

World Service Business Conference – May 1-5, 2006 - Full Report

Hello! I am Mike Bernard, a gratefully recovering compulsive overeater, blessed with recovery from compulsive eating in Overeaters Anonymous since January 4, 1990. I have been abstinent almost that whole time, am about 80 lbs. from my highest weight of 268 lbs. and have released, by the grace of my Higher Power and the 12 Steps tons and tons of resentment, pain, and fear. And you have given me the honor of being the Baltimore Area Intergroup delegate to the World Service Business Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico from May 1-5, 2006.

This is the full report of my experience at the Conference, with a summary in front followed by specific details. The Intergroup will use this information to review and expand its service work.

When I first started attending OA I heard people qualify every time they shared for the first time at a meeting. For whatever reason, I almost never hear any member qualify now. However, at the Conference, I heard it constantly and I realized that I missed it. I encourage you to qualify when you share as it gives newcomers hope and all of us a reason to celebrate what recovery does for us. Recovery gives me new life and a better life every day.

I worked with amazing people at the Conference, all who “qualified” when they shared, and who have long-term recovery and significant abstinence from compulsive eating. We debated business motions, shared in workshops, discussed issues in Region Forum, and supported each other in meetings. I attended 11 OA meetings at the conference, as several were held each day – and I had the privilege of leading one on the 12th Step.

Business Meetings – the Motions and other Actions

There were five business meetings during the week. Full details of these motions and actions appear later in this report. What gave me chills was that each meeting opened with the Serenity Prayer, once in a foreign language, and then in English. The Serenity Prayer was said in Hebrew, French, Spanish, Swedish, and Italian.

The first meeting consisted of a roll call of the Regions where delegates and visitors were asked to stand as their state, province, or country was called. What a thrill to see people from all over the world! Reports from the Trustee Chair, Treasurer, Managing Directors, Region Chairs, and Committee Reports were reviewed and approved.

At the second business meeting, Trustee nominations were reviewed. Debbie Wilson of Region 3 (U.S. Southwest), Margaret Ann Brady of Region 6 (New York, New England, eastern Canada), Dominique Buffet of Region 9 (Europe, most of Asia, Africa), and General Service Trustee Michael Buckley (no specific region assigned) qualified, spoke, and answered questions. The delegates later affirmed and installed all four trustee candidates in an almost unanimous vote.

Business motions were discussed and acted upon during the second and third business meetings. The review of these motions was completed so quickly that the fourth business meeting finished two hours early. This gave everyone the opportunity for more free time to shop for souvenirs (which I did), spend time with new OA friends (which I did), and relax (which I did). These are the results of the motions:

- Move to change the name of HIPM (Hospital, Institution, Professional, and Military) to “Professional Outreach” – adopted unanimously.
- Move to change the structure of solicitation of and financial distribution for regions to co-host or host World Service Conventions – was split into two motions to address structure

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- and financial distribution separately. The structure motion failed, the financial distribution motion was withdrawn.
- Move to combine Unity Day with the OA Birthday celebrations – motion was substituted with one that corrected a factual error in the original, then an amendment was suggested to change the time of the Serenity Prayer from 11:30 a.m. Pacific Standard time to 11:30 a.m. local time. The amendment failed, and the original proposal was withdrawn.
 - Move to add a ninth tool, “exercise” – the motion was amended to add a ninth tool, a “plan of physical activity,” which would parallel the tool a “plan of eating.” The motion failed with about 65% of delegates voting against it.
 - Move to amend the OA, Inc. By-Laws to require all groups and service bodies to have by-laws compliant with and including OA Subpart B – There were three motions, one each affecting Intergroups, National Service Language Boards, and Regions. The first motion failed, just missing the 2/3 vote required to pass. The latter two motions were withdrawn and all three will be reworked and reintroduced in the 2007 World Service Business Conference.

At the fourth business meeting, Trustees answered questions that were placed in the Ask-It Basket that was available all week at the Conference Support Center, a support area where OA volunteers guided delegates in their questions and concerns. Some valuable information was discussed, including these tidbits:

- If someone is cross-talking during meetings, it may be best to talk to that person privately to explain crosstalk, why it’s harmful, and show them in our literature that in the meetings we share about our own experience, strength, and hope. You may suggest to the member to discuss crosstalk with his or her sponsor and other OA members to fully understand it.
- When asked if extra Conference books are available, we were informed that Conference information, including the main conference book is available on the www.oa.org website, but the books themselves are provided only to delegates as they are covered under the cost of delegate registrations.
- A “rapid report” of the conference motion results will be available two weeks after the Conference. A full report will be sent to delegates later, in approximately 30 days.
- If you remove your body from the truth, it waits for you. When you bring your body to the truth, you find the truth of recovery.
- It is important for all OA meetings and Intergroups to have and USE the “OA Handbook for Groups and Intergroups.”
- Meetings and service bodies can reprint, without permission any downloadable documents from www.oa.org, excerpts of items being used to perform duties. Also many OA newsletters state reprinting or use of articles is allowed by other OA members and service bodies.
- Sometimes we give too much weight to anonymity...so much so that members won’t know that we are giving service.

Region Forum and Committee Work

All 200 delegates and trustees joined together in a morning-long Region Forum in which a host of subjects were discussed, including online “Listservs” and other services, cooperation of Intergroups, financial concerns of service bodies, and HIPM/Professional Outreach. Members were asked to answer two to three questions on a pre-prepared worksheet, discuss our experiences and thoughts in our groups of six to ten people. A spokesperson from each group then reported their answers to the entire body.

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Every delegate had the opportunity to join a World Service committee that requires collaboration and service for one year. I joined the 12th Step Within committee and joined 30 others to form several subcommittees. I am on the Speaker List sub-committee, and my job is to receive applications for and update a worldwide speaker list, where members can speak at a meeting or other event anywhere in the world, should service body so choose to ask that member to attend.

