

Winter 2023



THE ABSTINENT TIMES

Food Addicts Anonymous

www.faacanhelp.org

World Service Office
529 N W Prima Vista Blvd. #301A
Port St. Lucie, FL 34983
Email: faawso@faacanhelp.org
(772) 878-9657

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

No abstinence requirement to join an FAA Board Committee.

Step 11, Page 2

Ask Abstinent Annie, Page 3

I'm Always Going to be a Food Addict, Pages 4 & 5

Convention Experiences, Pages 6-10

My Before and After Recovery, Page 11

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.

Step 11: An Attitude of Gratitude

A Day in Gratitude

I'm grateful for the alarm app on my phone that uses gentle vibration to awaken me. Waking up, I am grateful to be alive.

I ask my Higher Power for guidance, willingness and abstinence for today. I am grateful to have a HP.

As I rise, I am grateful for the comforts of my old nubby robe, and my knee-high mukluk slippers.

As I leave the bedroom, I am grateful for the reassuring sounds of life, the soft snoring of my husband and dog. Thank you, God, for my kind and loving husband, and our dog.

As I pass through the family room, my son is sitting in front of the computer. Thank you, God, for reminding me to say, "good morning" instead of saying "were you up all night?" Thank you for our son and my family.

As I open the door to the patio, the refreshing sharp coolness of autumn in Northern Wisconsin wakens me further. Thank you, God, for the gift of living in an area of the country with four distinct seasons.

Returning to the kitchen, I start the water boiling in an electric kettle with an automatic stopping feature. I am grateful for the willingness and grace to make this adjustment, because of the numerous glass pots I left to boil dry on the gas range.

Then I put on my best friend's warm goose down coat she gave me when she moved to Florida. I am grateful for the gift of friendship. I put the coat on over my robe. Thank you, God for the privacy in my back yard.

I go outside with hot tea and sit on the old, weathered wood chairs. Thank you, God, for a home to live in and a place to raise a family for the last 24 years.

As I sit, the grey sky slowly turns to a rose-salmon color of the coming sunrise. Thank you, God, for my eyes and the colors I see.

I become aware of the morning sounds. First the honking geese that fly above me in perfect formation, then the squirrel chatter, some birdsong (not so much in the fall), the bells from the abbey church, and finally the familiar drone of cars and trucks on the distant streets. Thank you, God, for my ears, my ability to hear, help me hear you today.

Going back inside for my phone, I will connect with other food addicts on the meeting this morning. Thank you, God, for this family, which loves and supports me. Thank you, God, for the gift of abstinence today. I am grateful.



Dear Abstinent Annie, I'm spending so much time cooking now that I'm abstinent. I've heard people talking about batch cooking, but I'm not sure where to start. Confused Cora

Dear Confused Cora, I have found that batch cooking is *the* best way to get me out of the kitchen.

With batch cooking one always has ready (weighed and measured) food when mealtime comes.

For batch cooking protein, I usually broil and season 2-4 days' worth of chicken pieces. After it cools, I weigh and measure meal sized portions, with my scale, and put the weighed portions into separate or wrap and refrigerate or freeze. When needed for a meal, just thaw or microwave and presto-its ready to serve!

My favorite way to batch cook grains is in a rice cooker. A wide variety of grains can be found in the bulk section of the supermarket and big bags are sold at a bargain price at the big box stores. To learn how to cook different grains, follow the directions on the package or from a good, basic cookbook. Again, I cook 2-4 days' worth, let cool, measure 1 cup portions, and put into containers or zip bags. When needed, just heat and serve.

Starchy vegetables, such as sweet potatoes can also be pre-cooked and frozen for later use. For regular cooked vegetables, I cook 2-4 days' worth and refrigerate.

Cold steamed carrots, Brussel sprouts, or cauliflower are perfect to add as a cooked vegetable in a lunch salad.

I usually make simple salads each day for dinner. But to batch prepare a salad, just make 2-4 days' worth and put in a crisper container in the refrigerator. Then measure out one cup of raw salad and one cup of cooked vegetables for your lunch or dinner meal (re-heat the vegetables only if needed for dinner).

Fruit is best prepared daily, but larger melons can be cut up and berries can be put into weighed and measured portions for breakfast and metabolic adjustment meals. Batch cooking can be enjoyable and less of a chore and you will always have something ready to go at a moment's notice.

