



THE ABSTINENT TIMES

Summer 2024

Statement of Purpose

The Abstinent Times (AT) is the quarterly newsletter of Food Addicts Anonymous, whose purpose is to serve as an exchange of ideas and information to support the FAA fellowship. The articles and features are submitted by FAA members, and are not statements of FAA policy. Publication does not imply approval or endorsement of content by the FAA Board. The content voices a variety of experiences regarding seeking and maintaining abstinence, while keeping to our primary purpose: to stay abstinent and to help other food addicts to achieve abstinence.

Table of Contents

- Pg. 1 & 3 Cover Story
- Pg. 2 Events & Newsworthy Items
- Pg. 4 Abstinent Annie
- Pg. 5 Recovery Before and After
- Pg. 6 Steps 4, 5 & 6 In the Process
- Pg. 7 Roadmap to Recovery
- Pg. 8 Our Stories



Cover Story

Hanging On The Edge: A Recovery Wake-up Call

I was hanging off the edge of a cliff. My once firm grasp of recovery from food addiction was slipping away after a miraculous 9 years of abstinence. This realization hit me hard when one day I was running late for lunch, and I was unprepared. I was outside a bakery, and I was struck with the thought that a sandwich might be ok for lunch this one time. Thankfully, I recognized my insanity, and I fled the scene and drove the 90 minutes home to a late, but abstinent lunch.

This was a wake-up call! I had never entertained the “just this once” idea since finding FAA 9 years ago. My years of experiences with relapse in another food program had brought me to my knees, and I knew if I had even a bite of addictive food that I would be caught up in the cycle of addiction again. There was the insanity! (Continued on pg. 3)

Events

The FAA Annual Convention

will be held on October 25th – 27th, 2024 at the Crystal Bay Hotel in St. Petersburg, FL. This year's theme is "Into the Light of Recovery." Check our website for more information and to volunteer to help.

FAA Ohio Intergroup

is sponsoring its annual one-day retreat on July 13, 2024. See the Events tab on the FAA website to register. The theme is "From Me to We."

Join us for three FAA holiday marathon telephone meetings

for this summer are on Father's Day, Fourth of July, and Labor Day. All are 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. Eastern Time USA. The annual schedule of marathons is always listed on the Events tab on our website. The marathon conference call line, handy to put into your cell phone, is (607) 374-1154, pin code 169062#. To sign up to lead a marathon meeting, text Mary Lou at (631) 662-9457.

New Meditation Book Under Construction:

Calling All Writers!
FAA is producing a new meditation book which needs entries for consideration. Just send an email to: FAAmeditations@gmail.com with your writing for consideration. Multiple entries are encouraged.

NEWSWORTHY ITEMS

Happy FAA Anniversary!

Ruby from CA – 1 Year
Karen from Utah – 1 Year
Jerry from Costa Rica – 1 Year
Jeanne from Ohio – 2 Years
Lorraine from Ontario, Canada – 3 Years
Mary E. from NY – 8 Years
Jackie from Ohio – 19 Years
Linda from FL – 26 Years

News from the Annual

2024 FAA California Spring Retreat

The retreat was held over Presidents' Day weekend, again at the Mary and Joseph Retreat Center near Los Angeles. The 12 attendees were carried by the flow of the theme "Willingness Is The Key." The setting was majestic and inspiring, the weather was perfect, the fellowship warm and genuine, and the food was perfect for us. We are already looking forward to having even more attendees next year to multiply the rewards we enjoyed this year.

Awe-Inspiring California Retreat Vista



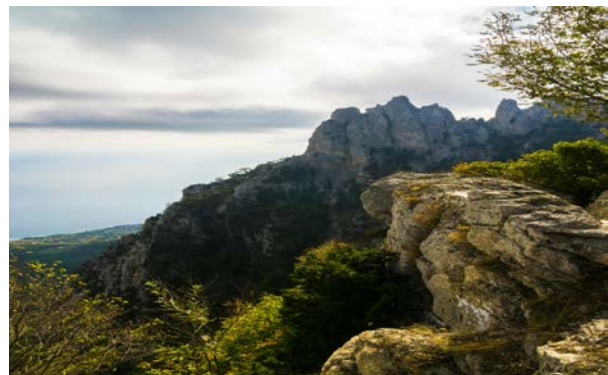
(Continued from pg. 1)