Our Intergroup's Retreat Committee is going to take advantage of this list as there is a member from Cleveland, Ohio who we are strongly interested in asking to be our keynote speaker this August. We are researching transportation costs and will make the final decision shortly. The complete report on the Forum and the Committee work appears later in this report.

Workshops

A full report of each workshop I attended is included later in this report. Ten workshops were offered and I attended six of them:

- One discussed the “stigma” of membership and how members dealt with feelings of having to be a member of OA when nothing else worked. One member shared that she must share her OA membership. She can't let shame kill someone else.
- “Hearing is Believing” featured a powerful public information CD in which members discussed their experience, strength, and hope and what OA did for them. I bought the Intergroup a copy, which can be used in 12th Step work within and outside the program.
- A most informative workshop gave tips on how to deal with a disruptive member, whether it was a perpetual cross-talker or someone who threatening physical harm, stalking, or sexual harassment.
- “All About Conference” was for “green dots,” new delegates like me that explained how the business meetings are run.
- “Review of Parliamentary Procedure” was just that – a review of Robert's Rules of Order and OA's Standing Rules that are used to conduct the business meetings with the goal of running them smoothly.
- One of the most powerful workshops for me was the “Cultural and Ethnic Diversity” workshop. Several panelists spoke of the OA experience from their cultural, ethnic, or gender-specific perspective. Members were then invited to share of their own experience. It was a most enthusiastic group that shared some eye-opening experiences.

Heard at Meetings and Miscellaneous Items

During the Conference, I jotted down phrases and statements that members shared that had an impact on me. My hope is that these will positively impact the recovery of our fellow compulsive eaters. This information is detailed later in this report, as is miscellaneous information that did not quite fit into a category of another report, such as information I heard about 12th Stepping and about items in the Hospitality Area.

Heard at Meetings

- No BLTs, please: no bites, licks, tastes, or sips between meals.
- “This is an opportunity.” [Troubles, situations, AFGOs]
- FINE = F***ed up, Insecure, Neurotic, and Eating!
- It doesn't matter who's right or who's wrong, but who's left.
- If I'm overeating, I'm lying to me.
- Another phrase for 'surrender:' “Do what you're told.”
- If you're taking inventories: “If you can spot it, you've got it!”
- If I want to take someone's inventory, it's time to take mine.
- Everything that goes in my mouth today has a purpose.
- I may be right, but if I am wreaking havoc in my relationships, how important is it be to be “right?”
- I have less opportunity to judge people because I have less time to be scared of people.
- If you have trouble taking your own inventory, take someone else's and insert your name at the top.
- If my goal is tolerance, then I'm still judging. I must change my goal to acceptance.
- My food doesn't have a lot of variety, but my life does have variety.
- You cheat everybody when you withhold yourself.
- My honesty starts with my food.
- If you don't have time to do it right, when will you have time to do it over?
- Recovery is a three-legged stool: spiritual, physical, and emotional and you really can't cut any one of them off.
- Smelling food used to be “good,” but what's great today is that I love to smell flowers.
- We don't have to fear because we get everything we need.
- There is a spiritual power here (in OA) that is remarkable.
- We're to be powers of example, not examples of power.
- I watched people who left OA and tried to do it themselves die! I am glad I was stubborn enough to stick around.
- I didn't realize then that they were ‘addictions,’ they were escape routes.
- We can try new [and unknown and scary] things in the safest of environments giving service in OA.
- When I am cold, I need to hug more.
- Choose your own God as you will choose your own abstinence.
- If you're overweight for your body, you're overeating.
- If you remove your body from the truth, it waits for you. When you bring your body to the truth, you find the truth of recovery.
- Sometimes we give too much weight to anonymity...so much so that members won't know that we are giving service.

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Business Meeting Motions – May 4-5, 2006

MOTION A: Move to change the name of HIPM (Hospitals, Institutions, Professionals, and the Military) Committee to “Professional Outreach” Committee.

BEFORE CONFERENCE: Feedback received from Baltimore Area members and meeting group consciences.

Reasons to Vote YES	Neutral Statements	Reasons to Vote NO
- Less awkward name - Encompasses all services.	- Be careful of the definition. “Military” might get lost in the title.	No comments offered.

BUSINESS MEETING: Motions, amendments, discussions, vote, results

Date: May 4

Summary: Very little discussion, no “con” discussion made against it.

Vote on Motion A: Unanimous in support, I voted “YES.”

Votes required to pass: majority (88 of 174 voting delegates)

Result: Passed.

MOTION B: Move that the World Service Board of Trustees (BOT) solicit requests from regions interested in participating in or co-hosting an OA World Service Convention (WSC). The trustee responsible for Convention planning would assign all possible responsibilities to the region Convention committee, subject to oversight and approval of the World Service BOT. / Any amounts earned in excess of expenses (including necessary WSO costs) would be kept by the region. Revenue sharing details to be worked out between the participating region and the BOT.

BEFORE CONFERENCE: Feedback received from Baltimore Area members and meeting group consciences.

Reasons to Vote YES	Neutral Statements	Reasons to Vote NO
No comments made.	- Remove section beginning with “Any amounts...” - We need to clarify typical revenue sharing details.	- We need paid staff members. - An all-volunteer staff won’t work, we need a mixed of paid staff and volunteers.

BUSINESS MEETING: Motions, amendments, discussions, vote, results

Date: May 4

Summary: By a vote of 90 “yes” to 84 “no,” the motion was split into two motions, B1 and B2 at the slash mark (/) above because these encompass two separate ideas. Comments from the “pro” and “con” sides seemed to demonstrate that current arrangements are working and, in fact, work similarly to the ideas in the motions.

Vote on Motion B1: 71 yes, 98 no. I voted “NO.”

Votes required to pass: majority (88 of 174 voting delegates)

Result: B1 failed. B2 was withdrawn by acclamation.

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MOTION C: Move to change Unity Day from the third weekend in February to the Saturday after Overeaters Anonymous' birthday on January 19.

BEFORE CONFERENCE: Feedback received from members and meeting group consciences.

