



Gratitude In Action

Twelfth Step and PI Committees
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“Gratitude should go forward, rather than backward, in other words, if you carry the message to still others, you will be making the best possible repayment for the help given to you.”
—As Bill Sees It, p.29

Welcome!

We are pleased to bring you the fourth issue of Gratitude in Action, your quarterly newsletter from the GSO Twelfth Step and Public Information (PI) Committees.

During 2005, Gratitude in Action is going to examine the situation of members in faraway (isolated) places, both newcomers who have discovered the program from a friend or relative or via the Internet, and members who've moved from an area with fellowship. Both situations involve being alone in a distant area where there are no meetings or contacts.

In this issue we'll talk about making and keeping in touch with the FA fellowship. Then in the next issue we'll deal with that truly difficult time when the isolated person is the only food addict around, abstinent, but with no one else to share the task of starting a meeting. So we'll talk about the concept of how to reach out to another potential food addict. The third issue will be about how to start a meeting, and the fourth issue of 2005 will be about the traditions and how to publicize meetings.

Sharing Wanted. So we'd like to hear from some folks out there who have had the experience of being isolated. What has worked for you? How have you met others and started a fellowship growing in your area?

We will also be reporting on the experiences of groups and individuals who have shared FA information with doctors and other health care professionals. Can you tell us your experience?

We welcome your feedback. We'd like to hear your questions or

suggestions for things you'd like to learn about Twelfth Step work and Public Information.

Sincerely,

— The WSI 12th Step and PI
Committees

FAQ's: Making and Maintaining Contact with FA Fellowship

I live in an area where there aren't any FA meetings. How do I make contact and get connected with FA?

Working the FA program in an outlying area has special challenges. But take heart, in areas where there are now many FA members, at one time there was only one. Work your program according to the suggestions, and you will gain recovery for yourself and help make it available to others, perhaps many others.

Contact FA:

Email fa@foodaddicts.org or call 781-321-9118 and ask for a newcomer packet which includes: an FA Worldwide Meeting Directory, “The 20 Questions: Are you a Food Addict?”, and “Food Addiction: There is a Solution”. Information on FA is also available at www.foodaddicts.org. This information will help you make phone contact, get a sponsor and get started.

Use the telephone. The phone is a great tool for recovery. Use it to call your sponsor, stay in touch with fellows. Use it to the max, but don't let it take the place of any opportunities you may have to meet other addicts in person. Many food

addicts tend to isolate, and you will have to work especially hard to minimize isolation when in a remote area where there is no FA program

Attend AA Meetings. When going to FA meetings each week is not possible for you, go to open AA meetings. The recovery there is closest to the FA experience. While you may not be able to speak at the meeting, before and after the meetings, or at the break, you can share with others, and tell them that you are there to help recover from food addiction.

Read Literature. There's a wonderful story in the third edition of the *Big Book* called “Lifesaving Words” which tells about a man in India who got sober and stayed sober without ever attending a meeting! He credits his sobriety to the encouragement he received from the A.A. General Service Office and a regular flow of literature. This is an excerpt from his story:

Then I saw an A.A. advertisement in the newspaper, and I wrote to the address it gave. The reply came, putting me in touch by mail with my sponsor in New Delhi. Following this, I had a short vacation, during which time I read as much literature as my sponsor could send me. I have read systematically since then, and A.A. literature has kept me sober.

FA has some wonderful resources to help. Check on the website (www.foodaddicts.org). There are many pamphlets (even in Spanish) and subscriptions for *The Connection*, a monthly magazine of stories, the name says it all! And

there are over 50 tapes/CD's made by members who have been abstinent a long time, sharing their stories of experience, strength and hope. These can be tremendously reassuring when you're not close to a meeting.

Some Experiences

"After more than five years of FA recovery in the US, where I was spoiled with big, strong meetings, I have recently moved to an area where there are no 12-step programs. I live in the remote north of a small European country, and I am just learning the language; I have no family or friends yet except my husband and baby son. I had dreaded moving, thinking I would not be able to 'survive' such a challenging situation, but to my surprise, I find myself being quite happy after the first two months of my new life. Although I miss my fellowship and friends dearly, I feel protected and safe, almost as if I was still attending three live meetings per week.

The main source of my connection to fellowship worldwide is the phone. I call my sponsor regularly; I take sponsee calls; I do service on the phone by dedicating time to fellow food addicts in other isolated areas; I reach out by making my own calls; and, mainly, I have many committed calls with people whose recovery and long-term abstinence I highly respect. Thanks to a table that indicates the different time zones I always know when to call (or not to call) other places in the world. In addition, I am in a phone AWOL that reminds me that I'm just one among many, that my situation is not unique.

I constantly have to watch my attitude. Without the corrective regularity of face-to-face meetings, it is easy to slip into negativity or to have an emotional binge. I am

extremely grateful for everyone's willingness to help me stay connected."

– Uli, The Netherlands

"Last year I left Maine to join my husband in Qatar. Even though I had several years of abstinence, I was concerned about how I would survive in a Middle Eastern country with no FA meetings. My sponsor urged me to attend AA meetings. I got the name of an AA contact, as part of my planning, and what a relief it was to meet a real person who took me to a meeting. There were three AA meetings a week, and later a phone AWOL gave me the support I needed for my five month stay.

It wasn't until months later that I found out how precarious that AA safety had been. Apparently a member had objected to having a food addict at the meeting, and the meeting had taken a vote to keep the meeting open to me.

Now months after my return to the States, this same fellowship has decided to close two of the three meetings to non-alcoholics, so it will be more difficult for others to use this tool and I thank God for my good fortune."

– Susan, Eliot, Maine

"I was a member of another food related 12 step program that was not working for me physically, mentally or spiritually, when I attended an Information Session where 2 speakers from Boston shared their stories. From thin people I heard about freedom from mental obsession and physical addiction to flour and sugar. I saw a light of hope after so much hopelessness.

I have been blessed with a few years of FA recovery in which I have seen the growth of local fellowship from

one member to approximately 20 members. I was that one member and there were some challenges to get what I needed for my recovery.

First of all, I needed a sponsor. I was very desperate so I made a long-distance phone call to ask for one. With that phone call God provided me with an honest, compassionate sponsor who had peace in her life and neutrality around food as a result of working a 'strong' program. Obviously that challenge was quickly overcome because I was willing.

Secondly, there was the challenge of connecting on the phone everyday with other FA members. My sponsor gave me several phone numbers and told me that the tool of phone calls would help with my recovery. This was scary for me to call across the continent to people I had never met. It was also difficult due to my work schedule and a two hour time difference. As well it was very expensive! Again, my desperation led to the willingness to call 'strangers.' As it turned out they really weren't strangers after all because food addiction united us quickly. Not every call turned out to be welcomed, but I just kept calling. As a result I have made some strong connections and great friends that have absolutely enhanced my recovery. In regards to the expense of the phone calls, I just kept reminding myself how much money went into 'feeding' my addiction. The cost of the phone calls was then much easier to accept. Over the years, the competition between phone companies has made FA calling much, much less expensive—another gift from God."

– Joan, Alberta, Canada

