

# 2019 FORUM HIGHLIGHTS

## OPENING SESSION

Hello, my name is Pam and I'm a food addict from Toronto. Welcome to the 2019 Forum!

I was asked recently why we decided to bring the Forum back. When I look around this room, I see the answer.

The Big Book says, "We are people who normally would not mix. But there exists among us a fellowship, a friendliness, and an understanding which is indescribably wonderful." It is indescribably wonderful to see so many of us, people who would not normally mix, here today in the spirit of building unity through fellowship and service. The Forum, by definition, gives us - well, a Forum - to do much more than share our knowledge and our wisdom. It gives us space to share our experience, strength and hope and to cultivate unity.

Today, we have an opportunity to share about why we chose to join FA and why we choose to stay; why the tools are essential for our recovery; why it's important to acknowledge and support those on the frontier who don't have an opportunity to be in a room with fellow food addicts who simply by their presence validate us and this solution; why we are integral to making our meetings effective, why it's important to remember that the Traditions are there to keep FA healthy and why working together to carry the FA message to those who are still suffering enhances our personal recovery.

If that's not a way to spend the day together filling that God-sized hole, I don't know what is. That's why we brought the Forum back.

Remember today is for you and for each other. So, enjoy the fellowship, the friendliness and that indescribably wonderful understanding we share. We'll see you back here at 4:00.

HAVE FUN!!

## FA BEGINNINGS – IT WAS A CHOICE THEN, IT'S A CHOICE NOW

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Came in feeling broken and frustrated because nothing was working for me. Doing what this program teaches me saved my marriage and relationships with my children.
- Came in because the definition of food addiction made sense to me. In this program, I lost my weight. I developed a calmness, serenity, connection to a higher power, and freedom from fear.
- Came in because I wanted serenity.
- I stay because I've developed mental stability, spiritual support, and maintain a healthy body size.
- In program 22 months – used to be 350 lbs. now under 150. Gained a lot more than I lost.
- Losing the weight is a bonus. I now have the serenity and peace of mind.
- This is working for me so why would I go anywhere else. Everything I need and every success I found right here, I don't need to go anywhere else.
- Tried multiple 12 step programs before I came here. This program gave me the tools I needed to get and stay abstinent. WE do these tools together each and every day. I am not alone.

- Tried other programs. They told me the tools were suggestions. They said I could take what I want and leave the rest. When I came into FA, I was told to do the tools – all of them every day. Today I can help others who feel as frustrated and hopeless as I used to feel.
- I'm here because I am a food addict. I need people to tell me what to eat. My higher power gave me this solution and it's a gift so I'm staying.
- I need to stop searching. God has given me an answer. I just need to embrace it.
- I stay with FA because I'm a food addict and I'll always be a food addict. Where else could I go and get recovery like this?

## **THE TRADITIONS UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL: HOW THEY BRING US PEACE**

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

#### **General:**

- Without the traditions we'd have a lot more mayhem in our meetings.
- The Traditions are vital for growth, development, and the stability of the program.
- The Traditions help bring structure and can be practiced at every level of recovery.

#### **Tradition 1- Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on FA unity.**

- Negative attitudes about the "strength" of meetings or the personalities of the people in the meetings destroys unity. Looking for similarities strengthens unity.

#### **Tradition 2- For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority- a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.**

- No one person is an expert.
- God worked through me to change my judgmental attitude. I kept showing up and things shifted.
- Desire to "show them how to do it" affects my peace and recovery.
- The traditions are a way of making sure that my ego is in its proper place.
- Staying on my side of the street is a gift to others.

#### **Tradition 3- The only requirement for FA membership is a desire to stop eating addictively.**

- I have to remember this tradition to help stay out of judgment of others.
- I had to keep in mind that some people may come in under weight or at a great weight, but they are still crazy around the food.

#### **Tradition 4- Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or FA as a whole.**

- When a question comes up about an action the members can ask: Can this affect FA as a whole? Can it negatively affect how a person sees FA?
- If I am uncertain if this could affect other meetings or FA as a whole, I can ask FA service groups such as the Traditions Review Committee (TRC), the Inquiry Response Committee (IRC), or the Meeting Effectiveness, Support and Assistance (MESA) committee.
- It is comforting to find that all meetings are the same no matter where in the world I attend a meeting.
- I want to remember that my meeting is not stand alone. It is part of a larger group and the decisions we make need to be in line so that the decision doesn't negatively impact another meeting or FA.