Reasons to Vote YES	Neutral Statements	Reasons to Vote NO
No comments made.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- But won't there be problems with snow?- We might get more people out to celebrate the combined anniversary and Unity Day, but two events would bring in more revenue that would finance other marathons and succeed in larger outreach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- There's a better chance of snow in the north in January than February.- If it ain't broke, don't fix it.- Why cut back on two celebrations? If an Intergroup doesn't want to hold two events, members can go to another Intergroup's events.

BUSINESS MEETING: Motions, amendments, discussions, vote, results

Date: May 4

Summary: Substitute motion was made to correct a factual error in the original motion to move Unity Day from the fourth Saturday in February to the Saturday after Overeaters Anonymous' birthday on January 19 and to say the Serenity Prayer at 11:30 a.m. Pacific Standard time. An amendment of the substitute motion was proposed to strike "Pacific Standard time" so groups can commemorate at 11:30 a.m. local time. Amendment passed 91 yes, 76 no. I voted "YES."

The main points discussed were the impracticality of groups around the world to commemorate at 11:30 a.m. PST, as it would be overnight in many parts of the world. Also, since the original motions points of support were based on concern of attendance due to Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and Presidents Day, delegates outside the U.S. questioned how this motion would affect OA as a whole, since OA is worldwide and not everyone celebrates American holidays. Others expressed disagreement because this would reduce the number of opportunities for celebration of recovery from two to one in this time period.

Vote on the Substitute Motion: Motion to replace the original motion with the substitute motion failed on a voice vote. I voted "NO."

Votes required to pass: majority (88 of 174 voting delegates)

Result: Substitute motion was defeated. The original motion was withdrawn.

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MOTION D: Move that a ninth tool, exercise, be added to the current list of OA tools.

BEFORE CONFERENCE: Feedback received from Baltimore Area members and meeting group consciences.

Note: The amount of pre-Conference feedback I received on this motion was by far the largest amongst all of the motions. The reasons and statements here are a synopsis, and many items were repeated in individual and group conscience responses. Because this motion created such interest, I will attempt to give as many details as possible in the summary of the business meeting actions.

Reasons to Vote YES	Neutral Statements	Reasons to Vote NO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tools are not mandatory, but are suggestions for success. - Exercise addresses physical recovery. - It's essential to get out of one's head and have a healthy relationship with one's body. - Exercise is an energy and food booster. We used to use food for that. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Friendly amendment suggested to change the proposed tool name to either a "Plan of Exercise" or a "Plan of Physical Activity" or "Moderate Exercise." - We must carefully rewrite literature to include those unable to exercise due to physical limitations. - People should consult their doctors before starting or changing exercise regimen. - Exercise must not have a specific plan. - Exercise, like tools cannot be required. - It may be expensive to rewrite pamphlets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exercise does not relate a spiritual connection as the other tools do. - Those with eating disorders must work food before exercise, as the body is depleted of nutrition necessary for exercise right away. - Exercise may lead to control, self-will, and comparing. - Exercise only eases some symptoms of compulsive eating. - It's important for physical activity and health but it should not be elevated to "tool" status, but perhaps a second tier of suggestions.

BUSINESS MEETING: Motions, amendments, discussions, vote, results

Date: May 5

Summary: The Chair had already received three amendments to the motion before it was initially presented, which automatically required referral to the Reference Subcommittee. The Reference Subcommittee heard discussions and decided to make no recommendation to vote for or against, but did suggest striking the word "exercise" and replacing it with the phrase "a plan of physical activity." The amendment motion was made and passed by majority voice vote. I voted "YES."

The following statements were made for the amended motion –

- **PRO** – Motion maker Kalia stated physical activity supports physical recovery, and is a good resource and gateway to a spiritual awakening. Physical activity is a suggestion, not a requirement. Like the tool "plan of eating," we will suggest that members see a professional. This is an important tool even for the physically disabled.
- **CON** – Neil stated that the best interest of OA as a whole would be to create an exercise pamphlet, not make it a tool. Tools help us learn and connect spiritually, and physical activity would not do that. Even though it's beneficial, it could be a substitute addiction.

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We could send a mixed message with a tool of exercise, as it could be hurtful to the exercise bulimic. Exercise is considered an outside issue as a medical issue and is not spiritual.

- PRO – Judith stated that exercise might not be for everyone, but our Higher Power and sponsors can help members find what is right for them. It could include all activities, even yardwork and belly dancing. It's highly beneficial for the body, gives energy, regulates sleep, and helps create muscle mass. Helping our physical recovery is part of our three-legged recovery.
- CON – Louise stated that tools support working the steps and abstinence. Exercise helps support health and the body. Exercise is too “tangential” to our Steps and Traditions and is an outside issue.
- PRO – Allen states that everyone has their own perception of what the tools are. We must decide what is ours. The tool of physical activity supports this concept of healthy mind-body-spirit as do all of our tools. Everyone can choose what is right for them. Any tool will help us stay away from the first compulsive bite.
- CON – Teresa states exercise is beneficial to health, but it is not our primary purpose that carries the message of recovery. There is concern that members will not consult professionals and cause harm to themselves with excessive exercise and might try to hold OA liable. Exercise is not part of the Steps and recovery, keep first things first. There is concern that this tool will be confusing and will split the unity of the program.

QUESTIONS ASKED AND ADDRESSED:

Q1. What is the definition of a “tool” in our literature?

A1. “Tools are available to assist us...to achieve and maintain abstinence, the action of refraining from compulsive overeating. We can't be abstinent unless we use some or all of the tools.”

Q2. What's next if we pass this motion?

A2. Naomi from the WSO stated that verbiage from the pamphlet would most likely be submitted at the next WSBC, but in the meantime a note is inserted in current pamphlet stock that explains the new tool. Updates on the Internet and other areas would be made immediately where possible.

Q3. The motion states that costs should be minimal to carry out. Is this really true?

A3. Jeannie, Publications Manager said that there is a few months supply of the Tools of Recovery pamphlet and that the new issue would be updated with the new information. The new pamphlet would need to be first approved by the Conference Literature Committee.