I use the analogy of hanging off the edge of a cliff because that is exactly how I felt at that moment. I had hit a point where I knew I couldn't get out of this position alone. I became aware that this thought of "just this once" did not actually appear from nowhere. I can see now that I had been sliding towards relapse for some time. My sponsor had left the program several years earlier, and I had not reached out for another. I thought that my program buddies were enough to keep me grounded. I thought I was consistent and safe enough with the food to not have to be accountable to anyone except myself. During the pandemic, I stopped committing to the meetings as I had in the past. I had begun to volumize, make less healthy food choices, eat bits of food as I was putting it on the plate, my prayer and meditation practice had waned, and my spiritual connection was weakened.

I had unknowingly edged closer to the cliff months before the bakery episode. The experience at the bakery terrified me. I went to a virtual meeting that day and I admitted the truth to them and to myself - that I was hanging on to my abstinence by my fingertips. The support I got from my fellows in that meeting was phenomenal. They spent a further two hours in the "parking lot" with me and were the sturdy hands that pulled me off the precipice and set me back on solid ground. A member asked me if there was anything they could do to help me and offered to take my food plan until I found a sponsor. I am eternally grateful for that member because I am still not entirely sure that I would have asked for specific help. I have learned that asking for help is not something that sits well with me and is something for me to continue to work on.

Taking the cliff analogy further, I needed the fellowship and its members to set me back on solid ground, but now it is my responsibility to take the steps back away from the edge. This wake-up call taught me that my recovery is not a passive process; it requires active participation. The steps back from the cliff edge consist of working with my new sponsor, following a food plan, committing my food, committing to meetings and a home group, reaching out to fellows, actively working the steps, getting involved in service, reading literature, daily prayer, reflection, and meditation and practicing these self-care actions so that I can be available to help others. These actions are the treatment plan for my disease of addiction, and I can remain well if I follow that plan. I have learned that my treatment plan is not just a guideline; it's a lifeline!

As a result of the bakery episode and the ensuing wake-up call, I have been reminded that abstinence is a daily choice. A choice that demands vigilance and active participation. It is not just about choosing the food and the quantities. It is about choosing the daily actions. I was surprised and humbled to learn that even after 22 years in food recovery programs I could still fall into the trap of treating recovery like a diet. I pray for the wisdom to remain vigilant and to stay true to this path of recovery once again.



Ask Abstinent Annie

Question: FAA doesn't say much about how to maintain weight once lost. Can you give me some guidance for the long haul?

--All In

Dear "All In,"

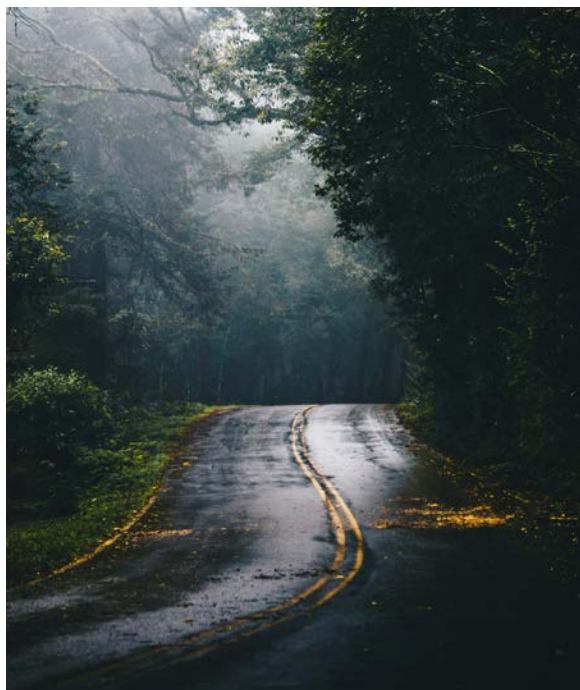
I like your choice of "guidance " and not "advice." There are a variety of theories about maintaining weight loss or gain for the long haul. In all cases, it's not a long haul, but one day at a time. In FAA, we do not speak in terms of a "maintenance" plan. Each person's body has a unique response to our new way of eating. The basic food plan will usually support achieving and maintaining a healthy weight. It takes time for your body and metabolism to adjust to becoming tuned in to the changes with your nutritional guidelines. Your health care provider can assist in determining an appropriate, healthy weight for you. When you believe that you have arrived at an appropriate weight, watch with your sponsor for a couple of months to see if your weight stabilizes or continues to change. Waiting a month or two to confirm if an adjustment is needed will not hazard your recovery or health over a short-term period of observation. Your sponsor can support you in identifying small adjustments to the food plan as needed to stabilize your weight at an appropriate point. Many people arrive at a healthy weight and stay there while continuing to follow the food plan. Some people keep losing weight to become underweight. A similar approach can apply to those who are underweight and either struggle to gain up to an



