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STEP 12 MAGAZINE™

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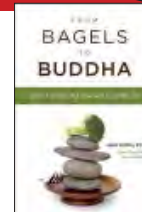
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Dr. Judi Hollis

Experience, Strength, and Hope
For People Struggling with Food Obsession



Right-Sizing with Humility

One of the first things we are encouraged to do in recovery is to find a sponsor. Despite that “suggestion,” many of us debate and want to keep operating independently. Our egos think someone will want to help us—to see our potential and be eager to participate. Despite feelings of despair and neediness, we often believe we are so important that someone will gladly and gratefully offer their time, energy, encouragement and support.

Although we know sponsoring helps the sponsor as well, it is crucial for ongoing recovery that we right-size ourselves—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Humility is the emotional and spiritual quality that allows us to be in a state of surrender. There’s something humbling about approaching a person and asking for their help. We admit that we cannot conquer this beast on our own and we need that person more than they need us. This is crucial—WE need THEM. It is difficult for many of us to ask for that help. I’ve seen some people refuse to ask anyone. I recently led a retreat where folks who considered themselves “old-timers” were surprised when I spoke so adamantly about the need for working with a sponsor. They had decided that reading the literature and trusting their own judgment was enough to help them survive—they stayed fat. Without humbling themselves to ask for help, some were even sponsoring others.

No one can identify with the humbling experience of asking for help if they are not continuing to do it themselves. It often concerns me when I see therapists minister to others while never undergoing their own therapy. Those in Al-anon know how easy it is to work on other people’s problems, rather than one’s own: it seems easy, but never works. When we experience for ourselves how difficult it is to work on our own problems, we have compassion with anyone who undertakes the difficult task of self-regeneration.

I was a hot-shot therapist when I first came to a place of surrender. I lectured, taught, and loved carrying the message of recovery—I was treating dignitaries and first ladies, thinking I had all the answers. However, for myself I had no answers and no ability to ask for help. I was still fat: I had education and information, ideas and solutions and an extra 70lbs under my belt. In this area, I had to admit I didn’t have a clue. My training dictated I should be able to fix myself—but I could not. This left me hostile and angry with myself while pushy and demanding toward those I tried to treat.

Asking for help exposes our vulnerabilities. In desperation, all the “know-how” we’ve accumulated is rendered useless. We might have all the answers on how to lose weight and, instead

of helping ourselves, we pack on pounds of knowledge. We cannot think ourselves into right action, but the action of asking for help allows us to be teachable on a deeper level than intellect.

As we begin working with our “selected” sponsor and navigating the steps, we learn to be accountable to another human being. We also get to see all the areas in which we’ve been lying to ourselves. We can’t see the deception until we put it out into the open with another person. We learn to humbly admit our mistakes (past and present), take action to right our wrongs, and embrace our humanity. We learn how to walk back into Macy’s and apologize to the sales lady for a bad attitude. These acts of humility re-focus our purpose and right-size our bodies and psyches. The act of apologizing can help us lose the weight!

Seeking that right-sized body might be the motivation for a change in lifestyle, but it is the process of surrendering that opens us up to all change. Humility is not about denying strengths and unique qualities that are precious and valuable. Humility is about acknowledging both our strengths and our weaknesses, and doing the best we can. We grow to appreciate that every human being is uniquely flawed and gifted. The ability to immediately admit wrongs is a sign of personal growth, humility, and integrity.

When we become honest with ourselves and concede that operating alone isn’t working, we ask for help and get busy with the work at hand. So please try to openly admit, “I need direction. I don’t know what to do.” That statement signals the beginning of surrender, acceptance, and recovery.

