



THE ABSTINENT TIMES

Winter 2025

Statement of Purpose

The Abstinent Times (AT) is the quarterly newsletter of Food Addicts Anonymous (FAA) 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 by the FAA Board. The content voices a variety of abstinent experiences, while keeping to our primary purpose: to stay abstinent and to help other food addicts achieve abstinence. All submissions are published with complete anonymity. To share your message with AT, please email us at: FAAatnewsletter@gmail.com

Table of Contents

- Pg. 1 & 3 Cover Story
- Pg. 2 Events & Newsworthy Items
- Pg. 4 Ask Abstinent Annie
- Pg. 5 Conventions are Miracles
- Pg. 6 Steps 10, 11, & 12 In the Process
- Pg. 7 My Take: Sponsorship Workshop
- Pg. 8 Our Stories



Cover Story

Freedom to feel our Higher Power

My letter from God -
My precious child, I am so happy that you have finally heard me. I have been there all the times you were alone. When you heard the wind, I was there. When you saw the sunrise and sunset, I was there. When you heard the ocean roar, I was there.

Remember that child that was crying that you picked up and held - that was me, I was there. When you listened to the friend that was hurting and you helped - that was me, I was there. How about the time you got those beautiful roses, and they smelled so good, and you couldn't take enough in and I just wanted you to remember that - that was me, I was there.

When you asked for help from these addictions and you found the program - that was me, I was there. When those people said, keep coming back, we love you and you couldn't take it in, that was me, I was there. Remember the sponsors with their love and acceptance and you couldn't take that in - that was me, I was there.

(Continued on pg. 3)

Events

Convention Committee Meeting Notes

The Committee met on Dec 15th. We are actively researching locations and dates for the 2025 Convention. Keep your calendar open in late September through October if you would like to attend! More information to come!

Holiday Phone Marathons

Dec 25th and Jan 1st

8 am – 11 pm

Join the phone marathons at:
607.374.1154 Pin: 169062#

Potluck - Hybrid Phone Meeting

Saturday, Jan 18th beginning at 11 am. The event is brought to us by FAA of Cleveland Ohio and will feature speaker Gloria P. (an FAA original member).

Signup via Sign Up Genius:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0A4BAAA923ABFFC34-53368344-faacleveland#/>

Ground-level opportunity for reports for this Newsletter

Set your own hours - Be your own boss - Lots of perks - Join a winning team - Expand your support network – We request that submissions focus on recovery

If interested email:

FAAatnewsletter@gmail.com

NEWSWORTHY ITEMS Happy FAA Anniversary!

Julie from WA – 2 Years

Paula from NC – 3 Years

Pamela from CA – 4 Years

News from the VIG Sponsorship Workshop November 23rd, 2024

The workshop was held virtually on Nov 23rd with many recovering food addicts in attendance. The co-hosts for the workshop were insightful and took the group through some soul-searching Q&A that resulted in open and candid communication. Many connections were made with honesty taking the spotlight.

See Pg. 7 for more details!



(Continued from pg. 1)

Those first steps - step one about admitting when you thought you could never do this. You asked for help, and I was there. When you came to me for help with your insanity, your insane thinking, and I told you I would help you with all things in step two - I was there. I was so excited in step three when you told me I could have all of you and that I was in charge - I embraced you - did you feel it? The hugs from your fellow addicts - that was me, I was there.

I asked you to inventory - I was there before, with you through all of it - through the fear and through the pain. I told you I would help clear the way from the past. How about the person you shared all that stuff with in step five - it was me - remember we cried, and we laughed, and I told you how much I loved you - could you feel me? Could you? I remember how foreign it felt those first hugs, but you could open up in my partnership in this fellowship with me.

Did you feel me in step six when I said we would find your defects (and boy did I) - the hidden places of your soul - the places where you weren't like me. How about in step seven, when I took all the things that stood in your way to feel the freedom of recovery. In step seven, I took away the cravings for the food that weren't in your best interest. I knew they would hurt you - remember how good that felt - that was me, I was there.

Did you think you remembered all those people, places, and things that you resented - I wanted you to have some peace in your soul - the freedom from the bondage - you thought you remembered it - no, I was there. Remember how it felt to sit face-to-face with the people you hurt. You told them you were sorry - that was when I held you, and I felt your surrender. You know those people - your husband, your children, your friends.

I loved being there for you.

The freedom you have in step ten - you approached me promptly and told me you were wrong. I knew you would do this - I wanted you to.

I wanted you to feel me, my love, my forgiveness, and your immediate freedom so you no longer had to stay in bondage. Step ten keeps you out of relapse. You go over that inventory and see where you've been with the food that day and see where you've been with those character defects. It'll free you, and then you can share it with your sponsor and that's another form of step five.

And then we came to step eleven, I was so excited you talked to me in prayer and sometimes you praised me and thanked me for all that I gave you. And the best part for me was when you listened. That is when I can feel you and you can experience my genuine love for you. I have always loved you - before until now, from yesterday, and then to tomorrow.

