

Gratitude in Action (GIA)

2nd edition – 2020

What is GIA?

GIA is a quarterly email publication of the WSI 12th Step Committee. Its purpose is to inspire FA members to engage in service and to carry the message of FA recovery to those who still suffer from food addiction.

Personal Reflections... Ways to Do Service

Abstinence, Gratitude, and Service During a Pandemic

A few weeks ago, I asked a few friends to join me in starting a video-conference gathering to help support food addicts during the coronavirus pandemic. We follow WSI guidelines and ask that those who share have at least 90 days of continuous abstinence. These gatherings have helped support my recovery by keeping me focused on abstinence, gratitude, and service.

Abstinence: Listening to my fellows share during gatherings reminds me that even in the midst of a global health emergency, the most important thing that I can do is to stay abstinent and help another food addict stay abstinent. When we are abstinent, we are physically healthier and better equipped to follow public-health guidelines.

Gratitude: Starting a gathering also has helped me to be grateful for what I have rather than focusing on what I don't have. We may not have live meetings or the ability to move about freely, but we do have everything we need to stay abstinent, including the support of a fellowship that spans the globe.

Service: On our video-conference gatherings, I run the technology, which keeps me mostly in the background. This gives me an opportunity to listen. It also gives me the opportunity to help a newcomer or a person on the frontier hear and see recovery. Helping to give someone else what I have so generously been given gives purpose to my recovery.



Abstinence, gratitude, and service have always been the bedrock of my recovery in FA. They are especially important now.

Anonymous, Michigan

When the COVID-19 pandemic demanded a lockdown, my business essentially shut down. I will essentially have no income until we are able to return to meeting in groups.

What I've learned in 23 years of recovery is that every challenge is a spiritual opportunity. In the past several weeks I have felt fear, intense grief, confusion, self-doubt, and gratitude. What I am learning is that every one of these emotions presents an opportunity to sit still, feel the feeling, be present to the emotion, feel the presence of a God of my understanding, and quietly and firmly give it to God. If I don't experience serenity in the moment, I have a range of tools to help me make a spiritual connection. I have the telephone, writing, and gratitude to name a few. But a vitally important tool is the tool of service. Picking up the phone in order to help someone struggling with food or simply doing what I need to do to stay abstinent are acts of service that give me strength right now. And there is *always* a reason to pick up gratitude. I'm not alone. With a program, social distancing is not the same as social disconnecting. Having a community to share all this with and a program to walk through my emotions gives me plenty to be grateful for. And lots of opportunity to pass on what I've received, in the spirit of doing service.



With all that is changing around me, the one thing that is constant is my program. It is my anchor. No matter what my circumstances, I keep weighing and measuring my food, getting up at the same time, taking my quiet time and my sponsee calls. I read the literature and stay connected during the day. What I am learning here is that fear and stress are living in the future and guilt is living in the past. The present is where I find God, serenity, and peace. I just need a program and a fellowship to remind me of this. There is no stress in this moment. God only knows where I would be right now without a program. That is gratitude in action.

Dave I., Alberta, Canada

The Gift of Connecting with Others

The shelter-in-place policies initiated by the government have caused me feelings of fear and isolation. I find myself continually asking, how will I protect myself from catching the coronavirus? And the more I learn, the more uneasy I feel. Dwelling on the quick transmission of COVID-19 between humans and the lack of test kits, medical supplies, and medical personnel only increases my concern.

Before FA, my escape would have been the local bakery shop, telling myself each day, *this will be the last time*. Yet, I know that day after day, I would make the same terrible trip for more sugar and flour products. At the same time, I know there would be a negative voice in my head, berating me for my thoughts and actions.

Thank God I have the FA program today. The structure of my FA life, which I treasure, kicked in immediately for me.

Weighing and measuring my food, having three meals a day, and making outreach phone calls have been parts of my daily plan of recovery that did not change with COVID-19. Prayer, meditation, reading, writing, attending meetings/gatherings, calling my sponsor, anonymity, and working the 12 steps have kept me out of my disease, one day at a time, through this difficult time.



I am focused on my recovery and am practicing gratitude for the technology that makes it possible to connect with other food addicts during this time of physical isolation. I have the chance to join larger gatherings and listen to members with long-term recovery. In fact, I can join calls every day, at several different times of my choice. Throwing ourselves into service, several FA members collectively joined a gathering that had few fellows with over 90 days of abstinence. Participating in that meeting helped me to give back what has so generously been offered to me.

Anonymous

Continuing to Carry the Message

It had been one week since the government announced restrictions on meeting in groups. This meant our Friday morning meeting in Sydney would need to close for at least three months if not more. I placed a notice on the door of our meeting place and put some FA trifold in a plastic sleeve alongside the sign. Soon after, I received two inquiries from newcomers asking about the meeting. While, to my knowledge, they have not yet started the program, this story reminds me that we can still reach suffering food addicts by using simple measures such as trifold drops and public announcements.



Maria M., New South Wales, Australia

Answering the Call

Just after the stay-at-home order was made in Florida, I sat at my kitchen table. My phone rang. It was a number I did not recognize, but I picked it up because that is what this amazing program has taught me to do.