Q4. The Reference Subcommittee says that they had “no recommendation.” Why?

A4. Bob, Reference Subcommittee chair stated that this was because there was a variety of feelings on this issue and no unanimity (17 of 19 members voting for same position) to recommend an action. They decided to let the whole body work through the issue completely and make up our own minds – 50% of the body are first-timers, or “green dots” and would not want them to be pressured into making a decision based on a recommendation.

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(MOTION D continued)

Q5. Would health professionals be consulted at cost in the development of a pamphlet on physical activity?

A5. The Conference Literature Committee and the Board of Trustees would decide whether or not to involve professionals. Professionals were consulted for the “Dignity of Choice” plans of eating pamphlet.

Q6. Regarding the idea within the motion that a pamphlet would be a source of income, historically income generation and profit of pamphlets is very low. The resource cost for pamphlet creation or revision is very high. Is there evidence of coverage of the costs or profit through sales?

A6. Jeannie, Publications Manager stated that this is hard to predict but a lot of funds come from literature sales.

An “incidental motion” was made to request paper ballot for voting, instead of voice or standing vote be done for this proposal. The motion passed by a simple majority.

Vote on Motion D: 63 yes, 115 no, one abstention. I voted “YES.”

Votes required to pass: majority (90 of 179 voting delegates)

Result: Motion failed.

BY-LAW MOTIONS 1, 2, and 3: Move to amend OA, Inc. Bylaws, Subpart B...

- [Motion 1] ...Article VI – Intergroups, Section 2...
 - [Motion 2] ...Article VII – Regions, Section 3...
 - [Motion 3] ...Article VIII – National/Language Service Boards, Section 3...
- ...- Registration by inserting the following:

[As a separate section] “Each [Intergroup, region, or National/Language Service Board] shall adopt and submit bylaws conforming to OA, Inc. Bylaws, Subpart B within one year of the initial World Service Office registration date.”

BEFORE CONFERENCE: Feedback received from Baltimore Area members and meeting group consciences.

Reasons to Vote YES	Neutral Statements	Reasons to Vote NO
- We tend to procrastinate.	- Give meetings and groups two years, and all other service bodies one year.	No comments made.

BUSINESS MEETING: Motions, amendments, discussions, vote, results

Date: May 5

Summary: A proviso motion by Bob Fisher, General Service Trustee was made that if the motion(s) pass that the By-Laws Committee will work on an implementation plan to submit the planned policy to the agenda questionnaire to be considered for the 2007 World Service Business Conference. Bob says that this will give an extra year to the 12 affected Intergroups and service bodies not in compliance with Subpart B, most who aren’t English-speaking groups to attain

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compliance with the assistance of the By-Laws committee. This motion was passed by a standing majority.

Further discussion brought up concerns that international bodies may not have the structure to complete such by-laws in this American format, nor would they necessarily have the resources. Furthermore, let's spread the message of recovery first and worry about paperwork later. Those in support stated that with the extra year built in with the proviso motion, and the offers of the By-Laws committee to help the service bodies attain compliance that this should be enough time for all of the groups.

Vote on Motion 1: 111 yes, 63 no, 5 abstentions. I voted "YES."

Votes required to pass: 2/3 vote to change By-Laws (120 of 179 voting delegates).

Result: Motion 1 failed. Motions 2 and 3 were withdrawn to be reformulated and presented at the 2007 WSBC.

Workshops

A wide variety of workshops were available at the Conference. Of those I attended I gleaned an incredible amount of information that can be incorporated into our Intergroup's service work to carry the message. That I got to only 60% of the workshops, mainly due to time constraints supports the need for the Intergroup to send a second WSBC representative, as the Baltimore Area Intergroup is eligible to send two representatives. The workshop titles and the full conference had a travel theme to augment the main conference theme: "OA Without Borders." A report of the workshops I attended follows.

Anonymous Traveler: "The Stigma of Membership"- May 2, 2006

This workshop addressed members' level of comfort in disclosing their membership in a 12-Step program like Overeaters Anonymous to people who are not members in this or another 12-Step fellowship. Members were asked to share on any or all of these questions:

1. Do you discuss your membership in OA when it seems appropriate?
2. Are you ashamed of your need to belong in OA?
3. How can we help members to feel more comfortable in discussing their OA membership?

Here is some of what was shared:

- I am not ashamed to go to OA – it has saved my life!
- Overeaters Anonymous is medicine. Going to a convention is like going to the hospital, but it's a better alternative than the hospital.
- I try to be a mentally and spiritually healthy person [that can carry the message].
- Belonging to OA has brought me a whole family of supporters that show me how to live a healthy life.
- Regarding shame and experiencing weight gain in recovery: Does God know you're abstinent? Does your sponsor know you're abstinent? Are you abstinent today? Then you can let go of shame.
- I'm an "abstinent weight gain" survivor. These are people who are abstinent but experience weight gain for physical, medicinal, or other reasons.
- I have so much gratitude for my OA membership that there's no room for shame.
- I must share my membership in OA – I can't let my shame kill someone else.
- This is not a moral issue, it is an illness. We can help others by telling others about ourselves.
- Face the fear and do it anyway. Take a risk. Feelings are "just" chemical reactions in the body. I can endure a bit of discomfort if I am carrying and spreading the message!

Passport to Freedom: Hearing OA Members Speak – May 2, 2006

A 25-minute full version, and a five-minute media version of a recording called “Hearing OA Members Speak,” of members speaking of their experience before recovery, when they joined OA, and what it’s been like since has been released and is available for purchase. The recording was designed to carry the message in creative ways.