appropriate weight or are concerned about continued weight gain once achieving a healthy weight. In all cases, complete honesty with your sponsor about your daily food is key.

Wishing you peace and faith in your abstinent recovery,
Annie

Send your questions to "Ask Abstinent Annie" by emailing FAAatnewsletter@gmail.com
Abstinent Annie is simply another food addict who is passionate about FAA and has many years of abstinence and recovery.



Recovery Before and After

Before

I was 48 years old when I arrived in the rooms of FAA in 2004. I was thoroughly beaten down by this disease. I didn't know about food addiction. However, through my best efforts with scads of diet attempts and fails, I was over 400 pounds and knew that I was not normal around food. I felt hopeless and jinxed; that I was doomed to live a life of barely getting by. I didn't share this with anyone. I was afraid of being abandoned or judged if I complained or was honest and vulnerable. So, I wore a mask and was the helpful daughter, friend, and employee.



After

I will always be grateful to a close friend who suggested FAA. I went to my first face-to-face meeting and had a very powerful spiritual experience. As I was reading the 12 steps for the first time, I heard the voice of my Higher Power speaking to me. My HP said, "I have heard all your prayers, and now I can respond because you are in the right place, and we are going to do this together."

Getting an endorsement from my HP was huge. I would remember that message when I felt overwhelmed or felt like running away rather than sticking and staying. Gradually, I started the food plan, got an amazing sponsor, got involved in service, started the step work, expanded my support network, and went to conventions and retreats. The food fog lifted. I started to feel good about myself and more self-aware rather than dissociated. I am almost 20 years in and treasure my abstinence. I am happier and healthier than I ever dreamed possible. My investment has yielded huge rewards for which I am profoundly grateful. As the old timers say, "Stick around for the miracles!"

To submit your Recovery Before and After story like this one, or share your experience, strength and hope with the Steps, Traditions or Tools of recovery, please email FAAatnewsletter@gmail.com The deadline for the fall issue is July 1.





Steps 4, 5 & 6 In the Process

Step 4

Along with the questions in the FAA step workbook, equally important to me was the inner material I uncovered by taking regular Quiet Time with the God of my understanding in prayer and seeking Truth. This shed light on the less visible aspects of my nature and freed my newfound intuition as a result of finer and keener senses by not having active food addiction run my mind. I asked my God what needed to be revealed and what needed to be released. And I wrote.

Step 5

Reading Step 5 in the FAA material helped me see that it was important to pray for the person to ask to receive my Fifth Step. My God had definite designs on who and also let me know it wouldn't be just one Step 5, but again in the future. I didn't have to get everything in the first time. I did not know that the things I wrote about in Step 4 were keeping hold of me until I voiced them aloud in Step 5. Writing is much different

than sharing it with another person as my witness before God. I felt I could look the world in the eye and my own eyes in the mirror.

Step 6

My sponsor didn't let me sit still after Step 5. We pressed on immediately to discover what it meant to be ready to have character defects removed and just who was in charge of doing the removal – God. I saw that FEAR was the primary culprit generating all the other defects -- they could all be traced back to this underlying one. This made it simpler when I realized I could stop pulling weeds and imagine God pulling up the root – FEAR. I was ready for FAITH.

Each quarterly issue of The Abstinent Times focuses on three steps. The fall issue will feature Steps 7, 8 and 9. If you would like to send in your experience, do so in three step descriptions like the example. It can be longer. Email to FAAatnewsletter@gmail.com by July 1.