**Tradition 5- Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the food addict who still suffers.**

- I came into an FA meeting and was happy to see there were others like me. I received loving kindness, acceptance and understanding. Hopefully I can do that for others.
- Remember that the still suffering food addict is not necessarily a newcomer. FA is not easy.
- We are all in the lifeboat together. If anyone goes over, am I willing to help bring them back in? (to throw out a life preserver).
- If I go overboard, I hope I will be thrown a life preserver. I am open to share recovery with anyone who wants it.

**Tradition 11- Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion. We need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press radio and films.**

- The question of bumper stickers came up. What if the member gains 50 pounds? There is personal and program protection by maintaining anonymity at the public level.

**Tradition 12- Anonymity is the Spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.**

- Anonymity is often referred to as the greatest single protection the fellowship has to assure its continued existence and growth. It provides privacy for the newcomer and develops trust that what is said does not leave the room. Anonymity means we don't share someone's membership in FA with those outside of our rooms. Confidentiality means no gossip within our rooms.
- Program taught me how to trust and how to be trustworthy.
- The phrase "I am not comfortable with this," is a helpful exit out of difficult conversations that might be breaking confidentiality. In other words, no gossip.
- If not 100% sure it is okay to share, don't.
- Principles before personalities helps me to stay clear about what I need to do. It is very distracting to worry about what everyone else is doing and why they are doing it.
- When I see a member in a store and someone asks how we know each other, I can say "we met through mutual friends."

## **GROWING TO LOVE OUR TOOLS**

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- My recovery begins and ends with the food. If I am not right with the food, I do not have a chance at having contented abstinence. If there is something in my food plan that lights up for me, it has to go. I must keep my food simple.
- For me, abstinence means freedom. Freedom from the bondage of food and an obese body. Freedom from fear, doubt and insecurity. Freedom from self-hatred, shame, guilt and remorse. Stay abstinent. It's a lot easier to stay abstinent than to get abstinent.
- Phone calls remind me again and again to simply trust God for help and not eat.
- If I can put my concerns in God's hands and turn myself towards service and helping others something amazing happens. I'm set free from the anxiety and fear and selfishness and I have a purpose.
- I create a checklist of all the tools and use it as a visual each day. It helps a lot.
- I remember "Every tool, every day".
- Quiet time was hard because I used noise to avoid listening to my own thoughts.

- Writing as a tool - we all start with writing our food for the next day. Write a gratitude list.
- Started with I “have” to do tools, moved to I “want” to do them or I “get” to - gratitude, shift in thinking.
- Learned to stop and slow down in my reading, read it out loud, take it in. One day my daughter said “mom, you’re doing so much better”.
- I was afraid I was bothering people by calling them, but then I realized that they needed calls too.
- The tools were created by people who really know us and our disease.
- If I do the tools I become a better, kinder, more open, more loving person. I grow in my spiritual strength.
- Phone calls help me stay connected and I feel like “you know I’m crazy, but you understand as well”.
- I had a misconception of the term “abstinent meal out” - I thought it was like “what happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas”. Today, I know it means I eat abstinently!
- Tools give me an opportunity to pause, slow down, reflect, get out of myself.
- The tools are like directions to a party - if you don’t follow them as they are written, you’ll never get to the party- take one tool out, you’ll never get there (recovery).
- Frontier - the telephone saved my life: people pick up my phone calls and I don’t feel alone.
- Video phones help to see fellows if you’re on the frontier - can read lips if English isn’t first language.
- Call newcomers and people on frontier back!
- In other fellowships and programs, didn’t have tools as a “must”. Every tool every day really works!
- We have to eat 3x a day, so we need our tools to help. It’s not like alcohol where you can just not drink.
- Never answered the phone before, but it gets me out of my isolation now, coming to convention is an opportunity to get out of myself
- I always leave a voicemail even if I don’t reach another fellow.
- Sponsor suggested going to convention to reconnect with FA and fellowship.
- Rededicated to disciplines, never done before - all the tools all the time!
- Treat open AA meetings, just like FA meetings - get there early, talk with fellows, help set up, sharing, listening, regularity, service, participation.
- Literature - fellows would share about things from the big book - I’m one of those people now.
- Abstinence - the best service you can do is to stay abstinent. Be of service to people in and out of FA in my life.
- I have a chance of giving to relationships if I’m abstinent.
- Calls - I didn’t want to share about myself because I didn’t like who I was, who else wants to hear about me? If they know me better, I can feel that trust and grow the relationships.
- I want to be in the middle of recovery, not on the outside.
- I have friends - real friends from phone calls.
- Living Abstinely booklet - helpful for sponsors to share with newcomers to explain FA and the tools - how and why we do things - helps me see how I’m doing in my own tools.
- It’s an ongoing process to learn and use the tools. Quality of how I use my tools changes over the years.
- What grade would you give yourself on the tools?
- Start with prayer - why is it important to get on our knees - to surrender and to SLOW down to let God come in.
- Tools help us slow down, pause.