This is a fantastic recording. I purchased a personal copy and an Intergroup copy of the full version, and received two copies of the media version, one of which will go to the Intergroup. We were informed that since the CD is copyrighted, the full version cannot be reproduced without permission. The media version of the copied will be available to be copied by service bodies. Members in attendance were asked two questions, with some of the responses following:

1. How do you see the new CD being used by our Intergroups?
2. Would newcomers feel hope after hearing this CD?
 - This CD could be used at newcomer meetings.
 - This CD brings hope, especially hearing about people who have lost 100-200 pounds.
 - Play this CD at a marathon or workshop, as newcomers do show up there.
 - Internet – can these tracks be placed on the website to play?
 - This is great for people in relapse to hear, good 12th Step Within work
 - Great tool for health professionals to hear.
 - This CD illustrates the difference between OA and “the other groups [diet clubs, etc.]” The 12 Steps help me change from someone-who-has-to-overeat to someone-who-doesn’t-have-to-overeat.
 - This CD can be a gift to newcomers, sponsorees, sponsors, and others.
 - Sponsorees can be given this CD and be asked to pass it on.

Avoiding Detours: The Disruptive Member – May 2, 2006

This workshop addresses the disruptive member and his or her effect on meetings. Members were asked to share their experience with disruptive members and how the meetings addressed these issues.

The facilitators discussed this in the context of Tradition One, in which our common welfare should come first as personal recovery depends on OA unity, and Tradition Five, that our primary purpose is to carry the message to suffering compulsive eaters.

Some examples of disruption can include eating at a meeting that’s not a lunch meeting, and harassment of a member by another. Members cannot be told to stay away from meetings, which would violate Tradition Three’s “requirement for membership.” If the group conscience asks the harassing member to stay away, he or she would not be required to leave, per se if the harasser declares him- or herself a member. A meeting could involve law enforcement, if necessary and a restraining order could be instituted. A disruptive or overbearing member can be asked to attend another OA meeting in the area for a period of time and return to the current meeting later and see if they can follow the meeting rules.

Another disruption is sexual harassment. If that happens, the group could talk to the member to get him or her to stop, and if it continues, to get assistance from the Intergroup or Region to discuss solutions and take action. We must remember “principles before personalities.” We don’t need to solve this alone and can get help from other service bodies.

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On page 161 of the Big Book it states we cannot give away what we haven't got. We must be in a good state of mind and carefully approach the disrupter to find solutions to problems and offer help. Page 28 says that troublemakers can be good teachers. We can try to help the troublemaker steer his or her energy to service and good works. Our jobs are to be in a place to be most helpful. Also, most situations work themselves out. Either the disrupter's recovery deepens and behavior changes away from the inappropriate or the disrupter leaves the program.

Ongoing conflicts that have been seen are disputes over the structure of meetings, food plan conflicts, emphasis on physical recovery only vs. spiritual recovery only, and working "only" the tools or the Steps, but not both.

At the Intergroup level, how to deal with conflict? Things to keep in mind:

- Remember that OA has no power structure, only a service structure.
- If we all agreed, we would not all be necessary.
- Disagreement does not equal personal rejection.
- Keep conflict resolution in the mode of "I love you, but I disagree with you."
- When the group conscience is reached, let us act in unity, even (especially) when individuals don't agree with the group conscience.

One meeting in Toronto asks a person in the meeting to take a disruptive member outside the meeting to speak one-on-one in a listening and supportive role, and help find solutions to how the disruptive member can act appropriately in the meeting. The member can choose to leave the meeting or come back inside the meeting.

- Share the message in meetings; take your mess to your sponsor.
- Have a secretary buddy to support the secretary during a meeting.
- Stop and say the Serenity Prayer during disruptions.
- Still extend the hand and heart of recovery to disruptive members.
- Enlist the help of other members outside of the disruption or conflict, as cooler heads will prevail.

CROSSTALK: What to do about it?

- One can talk to a cross-talking member separately after the meeting and explain the concept of crosstalk and why it's not appropriate for a meeting.
- The meeting secretary can call the member while they are cross-talking.
- Sometimes a cross-talker simply does not understand the rules. A "meeting sponsor" can help the cross-talker learn to share appropriately, sitting next to each other during a meeting where the "meeting sponsor" can coach the member.
- It is not crosstalk for the meeting secretary to remind a member to follow the rules or a format.

Remind members that member's sharing is the opinion only of the member, not OA, the meeting, or a service body. Stick to traditions. Trust your Higher Power, and the answers to questions regarding disruptive members will come.

Travel Itinerary: All About Conference – May 2, 2006

This meeting was for "green dots," first-time delegates like me. The facilitators, Dodie and Sandy, current and former trustees explained the process of the Business Conference, some basic parliamentary procedure, and what will happen at the business meetings. Several types of motions and amendments were explained, and the "center mic" person's role as a referee to determine if a delegate's inquiry during the Business Meeting would be appropriate for the type of business happening at that time.

Inside the Terminal: A Review of Parliamentary Procedures – May 3, 2006

This meeting was for anyone, especially “green dots” who wanted to learn about parliamentary procedure that is used during the business meeting. Expanding a bit from the “All About Conference” workshop, Bob, a general service trustee from Toronto explained the ins and out of different types of motions, point of information, points of privilege and other procedures that plan to keep meetings on track and going at a steady pace.

Customs Declaration: Cultural and Ethnic Diversity – May 4, 2006

Several facilitators spoke of their experience in OA in respect to their own cultural or ethnic diversity. Those in attendance were asked to ponder three questions as they listened to the facilitators:

1. What does your Intergroup do to respect cultural diversity in our membership?
2. What personal experiences with a culturally diverse member have you had?
3. What else do we need to know?

Celia, from Mexico City spoke of her experience as an OA member in Mexico.

- OA is controversial.
- Women believe that men in OA are multiply-addicted.
- Men don't mind overweight wives as they feel no fear that other men will try to woo their wives away, hence there is no incentive to encourage abstinence and physical health.
- Many meetings operate like diet groups, bringing in nutritionists and mental health professionals in violation of Tradition 10.
- Only one Intergroup serves the entire country.
- People have trouble with spiritual recovery because of deeply-rooted Roman Catholic religious culture. Finding a Power-greater-than-ourselves conflict directly with the religious Triune Divinity of the religion of the culture.

