

# SHADES OF GREY

Special thanks to Jim S. for our logo!

December 50¢

## THE STEP UP

Step One: "We admitted we were powerless over food--that our lives had become unmanageable."

Who wants to admit defeat? I came to greysheet because I couldn't stop eating, but I didn't have a clue I was powerless over food. I thought I was guilty somehow--that I was doomed to be fat. If you would have asked me at my first meeting if I had hit bottom and was ready to do anything to stop eating, I would have thought that was a little dramatic. Besides, my life didn't look unmanageable. Lack of control over food was a source of great shame for me so I gave the program a try, thank God. I attended every greysheet meeting there was. The more I listen, the more the step applies to me. I discover just how desperately food had control over my life--how all my relationships were convoluted, my actions motivated by wanting to eat, not wanting to admit it, or let you know I had a problem.

Sometimes I think I am now more obsessed with food than I used to be. But I reminded myself I am now conscious that I have a disease. My disease is no longer just a shadowy giant. It is a force that weighing and measuring can reckon with. I am now admitting powerlessness over food.

- Alison K.  
New York, NY

## GREY SHEET AWAY

For you traveling grey sheeters a word to the wise...Bring your cup and scale ON YOUR PERSON: wherever you go. Do not put it with your luggage because your clothes can end up in Timbucktoo while you are trying to bask in the sun on the beaches of Hawaii.

And from experience do not leave your life support system at the front desk while vacationing in Puerto Rico. Because it happened one beautiful night...

After a w & m dinner I left my artillery with the front desk to go frolic in the casino. My winnings were good, my luck was not, for I went back to my room leaving my better half behind.

I woke up remembering what I had done. I thought, "Oh, but of course it will be there in the morning!". It was not!

Thank H.P. that breakfast can be abstinent without cup and scale; 2 eggs, half canteloupe (sorry for the specifics but I did not want to confuse the issue of w & m without exception). I thought, "By the time I finish breakfast it will be found". It was not! Lunch approached us rapidly.

We did have a car for abstinent emergencies and this was what I would call life or death. My abstinent sister was to be arriving the following day, but I still had at least 3 meals until she came.

Off my mother and I went to a variety of shops searching for "Una cosa poner la comida" (A thing to put food on).

With my high school Spanish and a lot of chuckles and tears I got what I needed. Awkward at lunch with my unfamiliar cup and scale I was abstinent and relieved to find out shortly thereafter that my precious things were locked away in a closet. Safe.

How funny it is that today I am only comfortable with my cup and scale. My H.P. has a good sense of humor and a good sense of when enough is enough.

- Bethany D.  
New York, NY

## ABSTINENCE ABROAD

Want a holiday with a difference? Come to London and qualify at Europe's only grey sheet meeting. Even if it is raining the grey sheet community will give you a warm, enthusiastic welcome. There are five of us weighing and measuring without exception and we need your support.

Meanwhile..if you want to correspond or tape your qualification I'd love to hear from you.

And if at 3:00 a.m. you want a chat, remember in London it's already breakfast time - so start dialing!

Thank you Adina for editing this newsletter and to Judy for compiling the international courtesy list of grey sheet meetings and contacts. It is so good to know that compulsive overeaters all around the globe are weighing and measuring without exception off the grey sheet. And that just for today I don't eat no matter what. Hurrah!

- Angela P.  
London, England



I had been in OA over a dozen years, but I didn't make step one - my surrender - until October 31, 1986. You can imagine how desperate I was to surrender on that kind of a binge day. For years I had done the Halloween number - going through batch after batch of candy before, during and after Halloween. But this time I was just so sick of the disease, so sick of it all.

I had tried many ways to abstain during my years in OA. I had even tried grey sheet - but I had always added this or that to it - to make it more "liveable" - and I had never weighed and measured without exception, so it was always my form of grey sheet and therefore still tied up with the disease.

I had listened the week before to a set of retreat tapes by Fred S. of Florida. He had hit hard at weighing and measuring without exception on grey sheet, and I listened and listened to those tapes and I knew - I truly knew - that was what I needed to do, and I became willing.

I surrendered - and what a joy it has been. I have lost 186 pounds now, gone through holidays, and weddings, and all sorts of social occasions weighing and measuring from grey sheet - free of the disease.

I am so grateful to have found my answer. I know that everyone who comes through the OA doors is looking for an answer, and I don't know why I am so lucky to have found mine.

I do not have anyone else in Kansas abstaining this way, and contact with those who share in recovery is so important to me. Having the Shades of Grey newsletter is just wonderful. My sponsor, Annette T. in NYC sent it to me and I have read it six times already. Bless all of you who shared your experience - you helped to strengthen my recovery.

- Marian F.  
Manhattan, Kansas

Because I have just a little over six months of grey sheet abstinence at the time of writing, I do not have any experience of going through a holiday season abstinently. However, this is an experience I look forward to having, a day at a time, by weighing and measuring a meal at a time, an occasion at a time -- sometimes an ordeal at a time.

