

# **HAPPY, JOYOUS AND FREE TIMES!**

Serving the Upper Cumberland Area of Narcotics Anonymous

<http://www.nauca.org>

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## **LIVING THE STEPS**

*"When we work the program, we live the steps daily. This gives us experience in applying spiritual principles. The experience that we gain with time helps our ongoing recovery. We must use what we learn or we will lose it, no matter how long we have been clean." Basic Text pp. 81-82.*

When I first came into Narcotics Anonymous, I was told over and over "Work the steps, work the steps". People shared in meetings about how many times they had worked the steps. I was told that I needed to work the steps as soon as possible. It seemed as if answering the questions and writing all this stuff on paper was going to be the "quick fix" I needed to get my life back in order.

Well, actually I was partially right. First of all, working the steps is vitally important to recovery, and that is not just my opinion. "How It Works" in the Basic Text states: "If you want what we have to offer, and are willing to make the effort to get it, then you are ready to take certain steps. These are the principles that made our recovery possible." The steps are indeed an integral part of recovery. After all, that is how I learn to recover.

Secondly, writing the steps down on paper is also a very important part of the process for me. I can think that I'm powerless or that I've surrendered as much as I want to, but once I have the cold, hard facts staring me back in the face in black and white, then that's the time to get honest. Writing it down on paper also allows me to go through the process, whether it's turning over a character defect or looking at my part in something from my past, so that I can get to where I'm supposed to be.

The steps are not a "quick fix", however. Indeed, there are no "quick fixes" in recovery. Recovery is as fast or slow as I make it, and it is a process. I will never do it perfectly. But, as long as I can say that, today I did it to the best of my ability, then I'm doing okay.

That, then, is the true point when recovery really begins. I work the steps in order to learn how to live the steps, "to practice these principles in all my affairs". "It is only through understanding *and* application that they work." I must first understand the spiritual principles that reside in each and every one of these steps: honesty, open-mindedness, willingness, faith, anonymity, to name just a few. It is only then, once I have begun to understand these principles, that I can begin to implement them in my life. Then I truly begin to live the steps, and not only am I blessed by doing so, but I also become an example for others of what this program can really do.

I must learn to live the steps on a daily basis. My recovery depends on it. Because, as the Basic Text points out, if I don't, I will lose it.

- Anonymous

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The Purpose of Happy, Joyous and Free Times is to help share the message of Narcotics Anonymous to the Upper Cumberland Area. Narcotics Anonymous is a nonprofit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using. A meeting schedule can be found at <http://www.nauca.org>.

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# LIVING IN FAITH, NOT RUNNING IN FEAR

We addicts are, by nature, very dishonest people. We lied, conned and manipulated others so much that it became second nature to us. We didn't know any other way to behave. But perhaps the person whom we were the most successful in conning and lying to was ourself. "I don't have a drug problem, I can quit anytime I want to. Besides, I'm not hurting anyone else." This is the types of dishonesty many of us practiced on a daily basis. And even when no one else would believe it anymore, we continued to believe it, right up to the point of hitting our personal bottom.

Often, our self delusions are so ingrained in us, it can take quite awhile in recovery to get the truth sorted out from the lies. One such delusion many of us convinced ourselves of was the twisted idea of bravery that we had. We weren't afraid of anyone or anything. We walked around with a chip on our shoulder and dared anyone to knock it off.

However, once we come into recovery and work the first step, those delusions of being "bigger and badder" begin dissapearing, and that's when the fear becomes apparent. Once we start developing a concept of a Higher Power, we find that fear starts turning to faith, slowly, a little at a time. We become more assured of ourselves and start seeing the miracles of a Higher Power working in our lives, and that faith becomes even stronger.

Once we start our inventory, however, that fear can easily return. We are visiting those old memories of the things we did, and that were done to us, that we tried so hard to keep buried deep inside ourselves. We then begin to see how, instead of being the big and bad people we had convinced ourselves we were, we had actually been scared and lost children, running in fear for most of our lives. Fear of responsibilty, fear of commitment, fear of losing the crutch that drugs had become to us. We are totally amzed at the amount of fear we actually had within us, and usually without even knowing it. Then, when we admit these fears and turn them over to our Higher Power, a wonderous thing begins to happen. Our faith becomes that much stronger, to the point to where fear no longer has the control over us that it once had.

Sure, we still get scared. After all, we are human. But fear no longer consumes us. We no longer run in fear from each new challenge or obstacle as we once were likely to.

