



# The N.A. TREE

## The Service Structure of Narcotics Anonymous

SERENITY PRAYER

GOD . . .

*Grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change . . .  
The Courage to change the things I can . . .  
And the Wisdom to know the difference.*

We cannot change the nature of the Addict or Addiction . . .  
We can help to change the old lie "Once an addict, always an addict,"  
by striving to make recovery more available.  
*God, help us to remember this difference.*



**An open letter to the members of Narcotics Anonymous**

November 17, 1975

Dear Fellow Members:

Again, the groups in our area are being asked questions like: "Hey, what's this GSR we're supposed to be electing next week, what does he do?"; "Where does the money go, what's it used for?"; "Now that I've been elected Secretary, what do I do?"; "What's the WSO?" Most of the answers we've heard to these questions and others like them have been based on good guesses, opinion, or misinformation. There doesn't seem to be anywhere in N.A. where this kind of information is set down in plain terms.

Gathering together what we could find in old ditto sheets, letters, tapes, from the literature of other fellowships such as ours, and from our own experience, we have tried to find answers to some of our own questions and to clarify some of our misconceptions. The following is a pamphlet about the service structure of N.A. as we understand it. Its purpose is to express, in simple terms, basic ideas about how we as members and servants of N.A. relate to each other and to N.A. as a whole. It is our hope that this pamphlet will become a part of our literature, available to all members; and that, in some small way, it will help ensure the continuation and growth of our fellowship.

Yours in fellowship,

A GROUP OF CONCERNED MEMBERS

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this pamphlet is to express, in simple terms how we, as members and servants of Narcotics Anonymous, relate to one another and to N.A. as a whole; and to present an ideal Service Structure for N.A. in such a way that we can strive to improve our fellowship, and better fulfill our primary purpose of carrying the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers.

N.A. is a Twelve and Twelve program borrowed from the A.A. fellowship. In fact, three of the first committee of five were also members of A.A., who wanted to make this proven program of recovery available to addicts. So why, you may ask, don't we just use A.A.'s structure and be done with it? This would probably be a good idea except that we are not A.A.; our needs, despite the similarities, are to a certain extent different. (As addicts, the progression of our illness is normally much more rapid than alcoholism. How many alcoholics have you heard who have at some time in their lives been reasonably successful in business or family relationships? On the other hand, how many addicts have ever had anything even resembling a successful business or family relationship? This is just an example of how our basic patterns are subtly different.) We are precluded from directly using any part of the A.A. program other than the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions; and finally in order for N.A. to survive we must be autonomous, we must have a fellowship and program of our own.

In the early days of N.A. we had what have been called "rabbit" meetings; held sporadically in different places at different times. At this time with only one or two N.A. meetings in existence, a specific structure for N.A. wasn't needed and really wasn't wanted. Soon N.A. grew, and permanent meetings were established, but because these were few in number and all located in the Los Angeles area, there was still no real need for any established service structure. However, N.A. has continued to grow. As groups began opening up in population centers other than Los Angeles, we began to feel the need for some kind of structure. Intergroup or General Service Committees came into being in various locations, each trying to take care of business on a local level, without too much regard for N.A. as a whole.

In the last 5 years, however, this approach has sort of backfired. The unity necessary for personal recovery has been in short supply. Each group or area moved in its own direction-usually apart. The very existence of N.A. was again seriously threatened as it was in the 1950's when the traditions were ignored. Some positive action has been taken to try to solve this problem, conventions were held, a World Service Office opened, and lines of communication shakily established. We can see that these attempts have paid off to a certain extent. Groups in various areas are starting to work together, much of the petty bickering seems to have disappeared and it seems that many members, in all areas, are trying to establish a better environment for sobriety in N.A. The strength and unity of purpose evident at the last N.A. Convention shows we are making progress. Maybe this is because for the first time, we now find many members with long-term sobriety active in the meetings and in the fellowship. It's no longer a rarity to find members with years clean rather than only weeks or months. Perhaps some of the personal maturity gained in living drug-free has started to have an effect on N.A. as a whole.

Despite this progress, we are still at a very critical stage of the "coming of age" process. Today large, active fellowships are developing in several population centers and new groups are starting up in many areas throughout the United States and in foreign countries. N.A. is growing, and with this growth the need for unity and communication increases. The old adage that a house divided cannot stand applies to N.A. as well as any other group. Right now we don't seem to have any unifying structure or clear-cut lines of communication for N.A. as a whole. What structure there is, only functions on a local level and our vital lines of communication have often been both hard to locate and as changeable as the weather. It is our sincere hope that this presentation of the service structure of our fellowship, as we understand it, will help; to fill in some of the gaps that separate us; and that in this small way we can contribute to the growth and future of N.A.

