

Summer 2023



THE ABSTINENT TIMES

Food Addicts Anonymous

www.faacanhelp.org

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JUST FOR TODAY – I will practice letting go of any ideas I have about knowing what foods are best for me without checking with another abstinent person. This addiction is a disease related to one of the most basic needs for survival. To allow myself to trust that someone else knows what is best and if I sincerely want abstinence and recovery; then, just like a small infant, I will allow my Higher Power to manage, feed and protect me today.

From *JUST FOR TODAY* Bookmark, No. 6

Early Bird Registration for 2023 Convention Ends July 7th!

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To submit original poems or articles based on your ESH for Steps, Traditions, or Recovery Before and After:
FAAatnewsletter@gmail.com

Food Addicts Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who are willing to recover from the disease of food addiction. Sharing our experience, strength, and hope with others allows us to recover from this disease One Day at a Time.

World Convention Reflection: Love is Enough

I bought my plane ticket to the world convention in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, in April when registration hadn't even opened yet for the September 8 weekend. In the last 2.5 years of FAA abstinence, I've discovered an enthusiasm and energy no amount of caffeine ever generated for me. When people fear losing energy by giving up caffeine, all I can say is, you have no idea of the energy in store for you. Just wait! The portion of energy God gives on a daily basis is in perfectly measured divine proportions.

The annual convention means the world to me. Last year, I helped on the planning committee. But right when registration opened at the hotel at 3 p.m., I got a text that my mother was dying. I fortified myself with hugs, prayed with an FAA member, asked my sponsor about switching from the convention dinner and MA to those I quickly prepared in my hotel room to take on the road and eat there, and off I went to spend the weekend saying goodbye to my mother. She died on Monday.

The entire weekend, I had the FAA world convention tucked inside my soul, and it gave me the courage to be there with my family every vital moment. On mom's last night, I knew it would be, so we pulled an all-nighter, our first ever in our lives, me at 56 and she at 91. We talked all night. She told me she "wasn't a good enough mother" to me. I knew a spiritual act of forgiveness was about to occur, but I didn't know how God was going to use me for it. Finally, the words came, because I prayed for them: "Mom, your love for me is perfect and that's what counts. I feel your perfect love for me." I could see as I said those words, her entire body sunk with relief



into the bed she was already laying in. And then I remembered a saying that has always been dear to me: "The right word at the right time is like precious gold set in silver." Her countenance changed and she seemed to accept for the first time that her love for me was sufficient.

So it is with God: God's love and grace is sufficient for me in all things. I would never need to turn to food as a substitute when God's love and grace is so abundant. Today I seek my portion.

See you in New Jersey this September 8-10!



**2023 FAA CONVENTION WILL
BE HELD SEPT 8-10, CHERRY
HILL, NEW JERSEY. MORE
INFO ON THE FAA WEBSITE:
www.faacanhelp.org**

When I was first in 12 step recovery, I did a fourth step recommended by my sponsor and wrote a life story. I was unsure what to

4th STEP

If it comes into your head put it down. I was 34 years old so that was a lot of history. I loved to write since I was an English major but there were many times the writing got very heavy. Sadness, shame, regret, anger would show up on the page. Sometimes I would have to stop and sit and cry. Sobbing uncontrollably sometimes. Those were the times I picked up the phone and called my sponsor. I couldn't wait until the fifth step to talk about some of these things. It was working. I was somehow being healed by the mere act of taking what was long ago in my mind and putting it down on a piece of paper. The therapy of writing, I discovered, was magic. Not computer but pencil to paper. Who knew? Each thing I unearthed didn't magically go away but it loosened its power over me. It somehow answered many things as to why I was who I was. It helped me see why I was so intent on numbing myself. I often feared I would miss something, but my sponsor assured me I can use the tenth step if things come up later and of course they did. It probably took me three months of almost daily writing to complete and an entire day to read it to my sponsor with many breaks of crying and discussion.

A miraculous shift happened at the end of the fifth Step. Like I almost didn't know myself anymore. I felt like I was on solid ground. The highs and lows of early recovery were now on a more even keel. But apparently, even though this was incredibly life changing, I learned I still had a long recovery to go. So much so that I can look at that thorough and healing fourth step as just a beginning. An important beginning of learning how to look at myself and using a sponsor, these meetings and higher power to grow from.