Abstinent Annie
A grateful recovering food addict



Abstinent Annie is simply another food addict who is passionate about FAA and has many years of abstinence, One Day at a time.

'I'm always going to be a food addict.'

And FAA helps me to treat my disease and keep it in remission. I am no longer in the grip of the obsession to eat addictive foods, much like AA helped me get sober and stay that way.

I have had two relapses in FAA. What I learned is that I cannot just "take a break" and count on getting back into abstinence. I must work this program DAILY and remember that I am here in this seat only through the grace of my Higher Powers.

In my first attempt at FAA, in 2000, I only got the Green Book of FAA. It contains the core of FAA's principles which are found in the Steps & Traditions, plus the stories of many members of FAA and how they got abstinent and how they stay in the program. In the back of the book are our 12 Traditions, Questions & Answers, Food Plan, and the Tools of the Program. It's a magic book to me. I can open it to any page and be inspired or reminded that I am food addict AND there IS a solution.

From the age of 6, food was my solution to life in general and how to cope with its ups and downs. At age 13, alcohol and cigarettes stepped in to give me an even more intense solution. Food was still there, though. I was a "hungry" drinker. After getting a good drunk on, I'd have to binge on various salty, fatty, processed foods. Then those same foods the next morning to cure the hangover.

At the time, I felt like I had to have all those addictions to deal with the various crises in my life and my high school years were already rough and about to get even worse.

I attended four separate schools from grade 7 through 12, along with three moves from NH to SC to VA and back to NH.

My parents split, I was sexually assaulted at a couple of different parties, and then beat up during my 9th to 10th grade and then some.

Drinking caused me to get myself into extremely dangerous situations. As the trauma built, alcoholism, food addiction, and cigarette use increased. I was already an alcoholic and addict because it was in my family - genetically and culturally - but the various events compounded the need to block out memories, depression, and shame.

It's a complex disease in which I required higher amounts of all those substances to "work" like they used to.

Continued on Page 5



Submit "Your Story" to

The Abstinent Times

FAAatnewsletter@gmail.com

I'm Always Going to be a Food Addict, Cont. from P. 4

I was also using over-the-counter diet drugs, laxatives, and illegal drugs to try to control my weight. I heard about how to purge and did that occasionally after a bad binge. I knew that I had to stay physically attractive to manipulate certain people to get what I needed.

These are the memories that built up the feelings I had to forget and repress quickly when they surfaced. I tell you this in case anyone else can relate to my story and maybe they can also find the solution.

I was led to FAA. My sobriety in AA helped me so much and I quit cigarettes in 1998, prior to AA (thank goodness). But there is a heavy focus on addictive foods in AA in order to quell the cravings for alcohol. I am glad that I had that crutch at the time. I'm not sure I could have gotten sober AND abstinent at the same time.

At 15 years of sobriety, I returned to FAA, because the pain of using food as my solution grew so large that I couldn't live with sugar, flour, and wheat, and I couldn't live without it. I knew that FAA had worked for a year, despite my years long relapse.

I hadn't done anything at that time other than read the Green Book and attend the Loop and follow the food plan. It was a meal plan for me that worked, but I didn't deal with the feelings and shame through the Steps.

So, this time I dove in headfirst and committed to myself that I would work the program in its entirety. And, despite my relapse in Dec. 2022, it has helped me clear my head, heart, and soul, right-size my body, and bring me to a place of health and moments of joy.

This program has done for me what I could not do for myself.

The missing element to my full recovery was the addictive foods. I had to remove those as a coping option. I had to remove SFW so that I could hear the guidance of my HP.

I had to make human connections and allow them "in" so that I am known, loved, and supported by you all. Well, maybe not loved by all... I'm human and so are you....

Food, alcohol, cigarettes and self-harm are no longer an option because I have done the work to heal inside and out. My Higher Powers give me strength and guidance and love to do that.

My friends, sponsor and sponsees inspire and uplift me. Doing service in the program keeps me humble and reminds me that I am one of many and my purpose is to stay abstinent and help other food addicts. I do this one day at a time, to the best of my ability.



Synergize (combine to produce an effect greater than the sum of their separate effects) & **Revitalize** (restore or give new life)
Experience the Magic of Togetherness

The 31st Annual FAA World Convention and Board Meeting (Sept 8-10, 2023) held true to these words. I felt compelled to share with you my marvelous, grounding and spiritual experience at the convention held in Cherry Hill, NJ.

