



Gratitude In Action

Vol. 5 – Summer 2005

“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 fifth issue of Gratitude in Action.

At the recent WSI Convention in Danvers, MA, the Twelfth Step Committee had the opportunity to come together and do some collective brainstorming. We focused our discussions on ways to reach out to those in areas where there are not yet any meetings; ways the committee can facilitate the task of starting new meetings; and ways for us to support existing small meetings which may need our help with how to grow. As we talked, it became clear that our committee's mission is to focus on outreach by exploring new ways to communicate useful information to the fellowship and to foster the communication between members. But we became aware that with technology offering so many new options to enthusiastic food addicts we could get into trouble pretty quickly! We must be careful to continue to draw upon the wisdom of our early members who have been successful in creating our fellowship; new ideas must always be tempered by what FA has found to work. Easy does it!

As promised, this fifth issue of Gratitude in Action is about “Passing It On”. We're focusing on passing the FA program on to another addict. We collected the suggestions committee members made at the conference about their experience making that first contact with a new person. There are short stories of similar experiences and the principles of service.

Our next issue will focus on “How to Start a New Meeting.” We'll really need your input and suggestions. We

look forward to hearing your ideas and experience of “gratitude in action”, the definition of service. With your help, we are excited about the possibility of expanding the Gratitude in Action newsletter with sharing of “experience, strength and hope.”

Yours in service,
Jamie M.,

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FAQ's: Abstinent, Without Local FA Fellowship

We had the good fortune to hear Carol C.'s talk at the 2005 FA Convention in Danvers. Its focus on service was so well-suited to this issue's FAQ's that we asked her permission to use her comments here. Thank you, Carol!

It's a miracle—I have my 90 days of abstinence but I am working this program without any meetings or fellows in my area. What do members with long-term recovery recommend?

On page 153 in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, Bill W. faced a serious challenge to his newly found sobriety. Instead of giving into the temptation to drink, he chose to do service and seek-out another alcoholic. He found Dr. Bob, and soon thereafter AA was born. The same solution is available for us, and essential to our maintaining our recovery. We must start doing service as soon as possible, or we risk losing what we

have. “God works through people and FA needs all of us to carry the message, so if you have 2 days, 2 weeks 2 years or 2 decades of abstinence, you have something very valuable to give. Every little bit helps.” Speak with your sponsor about ideas that you have for service.

“Let Go and Let God means doing service when it's not necessarily convenient, but to do it out of gratitude and a desire to give back to this program. I take my recovery seriously, but I'm human and sometimes I don't *feel* like speaking or qualifying at a meeting, or on a cold winter's night sometimes I don't *feel* like leaving my cozy home or my family to attend my committed meeting, or if I'm tired I may not *feel* like returning phone calls or making a call. But I do it anyway. Please hear me when I say we all need each other to show up. We all learn and benefit SO much from anyone with a grateful heart. The bottom line, however, is I am a food addict and I don't ever want to return to addictive eating. Abstinence goes hand in hand with gratitude and service.”

“Many years ago, a wonderful sponsor often would say, ‘Action relieves anxiety,’ and that has been true for me on many occasions. My anxiety and fear,... and laziness can hold me back from doing service, but when I let go and let God, the rewards are many.”

Other Ideas

→ If there are open AA meetings in your area, share with these fellow addicts your addiction to flour, sugar, and quantities, especially with those who you think might have our disease.

- Use the phone. Members in meetings in nearby cities, towns, states or countries can send you phone lists, and you can develop relationships with other FA members in this way. You can telephone the meeting contact person on the meeting list at www.foodaddicts.org.
- Join a phone AWOL (A Way of Life—A systematic study of the twelve steps of FA). While AWOLs are not a part of FA, they are responsible for the long-term recovery of many of its members. Phone AWOL's open periodically—ask your sponsor to help you to learn when an open AWOL is available.
- Every FA member regardless of location needs to work a strong spiritual program. This is true of you too. Cultivate your relationship with God. Ask regularly for his help and guidance.
- Because you do not have access to meetings, place additional emphasis on the other FA tools. Whether it is telephone calls, writing, sponsorship, literature or service, work to keep God present in your life each and every day. We FA members need a power greater than ourselves to maintain our recovery.

I want to share program with someone who may need it themselves, but am not sure if the timing is right. They've noticed that I have lost weight. Should I tell this person that I am a member of FA, or protect my anonymity?

“One of my favorite paragraphs in the Big Book is in the chapter *Vision for You* where it says, ‘We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us. Ask him in your morning meditation what you can do each

day for the man who is still sick. The answers will come if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven't got. See to it that your relationship with him is right and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the Great Fact for us.”

“On a personal note, the service I have done in FA has helped and continues to help me change from someone who was out of control with food and who was depressed and introverted into a contentedly abstinent, reasonably happy, sociable outgoing, useful person, thank you God.”