According to Mary Rose, a lesbian from New York City, sexual orientation does not seem to be a big issue as there are so many ethnic and cultural groups. New York City is truly an international city. OA groups in the area simply see a person in pain and welcome them home as a compulsive eater needing recovery.

Steve from Massachusetts spoke from a man's perspective, a clear minority in OA.

- There aren't all that many men in OA. It's estimated to be one man in seven members. [I think in Baltimore, the proportion is a little higher, perhaps one in five.]
- He had to set boundaries around discussions with female sponsorees regarding sexual issues.
- Steve agrees with Celia that men seem to be more multiply-addicted and women seem to be singly-addicted (to compulsive eating but not anything else).

Pamela, a black member from Birmingham, England was born of Jamaican immigrant parents, and shared the following:

- “Children are to be seen not heard.” She suppressed emotions and ideas with food resulting from this admonition.
- She was taught that it was better to marry a “white” person or at least a “light skinned” person than one of her own color, even from her parents! Being black was “bad.”
- She went to OA at a doctor's advice and was welcomed with open arms, but she has seen few black women at her meetings and no black men at all.
- She continues to try to be a person of attraction, but other black members have left OA or never stayed, she believes, because of her presence. Pamela believes this is because there

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seems to be an underlying unwritten rule that black people should not be seen with other black people, but is unsure why.

Members in attendance shared and as Dodie put it, there was a stampede to the microphone. I got there first.

This is how I answered the questions:

Q1. What does your Intergroup do to respect cultural diversity in our membership?

A1. *Our Intergroup does not currently have a program nor has it been discussed. We do have a variety of members – racially, culturally, of all genders and sexual orientations, but I am not sure that our meetings reflect the cultural and ethnic proportion of the population in our service area.*

Q2. What personal experiences with a culturally diverse member have you had?

A2. *I have learned to respect the boundaries of Orthodox Jewish women in our membership in that they do not touch men for any reason (other than their spouse and family). This means we cannot hug at meetings or hold hands in the closing circle. My experience is that most of the women resolve this issue themselves by sitting between other women or positioning themselves in the closing circle between women. I cannot be hurt or marginalized by this, as we must respect each other and our traditions. I cannot violate anyone's "space." I can help the situation by informing male newcomers that this may sometimes happen and we don't need to feel rejection or hurt.*

Q3. What else do we need to know?

A3. *I was thinking about why I don't see a lot of gay men in the program. One in seven members are men, and if the most optimistic estimate of the number of gay and lesbian people amongst the general population of 10% is true, then this suggests that about 10% of male OA members, or one in 70 total OA members are gay men. Another possibility for the dearth of gay men in program is that there is a subculture called "bears." Bears are hirsute gay men, usually of large build, often overweight or obese. There is a wide community of men, including myself attracted to bears. I married one. My theory is that if these bears are receiving affirmation, attraction, and dates by other men as they are, they won't feel the need to change themselves; hence, they don't mind their overweight status.*

(This gives me a Public Information opportunity, though. I am going to take our OA PI cards and possibly some OA pamphlets to the local gay bars, especially where bears hang out and ask the owners if I can hang these on the bar's public bulletin boards. I will also take some to our local GLBT community center and the Lambda Rising Book Store to hang some there, too.)

Other members shared:

- Those who come to meetings are white people – those who can afford college and doctors and who will tend to hear of OA more. Poorer people of all cultures can't, and have fewer opportunities to be told about OA.
- In Sweden, 99% of members are white women. They don't know how to reach out to other cultures.
- In Vancouver, there is no diversity initiative, but there is a year-old gay and lesbian meeting. We must, as minorities proclaim our diversity.

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- The Pittsburgh Intergroup does not have a diversity initiative, and there is a large black population that is not represented in the rooms. Several shared that there are virtually no Hispanic or Asian members in their area, though there is some population [After the conference, I came to realize that there was NO mention of Arab cultures or members at all.].
- In Santa Cruz, California, a Spanish-speaking meeting was started and Spanish language literature was purchased from the World Service Office.
- How do we reach out to the African-American community?
- A lesbian member from New York City says that their meetings are very diverse, but she started to attend a meeting with mainly ultra-Orthodox Jewish members. She did not come out at first in her sharing, as she wanted to share recovery first. Later, she happened to disclose her sexual orientation and was told by some members that they were glad she waited to come out or they would not have become her friend had she come out right away.
- “I look at a sponsoree as a person – not thinking that I can’t identify with their culture and choosing not to sponsor them because of that. God doesn’t make junk. We are all created in God’s image. Keep an open mind.
- What about reaching out to illiterate people? Can we record our literature or can we purchase recorded literature?
- Region Two (California, Nevada, and other southwestern states) has a Diversity Committee.
- Our biggest exclusion in OA is socioeconomic.
- Page 141 of the AA 12 and 12 states that we are a society that cuts across all cultural and social groups with ease. Are we fulfilling that societal role?
- Only an estimated 3% of our members are black (African-American, African-Caribbean, others of African descent).
- The language is Love, regardless.
- One member from Oklahoma City shared that a gay and lesbian meeting was recently started in her area. As a result, there were a lot of prejudicial and hateful things said against gay and lesbian people in other local OA meetings and there was much opposition against the meeting. This member shared that she was afraid to speak up against the prejudice but this workshop has given her the courage to do so.

Other workshops were held, but I could not attend due to time factors and simultaneous scheduling, including:

- Travel Buddies: You and Your Sponsor
- Map It Out: The Tools
- Border Guards: Tradition Four Issues
- Borderless Program: The Internet

I encourage the Intergroup to do what it can to send a second rep to the next Conference, and to send two reps to each succeeding Conference so we as a service body do not miss out on any of the wonderful workshops that carry a gold mine of information that we can use to reach out to the suffering compulsive eater.

Region Forum

On every delegate’s badge was a number, which corresponded to the Table number in which we were to sit at the Region Forum. At Table 17 with me were delegates from Quebec, Canada; Iowa; New York; Massachusetts; and New Jersey.

