

## CHAPTER ONE

### WHO IS AN ADDICT?

Most of us do not have to think twice about this question. WE KNOW! Our whole life and thinking is centered in drugs in one form or another, the getting and using and finding ways and means to get more. We use to live and live to use. Very simply an addict is a man or woman whose life is controlled by drugs. We are people in the grip of a continuing and progressive illness whose ends are always the same: jails, institutions and death.

Those of us who have found the program of Narcotics Anonymous do not have to think twice about the question: Who is an addict? We know! The following is our experience.

As addicts, we are people whose use of any mind-altering, mood-changing substance causes a problem in ~~any area of~~ <sup>our</sup> life. Addiction is a disease which involves more than simple drug use. Some of us

believe that ~~our~~ <sup>The</sup> disease was present long before the first time we used, and others feel that the disease manifested at some point during our using. We all agree that we have a disease over which we have no power. <sup>Many</sup> of us did not consider ourselves addicted before coming to the Narcotics Anonymous program. <sup>INSERT P2L2-6</sup> The information available to us came from misinformed people. As long as we could stop using for awhile, we thought we were all right. We looked at the stopping not the using. As our addiction progressed, we thought of stopping less and less. Only in desperation <sup>do</sup> we ask ourselves, "Can it be the drugs?"

We did not choose to become addicts. We suffer from a disease which expresses itself in ways that are anti-social and make detection, diagnosis and treatment difficult.

Our disease isolated us from people except for the getting, using and finding ways and means to get more. Hostile, resentful, self-centered and self-seeking, we cut ourselves off from the outside world. Anything not completely familiar became alien and dangerous. Our world shrank and isolation became our life. We

1 used in order to survive. It was the only way of life we knew.

2 Some of us used, misused and abused drugs and still never con-  
3 sidered ourselves addicts. Through all of this, we kept telling  
4 ourselves, "I can handle it." Our misconceptions about the nature  
5 of addiction conjured up visions of violence, street crime, dirty

6 when our addiction is treated as a crime or moral deficiency,  
7 we become rebellious and are driven deeper into isolation. <sup>when we began</sup> Some of  
8 the highs felt great, but eventually the things we had to do in order  
9 to <sup>continue</sup> ~~support our~~ using reflected desperation. We were caught in the  
10 grip of our disease. We were forced to survive anyway we could. We  
11 manipulated people and tried to control everything around us. We  
12 lied, stole, cheated and sold ourselves. We had to have drugs, re-  
13 gardless of the cost. Failure and fear began to invade our lives.

14 One aspect of our addiction <sup>is</sup> ~~was~~ our inability to deal with life  
15 on its <sup>own</sup> terms. We tried drugs and combinations of drugs in an effort  
16 to cope with a seemingly hostile world. We dreamed of finding a  
17 formula that would solve our ultimate problem--ourselves. The  
18 fact <sup>is</sup> ~~is~~ that we <sup>can</sup> ~~can~~ not successfully use any mind-altering or mood-  
19 changing substance, including marijuana and alcohol. <sup>no longer work</sup> ~~Drugs ceased to~~  
20 ~~work for us. They no longer shut off our feelings or give us pleasure.~~

21 At times, we were defensive about our <sup>usually</sup> ~~addiction~~ and justified  
22 our right to use, (especially when we had "legal prescriptions."). We  
23 were <sup>may have taken pride in</sup> ~~proud~~ of the sometimes illegal and often bizarre behavior that  
24 typified our using. We "forgot" the times we sat alone consumed by  
25 fear and self-pity. We fell into a pattern of selective thinking,  
26 We only remembered the "good" drug experiences. <sup>remembering only</sup> We justified and  
27 rationalized the things we had to do to keep from being sick or  
28 going crazy. We ignored the times when life seemed to be a night-  
29 mare. We <sup>denied</sup> ~~avoided~~ the reality of our addiction.

30 Higher mental and emotional functions, such as conscience and  
31 the ability to love, were sharply affected by our use of drugs. Our  
32 Living skills were reduced to the animal level. Our spirit was  
33 broken. The capacity to feel human was lost. This <sup>not</sup> ~~seems~~ extreme,  
34 but many of us <sup>came from</sup> ~~have been~~ in this state.

