

LONG DISTANCE RECOVERY

When I came into FA in September 2014 at 5'2"(160cm), I weighed 143 pounds (65Kgs). Now, in September 2015 I am 34 years old and weigh 112 pounds (51Kgs). I have lived in Taiwan and had never heard of any 12 step programs until I spoke with my cousins who live in the US and were doing another 12 step program. I told them in 2010 that I could not stop eating. They gave me literature from another 12 step food-related program and I read it with tears. I tried it for a couple of months. Unfortunately, I still struggled with bingeing. In September 2014, one of the other food-related program fellows told me she was doing FA and gave me some FA fellows' numbers to outreach with. Instead of calling the fellows right away, I surfed the FA website and I got 19 YESes of the 20 questions for the newcomer. I was so desperate and reached out to the fellows with my second language, English. Since then I got my sponsor even though I did not know much about her. Thanks God, I am pretty sure she was sent by my Higher Power.

I was born as a chubby kid. Since I was in elementary school, my parents worked in the daytime and my grandmom always gave me money to buy flour and sugar after school. School was strict and academics meant everything. If you get a good grade that meant you are a good student, so I studied very hard. After school, I sat all night at my desk to study. However, even though I studied very hard, I always got average points on my tests. I had so much fear doing schoolwork, because I was afraid of punishment by teachers. The more punishment I got, the more fear I had and the more I ate flour and sugar. It became a bad cycle. After I was in the FA program, I knew I had a problem with concentration due to too much flour and sugar.

Five years ago, I think my food addiction took off. At that time, I was in an unhealthy relationship with a man older than me by 11 years. He was more mature and had a lot of expectations of me. Our conversation was always about how I should get better in my family, at my job etc. I thought the more I became, the more he would love me and even marry me. However, the more he wanted me to be, the more I ate. At that time he was my Higher Power. Being a food addict, I am a people pleaser and I wanted to be a good girlfriend and had unrealistic perfectionism, so I always failed. We broke up after 6 months, but I still lived in my fantasy for 5 years - that I was still his girlfriend even though he told me that the relationship did not work out and he did not love me anymore.

I was so sick and could not work for 5 years after we broke up. During the 5 years, I bought a lot of junk food, went from store to store and ate in the car filled with resentment and fear. I even went to the store in my pajamas, without curling my hair or brushing my teeth and ate the unfrozen food, because I wanted the food RIGHT NOW. I was so ashamed I brought the wrappers into my house and hid them in the bottom of the trashcan after eating in my car.

I had tried so many ways to fix my weight problems including liquid diet for 80 days, protein powder shakes, being a vegetarian and diet pills that one night I was sent to the hospital. Also, I signed up for many diet-related workshops and bought a lot of self-help books and magazines. I tried many different religions including Christianity and Buddhism. I even flew to India and found a guru. I over exercised and I was the first member checked in at the gym at 6 a.m. every day for a month, never missing one day.

When I was in my disease, I was in the hell every single day. Every morning when I woke up, my first thought was I was going to diet, but I started to binge within few hours. I ate ALL day long. I could not sleep well, only for few hours, because physically my whole body was swollen. Mentally I was guilty and spiritually ill. I had huge self-hatred. I remember there were several times I slapped myself and told myself “I hate you” and blamed myself, asking “Why are you were so fat and why can’t you eat normally?”

The first thing that I learned from FA was to surrender, to surrender, to call my sponsor at 6:30 p.m. (Taiwan time) everyday and make 3 outreach calls everyday (even in my poor English). Also, I surrendered to not being a vegetarian under my Buddhism background, because most of the beans have too much sugar. Being an addict, I am very stubborn and arrogant; however, I know in my heart, my ways did not work anymore and I needed to do something different.

Even though English is not my native language, I am trying my best to communicate with my sponsor and other fellows in English. Since joining FA, it is the time I am able to use a lot of English. Though I cannot comprehend my sponsor and fellows’ conversations 100%, I know GOD lets me hear what I need to hear. But, I still have to do my part, if I am eager to know fellows’ experiences. I say “can you say that again?” or, “sorry, can I repeat what you just said to make sure I understand you?” All the fellows’ responses are very kind and considerate. That’s what I learned from FA, be willing to ask for help and not pretend I know everything. In FA, I have learned to be humble and teachable.

This fellowship is amazing to me. Since I was 4 years old, I always did not fit in with my kindergarten classmates and my family. But I have the wonderful fellowship in FA. I can talk everything over with them with laughing and tears and they accept me completely and know me. Sometimes in the conversation, I would asked FA fellows” Do you

understand what I just said?” because I use Chinglish (Chinese-English), and sometimes I even did not know what I talked about. However, they said “yeah. I know what you are talking about” with laughing. Being a frontier fellow, I still feel loneliness and complain that there are no other fellows in my country, but I know God has his plan. I am grateful for the Hi-Tech to offer me the U.S. number to get and make calls to FA fellows easily and economically. Because of time zone difference, I have a couple of committed phone calls with the FA fellows every week. It not only overcomes time zone difference, but also establishes deep friendships with them. It was easy to make friends at the beginning, but it was not easy for me keeping the friendships. Through the committed calls, it helps me develop the strong relationships with honesty and open-mindedness. Moreover, under my sponsor’s encouragement, I started to translate the FA pamphlets and FA website into Mandarin with another FA fellow. I deeply know if I am doing GOD’s will, I will get abundant help. During the translation, I have so many friends who are willing to help me to check the translations and two of my friends working on the media are interested in FA and want to know more about the program.

If you saw my 24-hour book, the little red book and FA gray book, you can see a lot of Chinese where there are vocabularies that I do now know. I bought a lot of books and in most of the books I just read few pages, but FA gray book is the one I read over and over again. There are no FA meetings in my country, so I have to go to Taipei, the capital city of Taiwan, 3 times a week to AA meetings. It takes me 2 hours on bus to get Taipei, and another 2 hours back home. On the bus, I always listen to the FA stories on mp3 player. That is another way to have more connection with FA fellows.

In the past 5 years, I was so isolated and I did not show up. Because of my abstinence and doing the AWOL, my life has changed. I would love to reconnect with people and cultivate good habits. Also, I got a part time job after 5 years of depression. This May, I

flew to US for FA Business Convention. It was a good time for me seeing so many FA fellows. When I was at the airport, I kept saying, “Thanks God, I am abstinent”. I traveled a lot when I worked, but I binged at the airport. But now I have the program and fellows to talk to when I am nervous at the airport.

Food addiction does not care where you come from or which language you speak. It only matters that you are willing to go to any length to get it.

I have never regretted that I have food addiction, because I have FA as my solution. I am blessed. Thanks GOD, and FA fellows who make me not alone.

Mandy C. Taiwan