I was able to complete my workday early enough to pack up my trusty Subaru in hopes to make it there by dinner. I knew I would be missing the Board meeting and possibly the ice breaker but as I filled my car with gas, I became excited with the anticipation of seeing in person the lovely folks that I have been sharing with on the phone and virtual meetings.

Well Mother Nature soon brought my spirits down a few notches as I ran into dark grey clouds, torrential rain, thunderclaps and major lightning bolts. It seemed this storm followed me most of the way to the hotel. A few minutes before arriving in Cherry Hill there were glimmers of sunshine and knew my HP was guiding the way.

I walked into the hotel and was instantly met by two lovely FAA greeters who swiftly helped me park the car, carry in my bags and direct me towards registration. I was promptly registered and was given a name badge and a beautifully packed tote bag filled with everything I would need to stay on track at the convention. Some amazing convention volunteers stuffed these tote bags with a notebook, a pen, program schedule, a handmade bookmark and worry worm and a beautifully crafted wooden cutting board embossed with the FAA logo.

I quickly put everything in my room, freshened up and caught the tail end of the Ice Breaker followed by a scrumptious abstinent

dinner. I let go and let God knowing, I was home.

After lots of hugs, folks began to gather in the Conference room for a FAA Face to Face meeting! It had been a long time for me. As each person introduced themselves, I was finally able to put a face to a name, and a voice to a live-in-the-flesh food addict. (Bliss). I'm sure I fell deep asleep the second my head hit the pillow that night.



Saturday began with meditation or F2F. I chose to sleep in and get to breakfast on time. Again, the food served graciously by the hotel staff was carefully weighed, measured and plated by each person.

There were two workshop offerings. I chose Balance and Boundaries, three-legged stool-physical, emotional and spiritual recovery. The speakers shared from their hearts words of healing and encouragement. At times I felt as if HP was speaking directly to me through the speakers.

After a break I was blessed to listen to speakers sharing about Spirituality and Recovery. My HP led me to FAA when I was so totally spiritually bankrupt that every minute of recovery from sugar, flour & wheat seems like a miracle. I feel like I was given the gift of sight and clarity in those first few months. For me the message was clear: develop a belief in a Higher Power, anything as long as it wasn't me. Initially my HP was nature, the blue skies, the green trees, the purple color that only HP could infuse into nature.

The long-timers panel was amazing. They covered questions from 'cupping your veggies vs weighing' to guidelines on sponsorship and accepting changes in body metabolism.

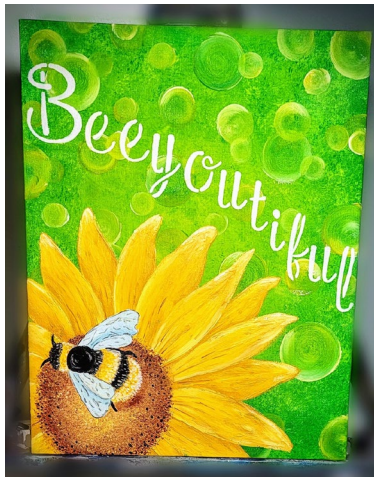
Continued on Page 7

My Convention Experience, Continued from Page 6

The long-timers answered each question presented to them with humility and grace. Their tender loving smiles of wisdom felt like a hug to me. The questions were sorted out and delivered carefully and, in my opinion, quite thoroughly. The main message I took from this was "Surrender, Just Surrender."

The afternoon was filled with several awesome options. Art and writing activities and a workshop on relapse prevention. I was blessed to be a part of the art activity. Who knew I could paint a sunflower with a bumble bee in the center? The leader of the art workshop generously gave of her time (and her supplies), making certain we had just the right color paint on our palette when needed. Initially I felt my bumble bee didn't look anything like a bee and as for the background bubbles I felt I had surely failed. But as promised, now I love my painting and it hangs in my kitchen as a gentle reminder to not judge myself so harshly, stand back, give it some time and embrace my oneness.

The fashion boutique (sale of used clothing) set the stage for an amazing fashion show. Even a few employees of the hotel joined in. This was true synergy - smiling faces, excellent energy beamed throughout the room as these donated gently used clothes were revitalized and modeled with the grace and splendor of Paris Fashion Week!