He was from the Midwest. I listened to his pain, his fear, and the problems of living in a rural area. Because of the virus, his partner was afraid for him to leave the house to buy food.

I did my best not to overwhelm him with information, but from my own experience, I thought FA might be the solution for him. He had been to another 12-step program for food that did not work out, as it had not worked out for me.

I was able to give him contact information for fellows in the Midwest, phone numbers of potential sponsors in FA, and told him he could call me anytime. He has since called me back twice, and I've given him additional phone numbers of FA members. In our further conversations, I can still hear the fear in his thinking. I hope and pray he finds his way to recovery in FA.

I am grateful that I was sitting at home at 11:15 a.m. and available to talk with him because of the virus. That, to me, is a God moment. I had put my hand out to be of service, and in God's time, it happened. I was able to be of service and to help another food addict suffering from this disease, without moving from my kitchen table.

Anonymous

Preparing for the Future

I am grateful for service in FA, which has always formed the core of my recovery program. I am grateful for the consistency of our meeting members, chapter, EAI, and World Service, Inc., all moving ahead with "business as usual," to the best of our abilities, during these uncertain times.

Because FA has taught me to make service a priority, I am asking questions like the following: Where do we go from here? How do we address the newcomer to FA? What opportunity can we take to reach out to food addicts? And, most important, how do we prepare ourselves to be ready to do the kind of service that will be needed when we are once again able to attend committed, in-person meetings? How will we go about growing (or rebuilding, when necessary) our local fellowships?

One simple answer comes to mind: we can be ready with our materials! We can get flyers into the hands of our members and prepare for the time when we can once again meet face-to-face with our fellows and share the hope of recovery with those who have not yet found FA.

Helen P., Maine

Local Service Group Spotlight

(A local service group consists of two or more FA members from more than one FA meeting group who combine resources to do service for FA.)

While all of the Local Service Group opportunities I am about to describe took place before the current COVID-19 crisis, taking the opportunity to reflect and remember by writing this article has given me yet another opportunity to experience gratitude through service. I was in an LSG meeting when I heard of an opportunity to write about my LSG experience. I was quick to raise my hand, as I consider doing local service to be one of the keys to my growth and recovery.

I came into FA eleven years ago after decades of suffering from food addiction and endless attempts to change. At the time, I was feeling suicidal. Upon joining FA, it was suggested that I do our regular FA tools but that I also get a cell phone, e-mail address, and a new computer so that I could participate in service opportunities that required quick and efficient communication. I was not used to taking suggestions, but I complied because I didn't want to eat again.

In my early years, local service opportunities were informal and started with fellows from two meetings joining forces to host information sessions. We then realized that we could improve efficiency and reduce costs by collaboratively purchasing and distributing books, pamphlets, and trifold. As the person who filled the literature position for several of my meetings, I took on this position. It wasn't long before that function morphed into being the "book guy" for numerous meetings in the region. My car became a moving bookstore, and I felt happy and useful. As part of a group that was working on editing trifold, I needed to learn new Microsoft Word and Excel skills, and, more importantly, I got to practice asking for help.



Our groups also joined together to bring "homebound meetings" to fellows in need. It's been very rewarding to see an ailing member's deep gratitude and to watch a group of people lovingly come together in a time of need.

In the summer of 2017, several fellows returned from the FA business convention and began to formalize the work of our local initiatives. Since that time our LSG has done a number of trifold blitzes and FA book placements in libraries, colleges, and universities. We have created local LSG guidelines that have helped us to function better as a group. And because we have become

so organized, forty regional fellows participated in a major health fair in our city. Today, we are a vibrant LSG that has yet to run out of initiatives or fellows willing to do service.

I am not the same man who walked into FA years ago. I don't have to eat again, and that's important. More importantly, today I feel vibrant, alive, and closer to becoming the person God intended me to be. I have had to face my tendency to isolate, and I have walked through many fears. In asking God for help, I have grown in ways I couldn't have imagined just by being willing to do service.

Mark I., Ontario, Canada

To learn about and support local service groups, consider the following:

- Participate in the bimonthly [Service Group Support Committee conference call](#).
- Access [LSG Guidelines and Recommendations](#) on the FA website.
- Request the Global LSG Contact List by emailing SGSC@foodaddicts.org.
- Share your LSG experience in an upcoming issue of Gratitude In Action. Submit 2-3 written paragraphs to SGSC@foodaddicts.org for consideration.

Words to Live By

“For the sake of our survival, and the survival of FA, we need to participate fully in the program. The more we give, the more we receive: we grow stronger in our abstinence and happier in our lives.”

Living Abstinently: A Guide to the FA Program, p. 34.

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- Go to the FA homepage at www.foodaddicts.org
- Click "login" at the top of the right page
- Type in your email address and password
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Share your experience!

Sharing experience, strength, and hope is essential to our recovery—and to *Gratitude in Action* (GIA). Your submissions can help inspire all of us to do service. In particular, we're looking for brief paragraphs on how service in FA has enriched your life and strengthened your recovery.

Please email your stories of experience to GIA@foodaddicts.org. We're also looking for FA members with 2 or more years of abstinence to join the GIA subcommittee. Please contact us at the email above to let us know your interest.