
Shades of Grey

\$1.00

Spring 1997

THE STEP UP

Step Eleven

"Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."

Regular prayer and meditation have always been a very elusive practice in my life. In many ways they are analogous to physical exercise. They all represent good habits that I get tremendous joy from when I participate in them regularly. Due to the perverse nature of the disease however, I frequently find excuses not to do them, e.g. I am too tired, I don't have the energy, I have too much to do, and I can't afford the time, ... Prayer and meditation like physical exercise cleans the toxins out of my system and wakes me up, gives me more energy and allows me to accomplish much more at a higher level of performance in every area of my life. The toxins that prayer and mediation remove are not physical, they are spiritual, but the impact on me is every bit as powerful as the physical toxins that exercise purges from my body. A spirit that is adrift on a sea of toxic thought and behavior is in at least as much danger as the atrophying muscle in a body which does not exercise.

For me prayer is when I attempt to open a channel to my Higher Power to state what are my thoughts, needs, plans and desires. It is my way of communicating to my Higher Power. Mediation is the other side of that communication. When I listen to my Higher Power, I discover what I should be doing.

Communication between my Higher Power and myself, as between my self and another person, requires two sides. I must both talk and listen. Prayer and meditation make up the two sides of my communication with my Higher Power; without both I have a one way conversation. Without either

there is no communication. I need to constantly remind myself of this to keep this part of my program in order.✠

Gary G., Jersey City, N.J.

EDITOR'S CORNER

We are rushing this Spring issue to you, hot on the heels of the Winter issue, to get Shades back on schedule. Please consider writing an article for Shades about your abstinent experiences, and send to the Shades Post Office Box. Deadline for the June issue is May 1st.✠

Allen K., New York City, N.Y.

WELCOME NEWCOMER!

I Want What I Have

I recently returned from my second Sober Club Med vacation. I spent a week with almost 600 recovering people on a beautiful island in Turks and Caicos. On so many levels, these trips are amazing. I am given a chance to meet recovering people from all over the world. I am able to attend lots of different 12 Step meetings and learn from a vast wealth of experience. I am able to try new and sometimes scary things (I took my turn on a circus trapeze) while being supported by others who are also overcoming fear and doubt. And I am able to have fun, which is not always easy for me.

This year I had the opportunity to meet a number of compulsive overeaters who are in the general OA rooms. Being in the large Greysheet community here in New York, I don't often come in contact with people who work other types of OA programs. As I heard what these people had to say about their food during the vacation, I became increasingly grateful for the clarity of the Greysheet. People seemed to be struggling with their abstinence -- sticking to their plan or even knowing what their plan was. One

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woman told me that since last years trip when she was really confused about her food, she had found a book that had helped her enormously. But she said she was not following her guidelines on the trip. One man said that for the first few days he was not on his food plan. Then someone reminded him of a plan he had followed many years back. A few days later that plan became his abstinence. He said to me that sometimes he was envious of the clear definitions of Greysheet, but that such strict parameters never worked for him. Overall, there just seemed to be a lot of confusion among these OAs.

Being Greysheet abstinent can be hard. Often because it shows in public. Eating with these other OAs one would never know of their program. They look no different than normal eaters. But I do. I realize that, for better or worse, when I weigh and measure in restaurants, my Higher Power is using me as a tool to carry the message. I would prefer to carry the message in a less conspicuous manner, but such is not the case. This is my path and I accept it today.

When people asked me how my food was going on the trip I could answer without hesitation. My food is the same wherever I go -- it's abstinent. And with the boundaries I am privileged to know around food, I get freedom. Freedom to walk down the beach in a bathing suit, freedom to dance to the music, freedom to look new people in the eye and say "hi," and freedom to enjoy three bountiful, guilt-free meals a day. In this world where the grass can easily look greener on the other side, I am grateful to say "I want what I have!" ❖

Laura D., New York City, N.Y.



**MOST FOLKS ARE ABOUT
AS HAPPY AS THEY MAKE
UP THEIR MINDS TO BE**

• ABRAHAM LINCOLN •

OUR VOICES

Things I Have Read, Felt, and Heard in Greysheet

January 28th, 1997: The Anniversary of my First Year in Greysheet. Write what you felt when you want to eat. Do not swallow your feelings, feel them. Do not do what is bad for you, do what is good for you. Do Greysheet. Greysheet is the last house on the block. If I stay in Greysheet, I will have strength and hope. You can't keep it unless you give it away. Do service. If I need to share and I cannot, it comes out in other ways, like a headache, a stomachache. I have a disease that tells me that I do not have a disease. It likes to fool me. I write my feelings down and I make phone calls. I read my literature until the next meeting. Life is a bit harder today, but eating is not an option. We make phone calls before we take that first compulsive bite. I was very sick around the food. I had no life. Greysheet gave me life. When I want to eat, I am not very nice person. I need my three weighed and measured meals no more than four to six hours in between. It's better to stay abstinent than to get abstinent. Because I have stayed in such an abusing environment, my self-esteem is very low. Greysheet is the help I need. If I pick up, I am going to pick up from where I left off.