So, you see my precious child, you are free, and you can feel the gifts of these steps. You can feel me always. I am there always so - and now this is step twelve - go and share this freedom with others, because you are free.

Thank you,

God



Ask Abstinent Annie

Question: I was abstinent in FAA for four years, before I left to do more “research” with the food. After 2 years of relapse misery, I came back, got a sponsor and have been abstinent for 3 years now. I have heard that not only is relapse progressive, but recovery is also progressive. That has certainly been true for me. Why then does my sponsor say my length of abstinence is only 3 years, and not 7 years?

-Confused

Dear Confused,

Your question might seem to be a logical one, except for one or two considerations. First, the recovery achieved through 7 continuous years of abstinence (and working the steps with a sponsor) is likely more developed and matured than someone 3 years returned from a substantial relapse. Second, it can help to consider that relapse is typically the result of having some weakness in the foundation we built, on which recovery was resting – thoroughly and honestly working the steps with a sponsor and maintaining truly clean abstinence. Overcoming a relapse requires identifying the circumstances that led to that faulty foundation, and working to rebuild that foundation, stronger than before. It takes rebuilding and reinforcing that foundation and re-tracing our path from the beginning up to where we relapsed, before we can resume our recovery from that point forward.



Yes, this can be a very humbling experience, but humility IS the key to total acceptance that we are powerless over food addiction and that we need our FAA fellowship “guardrails” to help us stay on the road. It is continuous abstinence that supports recovery, not the sum of many smaller periods. Recovery is a journey – not a destination. And, in the end, we each only have the one day of today’s abstinence to build on the previous days’ of abstinence to support us. And remember, we have not lost UNTIL we give up,

So – keep on keeping on, One Day at a Time.

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.

Conventions are Miracles

I attended the 2024 FAA World Convention, Oct. 25-27, 2024. It was my very first in-person attendance at an FAA event. I attended the Virtual Convention back in 2020 and I so enjoyed it. I made lots of new friends in the fellowship, got phone numbers and email addresses, and we laughed together online. But this in-person convention was an entirely new level of connection for this member of Food Addicts Anonymous.

The 2020 Virtual Convention took my program and my connection to the members, the food plan, and service commitments to a new high for me. I was becoming happier, healthier, and more spiritually connected than in the other 12-Step program I attended. This program of FAA was the only one that helped me put down the dangerously addictive ingredients that activate my disease of MORE.

So, when I heard that the 2024 Annual Convention of FAA would be held in St. Petersburg, FL, I knew it was a gift from my Higher Power. My ex-husband and I used to live in that area, and he died this past Spring. I had been planning to go from my home to St. Petersburg, FL, to sprinkle his cremated remains in the Gulf of Mexico in a touching ceremony on a boat. Since finances are a consideration, I saw that I could multi-task by attending my first in-person convention of FAA on the same trip. If that isn't a sign from my Higher Power, I don't know what is! So, I bought my plane ticket and arrived a couple of days before the convention started. I was able to experience a beautiful ash-scattering ceremony for my ex-husband. We had reconnected as dear friends since our divorce, thanks to the healing power of the 12-Steps. I was crushed when he died... but I didn't have to "eat over it".

With my FAA program in full swing, I was able to lean on my friends in recovery.

By planning to be at the convention after the ceremony for my ex, I set myself up to be immersed in FAA fellows and the love that they always show me. I was overwhelmed with the outpouring of love, laughter, sharing of stories and even some shared grief experiences that helped me heal my tears by helping others let go of theirs.

We experienced entertainment, inspiring speakers to open and close the convention, workshops about boundaries, trusting the process of FAA to guide us, finding joy in how we perceive our body images, tapping into our inner light and power, and building a life around recovery. That was all in one day! We also had an incredible opportunity to sit and hear from a panel of members with long-term abstinence and how they recovered. What a smorgasbord for the mind, body, and spirit. Saturday evening included an Abstinence Countdown, a fashion show, many raffles, and a dance party to close out the night.

In between all of these events, we were fed wonderful meals by the hotel that we could serve ourselves. Scales and measuring cups were provided so we could weigh and measure our food as suggested. We bonded over eating in a healthy way, sharing our experience, strength, and hope, and feeling the joy of new friendships. Some of us got to meet people and hug them for the first time in three years of knowing them! As before, after the 2020 virtual convention, I was so inspired, on fire, and ready to take my program to a whole new level. I know that I am responsible for continuing to do the things I have done since I returned to FAA and got abstinent again in 2020. I have sponsees that I want to share that fire with. The purpose of getting abstinent is not only to save my own life but to carry the message of hope and healing to the next suffering food addict.

Steps 10, 11, & 12 In the Process

Step 10

Personal inventory can be uncomfortable. It makes us look at ourselves and if we're being honest, it can be painful, especially when our shortcomings reappear after we've already done steps 4 – 9 and feel forever free from the guilt of our past actions. In reality, many "misbehaviors" may become better managed, but are never totally extinguished. As they are vital to guiding us gently through step 4, sponsors are equally important in walking with us daily through the surprise and frustration of current reappearances of character defects and promptly making amends.