I took away a notebook filled with gems of wisdom with me. I'm not sure of the exact way it was worded but when a speaker said, 'take the sticker off your forehead that says I want you to like me and paste it on your mirror' my heart melted, making it impossible to hold back the tears.

I made a promise to myself I would hang such a note on my mirror at home and infuse self-love back into my heart and soul. I would ask HP to hush the voice of the critical, demanding, belittling self and become willing to have these defects of character removed.

The raffle and 50/50 was so much fun. I commend the folks that tirelessly sold the raffle tickets over the three days. All the donations, such as handmade pottery and paintings, gift cards and 'you name it, it was there for auction', were given freely and were outstanding.

The dance party was filled with folks who could definitely move to the rhythm of the tunes DJ was cranking out. The agile, graceful, expressive dance flow was both elegant, rocking, and expressive. In case you were wondering, when you stay abstinent you just may be able to boogie down on the dance floor when you're in your 80's. I saw living proof!

Lastly, the closing speaker sent us all home with a message of how the 'Magic of Togetherness' happens. It happens when folks step up and give service. Giving back a fraction of what we receive in this program of food recovery is enough to 'be sure FAA will be here for our children's children'. Yes, life happens but it may happen a bit more gently when we eat our four weighed and measured meals and ask for help. Reach out, get a sponsor, work the steps. Get involved. Join a committee. These are just a few of the nuggets I took from the closing speaker.

Thanks for letting me share my experience with you. I haven't even touched the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the convention events, but these were a few of my fondest memories. My heart has opened up because of the tireless work of the Convention Committee. This healing is priceless.

HOPING THE CONVENTION RESTORES MY ABSTINENCE

I met my husband at college 55 years ago today. We were married 40 years when he died of cancer ten years ago. He was the love of my life and I still miss him. In abject grief, I started drinking. It became more and more, earlier and earlier in the day until it no longer had anything to do with my husband. I joined the 12 step "Grandfather Program" and have been sober for six and a half years. As soon as I put down the alcohol, food addiction hit me in a big way. My AA sponsor, thank God, told me about FAA.

I felt at home immediately in FAA as I heard other people telling my story. It took me nineteen days to let go of S/F/W (sugar/flour/wheat) but artificial sweeteners were the hardest. In fact, I enjoyed 22 months of abstinence, before the artificial sweeteners once again disturbed my peace. If I am totally honest though, I must say I was struggling with volume and eating "gray" foods even before I reintroduced the sweeteners. But in my food addicted mind, these gray foods didn't count because they were not sugar, flour or wheat – right? Never mind the idea I was practicing addictive behaviors.

So, after my eighteen months of relapse, I am at rock bottom, wanting the peace of mind I once had, wanting to feel my feelings and stop trying to stuff them down with food. Being here at the convention is giving me hope that I am at a turning point. With the help of God and FAA, I believe I can go forward abstintently, one day at a time – maybe even one hour at a time. Please God, help me to not pick up no matter what.

PUSHING THROUGH WAS WELL WORTH IT

I knew I had to be there. In fact, I had asked several people to ride along with me. At one point I had thought of backing out but thank God I had paid. Wasting food may be an issue for me, but wasting money is a sure-fire "NO." I will own being lax regarding wasting food yet also known as a member of the clean plate club, but when it comes to wasting money, no half measures for me. Money leaving me needs no assistance. As a matter of fact, I believe money runs from me because I'm never sure how it disappears so quickly.

So, I was super late Friday leaving my job and finally heading road north to NJ. Listening to my boyfriend making remarks that I didn't need to go, certainly did not help, but I told him I do NEED to be there, and I pushed through and made it here.

I am so grateful to be here. The people are so nice, funny and a joy to be around. The abstinent meals show me where I need improvement. Seeing people weighing and measuring makes an impact on me in a big way. I am so thankful to be here. My life is slowly but surely changing.

YOU NEED TO SURRENDER!

A week before the convention, I was told by a fellow, "Don't you know that you are dying?" He didn't say you "will die," but rather you are dying in the present tense. The strange realization of his words spoke to the core of my soul.

