

# Shades of Grey - Summer 1998 Issue

## The Step Up

**Step Three: *Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.***

After working for hours on this article about the Third Step, I accidentally deleted from my computer a large portion of what I had written. I not only wanted to scream; I wanted to forget the whole thing and let somebody else write this article. Instead, I paused, took a deep breath, and said the Serenity Prayer. I turned on my computer and began writing once again. Later, I weighed and measured my lunch. This, in a nutshell, is how I practice Step Three. I try to do the next right thing - whether I want to or not - no matter what I am feeling. Practicing Step Three means trying to find a balance between exerting myself and accepting limitations. Thus, I have to set my timer in order to finish this article in a reasonable amount of time - and accept that I won't have enough time or space to share all of my thoughts.

Where Step One required that I admit that I had a problem with food, Step Two required that I find a source of strength and guidance to help me deal with it. I believe that God

works through people and that I had begun practicing Step Three when I allowed the Greysheet community to direct what, when, and how I would eat. I have come to believe that although individuals are fallible and sometimes give bad advice, I can trust the wisdom of the group conscience.

Some people suggested that I eat any of the foods listed on the Greysheet, even the foods I considered fattening. They told me to get at least 30 days of abstinence before trying to lose any weight. When I did this, I came to realize that I needed to weigh and measure my food more for peace of mind than for thin thighs. By taking other suggestions, I learned that I needed to work with others in order to cultivate a life worth living.

At the same time, practicing the third Step sometimes means saying STOP instead of GO. Putting on the bedroom slippers by slowing down and saying no to people, places, and things has proved my biggest challenge in recovery. I must be willing to miss out on some things. I can't say yes to everybody and everything. When I do not respect the limits of my time, my energy, and my money, I feel anxious, overwhelmed, resentful and HUNGRY. I have a confession to make. I set a timer and swore to finish this article in a reasonable amount of time. The timer went off, and I set it again...and again. Obviously, I still have a hard time respecting limits. What a relief to see that the authors of the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions talk about practicing Step Three. They remind me to validate my progress when I fall short of perfection and

to keep it simple by weighing and measuring my food no matter what.

Respecting the boundaries of space, I shall write no more. When I remember that there is another meal coming, I trust that I shall have another opportunity to share my experience, strength, and hope. Furthermore, as much as I need to share my process, I need to listen to yours.  
*Paulina M., New York City, N.Y.*

## Doing the Leg Work

It is possible to train for and run the New York City Marathon abstintently. I accomplished this feat this past November. It was the third time I have run the New York City Marathon and my fourth marathon overall. The last time I ran New York was in 1989 so it has been a while. It is a major commitment to train for and to complete a marathon (26.2 miles). I saw a lot of similarities between my commitment to my abstinence and my commitment to train for the marathon. At first you have to do the leg work (meetings, phone calls, HP). Each week I did a long run which increased every week. Since I train alone, I'm the only one who knows whether or not I m doing the training I need to be able to run in the marathon. Just like I am the only one in my kitchen to see if I weigh and measure my food honestly. When I was doing my long runs, which can be very boring, I would think about qualifying at meetings, writing an article about my experience for *Shades of Grey* and talk to God and ask Him just to keep my feet moving. I wouldn't allow

myself to think about food (i.e. breakfast) until I only had three miles left. Then I would whip up this elaborate breakfast in my head and prepare it for myself when I got home. I was able to weigh and measure my training the same way I weigh and measure my food. I was able to keep both my running and my abstinence simple. As I was running over the 59th Street Bridge which is the 15-16 mile mark I realized that running the marathon abstinely is a big deal! I had my breakfast at 5:00 a.m. since I had to catch a bus to the start and then had my lunch at 5:00 p.m. after the Marathon. I must say that this was the first time after a marathon that I am actually excited about running it again next year and trying to beat my time of 4:58:06. So, yes, you can run without eating PASTA!

*Marathon Mary , Passaic Park, N.J.*

## **No Matter What**

The first meeting I came to I liked enough to take a sponsor. I don't remember much of what was talked about because I had more sugar that day than I care to remember. On day four I was eating the weighed and measured lunch when my husband came home and told me my father-in-law shot and killed himself and my mother-in-law. We had to leave to go to his Grandma's house. Part of me said pack it in and don't worry about the food. Another part of me was too afraid to blow this abstinence because tomorrow never comes for me. I don't know if there is anyone out there who planned

more one day binges that turned into weeks, months or years.