I then found another drug, food. It had always been there, but I realized I had now shifted addictions now that alcohol and drugs had been removed. I began the same pattern of numbing and not really working through things. It blocked my relationship with my higher power, and it got pretty rough. At 30 years sober I found FAA.

At the fourth step I assured my sponsor I had already done a very thorough fourth in AA so no need for any more of that. With her encouragement I did another one in this program. Yikes!! I was more screwed up than I thought. This one took me several months also and revealed a whole laundry list of defects and things that I was still doing that I didn't feel good about.

I guess it's pretty clear to anyone reading this, I'm pretty sold on 12 step work. Being able to look at how I used food to manage my emotions began to get clearer and clearer. During this time, I had to stay close as a tick on a hound dog for the love and support that was needed as I felt like a newcomer all over again. I was always encouraged to be gentle and kind to myself and little did I know that working the steps is just that. With God's help and a loving sponsor, I could safely discover the origins of those survival techniques that no longer created positive life experiences.



My Story

I HAD A VERY TRAUMATIC UPRISING. MOM REJECTED ME.

Dad traveled so I had no one to protect me. Mom put me in my room and latched the door. After a while the latch does not have to be engaged, a child just goes there. Mom never beat me or called me a bitch in front of dad. I had two lives.

Food was my mother. I can remember the sweetness of my bottle of milk which was laced with corn syrup. Sometimes I went hungry for a long time in the room. Sometimes I ate as much as I could before I went there. I would find my mom's stashes of pudding and lunch treats hidden around the house and would devour them. She was a sugar addict. I followed in her steps and despised myself for it. Once I ate her diet cubes as they reminded me of caramels. It made me sick. I hated and loved sugar like I did my mom. Food was the only mother I knew.

Around the age of 16 I began to babysit and so got out of the room. I used the money earned to get people to pick up booze from the bootleggers. I switched from sugar to alcohol. I had a beautiful body. I was naive and didn't know how to protect myself. I was crowned queen of the county. A few days later two boys had a bet of who would take the virginity of the queen. I was raped twice in one night by both of them. I was drinking. I blamed myself and told no one.

I developed anorexia. I hated my body. It betrayed me. I became a lifetime member of a diet program at 16. I was down to just over 100 pounds and felt disgustingly fat. I got involved with drugs. I went from advocating against them to now selling them. I did a few breaks and enters. I beat a girl up feeling the anger towards my mom. I was out of control. There was violence in my home.

Dad was filled with so much anger when he came home after being away all week working. He and mom fought constantly. I hated my mom for causing dad and me and our family so much hurt. I had a constant physical pain in my stomach as long as I can remember when I was a child. The only thing that numbed it was sugar, alcohol or drugs. I fantasized about dying.

When I left home at 18 and moved in with my boyfriend, I was still active in my eating disorder but quickly began gaining weight. I have been on a diet of some sort from the time I was 16. I am 58. Drugs and alcohol and music were my life. At age 22 when my boyfriend left me, I tried to take my life. I overdosed on drugs and slept for about three days. I was very upset to wake up.

My life changed. I began a study of inspirational material and gave up drugs. I have been drug free for 36 years. My weight though would go up and down depending on how long I could stay on the newest diet. I have literally lost and gained hundreds of pounds. I have put my body through so much. I gave up alcohol and have been free of it for 21 years. Food became my new addiction although I was determined to call it an eating disorder.

I have been fortunate to receive 15 years of psychotherapy and training by some of the most wonderful doctors. I worked hard over the years on the inside wounded little girl but my outside still suffered. Mom died; I forgave her. She was a victim too. My weight though just kept increasing. Work still needed to be done. If I lost 50 pounds, I regained 70 back.

I studied every book I could find on eating disorders in an attempt to stabilize my weight and have a normal relationship with food. I edited a book for a university and began writing my own. I attended an eating disorder/addiction private clinic for a year and was introduced to 12 steps. I lost 80 pounds. In hopes to work step 12, I volunteered with a counseling center and met with the head of the Eating Disorder Department. I was eager to help. I shared my new understanding of eating disorders and addiction. I was told I was brainwashed and there was no such thing as food addiction and that it was a behavioral problem.

Story continues on Page 5

My Story continued from page 4

I went into counseling with her. She was determined to teach me that I could manage eating sugar by modifying my behavior. She told me to eat a dessert; that I would just be fine. I did. I regained 80 pounds plus more in a very short period of time.

