

Lifeline

February 2000



Welcome Back

Often we hear that compulsive overeating is a disease of isolation. We remember the times we refused to leave the house, kept the drapes drawn and wouldn't answer the doorbell or the telephone. We were curious, though, about who would be calling us or coming to our door. Sometimes we peeked out the window to see who was there, but we chose not to answer. We stayed inside with the drapes drawn and the door locked . . . alone . . . eating.

After coming to meetings of Overeaters Anonymous, we found that we no longer had to be alone. Many others shared our experiences. We discovered the wonderful feeling of hugs from other members. We looked forward to seeing their smiles. We heard comforting words on the telephone from people who understood our pain and frustration. We found that we could be free of the isolation!

Unfortunately, some people stop attending OA meetings and go back to their isolation. Maybe eating alone seems easier than working the Twelve Steps. It is certain, however, that once they have experienced that common bond, the hugs and caring, the feeling of being "at home," isolation will never again be comfortable. They may want to come back to OA meetings, but their

guilt and embarrassment keep them away.

How can we help them return? We need to be regularly reaching out to one another. Then, when someone stops attending a meeting, we will naturally reach out and encourage the person to return.

Some groups have regular "Welcome Back" meetings, perhaps monthly. They call everyone in the sign-in book and invite them to attend. This may be the only encouragement a person needs to return. One group developed a flyer with a drawing of a person with open arms, a big grin and the caption "Welcome Back."

Some intergroups hold "OA Long-Timers Reunions." They distribute flyers and mail them to members whose names and addresses are available. They call long-timers and invite them to the reunion. Workshops at the reunion reflect on what it was like, what happened and what it is like now.

Even when we contact people who have dropped out, they may not return to meetings right away. The important thing is that we keep the door open. It is our job to be there when they return and to greet them with a smile, a hug and a simple "welcome back."

— M.F., West Des Moines, Iowa USA

Public Information