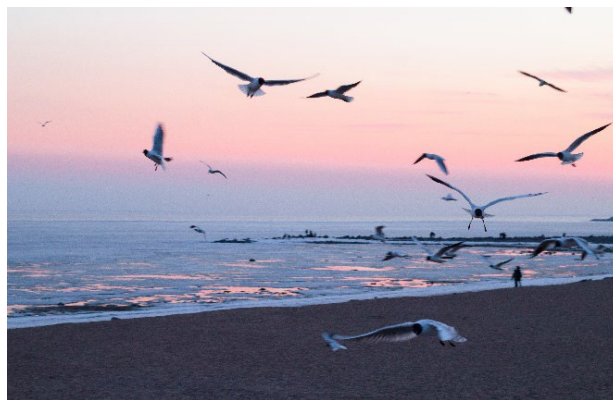
He then told me, "You need to surrender, surrender, surrender!"

The following day I went to a FAA Zoom meeting and the speaker and others used the word "surrender" at least 7 times! In addition, a fellow emailed me an article entitled, "Surrender vs. Compliance!"

A wise spiritual director once told me, "God is always trying to get our attention."

As a result of all this, I sensed God was inviting me to attend the 2023 FAA convention. I am here at the second day of the convention and my second day of abstinence!

I am grateful to God and my brothers and sisters of FAA for this gift!



My 2023 Convention Experience

I am nervously excited about attending my second convention. Five years ago, I was new in recovery and had no idea what to expect. This time was a little different. I am different. I now know the dangers of expectations, which often lead to resentment. So, I came with somewhat of an open mind. I say somewhat because I participated in the planning so I knew the topics but not exactly sure how things would materialize.

The hardest part was making the choice of which seminars to attend. My heart wanted to learn about one area; but my Higher Power led me to exactly where I needed to be. It was great to hear another person's perspective with the steps. Learning how much we aligned in our lives opened the door for me to want to connect with this person on a deeper level. Her approach to experiencing returns of anger toward someone she had forgiven was to write them another letter. This idea never occurred to me even though I know I am different today, so maybe I can see more clearly some leftover unresolved issues. Another concept I found helpful was seeing the 11th step moments as spiritual vitamins. And entertaining the idea of visualizing outcomes. The real kicker for me though was asking myself "am I ready or am I merely engaging in this theory of readiness". What a wake-up call for me.

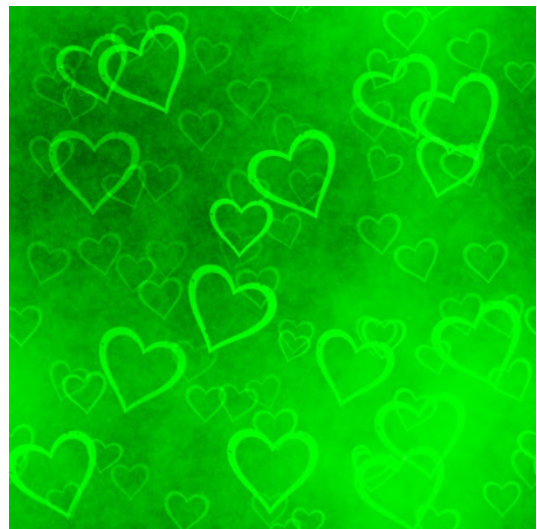
This enlightening experience was followed by someone sharing the gifts of the traditions. Imagine my surprise learning how the traditions kept this person in the doors of recovery. I realized I have done a host of work on me by using the steps. But how well do I really

operate with others? I am now willing to utilize the traditions to help aid in my growth. I realize there is indeed work to be done and based on this experience I am moved to ask for support working through the traditions just as I did with the steps. Not sure how it will work but I have the willingness.

My next sessions were pretty obvious to me. Hands down I knew I struggled with body image issues. It's been my area of weakness. But I felt so normal after this experience. It never occurred to me to use step one to help me overcome my issues. I truly am powerless over what is happening to my aging body and my life has become unmanageable as a result. There are many issues I have happening which are just a part of aging and I now know I can be grateful to be alive instead of dead in this disease.

We were then given a reading from Food for the Soul, "I Am Not My Body" pg. 225 to help set the stage for the presenter. She challenged me with the idea of creating four inventories—a pictorial inventory of myself with love; a physical inventory of not just how I look but my aches before and after; a name inventory and for me I choose the names I called myself, and then finally an inventory of my self-image—how do I view myself. I am still looking at that one.