35 We were constantly searching for "the answer"--that person,  
36 place or thing that would make everything all right. We lacked the  
ability to cope with daily living. As our addiction caught up with

us, many of us found ourselves in and out of institutions.

These experiences indicated there was something wrong with our lives. <sup>Instead of changing our lives, we sought</sup> ~~we wanted~~ an easy way out, and some of us thought of suicide, but our attempts were usually feeble, and only helped to contribute to our feelings of worthlessness. We were trapped in the illusion of "just one more", "if only", and "just one more".

Addiction is a vicious cycle. We have regained good physical health many times, only to lose it by using again. <sup>The only help we found was more drugs - which eventually brought more pain.</sup> Our track record shows that it is impossible for us to use successfully. No matter how well we may appear to be in control, using drugs always brings us to our knees.

~~If~~ we ~~did~~ <sup>sought</sup> ~~seek~~ help, <sup>what</sup> ~~we~~ were <sup>actually</sup> ~~really~~ looking for, <sup>was</sup> the absence of pain. Like other incurable diseases, addiction can be arrested. We agree that there is nothing shameful about being an addict, provided we accept our dilemma honestly and take positive action. We are willing to admit without reservation that we are "allergic" to drugs. Common sense tells us that it would be insane to go back to the source of ~~our~~ <sup>an</sup> allergy. Our experience indicates that medicine cannot "cure" our illness. <sup>Insert P2 L7-8</sup>

Although physical and mental tolerance play a role, many drugs require no extended period of use to trigger "allergic" reactions.

Our reaction is what makes us addicts, not how much we used.

<sup>Insert P4 L16-27</sup> Many of us did not think we had a problem until the drugs ran out. Even when others told us we had a problem, we were convinced that we were right and the world was wrong. We used this belief to justify our self-destructive behavior. We developed a point of view that enabled us to pursue our addiction without concern for our own well-being or that of others. We began to feel the drugs were killing us long before we could ever admit it to anyone else. We noticed that if we tried to stop using, we couldn't. We suspected we had lost control over the drugs and had no power to stop.

During this time, as we continued to use, we became accustomed to a state of mind common to addicts. We forgot what it was like before we started using; we forgot the social graces. We acquired strange habits and mannerisms. We forgot how to work; we forgot how to express ourselves and show concern for others. We forgot how to feel.

NO. 8  
TO  
P5  
L14



1 While using, we lived in another world. We experienced only  
 2 periodic jolts of reality or self-awareness. It seemed we were  
 3 at least two people instead of one, like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.  
 4 We ran around trying to get our lives together before our next run.  
 5 Sometimes we could do this very well, but later, it was less impor-  
 6 tant and more difficult. In the end, Dr. Jekyll's side and Mr. Hyde  
 7 took over.

8 Each of us has a few things we can say we never did. We cannot  
 9 let these things become excuses to ~~use again~~ <sup>Continue our destruction</sup>. Some of us feel lonely  
 10 because of differences between us and other members, and this makes  
 11 it difficult to give up old connections and old habits.

12 ~~No 8~~ We all have different tolerances for pain. Some addicts ~~needed~~  
 13 ~~to go to greater extremes than others.~~ <sup>Some of us went a long way down the road and</sup> Some of us found we had had  
 14 enough when we realized that we were getting high too often and it  
 15 was affecting our daily lives.

16 At first, we were using in a manner which seemed to be social  
 17 or at least controllable with little indication of the disaster which  
 18 the future held for us. ~~But our pain~~ <sup>eventually</sup> Our using ~~became~~ <sup>progressed</sup>  
 19 ~~from a social activity to a state of complete spiritual, mental and emotional bankruptcy.~~  
 20 were in situations that allowed us to use frequently. This was usually  
 21 the end of the good times. We went from a state of drugged success  
 22 and well-being to complete spiritual, mental and emotional bankruptcy.  
 23 This rate of decline also varies from addict to addict; Whether it  
 24 is years or days, it is all downhill. We may have tried to moderate,  
 25 substitute, or even stop using. Those of us who don't die from the  
 26 disease will go on to prison, mental institutions or complete demoral-  
 27 ization as the disease progresses. ~~Some of us~~ <sup>Some of us</sup>