- When I'm disconnected, I'm at risk - "spiritual blackout".
- How connected do I feel right now? - which tool do I need to pick up right now?
- Today, I GET to do my tools.

## FRONTIER BREAKOUT GROUP – GIVING AND GETTING SUPPORT

### HIGHLIGHTS

- I asked my HP to find me just one sponsee who needed and wanted this program.
- I was willing to travel 2.5 hours one way to get to an FA meeting. It was a great decision.
- I found that networking may help me find people who need FA.
- I let the WS office know I was there and asked them to give my number to anyone else in the state. There are a few others. We get together a few times each month.
- In AA meetings, I say I'm a food addict if that's OK at that particular meeting.
- Getting the FA Connection Magazine helped me feel "part of".
- Listening to MP3 files (or CDs) is helpful.
- When I leave phone messages, I mention I'm on the frontier and would truly appreciate a call back.
- Got on a phone AWOL.
- When I heard a group was having an Information Session, I would make it a point to attend even if it took me 6 hours to get there. I was frequently able to stay with an FA member.
- I was diagnosed as a type 2 diabetic and I participated in a health fair for diabetics.
- Coming to the convention really helps.
- I need to claim my own recovery, get into action, and lean into my global fellowship.
- PATIENCE –instead of trying to recruit and start a meeting, just try to keep it simple. Focus on the tool of abstinence. Spend time to get the food plan right. Teaching the new fellow how to eat abstinely, weigh and measure, cook and behave around food – this takes time! Often in other countries, there are different kinds of food, different cooking methods, and different measurement systems. Patience!
- Buy and read the Living Abstinely Booklet.
- Buy the FA Book – I read 2 pages a night in addition to my 2 pages of the big Book.
- Use the FA website! – create a profile. This enables you to sign up for the *Gratitude in Action*, a quarterly publication, and easily order anything you need including the *Connection*.
- If you are sponsoring someone on the frontier: Share your list of FA contacts and people you speak with regularly– those committed to their recovery.
  - Explain about leaving a message – to say their name, where they're from SLOWLY and to leave a message explaining what you wanted to talk about.
  - Also suggest not to have an expectation that you will receive a return call. Just keep on reaching out!
  - Help them use other no cost calling methods ex: WhatsApp, Viber, Facebook Messenger (if you know how to use them).
- Join and attend the Frontier Support Calls.
- Buy MP3 recordings as well as sign up for Gratitude in Action and Connection.
- Attend AA meetings to get out of isolation.

- When traveling out of town, always check to see if there are FA meetings and plan the trip so you can attend. If no FA meetings, use the Frontier Members List to see if there are any FA members in the city and connect with them beforehand.
- Get to an Intergroup, get to convention... make the effort. Get inspiration.
- Put time zones in your phone by the person's name so you know when you can call them.
- Doing service helps me keep connected to fellows.
- Use Google translate.
- Video phone calls (such as Facetime) are very helpful for those on the frontier.
- Let go of whether or not to start a meeting. Be patient. It's not a reflection of my recovery.
- To help spread the word, I share as much as I can about FA – everywhere I can, I'm very open about my recovery with everyone.
- It's OK that our meetings are small, we're all staying abstinent.
- Work your program.
- Stay abstinent.
- Do disciplines.
- Make outreach calls.
- Ask God to put people in your path... began doing that.

## **LOCAL SERVICE GROUPS CATAPULTING YOUR RECOVERY INTO THE NEXT DIMENSION**

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Having an LSG helped us learn to work together.
- In addition to reaching out to the newcomer, our LSG helps the current members also. We recently had a fellowship day with the theme "So you've got a service position, now what?". We were able to share with each other what really helped us in each service position.
- Keep it simple when you start. What do the meetings really need help with?
- Focus on reaching the newcomer to stay away from the concept of "they are the FA police".
- Easy activities: fold trifolds, put FA books in libraries, purchase signs for meetings.
- Participate in health fairs.
- Establish a contact person for each meeting in your area just to share what's going on.
- Many places find meeting before a regularly scheduled FA meeting works. Others use teleconference to meet.
- Use free community calendar listings to list meetings and information sessions.
- Put trifolds in doctor offices, health centers, college health centers, dental offices, mental health offices.
- Send out press releases. Refer to the PI kit for help. Or call your WAI or EAI PI rep for help.
- If you have an Information Session, contact the local press and ask for an interview. We had three people attend the interview. Remember to maintain anonymity.
- Present the Healthcare Provider Slide Show.