I went from doctor to doctor to find someone who believed in food addiction. I failed to listen to myself and the voice of my Higher Power. I wanted desperately for someone to tell me what I felt inside: I was addicted to sugar, and anything made with flour. All the while my weight just kept going up and down dramatically with whatever diet I did. I found other books written on the subject. I treasured them. Still there was a voice inside that kept saying it's just behavioral.

I got abstinent on my own many times. I tried so hard to do it on my own. I went to other food programs, but nothing lasted. I bought all the books. I would search the internet for something I could attend in Calgary, something that had everything I needed: an abstinent way to eat and the support I needed: to be with people who felt like I did.

I found FAA four and a half years ago on an internet search. I ordered the FAA newcomers book. I was deep into denial again when the package arrived in the mail. More books. They got added to other books I had, unread.

With desperation I finally arrived at FAA at my highest weight ever. My health was negatively impacted. My legs were swollen. I had become inactive. Lyme's disease and Fibromyalgia racked my body with pain. Sugar and junk fed my inflammation. Shopping for groceries had become a major event. I was frightened I would fall and seriously hurt myself. I have worried about choking on food. Ordering food in was a habit of mine. It was my dirty secret. I missed wearing my pretty 50's dresses. I stopped singing and writing. I am a bird that has been caged. I lost my voice, and I don't fly.

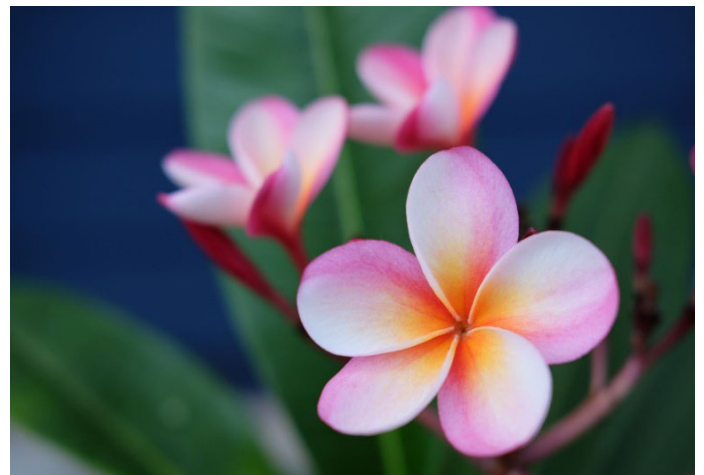
I searched the internet again and found the the FAA website and read it in its entirety. I was awestruck.

I made a commitment to myself. This is where I need to be.

I dug out my newcomer's book. I learned that I should go to six meetings and then make a decision. I knew on the first meeting I attended I made the right choice.

I wanted my 6th meeting to be a big one, so I attended the 2020 Convention and set the goal of 90 meetings in 90 days. With the doors of my heart swinging open, I listened with purpose to all the speakers. I was blessed with winning the entire CD set of the 2020 FAA Convention Program. Thank you, Higher Power. Thank you for being patient with me and putting up with my hard-headedness. I am abstinent now and on my 101st day of recovery (at time of writing) from food addiction not an eating disorder. The weight is coming off. I surrendered.

Sometimes I think I will really need to forgive myself for all that I did before I got here. Sometimes I am grateful it all happened in order to appreciate where I am now.



**Send your ESH (Experience/
Strength/Hope around making
amends for the next issue to
FAAatnewsletter@gmail.com**

ABSTINENT ANNIE IS NOT A PROFESSIONAL THERAPIST. SHE IS SIMPLY ANOTHER FOOD ADDICT WHO IS PASSIONATE ABOUT FAA AND HAS MANY YEARS OF ABSTINENCE, ONE DAY AT A TIME.

I'm newly abstinent and it is my turn to serve a meal at my yearly family reunion. Do you have any suggestions on what I can do to make sure my abstinence stays intact? Fretting Freda

Dear Fretting Freda,

Great question! Since you are newly abstinent, you may want to consider asking someone else in your family to take over for this year and take your turn later.

Being newly abstinent is a very vulnerable time and you don't want to add to your stress level. Many of us come from a "people pleasing" background and we're afraid to say "no," but guarding your abstinence is very important.

I would recommend that you bring your own meal and stay away from the "food extravaganza" that the rest of the family will be eating. Being present with your family and not totally fixated on the food is one of the gifts of abstinence.