Instead, we walk in faith, strengthened by the assurance that our Higher Power will guide and protect us, and that no matter what circumstances arise, the outcome will be okay, and will be okay, as long as we continue to have faith that everything happens for a reason, and that we will come out of each challenge that much stronger in our recovery and that much closer to our Higher Power.

- Ken H.

# THE NATURE OF SERVICE

We must put our faith to work with action. Without the changes which reflect our personal growth becoming apparent in our lives, we experience the return of the "hollow" feeling inside which we addicts have known so well. We revert to the selfishness and egotism we have relied on in the past. To help us establish some hope for ourselves, we need evidence that NA recovery is real. Evidence which will stand the tests which are forced upon us by our disease.

Basing our lives in a Power greater than ourselves gives us a spiritual freedom which makes the welfare of others a valid concern to us. It is this concern for others which is a part of what attracts our newcomers. This concern has been best summed up in this phrase: "What you want to do about your problem and how we can help." It is positive and non-directive at the same time. We do not play God and attempt the impossible. Recovery teaches us to live in reality. Through helping others, we ourselves are helped. This is the great spiritual lesson of Narcotics Anonymous.

If all our Program consisted of was service, no one would get clean. We must get help before we're in a position to give it. Our surrenders, our faith, our inventories, our amends and our spirituality allow us to carry the NA message. After we meet our own needs, we have something to offer others. Through recovery, we are able to recognize the effects, good and bad, we have on others. Our identity as human beings increases. We find it impossible to feel good about ourselves unless we are doing good for others.

As we learn and grow in recovery, we discover that the good we do for others comes back to us. Even the most hardened and embittered of our members eventually realize they have been given a new life by those who were able to love them before they could love themselves. Without the nature of service, there would be no NA, no newcomers, and no helping of others.

In the beginning, the giving of our meager resources seemed like utter foolishness. We were all takers, one way or another. We didn't think much of ourselves for doing it, but our disease had reduced us to the point where we had no choice but to put our needs first. We couldn't care and we didn't share anything of importance to us. Our using ate up all our resources, and we had to replace them as part of our using. As our needs are met in recovery, we find our desperate way of life fading into the past.

We see, accept and feel thankful for the help and love we receive from others. To do less for others than we receive would be a spiritual lapse. Giving makes sense to us because we see where we receive much more than we will ever be able to give back. When we try, we find that we have even more to give. The world is kind to its givers. Becoming a part of society is our transformation from taking to giving. When we find these truths, we have begun the spiritual transformation we call recovery.

Many members suffer greatly from the confusion between our formal service structure and the spiritual nature of service to others. Our structure is a meaningless diagram printed on paper without the life, love and wisdom only we can put into it. Many of our best trusted servants never serve in any elected capacity. Our most important member may be the newcomer, but our most important servant is the one who will be there, today, when we need help staying clean.

- Anonymous

# TRADITIONALLY SPEAKING

*(The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous truly are "the ties that bind us together". As important as the Steps are to personal recovery, so the Traditions are to group survival and to insure that our meetings fulfill their primary purpose. Each month, we will look a little closer at a particular Tradition, because we cannot implement a tool of recovery until we can begin to understand it.)*

Tradition Four:

"Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or NA as a whole."

"Autonomy gives our groups the freedom to act on their own to establish an atmosphere of recovery, serve their members and fulfill their primary purpose. It is for this reason that we guard our autonomy so carefully." - Basic Text, p.64

Some thoughts to ponder concerning Tradition Four:

- 1) What does "autonomy" mean?
- 2) Does this tradition give groups total freedom to do anything they choose?
- 3) How can my group's decisions affect other groups?
- 4) How can my group's decisions affect NA as a whole?
- 5) The Basic Text says that group autonomy has been used to justify a violation of the Traditions. Have I ever seen an instance where that happened?
- 6) How should a group establish an atmosphere of recovery?
- 7) Can a member of another group come in and influence my group's decisions?
- 8) How does this tradition relate to Tradition One?
- 9) At what point does "group freedom" become anarchy?
- 10) What is the definition of an NA group ?

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## WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Do you have an article, poem or personal story you would like to share with other recovering addicts? Maybe you would like to share an interesting experience of how your Higher Power has intervened in your life. Or maybe you would like to tell how you have applied the principles of Narcotics Anonymous in your life to overcome a difficult situation.

Any submissions you have can be sent to Happy, Joyous and Free Times 300 Neal Dr. Dowlitown, Tenn 37059. Or email [hjnftimes@hotmail.com](mailto:hjnftimes@hotmail.com).

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