“So with willingness and the encouragement of our sponsors and fellowship, we can all do our small part if we truly let go and let God give us the courage. Again each and every one of us, whether we have 90 days or 90 years has something to give.... and SO much more to get.”

Remember that when words come from the heart they will reach the heart. Your prayers will help guide you. Always remember you're never completely alone unless you choose to be.

Ideas

When I came to FA I loved it when people showed me their before photos at meetings. It gave me the hope I needed to believe that the miracle could happen to me, too. Today I use my pictures as a tool for attracting people to this program. I carry my pictures wherever I go. My favorite pictures are those of me with my children before I lost 100 pounds. I find that many conversations center around children, at school, shopping malls, work, and other social events. For example just shopping for a pair of sneakers for my ever growing 5 and 7 year olds can turn into an opportunity to share my program.

As a student, I carry my old school id with the new improved ID, I also carry my BJ Club ID, the old and the new. I also leave family pictures on my desk at work which show me as a larger woman. This tool allows me to start a casual conversation about the gift that has been given to me. I can strike up a conversation about my children that lets me get out a picture of them (being a proud mom, I am always in those photos too!) and this always prompts people to ask, “Is that you? How did you lose all of that weight?” I usually respond, “Yeah, I lost over 100 pounds, I am so happy to be relieved of that body!” Or “I was out of control with the food!” When they say things like, “You don't look as if you were ever that big,” or “How did you do it?” I give them the FA website and my phone number in case they have any questions or inquiries.

So far no complete strangers have called me to ask about the program, but I know a seed has been planted. And it doesn't matter to me whether the person looks as if they have a food problem or not, I share my joy, passion, and the excitement I have gained from being in program, and say a silent prayer that the seed will grow and reach a fellow sufferer who might need this small service.

– *Varda, MA*

I drove to far away meetings in the beginning, and got referrals of brothers and sisters in my area who might be interested in FA.

– *Catherine, CA*

I moved to Carmel from San Francisco. I posted FA on “Craig's List” and the local free TV, cable channel. I'm very eager. I could shout it from the roof tops, I can't afford to be shy when I'm alone.

– *Suzanne, CA*

I showed my pictures to my teacher at the gym, and everyone wanted to know how I did it! My teacher refers people to me.

– Maria, Qatar

I ask for help to be bold at pot lucks and other places where I take my food, so that when people ask, I tell ‘em! Also, I go to AA meetings and the men have referred their wives. Weight loss is a big attraction.

– Eileen, WA

I leave flyers on the dashboard of my car. I’m never shy when people ask. I just write down the website and hand it to them. Just that, nothing more.

– Rosemary, NY

My doctor was supportive when I lost weight, so I told him to give my number to anyone who might need it. Whenever anyone asks me why I’m eating my own food, I tell them it’s because I used to weigh 200 lbs.! That always gets their interest.

– Dianne, MD

When I lived in Chicago there were just two of us, then when I moved to Toronto, there were four! I had a big weight loss, so I told my doctors and left pamphlets. Then I asked my family if they knew anyone who might be interested. My mom sent an email to everyone she knew-- about a hundred people! I have no problem with my anonymity when it might help someone get better.

– Dan, Canada

I got Kaiser HMO to let us speak to employees. It took a lot of education, but it’s working.

– Suzanne, CA

We sent letters to beauticians for a PI night. Than Susan L. came to qualify and it was great.

– Marvin, CA

I have a sponsee who came in through a referral from her doctor, because someone had left the “Letter to the Professional” with him.

– Reni, CA

When I moved to LA from NYC, I went to places where the AA meetings were held and posted flyers there. Siblings of AA members called. Then one other person moved to LA from DC and we could start a meeting. It helped to have FA literature at the first teeny meetings. It gave us legitimacy.

– Alison, CA

In California, members of the Twelfth Step Committee took a commitment to call three people each month in the outlying or remote areas that the fellowship now encompasses. FA now has members all over the world who would love to receive a phone call. We also took the same commitment at the WSI 12th-Step Committee meeting; we are trying to make an effort to return those phone calls that come from members around the world. It seems like a promise that if we do our part we’ll be guaranteed that, with the help of our Higher Power, we’ll grow personally while we are helping the growth of our Fellowship.

– Jamie M., CA

“Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail. This is our *twelfth suggestion*: Carry this message to other alcoholics! You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence when others fail. Remember they are very ill.”

–Alcoholics Anonymous, p.89

“The real truth is that none of us would be here today if someone had not done service.”

–Carol, Remarks at the 2005 FA/WI Convention

“I spend a great deal of time passing on what I learned to others who want and need it badly. I do it for four reasons:

1. Sense of duty.
2. It is a pleasure
3. Because in so doing I am paying my debt to the man who took time to pass it on to me.
4. Because every time I do it I take out a little more insurance for myself against a possible slip.”

–Dr. Bob, Alcoholics Anonymous