Continued on Page 10



The long timers panel was an opportunity to tweak the brains of those who paved the way for my recovery. The questions were great. The answers were even better. Particularly the discussions around weighing or measuring vegetables. For me, personally, I am an addict and I have had occasions to fluff and sometimes stuff my cup. Truthfully, though, who am I hurting when I engage in such practices? The guidance was much appreciated though. Bottom line: do not make independent decisions. It's best to work with my sponsor.

The keynote speaker offered lots of great tips and had many stories to share. I had lots of identification with failed diets, self-pity, fears, and "was-band." Her cute way of describing her ex-husband. In fact, I enjoyed it so much I may adopt using it. But back to recovery, I can appreciate the honesty in telling me not to negotiate the terms of my surrender. That was powerful. As well as the concept of 90 meetings in 90 days twice. Surely attending this many meetings will help me identify as a food addict and help me prepare to follow the suggested food plan. The advice to develop a belief system reminds me of my early days when I said one thing but did something else. Today I have a belief system. I decided to step out of the cage, dare to re-invent myself so I, too, can begin to say I love you to me and mean it.

In the meantime, I look forward to getting a copy of the recordings so I can experience opening night speaker; the workshops I missed and the closing all of which I miss but hear they were awesome.



Convention Diary, September 6, 2023

I'm on a plane heading East to the FAA convention. I've decided that I'm going to go to it every year, like a touchstone.

This is a most important juncture in my life, and the FAA convention is a once-a-year coming together of all the elements, acting like a filter. Let's see what God can do in an event with a group of people seeking the God of their understanding instead of food in order to live their lives. Who will become abstinent for the first time?

Seeing God in each other when we get there will be a miraculous experience after

years of Zoom. We are like laboratory for how to live within FAA without excess food. Then we take the results of our lab work out in the world with everyone else. And we bravely face other people without the veil of active food addiction. We are on the front lines! We test and risk and trust and expand within the fellowship. Then as it translates to outside these rooms, the results can be remarkable.

September 10, 2023

It's the last day of the convention. I feel like a puzzle that was disassembled and then reassembled with a new scene. That's how revitalizing the experience was with the theme of synergy:

**Synergize & Revitalize
Experiencing the Magic of Togetherness**

See you next year!

My Recovery based on a Three-Legged Stool

Physical Recovery Before

- Diet books, articles, TV shows
- Commercial, weight-focused programs
- Self-Will power
- Self-criticism designed to whip myself into compliance
- Crazy exercise and personal trainers
- Nutritionists
- 30-day treatment center

Physical Recovery After

- FAA food plan as written
- Boundaries around food – weigh & measure
- Working with a sponsor
- Serenity around food – mental freedom from food obsession and thoughts
- Reduced pain
- Normal body size season after season, year after year
- A neutral and peaceful relationship with food

Emotional/Mental Recovery Before

- Depression
- Desperation
- Therapy
- Medication
- Feeling crazy
- Feeling resigned to have to binge daily
- Tears
- Fear
- Sadness

Emotional/Mental Recovery After

- No meds, no therapist
- Precious and nurtured relationships with a sponsor and fellows in FAA to provide support & a sounding board when I feel off
- The ability to live life on life's terms without extra food or a need to numb out and escape
- Mental freedom and clarity
- A better understanding of my own mental health and how to take care of me
- A better relationship with my thoughts and feelings and how I respond to them.



Spiritual Recovery before FAA and Abstinence

- Desperate prayer to the God of my understanding for help with my food
- Hours of journaling to the same God, crying out for relief
- More prayer, more God, more spirituality, more Bible study, more small groups, more Christian music, more church-knowing God was the answer (I had other 12 Step experiences that taught me that the food is but a symptom, the solution is spiritual); but not finding the path to Him to get to the solution.

Spiritual Recovery after FAA and Abstinence

- Intimate connection and communion with the God of my understanding
- Serenity
- Peace
- Joy
- Conscious contact
- A reciprocal, fulfilling, secure, trustworthy, spiritual foundation for my daily life even in the midst of the hard, the uncertain and the unknown
- Settled, trust-based confidence that my life is under the care and direction of the God of my understanding, and all will work out according to His plan



529 NW Prima Vista Blvd. #301A
Port St Lucie, FL 34983



God, quiet my fears, doubts, and anxieties.

Give me inner peace, hope, and faith in your ability to protect me from the ravages of food addiction.

Help me to trust you with my past, my present, and my future.

Take away my willfulness, so that I will know and accept your will above my own will... in all things.

Written by a Member of the Fellowship