Roadmap To Recovery

If you are a food addict who requires a roadmap for recovery, this roadmap is laid out in the FAA program. Journey with me as I take you through our FAA Green Book outlining this map. Beginning with the Table of Contents, let's look at the items in bold. It starts with defining the problem (what is food addiction, a letter to all of us, defining it as chronic, progressive and fatal). Are you searching for a solution – what happens in the beginning and are you willing to go to any lengths? If so, prepare to accept the prescription. It starts with "getting a sponsor". Then you must "make abstinence a priority." And then learn to live – one step at a time.

Now, let's look at the process of recovery. Embrace an acceptance of defeat. Are you done fighting, including fighting with yourself? Hear the hope. Your fellow food addicts on the journey offer this hope. Listen to them. Practice a little faith. Recognize "we are perfect in our imperfection." This allows us to make a mistake and continue to recover. Be honest about your challenges. Engage some humility. Open your mind and become reachable and teachable. Add a dose of sincerity. Be sincere about your efforts. Have moments of reflection should you fall short. Do not become discouraged. Reach out to others. Exhibit courage. Ask for help. Accept the love from your fellow food addicts who understand the challenge, who have the disease, and who have walked the path. Commit once again to perseverance. Do so with much vigilance. Go for the Serenity ...that place of inner peace. Remember – it all starts with action. Walk along this road with us. Become one of the miracles. As it states in our forward,



"We had to work for it and you must too."
Step onto this path and journey with us on the road to abstinence and recovery.

– Excerpt from the Tuesday 10 a.m.
Eastern Time FAA Phone Meeting format.



OUR STORIES

Who Is A Food Addict?

From the photos of myself as a child, I started to lose control of my life at about age 7 or 8. I was told I was "Chubby." I was made fun of by others in my school. Even into my teens. I could never wear the same styles of clothing that other people could. Back in the 50's and 60's I was restricted to "Husky" sizes. So I never felt that I fit in with the others in my life. Family included. For the next 60 years it was a rollercoaster ride of ups and downs. Mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually. The trouble was that the amusement park was open 24/7, and even though the rides were free, they cost me dearly. And I tried EVERY RIDE. Nothing worked to satisfy that inner craving for acceptance. I was always trying to be "NORMAL" like other people. My two older brothers did not seem to have weight problems. Today, however, they do struggle with various food issues. My mother and I were always on some kind of diet. I started to address the problem at about 12 years of age. Cottage Cheese, boiled eggs, crackers, etc. The list was endless. There were brief periods of success, always followed by still less control, failure, relapse and weight gain. Thinking that the next one would save me, I was really losing my life. I have survived two bouts of cancer. By the grace of God I am 13 years cancer free. So I thought ONE ADVANTAGE of this disease would finally be weight loss! What a laugh, and insane way of thinking. I did not lose weight. But I did lose my hair. I even had the good fortune of gaining weight! LOL! Now comes January 2016. I hit bottom. Nowhere to run – nowhere to hide. I did the unthinkable. I actually ate cake out

of my kitchen garbage pail. I was SHOCKED with myself, and scared. I didn't know what to do. This was no coincidence that in that same month, my wife told me about a program she had started to attend: FAA! I listened and said to myself: "Great! Just what I need! Another diet." I was to be proven wrong. January 26, 2016, I attended my first phone meeting. By the grace of God and the love of my Savior and Lord, I was rescued from a life of hopelessness and transported into a life better than I have ever known. I still do have rough days. And that is okay. I used to have rough decades. Because of God, the 12 steps and the fellowship, I have a Design for Living that works even in the roughest time. To show my gratitude I try to pass this on to others. I do it for four reasons: 1) Sense of duty, 2) It is a pleasure, 3) Because in doing so I am paying my debt to the man (woman) who took time to pass it on to me, and 4) Because every time I do, I take out a little more insurance for myself against a possible slip. No matter what happens today or any day, this is true: "My Heavenly Father will never let me down." I remind myself daily with great joy: "I'm not what I want to be. But thank God I'm not what I used to be! Thank you God, my wife, the 12 steps, and the fellowship."