I called my sponsor. She wasn't home. I then called the next woman I had been torturing with my calls for the first three days. She explained No Matter What to me. She told me to pack my meal. She led me through it. She told me that preparing my dinner for myself was part of what we do. I just went through blindly. I have never seen such dedication to Twelve Step work as I've seen in these Greysheet rooms. People have called and called. My sponsor came to the wake. The fellowship was the only thing I hung on to for the next two weeks. I had to go out for dinner with the whole funeral party. I wanted to do anything but weigh and measure in that restaurant. My sponsor told me no exceptions. I promised I'd eat an abstinent meal and she told me this program only works if it's followed completely. She also told me I don't have to understand the why's, I just have to trust the Greysheet. I did it and I did think I might die in the restaurant but, when I got home that night, even with all the insanity this type of death brings on a family, I was able to sleep because I followed the program.

*Linda D., Mid Island, N.Y.*

## **My Greysheet Pregnancy: Surrender to Change**

As I write I am in my ninth month of pregnancy. I have been fortunate to have been nurtured in the New York Greysheet community for seven years. I was trained to

go through changes abstinely, and to not eat no matter what. I was promised change in this program, but I had my own ideas of what that would mean. Being pregnant has definitely been the change that has involved the greatest surrender for me. I traveled extensively on Greysheet, changed jobs, had relationships, had "10" meals and meals on the road that were small and cold. My body naturally changed yearly, every summer and winter through my food choices. While weighing and measuring I went through periods of liking my body more and liking it less. However, despite these changes, my body remained mine. I surrendered to my sponsor.

Needless to say, being pregnant involves another life with needs of its own and an influx of hormones. I encountered sensations that were new to me and physical changes I was not fully prepared for. I would also like to mention that since discovering I was pregnant in June, God and the program allowed me to get married in abstinence twice (civilly and religiously) and move from New York, after 11 years, to Israel. Abstinence miraculously gave me the strength to take the actions necessary with the support of my sponsor and the community.

In the first few months of my pregnancy I would wake up hungry during the night. Making transatlantic calls, I begged to get more food. I did. My meals became extremely satisfying. Being a compulsive overeater I did not eat cottage cheese either. I was not prepared for the rapid changes on the scale. I had to surrender to

reaching a weight in the area I weighed before abstinence.

It is a surrender for me to gain this kind of weight in abstinence and not eat no matter what. The positive side has been humility and a necessity to ask for help and ask for gratitude. It has been an opportunity to see that this is a we program. I had to, and continue to need to, get out of my head. I am reminded that I am gifted with a beautiful life inside me, something I have been wanting for a while. I am also told that, even though the weight gain evokes my desperation to control my distorted body image, I need to remember that I am safe and taken care of in the program. I am, after all, following direction and weighing and measuring my food according to the quantities given to me by my sponsor and her sponsor. Similarly through surrender, by God's grace, and my sponsor's guidance, if I weigh and measure a day at a time, I have every chance of getting back to my normal weight after giving birth.

I am more conscious of the necessity of grateful thinking, and the concept of compared to what. My weight gain could easily have doubled if I wasn't abstinent. I also need to say as a testament to Greysheet that I have been gifted with a healthy pregnancy from the beginning, feeling nauseous rarely. I've been able to enjoy my food pretty consistently. It might be good for me to continue to enjoy these abundant quantities guilt free while they last. I pray that this new level of surrender will also give me tools to help someone else in a similar situation.

*Batya B.P., Tel-Aviv, Israel*

P.S.: Gavriel Dov P. was born March 6, 1998 at a very healthy 3.7 kilos (just over 8 pounds.) Congratulations Batya and Sam!

## Gratitude List

Thank you so much for the recent *Shades*. I read it cover to cover, even down to the mailing list. What great news about the Intergroup! I'm hoping, however, that there will be no recipe books. I've had so many sponsees make mistakes over those recipes . . . And following the traditions of AA is super important after all. They're still around so it must be working!! I have not much to say except that I am grateful that I have this wonderful program. My boyfriend is coming back from a month long business trip tomorrow afternoon, my sponsor is pregnant, my very best friend in Greysheet has a beautiful baby boy who turned one last month, I moved in with my boyfriend in September into a beautiful place, and I eat all my meals outside on the patio in our new garden. My business is slow so I'm selling magic pens at a shopping mall for the holiday season, I'm pursuing my dreams in the entertainment field (got accepted last month, and got rejected five more times this month) had a temper tantrum on the floor last month and broke a wooden chopping board before dinner, had an out of town sponsee and my special Greysheet Sister (class of '93) over for dinner last night, my boyfriend's dad was in the hospital and now has a Pacemaker and is doing great, talked on the phone a lot, got two of those gosh darned parking tickets, did

a fair amount of creative writing, learned how to use this computer, spent about two hours feeling insanely jealous of an actress acquaintance who is doing really well right now and I want what she has, painted a coffee table for our new place, ended an ill-attended Greysheet meeting, celebrated a half dozen or so Greysheet birthdays - most of them for one year of abstinence, got my car washed, did one or two loads of laundry, still debating doing the windows myself, did dust however, and each day I weighed and measured my food from the Greysheet with no exceptions, and didn't eat in between no-matter-what!!!