Greysheet is a steady sense of wellness. Rely on faith and your cup and scale. There are no solutions in the food. Share to get your fears out. When you take the food away, the human touch is what you need. Honor your feelings. If I say I am going to eat, my mind will want to eat. If I say it over and over, I could pick up. Greysheet is the only solution to my disease. The most important thing is to be humble and surrender to this program. The program is not a magic pill. I have to take responsibility. Abstinence is the best part of my life. This is a disease, it is not a moral issue. You can pick up any time. You have to be on your toes at all times. My body is not a garbage can. I do not put garbage into it. Miracles happen everyday if I stay abstinent. We addicts have an addictive way of thinking. And that's me, Elba. I have to do service. I have to follow suggestions. I have to use the tools of the program. What works for other people works for me, too. Take more time to do fewer things, and commit yourself to this program. I am here to grow. My body is none of my business. My responsibility

is to weigh and measure my food. You can't do Greysheet if you don't put it first. Fear is the basis of intolerance. Insanity is something you keep doing that is destroying you, and you keep doing it. Thank God for Greysheet. Bring your body to the meetings, and your mind will follow. My weight is in my Higher Power's hands, and my sponsor's hand. My feelings are real, but that shall pass. My job is the possible, and God's job is the impossible. To be strong and not pick up, you need to work the program for those times that you are alone with the food. It's faith, not fear, that will keep you abstinent. Self-pity is the other side of anger.

It's great to throw on clothes, jeans, sweaters, anything you want. That is the freedom that the program gives you. Greysheet is freedom to wear whatever you want. Greysheet is a bridge to life. It is not the things that make us happy. It is happiness that makes us happy. There is life between meals. The disease is always at work. I have to be on the look out. Work hard for your gift. I was sick and tired of being sick and tired. Once you are in the pity pot, you are in trouble. Whatever you put before your abstinence, you will lose. This is a vicious disease that tells me that I don't have a disease. Thank God today I have Greysheet.

Use the tools of the program: three phone calls every day, write it down, read your literature, do service. You can't keep it if you don't give it away. When I was into the food, I felt how I looked: horrible. I don't know what I need to eat. I could not stand myself when I was into the disease. I hated summer because of my weight. I don't eat carbohydrates or sugar anymore. I must weigh and measure no matter what without exception. I'm abstinent and grateful. When I was into the food I could never feel good about myself unless I was skinny. I depended on my weight to feel good. Because of Greysheet, the obsession has been lifted. Don't quit before the miracle. Pray for the willingness to stay abstinent. My life keeps getting better and better as I do Greysheet. My mind says dangerous things to me. But I don't have to listen. **When traveling, the most important thing I can pack is my commitment.** I don't get into a conversation with the disease because it will always kick my butt every time. **Abstinence is hope and life.** Think less and do more. **Compulsive overeating is a slow death.** When you stop making meetings, you pick up. We come into the rooms for vanity and stay for sanity. Life is the

adventure, not the food. Fear or not, I still have to walk this earth. Today I choose to walk with Greysheet by my side. I can't keep angry feelings inside of me because I am a compulsive overeater. I have to make amends.

I'm a carbohydrate and sugar addict. I make phone calls, not only for me, but also for the other people in the community, for the gift I get from Greysheet. Greysheet is some magical thing that I may not understand, but by the grace of God, it works. Every day is day one. I am insane, I just act sane. Meeting makers make it. I don't let the food choose for me anymore. The only problem I have is not being grateful enough for Greysheet. One day at a time. When you first get abstinent, it is a gift. The second time you have to work for it. This disease kills. Meditate every day. I pray five times every day: in the morning, with every meal, and at night. Be very honest when you weigh and measure your food.

Some more tools of the program: 1- Anonymity. 2 - Service. 3 - Meetings. 4 - The Traditions. 5 - Greysheet Unity. 6 - Sharing. 7 - Keeping it Green. 8 - Read the label. 9 - The Greysheet. 10 - Sponsorship - - If You Want What I Have, Do What I Do. 11 - Literature. 12 - Coffee, tea, diet soda - - There's Another Meal Coming. 13 - Preamble. 14 - The Telephone - - Reaching Out. 15 - Writings. 16 - Bedroom Slippers - - Easy Does It and H.A.L.T. ✕

Elba M., New York City, N.Y.

