

# Gratitude in Action

November, 2014

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## Welcome to the latest edition of Gratitude in Action

### *What is Gratitude in Action?*

Gratitude in Action is a newsletter published by the WSI 12<sup>th</sup> Step Committee of Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous (FA) to inspire you to get involved and do service so that you and others can be helped. We will bring you the latest FA worldwide information, remind you of tools and resources available within FA, and highlight upcoming FA worldwide events. Remember – “**Service keeps us abstinent!**”

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## The Fellowship Convention

The Fellowship Convention was held October 24-26, 2014 in Santa Clara, California and was attended by 847 people. The Fellowship Convention continues to be an opportunity for fellows from around the world to come together to build community and connection and to strengthen their recovery through shared experience, strength and hope.

### *Opening Remarks*

My name is Jamie and I am a food addict. On behalf of the WSB I want to extend a warm welcome to all of you to the 4th Fellowship Convention. There are people attending today from around the world who have traveled many miles to be here. I would love to talk very briefly about our collective purpose here during this Fellowship Convention and the goals that I hope we all can set for ourselves during the weekend ahead. Over the last month, in the 24 Hour a Day Book, we have been reading a series of questions focused on service, including reaching out to newcomers, sponsorship, and service at the group level and for the fellowship as a whole. These are concerns that I feel are key to the successful growth of FA. How do we learn to pass on a strong program and the foundations of recovery - Abstinence, Gratitude and Service? How do we keep our fellowship strong and what can we do to attract the food addict out there who is suffering? When I think of the answers to these questions I am reminded of the essentials of recovery. What is it that I do that we all do? What is it that unifies our Fellowship? To me, there is nothing more paramount than service. Service is something that we can all do, right this very moment, in a very fundamental but crucial way, by staying abstinent. We all can ask for that power right now! When I am abstinent I have the ability to pass it on to a newcomer no matter how few days I have.

I remember coming to my first FA meeting and prior to entering the doors I worried that I was going to lose my perceived sense of independence. At the same time I had this vague feeling that I was headed toward something brighter. I had no idea how bright my life and recovery was to become. I had no idea that I would go to bed that night and experience those long lost feelings of hope and gratitude. Through the practice of my daily tools and by doing service I have a joy in my life that grows with each passing year. Each day that I choose to surrender my will to what I believe my higher power desires for me, I find freedom. I want to pass that on to others.

I know that when I stand alone I can be knocked down easily, yet when I stand with my arms figuratively linked in recovery with others, I have strength and I can, in turn, impart strength. I hope you will take the opportunity this weekend to form a chain of recovery that will help to strengthen your recovery and that of others. Listen to the collective wisdom of those who have come before you, ask questions, and observe. Reach out to those who are new and look for ways to connect. We are here this weekend to make connections with others and to focus our efforts in reaching the newcomer. In doing so we strengthen not only our ourselves, but our growing Fellowship of Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous.

*Jamie M.*

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### ***Closing Remarks:***

On behalf of the World Service Board, I am grateful to have been asked to send you home with a few concluding remarks...

It has been a wonderful experience to be with you all this weekend - to learn together, and to celebrate our recovery and the growth of this fellowship. And I mean growth not just in terms of numbers, but, even more importantly, in terms of the quality of our individual recovery and the maturity of our organization. We still have a long way to go, but it is conventions such as this that take us another step along the journey.

As I look around this room and feel the strength of our fellowship and the strength of our individual and collective recovery, I think of a favorite quote from the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. "We are average [people]... who normally would not mix. But there exists among us a fellowship, a friendliness, and an understanding which is indescribably wonderful. We are like the passengers of a great liner the moment after rescue from shipwreck when camaraderie, joyousness and democracy pervade the vessel. The feeling of having shared in a common peril is one element in the powerful cement which binds us. But that in itself would never have held us together as we are now joined.

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 harmonious action.”

What I love about our fellowship is that when we come together we leave our egos on that sinking ship of suffering and come together to help each other survive and grow.

As we prepare to travel back to our respective homes, whether it be California, the other side of the country or the other side of the globe, I want to leave you with three simple reminders.