Step 10 is a daily reminder that we can avoid the crushing weight of guilt for being wrong and not taking action to make amends. It lets us see when we err and promptly admit it in the moment, thus enjoying freedom from accumulating the guilt of more and more missteps. The more we recognize our behaviors, the better we can become in recognizing, managing and avoiding the occurrence of those less desirable thoughts and behaviors. Step 10 is our insurance policy for maintaining and growing our recovery.

Step 11

Prayer and meditation allow me time to connect with the positive energy that I may desperately need. Conscious contact with my higher power has taken a long time to figure out. At first, to be still and ask only for God's will to manifest in my life, felt like I was wasting time. When I realized that it was God's plan for me to be still and connect, I understood I wasn't wasting time at all. I've learned that my sponsor's response to my meditation's results is often God's way of affirming or expanding on those insights.

Step 12

Spiritual awakening! Finally! So much time and effort has gone into my recovery at this point, that I am transformed completely from who I once was. I read back through my journaling and step workbooks and see how it all began. I go to meetings and hear those who have a few days and may be struggling, and I carry the message of my story to them so they may see how the steps work. I practice the principles the 12 steps have taught me at all times, remembering to put those principles before personalities and take every day one moment at a time.

Each quarterly issue of The Abstinent Times focuses on three steps. The Spring issue will feature Steps 1, 2, and 3. If you would like to send in your experience, please do so in three-step descriptions like the example. It can be longer.

Email: FAAatnewsletter@gmail.com
Deadline for submission is Feb 1st.



My Take: Sponsorship Workshop

I attended the recent sponsorship workshop and I was so happy to be there! I appreciate the workshop committee and the presenters for their time and information. The two presenters are amazing servants and supporters of FAA. They did a great job!

I am new to being a sponsor. I have worked with a sponsor before, but I have only begun to serve as a sponsor. Being a sponsor is work and it requires sacrificing my time and energy, but it is worth it. As someone in the training said, I learn as much from sponsees and their experiences as they will ever learn from me.

The best wisdom that I gleaned from the workshop today is that it is important to be honest. I need to be honest *with* my sponsor and be honest *as* a sponsor. As one of my favorite friends says, "I need to build integrity with myself." Integrity means integrity with my food, integrity with my step work, and integrity with my program. Integrity requires honesty!

We talked about challenges in getting a sponsor, problems in working with sponsors, and concerns surrounding serving as a sponsor. We talked about the qualities each of us wants in a sponsor. We read the guidelines published in our literature about how to be a sponsor. Did you know our literature details everything we need to do to serve as a sponsor? If you are waiting to be perfect, to be some wise oracle of wisdom to serve as a sponsor, you will die waiting. Worse yet, other food addicts whom you could have helped, may die in the disease because you weren't there to help them when they needed it.

Get abstinent, and then get a service commitment! Sponsorship is perhaps the highest service we can give.

Additionally, it was highlighted for me, that abstinence is the beginning of our recovery, but it's not recovery itself. We talk a lot about abstinence in FAA and rightly so. We must get abstinent for the recovery to begin. Abstinence is like plowing the field to get ready for planting, but recovery is the ultimate goal, the crop if you will. Recovery comes from working the steps. Step work is the actual planting. To work the steps, I need a sponsor. Step work is where recovery happens. Recovery is the harvest. We should be fostering ourselves and our sponsees to become sponsors. Without sponsors and service in general, we do not have a fellowship. We've got to do better.

What is my takeaway? Get abstinent. Stay abstinent. Work the steps. Nurture and protect your recovery and get busy.

After all, if I want to keep it, I must give it away.



OUR STORIES

Just For Today

For a long time, I did not understand that saying about 'one day at a time'. Now, I can see that when it's hard, I can say that I only need to do this today. I don't need to think about tomorrow or even about later today. I just need to stay on my plan, right now and the next few minutes.

It helped me a lot when one of the hosts of a Zoom meeting would keep saying, after asking if anyone was celebrating 30, 60, 90 days. etc. and then asking if anyone wanted to share their day count, that he had x days of abstinence, but really, he only had Wednesday (or whatever day it happened to be).

That made it tangible for me that no matter how many days I have been abstinent already, that's no guarantee for the future, even the near future, and no matter how many days I may still have ahead of me, I still only have to be abstinent here, now.

It's a good topic for me because I ate extra food today. I don't want to admit it, but I had better be open about it. Not SFW, but too much food.



I can see that I was very tired and had an emotional undertone of despair and sadness. And maybe under the weather from some virus. All of it is *not* an excuse for eating off plan. But circumstances that may / might make it harder for me to stay on plan.

The voice of addiction whispers that since I already gave in, I might as well continue overeating for a while... distract myself from the struggles of life.... but I don't want to. It's not helping me.

Reading other people's stories of experience, strength, and hope helps me to see that indeed, I need to do this 'just for today'.