From Joshua In The Holy Land

Submitted by Anonymous

The reason the world has no peace is that people have no peace inside themselves. How can people give peace if they have not found peace themselves? Peace means disciplining what is unruly and harmful within ourselves. It means overlooking hurt and insult and forgiving those who offend you. It means reaching out to God and allowing him into your soul, where he can become your friend. When God is within you, then you will have peace. Bringing peace to the world means bringing God into the hearts of others. It cannot be otherwise. You cannot have peace without God. You are his children and you will always be troubled as long as you are orphaned from God. I have come to help you find your Heavenly Father. ✕

By Father Girzone

Facing Myself

It is lunchtime on a rainy afternoon in Hoboken. Something is up today and the signal is in the shape of my abstinence. The radio is playing classical music, the phone is ringing, a Greysheet pancake is on the stove, and I am in the middle of eating my Greysheet salad.

I had to make a call to a Greysheeteer because I made a mistake. I also bought a pack of cigarettes. "The Disease," "my demons," "compulsive overeating" -- whatever name it may go by -- my life problem is manifesting itself in the same insidious way that it always does. Little things are turning into huge problems and my world is becoming sloppy.

Time to check in. What is going on? Too much. Fear. When I'm afraid, I do too much. Anything to fill up the seconds and moments so that I will not have to feel.

In fact, my over-activity is a form of spiritual laziness. I don't want to take the time to do things slowly and enjoy the peace and the pain of moving through life being present in every moment. Greysheet helps me stop, look, and listen. Greysheet began for me as a food plan. It is becoming a rigorous program of discipline which, despite six years of sobriety in AA, I never really had. I was as irresponsible as I could get away with being. Greysheet forces me to be responsible to myself -- the only person I can ever really be responsible for. What an order!

There is regret, sadness, and gloom sometimes, over the years I wasted being irresponsible to myself. I am only thirty. I could have gone on a lot longer. Today, writing this, I am one step closer to Greysheet abstinence and still only an extra lick, slurp, or bite away from my old, sad, and bloated self.

Even in the pain of this spiritual journey there is joy and I deserve all of it. Today I choose to take care of myself. To ask and ask and ask and then be still and listen. To show up no matter what.

I put off writing this over fear (or laziness). I lost the address to send it to. I called and got it again. I called. I will keep calling one minute at a time. My meal is over. I lit a cigarette and put it out after one puff. My coffee is done and I just answered a Greysheet call. The radio is still playing and it's

time to get back to work. I feel better. The people pleaser, compulsive addict in me is already worried about what you will think of me for writing this. Who cares, I'm not going to eat. . . until my next weighed and measured meal. No matter what you think. ☒

Eliza B., Hoboken, N.J.

Reaching Out

What strikes me most about Step One is the idea that to get recovery I needed to have been utterly desperate in order to surrender. I felt totally desperate. I had no other way to come to terms with my disease. I felt so defeated because I knew I had to come to AA and Greysheet. I knew I had "hit bottom."

I didn't have to have become homeless or go on a huge binge for weeks. I just got to a point when I didn't want to drink and eat compulsively for at least one moment and I knew that I needed to reach out. I needed help from the program.

My complete defeat meant a total humiliation. It was a sense that my life was nowhere and I needed God. My slip was a joke. I was happy for about two seconds, but then I felt so lonely. I had no support network and I was in utter desperate pain.

The only thing that could relieve me was God. I wish I could say what it felt like to know I was totally weak -- it was a physical bottom -- I knew that. My life was unmanageable.

In the first step all the words that describe my condition apply: complete defeat, utter defeat, absolute humiliation. Also, I had to admit that I couldn't do anything else. The Step says I realized my devastating weakness. It's true that my condition was a mess and that I would have picked up again or killed myself if I had not joined AA. ☒

Paolina W., New York City, N.Y.

Lucky Thirteen

I am always honored when I am asked to write for Shades and this is especially true as I approach my thirteenth anniversary. Thirteen years. . . as I reflect back it is hard to imagine not snacking and all those no-matter-whats. I remember the time when I was dating my husband and he took me to a deli for dinner. I ordered my food, took out my scale and began to measure. Just then the waitress walked by

