



**PODCAST #12: ANA
(Translation from Spanish)**

INTERVIEWER: Welcome to Podcast number 12 of Overeaters Anonymous. This podcast will focus on individual stories of recovery. With us today is Ana.

During this podcast we will be referring to Overeaters Anonymous by its acronym CCA in Spanish or by OA, its initials in English.

Ana, where are you from?

ANA: I'm from Costa Rica

INTERVIEWER: What were you like? Can you tell us about your relationship with food before coming to OA?

ANA: My relationship with food was a love-hate relationship. I needed to eat all the time at hours that were not normal meal times. I needed to resort to food when I felt sad, happy or nervous; when I was studying, and was afraid of tests. I also hated food because of what happened after I ate. I felt like I gained weight. I felt fat. I didn't like myself. I didn't like what was happening to my body. I needed food, but I also hated it.

INTERVIEWER: Can you give us some examples as to how your food was out of control?

ANA: I have several examples. When I was in high school, my parents gave me an allowance for my personal expenses. It was not much, just enough to get by. My compulsion made me want to eat a lot, so I always had to ask for credit in the soda shops and convenience stores. I incurred some debts that remained unpaid because I wanted to eat sweets. I also asked my friends from school to share their food with me. The image they had of me was that I was very poor, and that I was starving. It was my compulsion. Then, I started controlling my weight. I wanted to lose weight, so I started exercising compulsively. I put myself at risk – for example, I ate a lot at night and went out for walks at about 10 p.m. for three kilometers (two miles) or so, in order to burn the calories from my previous binge. I was once mugged. They didn't hurt me physically, but it was a warning signal from my Higher Power: "You are in danger!" They took my handbag, my money and my documents.

Another example is that I used to diet throughout the week and binge on weekends. I mostly binged on sweets. Sugar is a very potent drug for me. I also threw up and took laxatives because I felt guilty. I needed to eliminate the huge amount of calories that I had ingested.

Amongst other insane behaviors with food, was my begging for sweets from my friends. I incurred debts because I always wanted to eat more. During vacations, I used to work at stores, and I would steal money from the cash register in order to buy sugary foods that my body didn't need.

Thanks to working the Twelve Step Program of OA, the Fourth, Fifth and Ninth Step, I was able to make amends. I was able to return the money I had stolen.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, the Ninth step.

ANA: Yes, the Ninth Step. I was very ashamed, but I managed to do it. Over the years, my embarrassment went away and I was able to go to one shop owner. I gave her money, and told her that I had calculated, taking inflation into consideration what I had taken 25-26 years earlier. I told her that I had stolen that money from her store to buy junk food. Those are examples of my behavior with

food being out of control.

INTERVIEWER: How had your way of eating and your weight affected the way you lived your life?

ANA: I was always thinking about food. I thought about what I had eaten; the calories I needed to burn; the weight I had gained. I felt bad about myself. I had very little time and energy to think about something other than food. I was always obsessed with eating, not eating or eliminating what I had eaten.

INTERVIEWER: And how did it affect your family or friends?

ANA: I was a very difficult person. It was very difficult to live with me when I was so active in the disease. One of the ways my compulsion manifested itself was that I wanted to control food, and also wanted to control the way others ate. I became an expert in nutrition. I studied, read books about nutrition, and then I lectured my family on how they had to eat. I was always watching their way of eating so that I could tell them how they should eat. I also tried to follow these strict rules myself that I thought were the perfect way of eating. But, when I was alone, I lost all control of my eating, and felt really guilty. I also had explosions of rage when I realized that I did not have control over other people. So in a few words: It was no fun living with me.

INTERVIEWER: I see. And what happened? How did you learn about OA? What brought you to OA?

ANA: In 1989, I read a self-help book that talked about different addictions. This book mentioned OA. Their translation for OA was " Fatties Anonymous ".

INTERVIEWER: Fatties Anonymous?

ANA: Yes. It is not a proper translation for our program.

To know that there was a program that could help people with problems with food, gave me hope. There **is** something! I knew that I had a problem with food. So, when I read that book, I could finally place a label on my problem, and became aware that there were others that had this same problem. There were no groups in Costa Rica; no address in the book, and I didn't know where to look for help.