First, take care of yourself and of those you are traveling home to. Being together like this in a room of 847 food addicts is an intense experience for even the strongest of us. Making the transition back home is just that: a transition. While many of us are going home to supportive relationships, some of us may not. Many have had friends and family members taking care of our responsibilities while we have been here taking care of ourselves. Some of us live alone, while some are traveling back to relationships with people that don't understand and don't care about our recovery. Regardless of the circumstances that await you upon your return, remember to bring gratitude, and say “thank you” to anyone who has given you the support that has enabled you to be here this weekend. An attitude of service to bring the overflow of recovery you have received here into the lives of the people that await you is also important. Above all, remember to bring God home with you to help you with the transition. “The problem in front of you is never as great as the power behind you,” and... “Easy Does It.”

Secondly, unity comes through the strength of personal recovery. Without a clear and unified definition of abstinence, and without the spiritual principles of the Twelve Steps, there would be, to paraphrase a line in the Little Red Book, no F.A. Instead, there would be a group of disgruntled food addicts, temporarily on the wagon, living in a perpetual state of mental drunkenness.

But instead, we have a good program. We all live with a disease that can be deadly and a program that gives us a new life. FA works, and it works even better when we keep it simple and stick to the basics.

There is much diversity in this room. That is a good thing. We are here not to attempt or enforce any kind of conformity. We each need to be who we are. That is recovery. We have no need to fear differences in others. It is a sign of spiritual maturity when we can be around people who do things differently than us, and maintain the courage of our own conviction to be who we are and to work the kind of program that we need for our own unique personal recovery. What we need, instead, to focus on, is what binds us together: a unified definition of, and commitment to, abstinence.

My third and final message is that we need each other. I never knew that when I was in the depths of my illness. I ate alone. I binged alone. I purged alone. I lived alone, even when I was in relationships. One of the things that gave me strength and helped keep me abstinent in those early days was the realization that my decision to eat addictively – as well as my decision to be abstinent - affected somebody else besides me. I am

one of many, but I am one, just as each and every one of us are. I need to be continually reminded how important it is to be a part of, not apart from. To strengthen our spiritual recovery we need each other.

You can't sink half a ship, and you can't sink half a lifeboat. What each of us does affects each and everyone one of us. The good news is we aren't sinking! We are growing. We are, indeed, stumbling forward, with and through the grace of God, and as we grow, the need for unity remains ever more vital. Bill W. once said that we "come together in our weakness, and grow together in our strength." How true for all of us here this weekend, and in the FA fellowship worldwide. Think about why you came into FA, and why you stay in FA. It's messed up relationships—with ourselves and with others—that bring people here, and it's relationships—healthy ones, now that we are in recovery—that keep people here. Living an abstinent life, free of food and fear, and working toward freedom from our defects is inspiring – at least to those who are ready for the message.

As we set forth now to return home, it is my hope that we remember to be guided in every decision and every action in our fellowship by our primary purpose: to help reach the suffering newcomer. This is what we are ultimately all here for!

Safe travels, my friends, and until we meet again, may God bless, support, and sustain you all in this vital work as we trudge this road of happy destiny.

Thank you,  
*Dave I.*

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### **Fellows share their experience ...**

I've been in FA for 7 years and just attended my first FA Fellowship Convention. I live in Sydney, Australia where the fellowship is relatively young. To be around so many other food addicts, and in particular so many with long term abstinence in FA, was wonderful. The weekend was warm and alive with genuine conversations and inspiring meetings. I came away with some very practical ideas for attracting and keeping newcomers in my meetings back home. I've already used what I learned and asked a newcomer at a meeting recently if she felt ready to get started. The newcomer answered 'yes' but seemed unable to actually take the next step. I warmly offered to personally introduce her to one of the available sponsors and she began working the program that night. My increased confidence and genuine desire to be of service is a direct result of what I heard and observed during my time at the convention.

I still feel very full from the whole thing and in true addict style have come away wanting more fellowship, more recovery and to be of more service.

*Gwyneth P.*

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The fellowship convention was a shot in the arm for my recovery. I got to re-connect with fellows I don't often see, and meet new people as well. The sharing at the meetings inspired me so much. I heard so much strong recovery and listened to stories that demonstrated so much faith in a recovering life. I came away from the convention with a renewed faith and appreciation for what FA gives to me — for this way of life. Who gets to be so fortunate as all of us who live this program? It's truly a blessing. I feel very grateful that I have the privilege to be part of this fellowship.

*Kathleen M.*

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This was my first fellowship convention and I had an amazing time. Walking into a room of 800+ food addicts was intimidating at first, but then looking out onto the sea of people who understood my fear, doubt and insecurity was reassuring. I felt at home and soaked up all the recovery around me. These are people with a common bond for life!

