

Story Two – Bulimic for 22 Years

Southeastern Arizona Intergroup Web Excerpt

www.oasouthernaz.org

I have been obsessed with food and sweets since I had my first taste of M&M's at Grandmas when I was eight. My food addiction took flight in my teens when I alternately binged, then starved and exercised, and even experimented with laxative use. When I went away to college, I felt scared and lonely and turned to food in earnest. I heard about bulimia and was convinced- this was the tool for me. No more starving and exercising for hours on end to counter my binges, I would binge and then purge! I became an expert at throwing up my food. I hid while I ate and I stole food- who wants to go to the checkout with so many sweets? I focused on nothing but eating and 'getting rid' of the food for hours and days on end.

Later in my 20's, 30's and until I was 40, I would rotate to different fast food drive-throughs, making up stories about who else was going to eat the food, and did I have their orders right? Between times, I hit the grocery stores for candy bars, large bags of sweets and numerous pastry items. This obsession consumed me. After I was married and had my daughter food took time and energy away from my family. I was irritable and sometimes started fights just to get out of the house so I could binge. Other nights I snuck food and secretly went to the bathroom to purge.

At 40 years of age and after 22 years of binging and purging I was hopeless. I had not wanted to purge for years but could not stop. I would weigh 300 pounds if I stopped purging! November 14 of 2000 I hit bottom and purged for the last time. I had tried paid weight loss programs, pills, laxatives, fad diets, exercise and everything in between: except Overeaters Anonymous. OA was my last hope and I went there to save my life. In OA I found love and understanding. I learned that I was in the clutches of the disease of compulsive eating. I got a sponsor who told me that I needed to find a power greater than myself to solve my problem, and we started on the twelve steps of OA.

OA's program is based on the twelve steps as adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous. My life today is sane and useful. I am maintaining a 35 pound weight loss and am not overweight today- by the grace of my higher power and the program of OA. My story is just one of many who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. Our stories vary, but we have one thing in common, a desire to stop compulsive behavior around food.

Unlike other organizations, OA is not just about weight loss, obesity or diets; it addresses physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Many of our members are maintaining weight losses of 70 to 100 pounds through working the steps of OA, following a food plan and using the tools of the program. Other members of OA, although never overweight or just slightly overweight, come to recover from their mental obsession and addictive behavior around food. Still others (like me) come with classic eating disorder symptoms like anorexia and bulimia. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively. OA is self-supporting and accepts voluntary contributions only from members. There are no dues or fees. OA is not allied with any religion or outside organization, and its members practice anonymity at the level of radio, television and other public media of communication. To address weight loss, OA encourages members to develop a food plan with a health care professional and a sponsor. If you want to stop your compulsive eating, welcome to Overeaters Anonymous.