In 1992, my boyfriend at the time called me. He told me that there was an article in the newspaper about a group called "Overeaters Anonymous" in Costa Rica. I looked for the article, and for the first time I learned that there was OA was in Costa Rica. That's how I came to hear about OA.

INTERVIEWER: Interesting. Tell us about what you saw when you got to OA. What made you want to come back?

ANA: I did not arrive directly in OA. It happened that I wasn't successful in finding an OA group in Costa Rica, because the article in the newspaper had no contact information. I was so desperate, that a few months later I started my own group. The meeting format was based on another Twelve Step program. I posted some signs in my community and some people arrived.

I knew I needed help, and that I would only recover by working with other people. I kept coming back. We were all newcomers, and I knew I could not do it alone.

A few months later, someone gave me the telephone number for OA in Costa Rica. We contacted them, and became a part of OA as a whole. What made me stay was that in those meeting rooms I could hear a lot of hope. I listened to people who were changing their way of life for a better one, free from the bondage of food.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you. And what are you like today?

ANA: Well, I am now a person with serenity in her life. I have a healthy weight, and exercise moderately. I enjoy what I do. I have a very beautiful family. Most of the time I live in serenity; with happiness, faith and hope. I am very conscious of what I am doing each day. I have people who love me, and that I love in return. I have very satisfactory personal relations.

INTERVIEWER: Please tell us about the miracle of being free from the obsession.

ANA: That miracle came little by little. In the beginning, I refused to accept the gift of recovery. I still had the illusion that I could control food. I came to OA in 1992. Today I am celebrating my 17th OA birthday.

INTERVIEWER: Congratulations!

ANA: Thank you! My first five years were difficult. I had periods of abstinence, of eating moderately; and others of eating without any control. Since 1997, I started to accept the gift of recovery.

I define the miracle of freedom from the compulsion by eating at the times I am supposed to eat. I eat in a moderate and nutritious way. My food tastes good. It is delicious. It is not like the diets I did before, where eating was a punishment. I eat in a satisfactory way, and dedicate the rest of the time to living. I am not only thinking about food. I live, and I am useful. I dedicate myself to an active and productive life.

INTERVIEWER: How long have you been abstinent from eating compulsively?

ANA: Since November 1997. Eleven Years.

INTERVIEWER: Eleven Years! How has your weight changed and how long have you maintained a healthy body weight?

ANA: I had a normal body weight when I got to OA. Because I focused on three strategies: I combined fasting, days of fasting where I ate almost nothing and was very hungry, or binge days; or I dieted throughout the week and ate compulsively on the weekends; or eating a lot, and exercising compulsively. That is why my weight was normal when I arrived in OA. It is still normal, but because of very different reasons. I do not resort to those strategies that made me obsess over food. Now I have a normal weight, because I eat moderately at those times I am supposed to eat. This is very important, because some people think that to join OA, they have to be overweight. This is not a requirement. There are those of us, that join OA having a normal appearance, but with great chaos inside about food.

All people, no matter what they weigh, are welcome to our program. The only requirement is the desire to stop eating compulsively.

INTERVIEWER: Ana, in your opinion, in a few words, what is the best gift that OA has given you?

ANA: The best gift that OA has given me is a life of great use and service. Thanks to the freedom from the obsession with diets, food and compulsive exercising, I have time to discover and develop my abilities and my talents, gifts given to me by my Higher Power.

My life is filled with satisfaction and fulfillment, and this is a great gift. I am physically healthy. Spiritually I have a close relationship with my higher power, and mentally I have a more balanced life with respect to emotions.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you, Ana, for sharing your story with us. Please tell us how a person in your country—Costa Rica—can find OA.

ANA: We have our own Website: www.ccacostarica.org. They can also call this phone number: (506) 2203 3439. We will be glad to help and assist you.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you Ana!

Thanks for joining us for this podcast. For more information about Overeaters Anonymous, please go to www.oa.org, or call the World Service Office in the United States: (505) 891 2664.