*Heidi V.*

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I heard someone once say that the FA Convention is a "truth-serum petri dish" and I couldn't agree more. The FA Convention was a weekend of sweet fellowship, new awareness and personal growth. I am currently on the 4th step in my AWOL. That, coupled with the concentrated experience of FA meetings, speaker qualifications, and best practices sessions, left me filled up with a new willingness to dive deeper into my recovery. I saw behaviors around my food that I want to change and areas of my personality where I can relax more and trust God. I am so grateful to be a part of a community where folks are constantly, yet gently striving to be a better version of themselves. May the Higher Power bless FA!

*Demi S.*

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Coming from a small fellowship back east, I welcomed the opportunity to be plugged into the larger fellowship. I had great conversations with fellows from across the country and around the world, enjoyed the inspirational sharing from old timers and newcomers alike, and left with an ever-growing sense of gratitude and connection. FA offers me a safety net and helps me negotiate civilian life, secure in the knowledge that I am part of a ever-growing and evolving recovery community. The Fellowship Convention cemented those feelings in a fun and relaxed environment. I loved it!

*Ann H.*

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I realized after our Fellowship Convention weekend that it marked the 18th FA Convention that I've attended so far; what a privilege. I've learned to take care of myself in every way, focus on whoever is right in front of me, and give as many genuine hugs as possible. This time was no exception. I was able to appreciate quality time with the people I've come to know, and be open to all the ones I was meeting for the first time. For me it's the one-on-one conversations that fill me up the most. Given the number of attendees, I left there fully satiated.

*Adrienne P.*

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The Fellowship Convention held in Santa Clara, California last month, was an inspiring experience for me, as well as for many others. A staggering 847 of our members were there! Together we celebrated our recovery, were moved by wonderful sharing, and had some good abstinent fun together. Much service occurred during the weekend in the form of countless hours of volunteering, supporting one another, and reaching the newcomers who were there. Being with friends, learning to be comfortable with myself among so many people I love, and being a part of our growing fellowship in meaningful ways, always moves me further along the recovery journey. On behalf of the World Service Board, I want to thank the Convention committee, the volunteers who gave so much of their time to organize and make this weekend a great experience, and to all who took time out of their lives to attend. I look forward to being a part of future conventions which keep getting better every time we are together.

*Dave I.*

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I truly enjoyed the Fellowship Convention! Everything flowed smoothly through the entire weekend. I got to meet members from other parts of the U.S. and Canada who I had only spoken to on the phone. It was anchoring and inspiring to hear sharing from members with 15 years and more of abstinence, and it was exciting to see newer members, or those who live on the frontier, who were either at their first fellowship convention ever, and for some, at their first FA meeting ever. Finally, it was moving to attend four qualifications of members both young and old, from across the globe that will soon become part of the FA CD library.

*Linda N.*

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## Traditions Review Committee (TRC)

**Issue:** Do clothing swaps (i.e. members giving clothes they have shrunk out of to other members) at meetings violate the Traditions?

**Response:** It depends. Our primary purpose is to carry the message to those who still suffer, and clothing swaps can divert us from that purpose if they interfere with meetings. They can distract us from greeting newcomers, and may leave some members (e.g., men, very large members, newcomers) feeling excluded from what may be perceived as a meeting related activity. It would also not be appropriate to make clothing swaps part of business meeting agendas or to announce them from the front of the room. That being said, the TRC believes it would not be an issue if members pass along their clothes to other members in a discreet and considerate manner that does not, in any way, interfere with meetings (including before and after the meeting or during the break). This would be best done outside of the meeting room and all other areas where members may be (i.e. in another room or in the parking lot).

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## Upcoming Events

**Thank-a-thons** - A Thank-a-thon is a meeting on the morning of Thanksgiving (in the US) or on another day of thankfulness. The meeting follows a special format, which often includes sharing of experience of two members and a focus on the topic of Gratitude. The Thank-a-thons are announced at FA meetings and on the FA website. Everyone is welcome. For more information please visit

<http://www.foodaddicts.org/thankathons>

Save the date: The **2015 FA Business Convention** will be held from May 29-31, 2015 in Danvers, MA.

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Please email your comments and feedback to [GIA@foodaddicts.org](mailto:GIA@foodaddicts.org).