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The purpose of the Region Forum was to discuss questions posed by the Board of Trustees about matters affecting our service bodies, especially Regions. Several Region Chairs shared about their experiences with service at that level, and each table was asked to address a few questions. The information on this report is taken directly from my notes as the subjects are not in any particular order.

LISTSERVs

- Is an e-mail list where information can be exchanged, like our Intergroup's informal e-mail loop.
- It would be great for Intergroups to connect at the Region level.
- Information on practical solutions to problems can be exchanged.
- Listservs protect anonymity, as outside e-mails are moderated by a listserv administrator and can be rejected.

COOPERATION OF INTERGROUPS

Three Arizona area Intergroups planned to merge because their service areas overlapped.

- The Intergroups began by merging their meeting lists.
- Committees on Finance and other administrative functions were formed to execute the merge.
- They worked together using the 12 Traditions.
- Building trust and communication was important as everyone had their own perceptions of the other Intergroups, often based on hearsay.
- The Region Chair and Region Trustee helped lead a Traditions workshop that helped the process.

FINANCES

- Fundraisers and “fun”-raisers – the purpose is to raise funds for region and Intergroup operations.
- Creates fellowship by working together.
- Fundraises are great if they're open to all, but some are not accessible to all, such as those with financial and physical limitations. Meetings are open to all OA members; special events are open only to some.
- The more events we do, the more fellowship we create.
- The more we give, the more we get back.
- Regions and Intergroups can expand together, by providing and obtaining grants, services, and financial help within the fellowship.
- We trust these activities will increase our support base.
- Read the Fundraising and Prudent Reserve Guidelines that the World Service Office has put out and is available at www.oa.org.
- There is an interactive spreadsheet available for budgeting and prudent reserve calculations. It's available from OA.
- We must determine our priorities and support them with our funds.
- Pay Pal has been successfully used for Internet-based fund collection and currency exchange, which is good for regions with multiple nations and currencies.

REGIONS and INTERGROUPS WORKING TOGETHER

- Need help with something? Go to your Intergroup, Region, and Region Trustee for information. [Our region is Region 7. Contact information for Region service members and the Trustee are at www.oaregion7.org.]

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- We can ask for help with Public Information or HIPM (Professional Outreach) at the Region level and from the Trustee, as they can offer more resources than a group or Intergroup.
- We can learn parliamentary procedure and talk through difficult or trying issues with mock-up discussions, motion processes, and mock votes.

HIPM (PROFESSIONAL OUTREACH)

- A conference of 10,000 dieticians was held in St. Louis last year.
- The Region sent flyers to all Intergroups asking for a special donation for this event, where OA would have a presence.
- Region Chairs pooled funds to distribute to groups participating in this event and activated the Professional Conference Fund.
- Packets, posters, and envelopes were obtained at cost from the World Service Office.
- Outgoing volunteers from the local Intergroup were recruited to man the booth, who would reach out and converse with conference attendees.
- The rationale to pool funds from all Regions is that this was a national conference and almost all of the Regions would benefit from this exposure.

HOW DO WE HELP NEW MEETINGS AND STRUGGLING MEETINGS?

- One Intergroup lists meetings that are struggling in their newsletter and asks for support. Sponsors and Intergroup reps and officers go to the meetings to support them.
- The Baltimore Area IG gives \$25 to new meetings for literature. Other groups give up to \$50.
- When starting a meeting, be careful that it does not conflict with an existing meeting in proximity, day, and time. The quality of meetings is more important than the quantity of meetings. Don't drain current resources.
- How long should we fund struggling meetings and Intergroups? That would be determined on a case-by-case basis, and we should take responsibility to do what we can with the resources we have.

RANDOM THOUGHTS: THINGS WE COULD TAKE ACTION AT THE MEETING OR INTERGROUP LEVEL and OTHER THINGS

- Post our monthly Intergroup meeting minutes on the Intergroup page of our website.
- Online meeting list – are googlebots a problem for contact names? Reverse lookups could be done.
- Hire or find a volunteer babysitter for a meeting for parents.
- We can start meetings at local hospitals or health centers and strike a deal for the center to send their patients there (Professional Outreach opportunity).
- Mini-marathons every other month – 1/3 cost to the facility, 2/3 cost to Intergroup
- Should we order Spanish language OA literature and start a Spanish language meeting in Fells Point? Perhaps we could speak to health professionals that work with the Hispanic community.
- A Public Information activity: buy space on the back of grocery receipts.
- To fund the cost of sending delegates to the World Service Business Conference: have air miles donated, garage sale fundraisers.
- If all of our 25 meetings in the Intergroup donated \$10 for 12 months between conferences, our Intergroup can send two delegates.
- One Intergroup does a traveling meeting within its service area. It has a one hour meeting, a lunch break, and then a two-hour mini-marathon. Attendance has increased 66%!

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LIABILITY INSURANCE

- More and more meeting facilities require it for groups.
- See if one can get a rider on the facility's insurance policy
- A homeowner's policy insurance may be able to write a policy for a group.
- Can Intergroups get liability insurance that covers itself and all of its meetings?

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES OR REQUESTS CAUSING ILL WILL? HOW TO FIX?

- Not enough people are coming to Intergroup. The same people keep coming.
- Have sponsors encourage (require?) sponsorees to come to Intergroup.
- Create more service opportunities and ask individuals directly to help (don't ask a group. It's easier for an individual to say "no" while hiding in a group). For example, contact hospitals, colleges, and visitor convention bureaus for upcoming health fairs and other events where HIPM/Professional Outreach work can be done.
- The more opportunities for service, big and small that are created and can be specifically presented to individuals to do, the more that gets done and the more people are involved. One cannot give a general request for help without specific service opportunities to offer.

OTHER LAST TIDBITS

- The Los Angeles Intergroup has recorded speaker meetings available in .mp3 format for free downloading at www.oalaig.org at the Speakers link.
- At a Sponsorship Workshop, "speed dating" can be done between available sponsors and those seeking sponsors. People can sit and speak for a couple minutes to decide if they want to be sponsor/sponsorees.
- The Gold Coast Intergroup has a wonderful young people's meeting for children age 6-15. Shall we locate them and ask how they do it?
- Lifeline magazine – we need more subscriptions. Meetings can subscribe and share the issues, but we need to encourage individuals to subscribe. If they don't keep the issues, they can give them away and use them in 12th Step work.