28 Drugs had <sup>given</sup> us the feeling that we could handle whatever  
 29 situation might develop. ~~We became aware that drugs were largely~~ <sup>Using was our answer to life's problems.</sup>  
 30 ~~responsible for having gotten us into our very worst predicaments.~~ <sup>However, we eventually became aware that drugs were largely</sup>  
 31 ~~Our answer was, in fact, our problem, and~~

33 We had to reach our bottom before we became willing to stop.  
 34 We were much more motivated to seek help in the latter stages of our  
 35 addiction. It was easier for us to see the destruction, disaster  
 36 and delusion of our using. It was harder to deny our addiction when

problems were staring us in the face.

Insert from PAL8-15

Some of us first saw the effects of addiction on the people we were close to. We were very dependent on them to carry us emotionally through life. We felt angry, disappointed and hurt when they had other inter friends and loved ones. We were not happy in the past, dreaded the future, and we weren't too thrilled about the present. After years of searching, we were more unhappy and less satisfied than when it all began.

Our addiction had enslaved us. We were prisoners of our own mind, condemned by our own guilt. We had given up ever stopping. Our attempts to stay clean had always failed, causing us pain and misery.

As addicts, we have an incurable disease called addiction which is chronic, progressive and fatal. However, it is a treatable disease. We feel that each individual has to answer the question, "Am I an addict?", for themselves. How we got the disease is of no immediate importance to us. We are concerned with recovery.

We had tried to find answers but failed to find any workable solution until we found each other. Once we identify ourselves as addicts, help becomes possible. We can see a little of ourselves in every addict and a little bit of them in us. This insight lets us help one another. Our futures seemed hopeless until we found clean addicts who were willing to share with us. Denial of our addiction was what had kept us sick, and our honest admission enabled us to stop using. The people in Narcotics Anonymous told us that they were recovering addicts who had learned to live without drugs. If they could do it, so could we.

The only alternatives to recovery are jails, institutions, dere-  
<sup>pain</sup>struction and death. If we had not found the N.A. program that would not otherwise <sup>seem</sup> be possible. We have become very grateful in the course of our recovery. Our lives have become useful, <sup>by staying clean</sup> through abstinence and by working the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous.

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1 us all our lives. We have a disease from which we do recover. Each  
2 day we are given another chance. We are convinced that there is only  
3 one way for us to live, and that is the N.A. way.

## CHAPTER TWO

### WHAT IS THE N.A. PROGRAM?

N.A. is a non-profit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovered addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean. This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only "One" requirement for membership, the honest desire to stop using. There are no musts in N.A. but we suggest that you keep an open mind and give yourself a break. Our program is a set of principles, written so simply that we can follow them in our daily lives. The most important thing about them is that "They Work".

There are no strings attached to N.A. We are not affiliated with any other organizations, we have no leaders, no initiation fees or dues, no pledges to sign, no promises to make to anyone. We are not connected with any political, religious, or law enforcement groups, and are under no surveillance at any time. Anyone may join us regardless of age, race, color, creed, religion or lack of religion.

We are not interested in what or how much you used or who your connections were, what you have done in the past, how much or how little you have, but only in what you want to do about your problem and how we can help. The newcomer is the most important person at any meeting, because we can only keep what we have by giving it away. We have learned from our group experience that those who keep coming to our meetings regularly stay clean.

1        Narcotics Anonymous is a Fellowship of men and women who are  
2        learning to live without drugs. We are a non-profit society, and  
3        have no dues or fees of any kind. Each of us has paid the price  
4        of membership. We have paid dearly with our pain for the right  
5        to recover.

6        We are addicts surviving against all odds who meet regular-  
7        ly together. We respond to honest sharing and listen to the  
8        <sup>experience</sup> stories of our members for the message of recovery. We realize  
9        that, at last, there is hope for us.

10       We make use of the tools that have worked for other recover-

ing addicts who have learned to live without drugs in Narcotics Anonymous. The Twelve Steps are positive tools that make recovery possible. Our primary purpose is to stay clean and to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. We are united by our common problem of addiction. By meeting, talking with, and helping other addicts, we are able to stay clean. The newcomer is the most important person at any meeting because we can only keep what we have by giving it away.