Just an abstinent life with abstinent luxuries and mini-miracles as usual! And thanks Greysheet!

*Angela E., Los Angeles, CA.*

## There Are No Magic Pills

My sister Jerry died on February 10, 1997. She was 58 years old and she was a food addict. This disease kills and we don't want to believe this could happen to us. I have been abstinent for four years and four months and I wanted to give this special gift to my sister. I felt the only way I could show or help my sister was to keep on being abstinent.

Funerals, parties, weddings, I carried my scale and my food bag. Jerry would say to me You're a food addict, but I don't eat as much as you do. That was true in a sense because I would stop at the fast foods and order for five people and push the bags under the seat and go on to the next fast food

place, but this was before Greysheet. I had decided to introduce her to some Greysheeters so I had an abstinent dinner party and everyone weighed and measured and enjoyed. Jerry was always amazed at all the food we could eat.

The next week she decided to go to a meeting and start the Greysheet program. She loved the group, but wanted me to be her sponsor. I told her, "No, I am your sister, I can't be your sponsor." She finally got a sponsor and was abstinent for two weeks and feeling good.

Then she decided to take her food plan to her diabetic doctor. She was told she needed grains and etc., all the excuses were given because she was a diabetic on insulin. I also am a diabetic and I was on insulin for three years. The Greysheet food plan helped me get off insulin and I didn't even need to take pills, just follow my food plan. My sister Jerry started to make excuses - could I drive her to a meeting, could I make her some food. I would pick her up and make her food. I started to become so co-dependent. I was not letting her stand on her own two feet. It was a sad day but I started to tell her, "No. Jerry, you can cook and you can drive to meetings." She stopped coming to meetings and returned to eating.

One day she called all excited. My doctor has put me on this magic pill and I have no appetite. I don't need to do what you do because I have no will power like you. I kept telling her I had no will power and if I didn't do Greysheet I would probably eat a whole driveway of food. But her heart and ears were closed to my abstinence. She

would come to dinner and eat the food but she wouldn't weigh and measure.

We grew distant in a way. We still loved each other but she would make excuses not to see me. I would ask her to the show but she preferred to go with her friends so she could eat. I wasn't any fun. I was too serious and I was thin and she was still having problems with her food. She would go without breakfast and then wake up late and then take her insulin. She would eat her sweets and grains. She would fast or binge and eat all day sometimes. The magic pill got some of the weight off, but the cravings were still there.

February of 1997 Jerry finally decided to get a knee replacement done on her left knee. She was told it was a simple operation. She woke up from the surgery and asked for pain medication. She took the pain medication and started to relax. Her heart gave up and she went into respiratory arrest. They tried to save her and we were told she was brain dead. We needed to turn off all the machines. So we all watched as they slowly turned off all the machines.

Yes, this disease kills. No, there are no magic pills to help us. The only hope is Greysheet.

I cried when my sister died because we always felt we would care for each other in our old age. I asked God to give me courage to get through this crisis in my life. I weighed and measured at my sister's funeral and I brought my own food. I have had a few more crises this year, but God has been there for me.

I want to thank all of you Greysheeters and especially my sponsor for being there for me

and listening to my needs and understanding my insanity with food. I know my sister is in Heaven and she guides me with God each day in my Greysheet abstinence. I know I don't have my sister on earth, but I do have a special guardian angel in Heaven looking after me.

*Betty C., Northville, MI.*

## **So Different Now**

I was at the meeting last week and someone announced *Shades of Grey* needs articles. I figure it's the least I can do. I have 25 days of weighing and measuring the food on the Greysheet, writing it down, and giving it to a sponsor. I drove to the meeting 26 days ago and finished my binge in the parking lot. I was so afraid to come to Greysheet. I knew this had to be my last stop. I've been in and out of the [other] rooms for many years. I lost 62 pounds the first time and 130 the second time. I started binging a few months ago and gained back half that weight. Measured carbohydrates always ended in sugar binges. I started to feel like a real failure. I didn't realize that I was weighing foods that would actually trigger me physically. I had to binge. I thought it was me and wondered why other people in the room were getting it and I wasn't. Even during those abstinences I always fought the food.