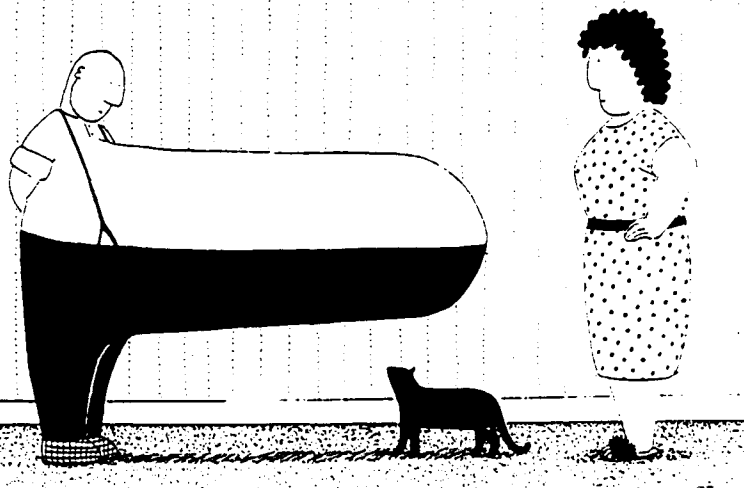
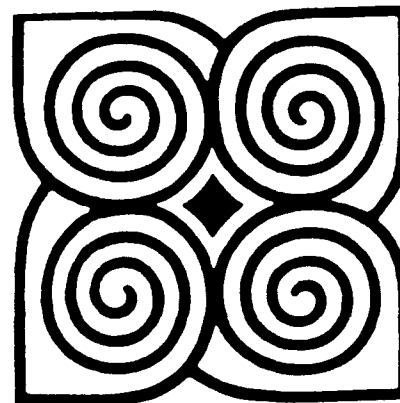
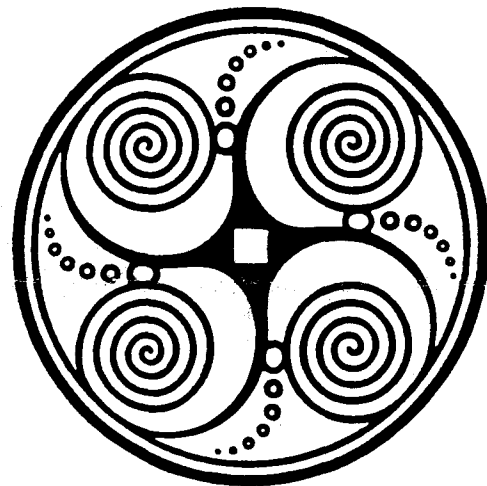
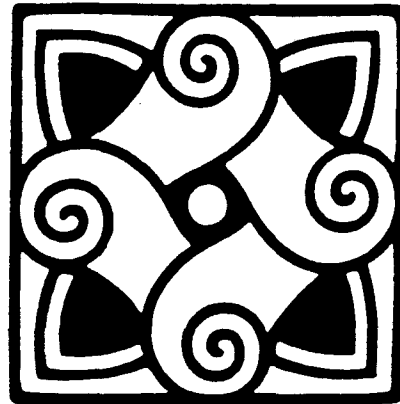
and decided the table we were at was too small. So in an instant she began to pick up all of our food and move us to a larger table. I was horrified my scale created a scene. I held my breath, said the serenity prayer and moved, scale and all, to the larger table. Michael didn't say anything, we ate and life went on.

And life did go on, one day at a time, and now, somehow, it is thirteen years later. Now I look forward to increasing the strength and quality of my abstinence. I look towards life with eagerness and anticipation. What have I learned? I have learned that as much as I know, it still all remains a mystery. As I sit here waiting for an appointment, I can honestly say I never knew that this is where I would be thirteen years after my first weighed and measured meal.

I am grateful for the experience of the faith. It is only through faith that I am here. And maybe that is what my message is all about. Have faith that this too shall pass and then one can do anything and remain abstinent. Yes, have faith and put your program first and you can't help but rack up one day at a time. So I wish all you Greysheeters the best on my anniversary. Have faith and Let Go and Let G-d.

P.S. For all of you that know my children, Matthew turned seven on March 9th, and Atara is five and a half. ☒

Beth B., Jamaica Estates, N.Y.



FRED FINALLY CONFESSED TO
EATING THE SOFA.

BULLETIN BOARD

COURAGE AND PATIENCE

Courage is not grim determination, boastful arrogance, or uncontrolled aggression. True courage comes from quiet conviction which shows itself in self-control, calm assurance, and patient persistence.

It takes courage, for example, to resist lashing back at others who hurt or offend us. It takes courage to endure the consequences of our attitudes, actions, and neglects without bragging or complaining. It takes courage to believe no situation or person is hopeless. It takes courage to remain optimistic about life when nothing seems to turn out right. It takes courage to maintain our enthusiasm and effort despite delays and setbacks. It takes courage to do the things we know are right in spite of our fears of rejection or inadequacy. And it takes courage to refrain from taking over a loved one's responsibilities when he or she is failing to meet them.

TODAY I will face life with courage. I will respond calmly and confidently to life's challenges. I will place my faith and trust in God and the principles I am learning in this philosophy of living.

The Reflecting Pond

Liane Cordes

Anniversary Box

*Ben M.
New York City, N.Y.
April 22nd, 1 Year*

*Mary B.
New York City, N.Y.
April 27th, 2 Years*

*Laura D.
New York City, N.Y.
April 16th, 15 Years*

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