Narcotics Anonymous has had more than twenty-five years of experience with literally hundreds of thousands of addicts. This mass of intensive, first-hand experience in all phases of illness and recovery is of unparalleled therapeutic value. We are here to share freely with any addict who wants it.

Our message of recovery is based on our own experience. Before coming to the Fellowship, we exhausted ourselves trying to "use" successfully, or trying to find out what was wrong with us. After coming to N.A., we found ourselves among a very special group of people, who have suffered like us and found recovery. In their experiences, freely shared, we found hope for ourselves. If the Program worked for them, it would work for us.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using. We have seen the Program work for any addict who honestly and sincerely wanted to stop. <sup>using. Many of us weren't</sup> ~~We don't have to be clean when we get here, but after the first meeting, we suggest that newcomers keep coming back and come back clean.~~ <sup>our tried to</sup> We don't have to wait for an overdose, or jail sentence, to get help from N.A. <sup>is not</sup> ~~nor is addiction a hopeless condition from which there is no recovery.~~

We meet addicts like ourselves who are clean. We watch and listen to them and realize that they have found a way to live and enjoy life without drugs. We don't have to settle for the limitations of the past. We can examine and re-examine all our old ideas and ~~constantly~~ improve on them or replace them with new ones. We are men and women who have discovered and admitted that we are powerless over our addiction. When we use, we lose.

When we <sup>accepted</sup> ~~discovered~~ that we cannot live with or without drugs, <sup>could not</sup> we sought help through N.A. rather than prolong our suffering





1 the Twelve Steps to sustain our recovery. Living this Program  
2 gives us a relationship with a Power greater than ourselves,  
3 corrects defects, leads us to help others, and where there has  
4 been wrong, teaches us the spirit of forgiveness.

5 Many books have been written about the nature of addiction.

6 This book concerns itself with the battle of recovery. If you  
7 are an addict and have found this book, please give yourself a  
8 break and read it.

CHAPTER THREE

WNY AND WE SERIES

Before coming to the fellowship of N.A., we could not manage our own lives, we could not live and enjoy life as other people do. We had to have something different and we thought we had found it in drugs. We placed their use ahead of the welfare of our families, our wives, husbands, and our children. We had to have drugs at all costs. We did many people great harm but most of all we harmed ourselves. Through our inability to accept personal responsibilities we were actually creating our own problems. We seemed to be incapable of facing life on its own terms.

Most of us realized, that in our addictions, we were slowly committing suicide, but such cunning enemies of life are narcotics and sedation that we had lost the power to do anything about it. Jail did not help us at all. Medicine, religion and psychiatry seemed to have no answers for us that we could use. All these methods having failed for us, in desperation, we sought help from each other in Narcotics Anonymous.

After coming to N.A. we realized we were sick people who suffered from a disease like Alcoholism, Diabetes or Tuberculosis. There is no known "Cure" for these--all, however, can be arrested at some point and "recovery" is then possible.

In N.A. we follow a program borrowed from Alcoholics Anonymous. In the last forty years more than one million people have recovered in A.A., most of them just as hopelessly addicted to alcohol as we were to drugs. We are deeply grateful to the A.A. Fellowship for pointing the way for us to a new way of life.

We are addicts seeking recovery. We used drugs to cover up our feelings, and did whatever was necessary to get them. Many of us woke up sick, unable to make it to work, or went to work blind. Many of us stole to support our habit. We hurt the ones we loved. We did all these things and told ourselves "we can handle it". We were looking for a way out. We couldn't face life on its own terms. In the beginning, using was fun. For us it became a habit and finally was necessary for survival. The progression of the disease was not apparent to us. We continued

1 on the path of destruction, unaware of where it was leading us.  
2 We were addicts and did not know it. Through drugs we tried to  
3 avoid reality, pain and misery. When the drugs wore off, we  
4 realized that we still had the same problems and that they were  
5 ~~relief by using more and more~~  
6 more drugs, more often.

