



Serving the Upper Cumberland Area of Narcotics Anonymous

The Guardian

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DOES YOUR REPUTATION HAVE CHARACTER?

Regardless of the Twelfth Tradition, there are still some big personalities in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. You know who they are. They love to be the center of attention at every meeting and function they go to, and have their little entourage of recovering addicts who follow them wherever they go.

And, unfortunately, sometimes these "personalities" go back out, as any of us are susceptible to if we don't do what we have to for our recovery.

But when these people go back out, they leave a lot of bewildered recovering addicts stumbling around, wondering what went wrong. How did this great recovery giant go back out? How can that be possible?

Well, I can go back out very

easily, if my program is built on reputation without character. Let me explain. If I have a strong, likeable personality and the gift of gab, then I can become very popular at a lot of the NA meetings and functions I go to. Add to that a few years under my belt, and I can gain quite a reputation with those who are misinformed about the Traditions.

The truth is, reputation is fleeting. That's because it is nothing more than how others perceive me. And if anything occurs that causes them to change their perception of me, then my reputation is changed forever, and possibly at the cost of my recovery.

So how can I insure that I won't fall victim to the "reputation curse"? By making sure I have something that's even more important than a good reputation, and that is character. Don't get so caught up in my image - or how others see me - that I forget who I really am, or wish to be.

Character comes from

practicing the principles of this program in all my affairs, from living the life expected of a recovering addict.

Practice honesty. An honest person has nothing to lose because there are no lies or false facades to protect.

Have integrity. If you always do the right thing for the right reasons, others will trust you and have faith in you.

Learn anonymity. Remember that the most important person in NA is the one just walking in the door, and that the rest of us are here to serve, not to be catered to.

Protect the recovery of others as much as you do your own and you will find friends who will stick with you even in the toughest times.

So work on building your character instead of a reputation. A true reputation will follow on it's own, and it will endure a lot longer.

- Anonymous

"We keep what we have only with vigilance ..." - Basic Text p. 57

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PRINCIPLES OF LEADERSHIP

“Effective leadership is highly valued in Narcotics Anonymous. Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants.” - Concept Four

Leadership is very important in Narcotics Anonymous. We need willing trusted servants in order to fulfill our primary purpose. But too many times I feel we fall into the “warm body syndrome”. This person is willing to get involved in service, and we need someone to fill this position, so what’s the problem?

Well, it can be a big problem. Strong personalities taking over service committees, trusted servants misappropriating NA funds, outside issues being allowed to influence NA service decisions. All of these things have a more likely chance of happening when we, as group members, fail to practice the Fourth Concept.

It’s easy for us to say “that person wasn’t working a very good program” or “well, I voted for that person because no one else was nominated” when a trusted servant has to be removed from a service position or, worse, ends up going back out. But, as much as it’s that

particular service member’s responsibility, it is also our’s.

Take a look at that Fourth Concept again. “Leadership qualities should be carefully considered when selecting trusted servants>” What are these “qualities” it’s talking about? Certainly that doesn’t mean ability, because we are allowed to learn service positions as we serve.

And surely it doesn’t mean the ability to boss people around or to rule, because all through our literature we are told that leaders are trusted servants, they do not govern.

No, the leadership qualities it’s talking about are the spiritual principles. Before selecting someone for a service position, we need to know if they are practicing the spiritual principles in their lives. After all, if I’m not practicing them in my life, how can you expect me to practice them as your trusted servant?

Too many times, we don’t question those who express a willingness to serve because we don’t want to offend them or run anyone off. But it’s not about offending anyone, it’s about protecting our fellowship. And, of course,

if the person is practicing the principles, they will understand why we are questioning them and will be okay with it.

It’s about more than offending someone, or finding a warm body to fill a seat. It’s about making sure the message of Narcotics Anonymous remains intact in our meetings, and that the service structure is properly in place to get the word out to the still suffering addicts and direct them to the meetings, because without those two things we have failed already.

Without a clear NA message in the meetings, there won’t be anything for the addicts when they get to the meetings, and without a proper service structure in place, we won’t have a way to get the word out to the addicts so they can come and hear the message.

So not only is making sure our trusted service live the spiritual principles of NA important, it is vital to our survival as a Fellowship as well as our effectiveness in letting suffering addicts know that there is a better way to live.

- Ken H.

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

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Meetings in the Upper Cumberland Area of Narcotics Anonymous:

Crossville NA Group
Crossville, Tennessee

Daily Reprieve
Wartburg, Tennessee

Freedom Group
Allardt, Tennessee

Middle of Nowhere Group
Albany, Kentucky

New Beginnings
Huntsville, Tennessee

Primary Purpose Group
Smithville, Tennessee

Unity Group
Crossville, Tennessee

PAIN = GROWTH OPPORTUNITY

Pain is a fact of life but suffering is optional. When we began our active addiction most of us thought we were having fun. But when we look back we discover that our real motivation was to kill some pain in our life. Eventually our disease turned on us, and our addiction itself became the pain. We couldn't live with it and we couldn't live without it.

