



THE GUARDIAN

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A THANK YOU TO MY PREDECESSORS

When I came to NA I had enough of living life on my addiction's terms. I could not continue doing the things I was doing and I knew it. I was so relieved to find a place that said all they cared about was what I wanted to do about my problem. They then told me their experience with recovery. That experience provided me with hope. Hope that I could find a way to live free from the life of addiction and build a life filled with some truth and reality, a life where I could be proud of the man who stared back at me in the mirror.

There was enough hope at my first NA meeting that I surrendered to trying a new way to live. My life depended on that choice that night. I went after recovery with all the willingness I could muster. After a couple of meetings I wanted all this program had to offer and was willing to do what it took to get it. Most of all I wanted that all elusive integrity in my life. I sought out sponsors who worked the steps and seemed to be working and applying recovery to their life. Some were and some weren't. If they weren't I moved on. I dealt with confusion and anger at different points of my recovery and still do over the selfishness and self-

centeredness of some people but I have found the only solution to that anger is to ask myself how I can carry a NA message of hope.

I want to thank my predecessors for their attention to simplicity and truth. The one purpose we have is to carry the message to the still suffering addict. We make that an honest message by working and applying our program. The whole thing. Our predecessors taught us through experience the things that would work without conflicts of spiritual principles. So to make this short and sweet, Thank you for your time and commitment to the spiritual integrity of our Fellowship. Thank you for doing that part of the work for us.

My prayer is that I will be able to carry a NA message of hope filled with the spiritual integrity of our literature. Help me to remember what is an outside issue to NA recovery. Help me to see my way through the confusing issues that come up in my recovery so I can help the newcomer through theirs. Help me do selfless service the way my predecessors did.

In loving service, an addict

In This Issue:

Page 1

A Thank You To My Predecessors

Page 2

It's a Good Idea...

Page 3

First Things First

Page 4

Apply Traditions

It's a good idea to look in the rear-view mirror once in awhile; just don't stare...

I know of one thing that can plague me the most in my recovery: my past. From when I had 2 months, or one year, or until I sat down with my sponsor and worked my 5th Step, or as I pray to the God of my understanding to remove a character defect, or make an amends, and even to this day, my past can negatively impact my life. I can think about the things I did in my day-to-day active addiction, mentally revisit a few particularly bad experiences, remember that last fix, pill and/or drink, any of which can end up in an emotional whirlwind of self-hatred, and loathing towards life in general.

The longer I stare in the rear-view mirror of my past, the more disgusted I become with the person I created, and how I can react to the world around me. And the longer I stare, the greater my chances are of returning to my old thought patterns and coping mechanisms, whether or not the thoughts of using even comes into my mind. And if I keep staring—which I discovered through many bitter tears – the greater my chance of relapse.

The thing is, I still need to have that occasional reminder of my past, usually through newcomers at meetings, so that I don't return to that person today. I still need to see that look of desperation in their eyes, see their shaking hands, and hear their quavering voice, if they even share at

all. But I don't have to stare at the rear-view mirror of my life through them any longer; I can look forward through the windshield of my life as it is today.

I have Steps to walk, spiritual principles to apply, prayer and meditation, and a life I need to share with others in and outside of recovery each day. Through these things I can replace the life of my past with a new life today. And that newcomer who I need to see is also the person I need to talk with. I need to let them know the hope I have in my life today because I surrendered to win. I need to let them know that I can trust again and have faith in the NA program. I need to let them see for themselves how the Steps work in my life. And most importantly, I need to let them know how a Higher Power works in my life, so long as I let Him.

Now, today I can let the God of my understanding work through me – in whatever way He wants, and through whomever He chooses - and leave the results up to Him. I can remember the past, but I no longer have to live in that life. I can follow the suggestions of the NA program and Fellowship, and live today.

Am I willing to quit staring in the rear-view mirror and live my life today?

Joe A. - grateful recovering addict in central Pennsylvania

The Guardian is a free monthly publication serving the Upper Cumberland Area of Narcotics Anonymous.

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Upper Cumberland Area of Narcotics Anonymous web site:

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Meetings in the Upper Cumberland Area of Narcotics Anonymous:

Crossville NA Group
Crossville, Tennessee

Daily Reprieve
Wartburg, Tennessee

Getting Started
Crossville, Tennessee

Freedom Group
Allardt, Tennessee

Middle of Nowhere Group
Albany, Kentucky

Primary Purpose Group
Smithville, Tennessee

Unity Group
Crossville, Tennessee

Who Are You Group
Pikeville, Tennessee
(Note: This meeting is held in a correctional facility and is only accessible to those with clearance and approval.)

First Things First

“As we begin to function in society, our creative freedom helps us sort our priorities and do the basic things first”

(Basic Text, pg 83)

When I came to my first NA meeting, my life was totally unmanageable. I had just been released from jail, had no job, no phone number, and no principles at all. I wasn't capable of being a good husband because I only thought of myself. I had no idea how to live without using.

