

Who is your Newsletter Officer?

The truth is, I am simply another compulsive overeater with, like all of us, a story to tell.

My journey in OA began at the age of 19, some 32 years ago. I was driven to my first meeting in St. Albans by the lovely lady, who is still my sponsor.

I will tell you a bit more about the painful, crazy and completely incredible journey I have been on in this fellowship as I, remarkably, celebrated 28 years of abstinence in September last year.

Bingeing, starving, purging, over-exercising, food and body image obsession and self-hatred ruled my life until I was 19 years old, painting a dark shadow over every aspect of my life. It took me to depths of despair that anyone stepping through the doors of OA will understand. It sucked life and joy and happiness and hope from me as effectively as if a death-eater had flown straight out of the pages of a Harry Potter novel and chosen me as its victim.

At my first meeting, I got hope; a chink of light that continued to guide me towards recovery despite four years of intermittent relapse. During this painful time, I chose to use OA as my life-raft, only clambering back on, bedraggled and desperate, when the seas became too rough for me to handle alone. It was excruciating to taste how wonderful abstinence felt, but to continue to dive back into the illness like an out of control roller-coaster.

My continuous recovery started when I joined another fellowship to deal with a second addiction, which had also brought me to my knees. Finally, I found the willingness to put my recovery in both fellowships at the top of my list. I also had to let go of the sugar, one day at a time, as it was too addictive for me.

Since then, it has been one hell of a journey. What astonishes me is that I am not the same person who walked through the doors of OA 32 years ago. The 'Nicky' who was adrift and alone, bewildered and desperate is no longer who I am. I have been given the gift of a steady core, which keeps me centred and balanced most of the time. I have been given courage: courage to say no; courage to try new things; courage to fight for help for my son; courage to admit that I'm wrong and many other 'courages'. Most of the time, I like and even love myself, which truly is a miracle.

The faith that I have built up in a Higher Power fills me with light when the old, familiar darkness tries to curl its icy fingers back around my life. I draw on my Higher Power, my friends in the fellowship and the programme to keep me balanced emotionally and physically through whatever life throws at me. And believe me, life, as it does, has thrown me some blinders. Whilst these times can feel like trudging knee-deep through mud, with my Higher Power and the fellowship holding my hand, I have, one breath at a time, one baby step at a

time, scraped through without picking up the food or being driven off to while away the days in a padded cell.

Of course, it's not perfect. Nothing is. I have good and bad days. I remain (very!) human. One thing I have always done right is to keep in the middle of the OA bed. I have always had a sponsor and sponsored from early in recovery. Service at group and Intergroup level has helped me feel part of and allowed me to give back; it has also improved my confidence and built my self-esteem. I have kept in close contact with my Higher Power even when I am not happy with him. Working the steps with my sponsor helps me get through difficult days and resentments and to come out the other side, back into the sunlight, without breaking my abstinence.

I am so thrilled to be your new Newsletter Officer. I hope that you will pick up pens, paint, crayons, pencils or start tapping away on your keyboard to pass on your recovery to other OAs out there. This newsletter is yours, not mine, and I so look forward to reading your stories.

Nicky: Reading, Sunday