

Voices of Recovery, 10/26

Before program, I often suffered from anxiety. I don't mean normal anxiety, I mean crazy-ville. Sometimes I could feel my throat closing on my way home from work. I would sometimes find myself pacing at night, looking for ways to distract myself until the insanity passed. I couldn't concentrate at work, and my frequent irrational fear took a real toll on my personal relationships. How tiresome I must have been! More than once I found myself in a doctor's office, or even the ER, for imagined crises. These doctors would listen but send me on my way. Clearly something was wrong, but none recommended mental health services. Though I was suffering, treating my anxiety was out of their bailiwick.

And of course I ate. My anxiety was fed by the twisted lens through which I viewed the world before program. Food was an escape, a way to find comfort in a decidedly uncomfortable world.

I had no idea that OA would help with my anxiety! I came to OA because I wanted to lose weight and could not stop eating. But today, I can't remember when my last go-round with anxiety. This is how I believe OA helped to relieve me of this particular bedevilment:

OA requires me to seek a higher power that can and will help me. Though it has not been easy for me to take the leap of faith (plunging to my death is a possibility, afterall), even my tentative reliance on my Higher Power has brought miracles into my life. I see the proof when I look behind me and see how far I have come.

My time spent at meetings, with my fellows, and in service get me out of myself. I am far less likely to slip into the quicksand of nutty thinking when I am not isolating, and (gasp), I am contemplating something other than my own navel.

Last, but not least, the Steps have helped relieve this particular insanity. Working and living the Steps to the best of my ability (a work in progress!) allows me to deal with the issues underlying my anxiety. They are, after all, the same issues I ate over. With the help of my Higher Power, living the Steps carries me from self-knowledge (interesting, but useless) to resolution. Who knows if I will suffer from anxiety again? But today, I am not. And that is a real weight off my shoulders!