

Be Perfect or Face Rejection

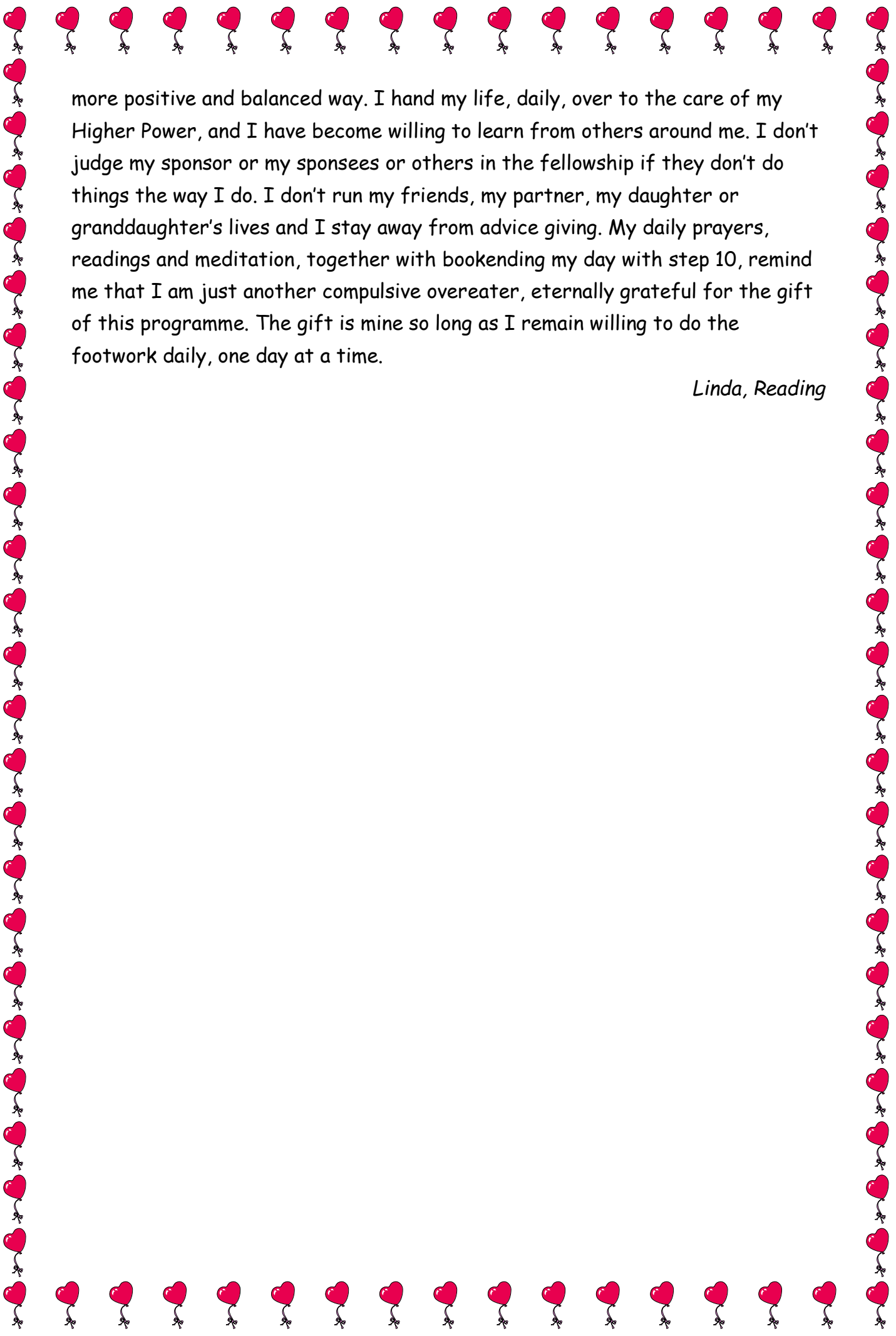
I came to OA at a desperate time in my life. I was completely gripped by controlling every single calorie I put in my mouth, and unable to find any balance around my food choices. I had managed to lose five stone on a very low calorie diet almost five years before, and was frightened to eat normal portions again, hence every calorie had to be counted. Additionally, I needed to keep half-stone underweight, so that if I succumbed to a binge, I would still fit into my clothes. Naturally, the half-stone underweight became the new normal, and I then had to try to keep another half-stone underweight...life was one long battle!

Being addicted to chocolate meant I had to save enough calories for my daily fix, as that was the only comfort I was getting. On the outside I looked, and people thought, I was normal and happy. What a mask! What a fraud! I white-knuckled every day of my life and felt sucked dry of any real feelings.

Every diet I had ever been on and believe me, that is every diet and eating fad known, would have to have 100% commitment as it had to be done perfectly. I would slavishly follow the instructions and expect perfect results. As soon as perfection was slowing down, i.e. I was not losing weight as I expected, 100% commitment would be withdrawn pronto. Another failure. It had to be perfect or it was not worth the effort.

Everything I did had to be perfect, as my esteem was so low; if I was not perfect, people would reject me: my bosses, my staff, my family, my friends. I worked long and hard at everything, but enough was never good enough. Perfection was the only acceptable result. My only rationale for progressing up the greasy pole of local government was that I knew how to do the job perfectly. I was largely uninterested in the financial rewards. Consequently, I became a workaholic, though I didn't realise this at the time. I was just doing my job to the best of my ability. Woe betide anyone who didn't share my 'perfect ideal', whether that was family, friends, or staff. I would judge them for their lack of commitment/intelligence/vision/ethics. Of course, the people-pleaser in me carefully selected those with whom I would share my judgement; the remaining people went onto my resentment list.

Looking back over six years later, having worked the 12 steps and with six years of abstinence, I can say that today I choose to behave like a completely different person. My perfectionist instincts are still there. I use them now in a



more positive and balanced way. I hand my life, daily, over to the care of my Higher Power, and I have become willing to learn from others around me. I don't judge my sponsor or my sponsees or others in the fellowship if they don't do things the way I do. I don't run my friends, my partner, my daughter or granddaughter's lives and I stay away from advice giving. My daily prayers, readings and meditation, together with bookending my day with step 10, remind me that I am just another compulsive overeater, eternally grateful for the gift of this programme. The gift is mine so long as I remain willing to do the footwork daily, one day at a time.

Linda, Reading