If you find yourself tempted by the food, go for a walk, make an outreach call or leave early if you need to. Love yourself enough to do what you have to do to stay abstinent.



That being said, if you do feel strong enough to host the meal, I would suggest making only the food on our food plan. Let your family know in advance what you are serving, and to bring whatever they may want in addition to that. I no longer make traditional family favorites. I make a beautiful, nutritious, healthy meal that everyone enjoys.

Wishing you all the best,

Abstinent Annie

Connecting with others at the FAA convention

I have been continuously abstinent since August 3, 2020. I was abstinent for about a year back in 2000-2001. I communicated quite a bit on the Loop but didn't work the steps or have a sponsor at the time. I convinced myself that I could celebrate Halloween and then get back on the program the next day.

Twenty years later, I crawled back into the rooms, desperately wanting to feel that peace again in my mind, body, and soul. I was willing to do ANYTHING to get and stay abstinent again. I threw myself headlong into the program - got a sponsor, studied the Guide to Abstinence like it was a college course, went to meetings (virtually and by email), joined the closed social media group, contacted other food addicts and prayed each day to keep the serenity I had found again. I was unbelievably grateful that the FAA 12-step fellowship was still around, and it was even easier to attend all those meetings. After a month or so, I was invited to lead our FAA Loop email meeting for a week. I accepted because I believe that I should accept a reasonable request to serve in Food Addicts Anonymous. I am always glad to give back what was so freely offered to me.

After about 60-days, my sponsor suggested that I attend the FAA Convention because she said it would allow me to meet people from all over the world and feel more connected to the program. Boy was she right! I met so many people and I still communicate with many of them today. It was an immersive experience in knowledge, connection, and fun. I was 74 days abstinent at the beginning of the Convention and there were so many great speakers and classes to take. To be able to hear the experience, strength, and hope of so many FAA members was like water for this thirsty newcomer. I remember a wonderful course taught by a member of FAA, which showed us how to organize our food plan and how to keep track of what was in the fridge. She also had a simple food chart that people could request so that they can easily enter their food for the week.

Another wonderful course was taught about how to work the program if you have special

medical needs. What a wonderful topic to which many of us flocked.

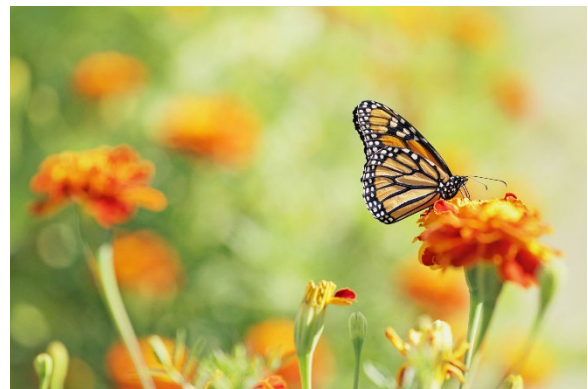
We also had free time online to just chat freely and make new friends. I added 13 people to my phone list during the convention. Many of them are becoming good friends.

Other highlights were getting to meet the Board members and their accomplishments. We have such dedicated members serving us in so many capacities and I learned new ways to be of service. Even though I was so new to the group, I was invited to assist with hosting one of the virtual meetings. I felt so honored that they would trust me to participate so quickly.

Additionally, there were drawings for prizes, digital recordings of all the speakers, and other goodies.

What took place over that convention weekend was that I suddenly felt "a part of" more than I had imagined I would in such a short time. It's like taking a crash course in all the good things about our program: togetherness (thank goodness I'm not alone anymore!); learning to eat a healthy food plan; being able to serve (which leaves me feeling such gratitude and builds my self-esteem); and learning how to take the steps toward a spiritual awakening. An awakening that will keep me from returning to sugar, flour, wheat, and other high-carbohydrate foods. I think of it as insurance against my next binge.

I hope learning about my experience leads you to attend the next convention. Perhaps we can then celebrate your success with you.



LET GOD BE IN CONTROL PRAYER

SOME DAYS THE BEST PRAYER WE CAN MUSTER IS,

“GOD, I BARELY TRUST THAT YOU CAN HANDLE THIS ANY BETTER THAN I CAN, BUT I KNOW THAT IF I HOLD ONTO IT, I WILL MESS IT UP. SO, I’M GIVING IT TO YOU”.

From Food for the Soul, page 62