Family occasions are often charged and trying events. This season I have much to be grateful for. First of all, I am much more sane and balanced in my thinking and in my emotional reactions because I have a food plan to which I adhere without exception. I am, in the second place, comfortable with my body and my appearance, so I feel more ready to meet the world. If I am uncomfortable with myself and in my skin all I really want to do is isolate. In the third place, it is an enormous relief to know that each meal is defined. The food is no longer a threat. A dinner, even if it is a "special meal", will not billow out of proportion, like a rampant infection, and take over an entire holiday weekend, resulting in a "lost weekend". I can make recreational and social plans knowing that, by weighing and measuring my food a meal at a time, I will be available for life. All my meals will have beginning and ends.

I also know that I have the option to eat at home if for some reason I don't feel capable of showing up for the event. I always have a choice. My abstinence comes first. And if, for some reason, I am overcome by confusing emotions, which family occasions seem to encourage in me, I have a firm support system that tells me that I don't eat no matter what, that I'm a success if I maintain my grey sheet abstinence, and that after that, whatever else I figure out is a bonus. I am thankful that I do not have to project a diet starting date, and that I am already living in the present in terms of my food and working my Twelve Step program. No more target dates or fresh starts for me, just a constant and daily reaffirmation of my grey sheet program.

- Linda R.  
Astoria, NY

Abstinence for me is a commitment each day that I will weigh and measure 3 meals a day without exception, commit them to my sponsor everyday, and I don't eat between meals no matter what.

First and foremost, my commitment to be abstinent is supported by my sponsor, making a lot of abstinent phone calls, attending meetings, sponsoring other compulsive overeaters, using the 12 steps of AA as a way of life every day, and reading program literature.

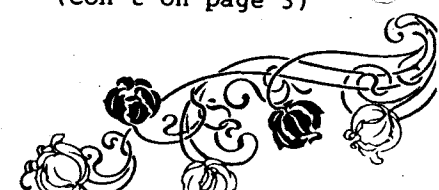
What is very evident to me on a daily basis is that I must not and do not take this precious gift of abstinence for granted. When I awaken each morning I ask my H.P. to PLEASE KEEP ME ABSTINENT! PLEASE KEEP MY HANDS OUT OF THE FOOD THIS DAY! Each day is a new day of abstinence and I don't rely on the yesturdays because all I really have is this 24 hour day. Believe me, it is all I can handle right now.

For my recovery this day, abstinence is my enabler. Abstinence has given me clarity, peace of mind and serenity. Abstinence and using the 12 steps provide me with the tools I need to cope with my life. I have learned that I can use the 12 steps to work out the problem. I am also committed to working and using the 12 steps in my life each day, that I may better understand myself and that I may learn what I need to do to change my attitudes and my defects of character, so that I can begin to be even more peaceful within myself and eliminate the confusion which sometimes surfaces because of

who and what I am - a compulsive overeater.

It became apparent to me, once abstinent, that compulsive overeating is a physical mental and spiritual disease. As I began my abstinent recovery, I became and I still, every day, am reminded of my emotional and spiritual defects. I have learned in this program that I must be

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## LONDON AWAY!

Although a trip to England may sound like vacation, for me it was more. It was the chance to make amends to those I had harmed two years ago as a direct result of my eating. How would I react being back in a country where I did so much damage to myself and others?

This trip, however, I was met in the hands of a Higher Power which showed itself in a Grey Sheet group in London. I arrived at Heathrow at 8:30 a.m., and by 10:05, I heard the words, "I weigh and measure off the grey sheet...". I had an overwhelming sense of security as the London grey sheet group took me in their hearts and carried me through my vacation. The love I felt cannot be described as we exchanged our recovery and shared from deep within.

I am indebted to grey sheet in London and am proud to be part of a network that is so committed to recovery.

And my trip? Around England, Portugal, and home, my strongest impression is not Big Ben, but of the love and abstinence felt when carried by grey sheet members both at home, and abroad. Thank you.

- Adina K.  
Millburn, N.J.

## FROM THE SUN

Hi from sunny Florida!

I am well and abstinent for 2 years and 6 months October 9, 1988. Life here is much better for me, but no grey sheet. However, I hopefully will be starting a meeting soon.

I love it here. Living one day at a time with my Higher Power, my literature and the belief in the promises of the big book gets me through every day.

Thank you all for your calls and letters. I am unfortunately a bad letter writer so please excuse me for not writing. Please call me when you get to Florida!

I miss you all!

With love and abstinence.

- Anne K.  
Florida

## A NEW LIFE

How wonderful to have a grey sheet newsletter! It gives me such a feel of community.

When I first came to OA in 1977, I was miserable and at the end of my rope. Food had become my whole life, and I wondered what the point was in living. I was 18 years old.

At my first meeting I got a newcomer's packet of literature which included a grey sheet, but I paid little attention to the food plan. I was looking for some kind of easier, softer way - to be magically thin and still be able to eat the way I wanted to eat.

It was only after three more years of eating, many meetings and two geographic cures that I wandered "accidentally" (but there are no accidents in God's world, are there?) into a grey sheet meeting in Cambridge, Massachusetts that was to change my life. I fought for a while longer to do it my way, but I continued to be even more miserable and desperate, and the day finally came when I was willing to give up, just for that day, and do what I was told. What I was told was to weigh and measure three grey sheet meals, make no exceptions and go to a meeting. By sheer grace I was able to do that for that one day, and by God's grace I've been doing it one day at a time since. It's been seven and a half years now.