12th Step Within Committee

Delegates have the opportunity to join and work on a committee at the World Service level. I joined the 12th Step Within Committee. For the next year, I will be working with committee members from all over the world to increase and enhance the 12th Step Within services that are offered to service bodies and meetings. The committee met twice during the week and will continue to work the next year. The chair estimated that our committee work will take up to one hour per month, that's it!

My specific job, which is on the Speaker's List subcommittee is to receive applications to join the list and update the list monthly and forward it to the World Service Office. This list contains members that are willing to speak of their experience, strength, and hope in places outside their area. I have joined the list, for example, and am willing to speak anywhere where travel reimbursement is available.

Other subcommittees include

- Recovery and Relapse Prevention – this subcommittee wants to gather several versions of Big Book studies to make available to meetings and service bodies.
- Communications – this subcommittee will deal with dissemination of information within the fellowship and work to keep contact lists updated.
- Internet-Website – this subcommittee deals with keeping current the website and helps with Internet communication and use.

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Each subcommittee met during the main committee meeting to set short-term and long-term goals, and set times to complete those goals. Since the conference, the committee has been corresponding regularly with each other on various committee issues, and I will keep the Intergroup informed about its progress.

Miscellaneous Items

12TH STEP: From the May 2, 2006 OA meeting in which I had the privilege to lead, regarding the subject of 12th Stepping and how we were “12th Stepped” into the program, as well as other things I heard:

- A simple and effective Public Information idea: BOOKMARKS! They’re easy to make, easy to reproduce, and easy to distribute. Print the OA name, website, Intergroup’s or meeting’s name and contact information. Leave them at grocery stores, churches, and other public places. Individuals can give them to people when discussing the program or when doing 12th Step work.
- The only thing between me and my first bite is God.
- Meeting phone lists – check the We Care Book or the meeting’s telephone and contact list. A person can be the “Contact Follow Up” person and call those people to confirm their contact info and share a little program along the way. These same people can be listed in the Intergroup’s newsletter or website in a contact list [similar to our “Morning Dove” and “Night Owl” lists].
- Do service, reach out to newcomers, and give what I have freely been given.
- I carry the message in the way I carry myself.
- For obese patients, work a deal with health professionals to offer that our recovering members to visit them and talk about the OA program. Also, host meetings at rehab centers, health professionals’ offices, and hospitals.

FUNDRAISING: Service bodies were offering items for sale at the WSBC, such as...

- Needlepoint book covers of various designs that fit all kinds of OA and AA books for \$4-\$10.
- Quilt raffle - \$1 per ticket, six for \$5
- T-shirts from various events - \$15
- Pens with recovery slogans printed on them - \$3, two for \$5
- Notecards and greeting cards with designs on front and recovery slogans printed on the front or inside - \$1, six for \$5

Flyers, announcements, and newsletters were also placed in the Hospitality Room and were offered for free. Included were copies of the March 2006 issue of the Steppingstone and 24 copies of the Willingness and Retreat flyer. All were taken. I took at least one copy of each free item. I took two copies of newsletters when available and gave one set to our Steppingstone editor, Joan W.

Now What?

At the end of the week, there was much excitement and buzz amongst the delegates about the information we have learned and the service we have done. We were most excited about bringing this gold mine of recovery back to our Intergroups and meetings. But quite a few of us were wondering where to begin. On May 6, Kalia, a delegate from Sebastopol, California called a meeting to discuss how to spread the word. Here are some of the ideas that the 17 delegates in attendance discussed:

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- Provide information in bits and pieces in newsletter articles and e-mail loops. There is a wealth of information to keep our service bodies and meetings informed all year.
- Post the delegate reports – in whole, in summary, and in pieces, on the Intergroup or service body’s website.
- We can distribute a summary version of the report to our meetings.
- Incorporate some of these ideas in a marathon.
- Have your delegate and other delegates from other areas speak at our meetings, Intergroup meetings, and events.
- The World Service Board of Trustee members often pass through our airports to go to Albuquerque for Board Meetings. Make arrangements with a Trustee that’s passing through the area to speak at meetings or events.
- Write in our reports how we felt about business motions and discussions and how it influenced our vote.
- Reports need to be only one to two pages...I will work on this one...
- Pick out things that our service bodies can do and make suggestions on how our service body can do this and add it to the list of goals for the Intergroup or service body. Create value from our Intergroup’s investment of sending us to the conference. Our work here must be carried to our local service bodies.
- How can we distribute tapes and CDs from the Conference? We can create a lending library and ask for a deposit. We can publicize these in our newsletters and show how to order them.
- Go to each meeting in our service body and share about our Conference experience.
- Play the “Hearing is Believing” CD in our meetings and events. Share how we feel about what we have heard.
- Create a mock World Service Business Conference business meeting at our service body meetings to show how it works and to work through an upcoming motion.

Conclusion

The World Service Business Conference was a most amazing experience. There is so much that we can share with compulsive eaters inside and outside the fellowship, and hearing the experience, strength, and hope of 200 OA members with long-time recovery and abstinence was profound. To see how the most basic of service bodies, the World Service level works inspires me to share in what I have learned and to affirm what our Intergroup already does very well.

I appreciate your service in providing me your and your group conscience’s opinions on motions that will influence the entire fellowship. You helped create OA history. I can’t thank you enough for this honor to serve as a delegate and look forward to continuing this service through my three-year term. As I work with the Intergroup to integrate this information into our service work, I hope that you will support a proposal and effort to send a second delegate to the conference, because there is an incredible amount of recovery to bring home.

I will be happy to come to your meeting to speak about my experience, strength, and hope with the hope that it helps your meeting reach out to our fellows. May you be blessed with ever deepening recovery every day.