I listened to other addicts share in meetings about how things had been for them before coming to the rooms and how the program had allowed them to put their lives back together. After staying clean for a while, I began to believe that I too could find a new way to live. I got a sponsor and began working the steps, and I was able to stay clean. Staying clean was the easy part for this addict, the drugs had beaten me badly and I never wanted to feel that way again. The hard part was having the patience to build a solid foundation of recovery. I wanted to get my life on the “right track”, and I wanted it right now. My sponsor kept telling me things like “first things first”, and “keep it simple”, but I was not very good at listening at that time. I had a hard time that first year of recovery. I was working the steps and trying to apply the spiritual principles of the program to my life, but I was still attempting to force

things to happen. I thought that since I was no longer using I should be able build a career, have a healthy relationship with my family, and anything else that I wanted.

Sure, it's important to me to have a job, home, car, etc., but I must keep my priorities in order. Before I can expect to achieve all these things, I must have a solid foundation of recovery working in my life. Building a new and successful life is like building a house. Regardless of how well a house is constructed, it is only as strong as the foundation it's built on. Recovery is the same, if I neglect the foundation of my recovery, any life I attempt to build will be shaky at best.

I have heard it said that we work our steps in order for a reason; they build upon one another in a manner that helps us grow. As we work our way through each step we gain an understanding of spiritual principles that we carry with us to the next step, the foundation of our recovery growing stronger with each step we take. We learn to try to apply these principles in all of our affairs. As our faith and trust in our higher power gets stronger, we begin to believe that our lives are being guided by that same power. Surrendering to the process of recovery, we continue to attend meetings, working our steps with a sponsor, and seeking our higher power's will for our lives. It is in this way that we can experience a life that is both rewarding and stable.

Randy E

We need your help!

We need your help. The Guardian is in need of submissions. It can be a personal story of how you used the Fellowship or your Higher Power to get through a tough time, your views on a particular quote from the Narcotics Anonymous literature that you happen to like, Or a simple expression of gratitude.

Don't worry if you think you can't write well enough, we will be happy to make any spelling or punctuation corrections for you. The important thing is that you will be sharing your recovery with another addict. After all, we can only keep what we have by giving it away. The length of your article isn't very important either, just remember that shorter is better.

The only real criteria for submissions are that they reflect the message of Narcotics Anonymous and stick to the identification of ourselves as addicts suffering from the disease of addiction.

Submissions can be brought to the Upper Cumberland Area Service meeting, sent to The Guardian, 140 Cottle Ln, Jamestown, Tenn. 38556 or E-mailed to: ucaguardian@hotmail.com

Thank you for your support.

Applying Traditions

Applying Traditions, for the group or for me?

I started learning how to apply Traditions in my life by doing service work in NA. My husband's sponsor suggested that service work is a great way to learn about the 12 Traditions of NA. There is a line in the NA Basic Text that says: "personal recovery depends on N.A. unity", and that unity depends on how well we follow our Traditions." Doing service work in NA exposes us to many personalities and opinions about ways of looking at things or doing things. There were times I walked out in a huff because I did not agree with someone, thought they were full of it, didn't like someone or didn't trust someone. It hurt me to walk away. I realized that my "personal recovery" was lacking because I was failing to apply Traditions to situations that came up.

We say "principles before personalities". It took me a while before I found that most times it is MY personality I need to examine if I'm having trouble in that area. I found the following quote in the NA Way of Life and I think that every member of NA ought to read it and take it to heart:

"Traditions characterize a spiritually fit group of recovering addicts who find recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. When Traditions are violated, we have learned that fear has in some way gained a foothold. These fears justify wrongdoings. The only other possibility is simple ignorance. Violating traditions hurts the people involved. The fear makes it seem reasonable and proper for those doing the hurting to feel justified despite the evidence of their

eyes and ears. This may be the essence of our insanity, not believing our own witness. If other members are hurting or behaving badly, they need extra love. If we are the ones who care, we are the ones who must pray for the extra grace and opportunity to help them in their difficulty. Newcomers are watchful and they can catch flaws in old-timers as quick as some of our NA scholars can spot a Tradition violation. "If it ain't practical, it ain't spiritual" is an old NA saying that shows how we deal with a good idea if it doesn't appear to be working. To retain a place in the NA program, everything spoken or written must prove its usefulness in the recovery arena. If love and caring are in evidence on the surface, it may indicate love and caring below the surface. If hatred and anger are on the surface, we may need to pray or meditate. If we can't do this, it's a good sign that our spiritual condition is broken and must be regained before we can go on to anything else."

And:

"We are careful to avoid using our knowledge of the traditions as rules for others. The usefulness of the Traditions is in learning to guide ourselves and make the right decision for the right reason. We can share our feelings and experiences with others without seeking to dominate or control. Because recovery is an inside job, the principles of the Traditions deal with the outside issues. They help us find ways to be useful as instruments of a loving God and avoid conflicts with others."

Thanks for letting me share. Thanks NA.

The next meeting of the Upper Cumberland Service Committee will be on January 20 2008 At 2:30 pm CST in Crossville, Tennessee at the Crossville NA facility. Come check it out to see what the service committee is doing for the Upper Cumberland Area and your group to aid in better carrying the message to the still suffering addict.