Over time in this new life I have done a lot of things that I would never have been able to do if I were eating. I have developed friendships that are warm and loving and wonderful, and I have

willing to change, to progress, with the help of my H.P., so that my compulsive overeating personality, "the disease", does not take over again. I absolutely believe and know that this disease is cunning, baffling, and insidious. I am committed to my abstinence one day at a time and I don't eat no matter what.

So what does this disease do? It begins to give me emotional hang ups like anger, resentment, fear, anxiety, guilt, EGO, PRIDE, grandiosity, etc. Sound familiar?

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experienced the love of a Higher Power who has seen me through this new life, one day at a time. I was given permission to explore and have adventures, and so I moved to Austin and went to law school and am now, God help us, a lawyer. Last summer, I met a perfectly wonderful guy and we're planning our wedding in April. For me, a formerly antisocial recluse, that's big business. I believe it to be nothing short of a miracle.

What I do today is to weigh and measure three meals a day from the grey sheet, no matter what, and call my sponsor and go to meetings and work the steps, and try to remember that God is in charge and will continue to take care of things if I will only let Him. And so long as I remember where I came from and what has been possible in my life because of the program, I remain eternally grateful.

- Linda M.  
Austin, Texas



"The best thing about weighing and measuring my food when I am away visiting is that I get asked back."

- Denise V.  
Astoria, NY

How do I handle these emotions without picking up the food one day at a time? I want to show how physical, emotional and spiritual tie into each other. I am abstinent (the physical). I am angry, resentful, etc. (the emotional), I believe my H.P. can restore me to sanity (the spiritual). I absolutely believe that I MUST work on all three levels of recovery in order that I may have contented abstinence one day at a time.

My abstinence is a privilege and a gift today by God's grace and mercy, and I am grateful.

- ANONYMOUS

**COME ABOARD**

If you look like a skeleton  
With hardly a piece of meat  
Then I've got the answer for you  
Just come aboard the old grey sheet

Or maybe its been too long  
Since you been able to see your feet  
Don't wait another minute  
Come on board the old grey sheet.

If you've tried all other answers  
And the food's still got you beat  
"Don't wait no more big fella"  
Get on that old grey sheet.

This isn't just another diet  
It's a program that's complete  
So hurry up and join us now  
On that glorious old grey sheet.

With pain and anguish and humble pie  
You've paid the price for your seat  
So hop right on the ticket is paid  
For your place on the old grey sheet.

For us this is the only way  
To wrest victory from defeat  
So what is it you're waiting for  
Hop on that old grey sheet.

They've tried and tested all the food  
That are safe for you to eat  
So hurry up and save yourself by  
Joining us on the grey sheet.

Once you're honest with your food  
There'll be no need to cheat  
Now aren't you glad you heard  
About that wonderful grey sheet.

No sugar, starches, grains or flour  
Not even "healthy" wheat  
Cause now you know what poisons are  
Food not found on the grey sheet.

You've got your mind and body back  
A real miraculous feat  
Now aren't you glad you stuck it out  
On that glorious old grey sheet.

The reason that you're looking good  
Thin pretty and real neat  
Is cause God loves you very much  
That's why we've been given the Grey Sheet!

Dan D.  
- Sweden

**LETTERS**

Dear Adina,

Hi! You don't know me, but I'm S--'s pigeon. I'm weighing and measuring my food and I'm at college. Things were a little rough at first, but it passed like I knew it would eventually. I'm feeling wonderful once again because I know today that all my addictions are being worked on. All I have to remember is just for today and I'll be O.K. If you wouldn't mind, would you please send me some addresses of other overeaters on the grey sheet. I need to write to people because there are no greysheet meetings where I am going to school. Thanks again. Have a wonderful abstinent day.

- Amy  
York, PA

**PEN PALS**



**FREEDOM AT  
LAST**

When I finally decided to accept grey sheet as "A way of life - a day at a time" I thought for sure that I was not going to have much of a life. Looking back over my 2 years of abstinence, grey sheet weighing and measuring (without exception) has enabled me to do things I never thought imaginable.

Next to my weighed and measured meals, I love to travel. I want to share my experience, strength and hope, as others who have traveled before me, have shared their experiences with me. Abstinence allows me to live life most anywhere.

Weighing and measuring (off the grey sheet) can be done in many countries including the Orient, Far East, and Russia. The cup, scale, Higher Power willingness and commitment what I needed in my travel kit. These things which I believed were so limiting have given me freedom at last.

- Maria P.  
Queens, NY

**EDITORS NOTE:**



Thank you all for making Shades of Grey a success! Our recovery is strong and growing. The newsletter staff is happy to introduce our regular features, "The Step Up", and "Grey Sheet Away", and would love your experiences on these or other subjects.

The next newsletter is scheduled for March 1, 1989. All contributions are due by February 14 to:

The opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newsletter staff.