The first few days on Greysheet I was hungry but I'm really not hungry now and it's not a 24 hour fight. The Greysheet takes away all the foods that turn me on and make me want more food. My whole attitude is

different. My husband said, "You must have really been so allergic to those grains you ate, you're so different now." That is very hard for me to believe but there can be no other reasonable explanation to this. I don't feel crazy on the inside. I'm putting my trust into this Greysheet and the fellowship. I'm not even asking why can't I have a pear. I don't want anything that's going to send me back to the hell of eating compulsively.

*Linda D., Mid Island, N.Y.*

## **InterGroup News**

The Greysheet Intergroup Formation Committee has been meeting regularly since the last year. When it sought to register as an Intergroup of [another 12 Step fellowship], the Committee received a detailed letter regarding its requirements. Based upon the letter, the results of the 1996 survey of the Greysheet Community at large and its mandate, Greysheet Community was incorporated on April 7, 1998 as Greysheeters Anonymous World Services, Inc., a distinctly separate Twelve Step program organized as a non-profit organization. Its corporate purpose is as follows:

Greysheeters Anonymous World Services, Inc. (also known as GSA or GS) is a Twelve Step fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem by helping others worldwide to recover from compulsive overeating, by following the Cambridge Greysheet plan of eating without exception, and by

exploring together the utilization of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous in arresting compulsive eating.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop eating compulsively. There are no dues or fees for Greysheeters Anonymous membership; we are self supporting through our own contributions. Greysheeters Anonymous is a non-profit public service organization which is not allied with any sect, denomination, religion, politics, organization, or institution; neither engages in any controversy; nor, opposes or endorses any causes.

Our primary purpose is to stay abstinent from compulsive overeating, and to carry the message in order to help other compulsive overeaters achieve abstinence. We are currently pending 501 (3) tax exempt status, registering trademarks, drafting by-laws, drafting group and intergroup registration forms, and determining the tasks to be performed to serve the newcomer, aid the existing Community and provide outreach for those who still suffer. We hope to present the by-laws to the membership at the annual NYC Round-Up in October, 1998, and to set a date for the annual meeting. First things first! We must get our business in order first. Then we carry the message. The current officers elected are: Marvin, Chairperson, Penny, Vice Chairperson, Mona, Secretary, Eden, Assistant Secretary, Ari, Treasurer.

We welcome and encourage participation from the Community. Anyone wishing to participate in the drafting of the by-laws call Mona, Cheryl, or Geri.

Yours in abstinence,  
Greysheeters Anonymous World Services,  
Inc.

*Marvin A., Chairperson, New Jersey*

## Bulletin Board

Greysheeters have an exciting new tool that is only a phone call away: Greysheet Phone Meetings! For the price of a long distance call (check with your carrier) you can dial (702) 222-2469 Saturdays at 6 pm EST (open to all), Wednesdays at 10 am EST (open to all), Sundays at 9 pm EST (closed meeting - only for those who strive to be abstinent as defined on the Greysheet), and Tuesdays at 1pm EST (for mom's and pregnant women) to be connected to Greysheeters from all over the world in a live Greysheet meeting. The format is the same as one of our regular meetings - preambles, Steps, qualification, sharing. Just be advised of the following:

1. You must be in a quiet space (away from dogs and babies, etc.)
2. Heavy breathing is heard by everyone so keep your mouth away from the mouthpiece or, better yet, use your mute button if you have one.
3. No multi-tasking (i.e., whatever you do the group can hear so leave the dishes to later.)
4. Do not announce yourself if you enter the call late or if you are leaving the call early. Although it feels like a phone call it is a real meeting and greetings and sign-offs during the meeting are disruptive. A minute or two will be left in the end for exchanging telephone numbers.

5. Some groups will be collecting for the Seventh Tradition to cover the rental of the phone bridge.

The response so far has been tremendous! A Greysheeter with six months of abstinence who has no meetings where she lives was able finally to attend a Greysheet meeting on our first Saturday night. People who are home sick, traveling, far from meetings, or just want the connection are all benefitting. And we are getting quite a response from London! More telephone meetings may be started in the future so stay tuned, we will keep you posted! We extend many thanks to Bruce whose creativity and generosity has allowed us to come together in a great new way to support our abstinence!

The Eighth Annual New York Greysheet Round-Up will take place at Robert Wagner Jr. High School, E. 76th Street, between 2nd & 3rd Avenues, Saturday October 17th & Sunday October 18th. Please make your arrangements to come early. See flyer enclosed to volunteer for services.