- Get on the WSI Service Group Support call. Learn what other groups are doing and how they accomplish things.
- Being in an LSG has helped me to be a less self-centered person. The working together as a group is very nourishing. I do service as a part of my journey of recovery. It's also a social activity, I am not so alone with a group of people. I can do it. As a person addicted to pleasure this helps me to want to help people in dire straits. We have an LSG meeting then have lunch and it is sweet.
- Have folks get together to put racks up in the community. Go "store to store".
- Our LSG had one meeting spent putting meetings on internet calendar sites using weblinks. We each brought our laptop. It was fun and we figured it out together.

## **WHAT MAKES A MEETING GREAT?**

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Sharing from the heart.
- Sharing in a transparent way.
- Sharing that shows vulnerability.
- Honest sharing.
- Invokes hope.
- Warmth of fellowship.
- Positive mindset.
- Understanding that meetings are our medicine.
- Consistency of meeting format.
- Spiritual experience.
- Enthusiasm.
- Positive body language/ nonverbal gestures.
- Alert, attentive listening.
- Punctuality.
- Judgement free zone.
- Praying prior to sharing.
- Talking and listening to the newcomer, having a greeter to welcome and introduce the newcomer to other meeting members all help the newcomer feel welcome. It is said that people "do not remember *what* you said to them but rather *how* you made them feel."
- Newcomers and those returning after a relapse feel this warmth and are welcomed with open arms.
- The consistency of FA meetings helps to prevent distractions and is often comforting to members especially when travelling. We can feel right at home.
- Breaks at meetings help build fellowship as do the before and after meeting conversations.
- Sharing our stories allows members to connect with others in the room and identify with the speaker. Helps to overcome isolation.
- Honest, vulnerable sharing.
- Positive attitudes at meetings and business meetings.
- Feelings of warmth and acceptance.
- Being greeted with a smile.

## CLOSING SESSION

### MEMBERS SHARED INSIGHTS THEY WILL TAKE HOME TO THEIR FELLOWS

- Tools: Keep it simple and use the tools. In the moment of struggle make calls, you will have more fellows to connect with.
- FA Beginnings: Maintain the lessons we learn in the beginning of FA as new fellows come in.
- FA Beginnings: FA started with simple structure. Surrender to this program.
- Tools: It is a disease of isolation. Hungry and tired and isolating. Reaching out to another food addict, having structure. We thrive in structure. Tools force me to bend my knee to a God I don't understand.
- The Traditions: a still suffering food addict is any one of us, speak to someone who is suffering, anyone of us, and have healing.
- Tools: Have a good mindset and you'll have a good meeting.
- Frontier: Don't give up!
- Traditions: Traditions keep me safe with anonymity. Do as much service as I can to stay strong.
- LSGs: Doing service together unifies the group. Unity is attractive to the newcomer.
- Frontier: claim your recovery.
- FA Beginnings: Why come in/why stay? Fellowship is good. We find God in the Fellowship, supporting each other with love. Many people have been through tough times, but are fundamentally good people. Trust my abstinence, sponsor and HP.
- Tools: Love your FA tools, tools were like following the directions to a party. take any one out and you won't get there...have to be all in, gets you to the abstinence party.
- Great Meetings: be vulnerable, what am I doing to make meetings better? On time? If you aren't ten minutes early, you are late. Attention to the details, attention to the logistics.
- FA Beginnings: Don't need to search anymore. It comes to me. Just need to work my program.
- FA Beginnings: FA works, why? Why would you change it? It has worked for a long time. Willingness to keep it strong.
- Frontier: Be willing to use apps to make free long-distance calls. Video calls are helpful to folks on the frontier. I don't need to be one who suffers.
- Great Meetings: I will never know the impact of what I say.
- The Traditions: traditions protect us from our egos.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

"The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action. This is the great news this book carries to those who suffer from alcoholism. (*Alcoholics Anonymous*)"

We DO have a common solution and we celebrated that solution today. We did that not only by sharing our experience, strength and hope with each other but by building unity through fellowship and service. The Forum doesn't end now. Through fellowship and service, we can carry what we heard here to those who suffer from food addiction. And, like the Big Book says, that is great news!