In recovery we need to experience our negative feelings and understand them honestly without returning to our old ways in order to escape our emotional realities. We know where our will took us in the past, so to change for the better we have to surrender our will to our Higher Power to win. Like everything we do in life, the journey begins with a first

step.

We accept that we are powerless over the cause of our pain, and the amount of unmanageability it creates in our lives. We then start believing that the God of our understanding will help us carry the burden. Then we surrender our will in exchange for the will of our Higher Power.

To get past the hurt inside we need to not only experience our pain, but also grow through those negative emotions. Our friends in the Fellowship - who our Higher Power often speaks through - are there to help us along the way with their guidance. We gain strength through their experiences, as well as hope that our lives will get better. And in trusting that our friends, and more importantly that the God of our understanding is right there

with us, will help us grow through the pain. Remember, a problem shared is a problem divided.

Now, today, I will appreciate the fact that I can feel my pain. I will believe that I have other options available to me to deal with my emotions without having my disease control my behavior. The only thing which will prevent me from growing through the pain is when I won't accept the will of my Higher Power. As God saved me from my active addiction, God will take care of the rest of my life!

I can't
God can
He will if I let him
Will I let him today?

- Submitted by
Joe A.,
a grateful recovering
addict in Central PA

A COURAGE NOT THEIR OWN

"Those who make it through these times show a courage not their own." - Basic Text p. 82

Bad things happen in recovery, because bad things happen in life. The longer I stay clean, the more hard times I will have to go through. But the important thing is that I don't have to go through them alone.

If I share what I'm going through with other recovering addicts, a miraculous thing will happen. My burden will become lighter and the eventual outcome will seem more positive.

"The therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel". Others can help me and want to help me, but only if I

allow them to. And I do that by opening up to them and letting them know what is bothering me.

Even if they have no words of wisdom for me, at least I know I'm not alone. There really is strength in numbers. So in your moments of weakness allow others to be strong for you.

- Ken H.

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 more than 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 is 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 166 Tami Kay Rd Dowelltown, Tenn 37059, or emailed to ucaguardian@hotmail.com.

Thank you for your help and support.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Any NA member can be a leader, and every NA member has the right to serve the fellowship. Effective NA leadership knows not only how to serve, but when it will serve best to

step aside and allow others to take over. An entrenched bureaucracy inhibits our fellowship's growth, while a regular influx of new leadership, balanced by continuity, inspires NA growth. The effective leader also knows that, in order to maintain the distinction in service between principles and personalities,

it is important to observe the practice of rotation.

(Reprinted from "A Guide To Local Services In Narcotics Anonymous", Fourth Concept. Page 6. Copyright 1989, 1997 by Narcotics Anonymous World Services, Inc.)

GETTING BETTER OR SICKER?

Sometimes I feel very much alone because I love and respect the NA program so much. There are times when I feel like an outsider even in Narcotics Anonymous meetings. It seems, at times, as if there are so many things going on in a meeting that the NA message is almost an afterthought, if it's even thought of at all.

There are those who, even though they are "grateful to be clean", seem just as sick now as I ever thought about being in active addiction. We're told not to take others' inventories, but that's not really necessary when they are very open about the things they are doing. If they don't feel the need to be discreet about their behavior, then I don't feel the need to keep quiet about how I feel.

Sure, whether you are a recovering addict or not, you have the right to be as sick as you want to be. The only thing I ask is don't bring it into the meetings to spread the poison to others, especially the newcomer.

Give the newcomer a chance to get clean. Give them a chance to hear the message of Narcotics Anonymous. Give them a chance to live. All of us are here today because we were given that chance. Now why would we want to turn around and take it from someone else?

So, what am I talking about, exactly? Several things, actually. Predatory behavior, for one. Leave the newcomers alone. Don't mess with their already screwed up thinking just to get your pleasure. How selfish and self-centered is that?

Another is mixing the message of Narcotics Anonymous with that of other Fellowships and organizations. We can't water down the NA message. A diluted message is a worthless message.

How can we become responsible members of society if we can't even be responsible in meetings? I have a responsibility to Narcotics Anonymous. This Fellowship saved my life and I need to protect it to the best of my ability.

I have a responsibility to the Newcomers. They are our life blood. Without them, this Fellowship - and the answer to many addicts' prayers - will cease to exist.

If this article makes you nod your head in agreement, then take your Fellowship back. When someone starts their sick crap in a meeting, let them know that isn't tolerated in Narcotics Anonymous.

And if this article pisses you off and makes you say to yourself "How dare you say those things about me", then maybe you might want to do a personal inventory and see if you have in any way harmed yourself or others.

I say what I say out of love. Love for the fellowship, love for the Newcomer, and love for you. We all need each other to survive, but I need you to be getting better - not sicker - in order to be of any help to me.

- Anonymous

The next meeting of the Upper Cumberland Service Committee will be on September 17 2006 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.

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