 25% of groups/Intergroups to send a delegate in order to make the Assembly quorate, ie to validate the decisions taken at the Assembly.

In additional, any OA member can attend the Assembly as a visitor, as well as attending all the recovery events happening throughout the weekend.

## What's being discussed at the Assembly this year?

- Updating bylaws to allow the Assembly to take place virtually
- Creation of a budget for national Public Information campaigns
- Updating the bylaws to allow virtual groups and Intergroups to affiliate with OAGB
- Allowing National Service Board officers to be elected with 18 months of previous service beyond the group level, instead of 2 years
- Co ordinating website services between all groups and Intergroups in OAGB

## How do I sign up?

Visit [www.oagb.org.uk/national-assembly](http://www.oagb.org.uk/national-assembly) for more information, including details on how you register to attend





# A MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL SERVICE BOARD...

## Could you consider joining the OAGB National Service Board?

Currently we have five members serving on the National Service Board (NSB) however the majority are finishing their terms in October.

We do not want to be in a position where we have to close down our NSB, which would also mean closing the OAGB literature shop, so we would LOVE to encourage more fellows to come on board!

With more officers on the OAGB Board, we would be able to have specific members dedicated to roles such as Public Information, Professional Outreach and Twelfth Step Within (as well as the core officer positions). We can spread the message of recovery wider through our varied experience, strength and hope.

Please think about giving service at NSB level if you meet the requirements of one year of current abstinence and two years of service above group level.

Service above group level could include;

- Serving as Intergroup Representative for your group
- Doing service for OAGB such as packing literature, answering email enquiries, helping with social media, etc.
- Serving on an Intergroup Board or Intergroup Committee
- Region 9 service

Please note that having two years of service doesn't need to be within the last two years; it can be historical meaning you have accumulated two years of service above group level during your time in OA.

To find out more about the service we do and how to apply email [nsb@oagb.org.uk](mailto:nsb@oagb.org.uk) - the application form can be found [here](#).

If you'd like to have an informal chat about the Board and how we work please email us and we can arrange a time suitable for all.

What's stopping you from applying if you meet the criteria? Your current board members have all been in the position you are in now - maybe even sharing the same fears. Remember that together we can do what we could never do alone. OAGB really looks forward to receiving your applications!



# SERVICE IS A REQUIREMENT, NOT AN OPTION

When I came into OA 29 years ago, I was greeted warmly by the people who attended my home meeting at my local church.

They were giving service at the group level by helping me feel welcome. So, I learned over time that service at the group level was important and that even newcomers could give service by greeting newcomers and each other before and after the meeting. Listening to each other is a simple form of service. Setting up chairs for the meeting is a form of service. Speaking at a meeting is giving service

It took me a long time to recognize the importance of giving service above the group level. I believe that part of the reason was because I didn't have a sponsor for the first 15 years in OA who would have emphasized that service was essential to my recovery. Two things happened when I got a very experienced sponsor. He emphasized the importance of giving service above the group level and encouraged me to volunteer to co-lead a workshop at the 2007 WSO Conference in Philadelphia. I was scared to death, but I did it. An experienced woman was my co-leader

which helped me. Little did I know that over 200 people (predominately women) would attend our workshop because of the title "Freedom With Body Image and Sexuality". WOW! After that, a woman invited me to attend Intergroup, and I became aware of doing more service there. I became an IG Rep., the Chair of the PI/PO Committee, Vice Chair of IG and

**It "only" took me 80 years to attend my first WSBC**

eventually a Delegate to the WSBC and a member of the WSBC PI/PO Committee. It "only" took me 80 years to attend my first WSBC.

Another area of service has been to be involved with trying to increase the number of men in OA. Last October we formed a Men's IG as part of the Virtual Region and have appreciated the support of women in helping us attract and retain men in OA. Sponsorship is also a very important part of service too. OA has saved my life physically, emotionally and spirituality and it is my responsibility to give service and help others to achieve that goal.

**Bob B**



## THE MISSING PIECE OF THE PUZZLE

When I came into OA, there weren't many people in the meetings I attended who had worked through all the steps - on the weeks where we studied the steps above step 4, most shares would start "I haven't done this step yet, but..."

It was hard to imagine myself being one of those people who had actually done all twelve steps. The challenge seemed huge, this list of tasks that I was scared to think about, let alone do. I found myself a sponsor, and made a start. For a long time in the programme, I never got to that point of completing the steps - I worked with several sponsors, but we never quite made it that far.

I did sponsor others, to share what I had been given, but I always felt overwhelmed and full of doubt about whether I was saying or doing the right thing. It felt like a lot of pressure to try and work out exactly what that person needed to do in their recovery in order to get well.

Finally, I did work through all twelve steps with a sponsor, I achieved that

distant goal I'd had as a newcomer to OA, and it did feel good to have got there, but then I thought, what next? How do I continue to grow in my recovery if I've done all the steps?

Working through the steps gave me the ability to become a sponsor myself, but in a way I'd never done before. Instead of feeling the pressure of trying to figure out exactly what another person needed at any given time, all I had to do was instead follow the blueprint set out for me by my

**How do I continue to grow in my recovery if I've done all the steps?**

sponsor. I just did with someone else what she had done with me, and trusted in the process.

At this point I realised that what I'd thought of as the end goal of recovery, getting through the steps myself, was only the beginning! Becoming a sponsor unlocked the





missing piece to my OA programme,  
and I learned the truth of the  
statement “We keep what we have by  
giving it away”.

**My life is shifting,  
slowly and steadily**

I learn so much about my sponsees,  
about myself, about the programme

and about life through this process of  
taking other people through the steps.  
It has helped me understand  
connection, boundaries and  
compassion in new ways.

Being able to work with other people  
was the part of the programme I'd  
missed out on for years in OA. It was  
only when I started to work step 12 by  
working with sponsees that I really  
felt I was experiencing everything that  
recovery has to offer, and now I  
wouldn't be without it!

***Caroline***

**Our next Intergroup meeting is on Sat 6th  
November – all are welcome to attend!**





# Your newsletter – How to get involved!

**Deadline: 12th December 2021**

## **Write an article**

The topic for our next newsletter is "Celebrating Recovery: How has recovery changed my life?" Could you write 500-600 words on this topic? If you're not sure what to write, how about interviewing another OA fellow and ask them some questions relating to the topic?

If you're in your first year of OA recovery, you could also write an article for Newcomers' Corner!

## **Get creative!**

We welcome creative 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](mailto: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.

