



**PODCAST #19: ALISON  
(Translation from French)**

**INTERVIEWER: Welcome to podcast number 19. This podcast will present the story of individual recovery. During the podcast, we will refer to Overeaters Anonymous as OA. This week, we are speaking with Alison.**

ALISON: Thank you, hello.

**INTERVIEWER: Hello. So, tell us where you are from.**

ALISON: I am Canadian, I am from Toronto, in Canada.

**INTERVIEWER: Good. Let's start with how you were. What was your relationship with food before you joined OA?**

ALISON: From the time I was 8 or 9, my relationship with food was one of obsession and of problems, it was never a natural relationship, it was very different, not natural, and I knew it. I knew it. So from that time, I tried to control it, to hide it. There were a lot of secrets, compulsions, obsessions. Not natural at all.

**INTERVIEWER: Can you give some examples of how your way of eating was out of control?**

ALISON: I would say it wasn't really my way of eating, at the beginning; it was how I controlled it. Because I knew I wanted more, always. I had an older sister who could always eat one slice of something, whereas I wanted 2, 3, 4, so I was always controlling and after a few years, after 10 years, 15 years, I couldn't control it, so I had binges, I had periods where I ate and stuffed myself, always, these fits during which I couldn't stop eating. Or I would tell myself, I'll have 10, where normally someone else would have 1, and then I would be able to stop, but after a certain time, I couldn't stop.

**INTERVIEWER: How did your eating or your weight affect your life?**

ALISON: Normally, after a binge, I couldn't sleep, I felt bad for days, I couldn't study normally, I couldn't go out with friends, I couldn't be in a good mood, I was almost always in a bad mood, and because I was obsessed with control, I did a lot of exercise, so I spent a lot of time biking, running, swimming, it didn't matter. It wasn't normal and I didn't have any free time because I was always doing something to control or to get rid of the calories I had consumed. So it filled my life, and I didn't really have a life. When I was in high school, I only studied, studied, studied, I exercised, and I ate. That was my life.

**INTERVIEWER: How did it affect your friends and family?**

ALISON: I know that when I was 14, I was abusing laxatives, and my parents found out, and they were really worried about me, about my health, but they didn't say anything. My sister, too, she was mad at me because she thought I was doing it to get attention, and she wanted to be sister and to have a relationship with me, and she couldn't because I was always angry and in a bad mood, and for them, to live with someone who was obsessed and in a bad mood all the time, it was bad for them, and I didn't know. I didn't even know. At university, I was living with a few girls, and at the end of the year, they sat me down and told me: "You are hard to live with because you are always in a bad mood, you are always angry, and we can't help you and it bothers us." So I know that even though I didn't say anything to anyone, and no one was directly affected, everyone felt that I was unhappy. They felt it.

**INTERVIEWER: How did you hear about OA the first time?**

ALISON: I was in third year at university and I bought a book online. It was the story of a woman who had the same family story as I did, and it was very similar, and she talked about her obsession, and at the same time she talked about OA and how she had found a solution there. Right away I went online and found a meeting in the city I was in. I went to one meeting. That's how I found out—in a book.

**INTERVIEWER: What brought you to OA the first time? But perhaps you have already answered?**

ALISON: It was that at that time, I was totally helpless I didn't know what to do because I couldn't stop myself. I wanted to have a full life, and I saw that I didn't have a life, not at all, I saw my friends having serious relationship with guys, and I hadn't had one, and I was 22. I saw that a lot of people could have fun, and yet I didn't have any joy in my life. When I read that book, I thought maybe it was possible for me, too.

**INTERVIEWER: What did you find when you went to OA for the first time?**

ALISON: Well, it's maybe not a great example, because I was in a small town on the East Coast, so there were only 2 or 3 women who didn't really know what abstinence was, they didn't have a lot of experience with these programs, but they knew a lot about the 12 steps because they were in another program. But there were really nice. There was a woman who told me that she didn't know how, she didn't know how it was possible, but she had stopped eating the foods that she was obsessed with. It was like a miracle for her. But she didn't know how it had happened. It planted something in my head. I decided maybe there was something.