7 We sought help and found none. Often doctors didn't under-  
8 stand our dilemma; they tried to help by giving us medication.  
9 Our husbands, wives and loved ones gave us what they had and  
10 drained themselves in the hope that we would stop using or get  
11 better. We tried substituting one drug for another, but this only  
12 prolonged our pain. We tried limiting our usage to "social"  
13 amounts without success. There is no such thing as a "social  
14 addict". Some of us sought an answer through churches, religions  
15 or cultism. Some sought a cure by geographic change, blaming our  
16 surroundings and living situations for our problems. This attempt<sup>These</sup>  
17 only gave us a chance to take advantage of new people. Some of  
18 us sought approval through sex or change of friends. This approval  
19 seeking carried us further into our addiction. Some of us tried  
20 marriage, divorce or desertion. Regardless of what we tried, we  
21 could not escape from our disease.

22 We reached a point in our lives where we felt like a lost  
23 cause. Our worth to our jobs, families and friends was little or  
24 none. Many of us were unemployed and unemployable. Any form of  
25 success was frightening and unfamiliar. We didn't know what to  
26 do. As the self-loathing grew, we needed to use more and more to  
27 mask our feelings. We were sick and tired of pain and trouble.  
28 We were frightened and ran from the fear. No matter how far we  
29 ran, we always carried the fear with us. We were hopeless, useless  
30 and lost. Failure had become our way of life and self-esteem was  
31 non-existent. Perhaps the most painful of all was the desperation  
32 of loneliness. Isolation and the denial of our addiction, kept us  
33 moving along this downhill path. Any hope of getting better dis-  
34 appeared. Helplessness, emptiness and fear became our way of  
35 life. We were complete failures. Personality change was what  
36 we really needed. Change from self-destructive patterns of life



1 became necessary. When we lied, cheated or stole, we degraded  
2 ourselves in our own eyes. We had had enough of self-destruction.  
3 We experienced how powerless we really are. When nothing re-  
4 lieved our paranoia and fear, we hit bottom and became ready to

5 we were searching for an answer when we reached out and  
6 found Narcotics Anonymous. We came to our first N.A. meeting in  
7 defeat and didn't know what to expect. After sitting in a meeting,  
8 or several meetings, we began to feel that people cared and were  
9 willing to help. Although our minds told us we would never make  
10 it, the people in the Fellowship gave us hope by insisting we  
11 could recover. We found that no matter what our past thoughts or  
12 actions were, others had felt and done the same. Surrounded by  
13 fellow addicts, we realized that we were not alone. Recovery is  
14 what happens in our meetings, each of our lives is at stake. We  
15 found that by putting recovery first, the Program works.

16 We faced three disturbing realizations:

- 17 1. We are powerless over addiction and  
18 our lives are unmanageable.
- 19 2. Although we are not responsible for  
20 our disease, we are responsible for  
21 our recovery.
- 22 3. We can no longer blame people, places  
23 and things for our addiction. We must  
24 face our problems and our feelings.

25 The ultimate weapon for recovery is the recovering addict.  
26 We concentrate on recovery and how we feel, not what we have done  
27 in the past. Old friends, places and ideas are often a threat to  
28 our recovery. We need to change our playmates, playgrounds and  
29 playthings.

30 When we realized we were not able to control our lives, some  
31 of us immediately began experiencing depression, anxiety, hostil-  
32 ity and resentment. Petty frustrations, minor setbacks and  
33 loneliness often made us feel that we were not getting any better.  
34 We found that we suffered from a disease, not a moral dilemma.  
35 We were critically ill, not hopelessly lost. Our disease was only

1 be arrested through abstinence.

2 Today we experience a full range of feelings. Before coming  
3 into the Fellowship, we either felt elated or depressed with very  
4 little in between. Our negative sense of self has been replaced  
5 by a positive sense of self. There are many people who have  
6 found themselves. It is a great gift to feel human again.

7 What a change from the way we used to be! That's how we  
8 know that the N.A. program works. It's the first thing that ever  
9 convinced us that we needed to change ourselves, instead of trying  
10 to change the people and situations around us. We discover new  
11 opportunities. We find a sense of self-worth. We learn self-  
12 respect. This is a program for doing just those things. By  
13 working the Steps, we come to accept a Higher Power's will; this  
acceptance leads us to recovery. We lose our fear of the unknown.  
We are set free.