**INTERVIEWER: How are you now? Talk a bit more about the miracle of the absence of the obsession.**

ALISON: Well, it's not completely absent. But I am freer compared to what it was like before. There are times when I don't even think about food, about my weight, my size, if people think I'm fat; I don't compare myself to other women, not always. I feel more normal, I feel more in the world, and when moments of obsession return, and they can come often, and it's not just the food or my weight, I know something is going on. When the obsession returns, it's because I'm scared, or tired or angry, and now it's like a thermometer, and it tells me if the temperature is too high in my head, and the obsession returns, but it's not a problem, I know I can pray, I can let it go, I can call someone and talk about what's going on with me, and certainly, I am much more aware of what's going on with me, whereas before it was just obsession, and I didn't know I was unhappy and depressed and that I had problems living life without being a perfectionist I didn't know. And I now I know.

**INTERVIEWER: How are you different today, emotionally, physically, spiritually?**

ALISON: Well, emotionally, I am calmer, but sometimes I would say that... before I didn't have any emotions, and now I do. They are strong sometimes; I am learning how to feel them and to accept them. But also, I am more responsible for my emotions; I am not as reactive. I respond so if something makes me angry, I can do something about it, and I don't have to be angry with someone, I can feel that I am angry. It's a little different. I have space between my feelings and me. Before they were right in my body, and I couldn't control them, I had fits where I repressed them, and I would eat something or get depressed. I don't know. I have learned that you have to accept them, and feel them, and that's life. It's hard sometimes because feelings hurt, but I can also feel peace and joy, and I can share my experience with people. I can be human whereas before I was a rock. I was dead, I would say.

Physically, I have lost about 20 lbs, which isn't a lot because I was controlling a lot with exercise, so I wasn't too big but my weight has gone up and down, which was hard because I was eating well, and my weight went up. I felt like, how is it possible to eat the same thing and then gain weight, so it was frustrating but it has taught me how to let go because it's always about control for me, now I can accept that if my weight is healthy, there's nothing I can do.

Spiritually I am totally different because I didn't have a spiritual life before. I was raised Catholic, but I didn't like the Church, the beliefs. I was indifferent. But I am searching, and I am trying to find a God that is within me, in others, and who is a guide in life, and gives me access to goodness in myself and others, and helps me to see that life is an adventure, not something cruel. I am not a victim, I am privileged. It's God and the program that has showed me that.

**INTERVIEWER: How is your life different? Maybe you have already answered. You are an inspiration...**

ALISON: Thank you.

**INTERVIEWER: Go ahead.**

ALISON: I have a friendship with my sister, whereas before we never knew each other, and I have the chance to accept her, she has accepted me, and she loves me a lot, and I have started to love her, although it's hard for me to love people who I... Before I thought that my family was cruel, that they didn't love me, and that was I different, that they didn't accept me or listen to me, and now I see that they love me a lot. I have started to have a friendship with each one, and it's hard, but it's important to give them a chance to be in my life and to be vulnerable with them.

Also, I have friends, a few, whereas before I didn't have any. I have a job, which is really hard, but I do it every day, with some grace and enthusiasm, and I am exhausted, but I can't eat. Even if I am frustrated, with political problems, people I work with, that's life. I have to accept it. I have a chance to live life without running away from it. It's hard but it's worth it, it's my life, that's the way it is. Now I want to live, whereas before I was dead and I wanted to be dead.

**INTERVIEWER: I am honored to hear you speak. How has your weight changed? You already...**

ALISON: Yes, I've lost 20 lbs, but I lost more than that, about 35 lbs, but I was too thin, so I've gained some weight.

**INTERVIEWER: You need a bit more.**

ALISON: It's been seven and a half years since I have eaten my alcoholic foods, I was 24 years old when I came in, and so it's been a long time since I have eaten anything.

**INTERVIEWER: That was the next question: how long have you maintained a healthy body weight? You've answered, I think. The last question: In your mind, what is the best gift OA has given you?**

ALISON: There are two. OA has given me the 12 steps. It's a guide for living, and I couldn't live without these 12 steps that are so simple and that show me how to connect with my spirit, with goodness, with God, with a healthy path. Also OA has given me friends who support me, who listen to me, who encourage me, who laugh with me and how show me an example of how to live this way for 20 years, 30 years, and how to keep searching to become closer to the spirit of the universe, to God, and how it grows like a tree, and it doesn't stop. They give me an example that I don't see in the outside world, well, rarely, if I see it. They are priceless gifts.

**INTERVIEWER: Thanks for joining us for the duration of this podcast. For more information on Overeaters Anonymous, please go to [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org) or call the World Service Office in the United States at area code 505-891-2664.**