

WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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To: Regional Literature Committees
From: Mary Jensen, Chairperson
WSC Literature Committee
Date: May 3, 1991
Re: Review of daily book entries

Hello everybody! We are looking forward to a very productive year in literature development, and we can't do it without your help!

Our production schedule for the daily book project involves three sample reviews by regional and area literature committees. This set, which was originally sent out for pre-review, is being redistributed for review and input. We're asking that you review these 33 daily book entries and submit your input by July 10, 1991.

As you may know, both the World Service Conference and the World Service Office are under severe financial constraints. Therefore, we are counting on you to copy and distribute these batches to area literature committees. You will receive the second review batch in early August and the final batch in late August. Each batch will be due back at the World Service Office in 60 days.

Much thought and discussion went into the WSCLC's decision to use sampling in the review and input process for this project. Due to the nature of this project, each entry stands alone. Passages do not depend on each other or interrelate in a thematic way. As you look at the first batch, the kinds of variety in content, audience, and style are the same kinds of diversity that will exist throughout the book. With this review option, we plan to have the book ready for inclusion in the 1992 CAR.

Some participants at the World Service Conference expressed concerns about the ability of literature committees to maintain the kind of timeline required by this plan. We see this as a year in which we will be depending heavily on the ability of committees to provide review on a fairly consistent basis. If this will be a problem for your committee, please let us know and we can work together to make sure that your input is considered. We will be counting on the ability of most of you to meet these deadlines.

Our experience with the daily book review panel last year indicated that these pieces are much easier to review than full-length essays. We believe that your committee will find a review pattern that works well for you. We are including a

form for you to use to facilitate both your review process and our interpretation of input.

Thank you for helping to make the daily book process work! If you have any questions, please call the literature coordinator, Mary VanEvery, at the World Service Office.

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DAILY BOOK REVIEW First Sample Batch (33)

This review form is being sent to assist you in evaluating the daily book entries. Please use this format to respond to all 33 pieces *in general*. If you have comments about individual entries, please attach them as indicated at the bottom of this form.

circle one

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|----|------------------|---|-----|----|
| 1. | Purpose: | Do these entries provide daily encouragement toward recovery in N.A.? | Yes | No |
| | | Do you think that these entries adequately meet the needs of our fellowship for a daily book? | Yes | No |
| 2. | Audience: | Do these entries speak to a diverse fellowship? | Yes | No |
| 3. | Leads: | Do the leads seem to be appropriate to the body? | Yes | No |
| | | Do you approve of using leads which are not from conference-approved literature? | Yes | No |
| 4. | Body: | Do you approve of the variety provided by an occasional entry which uses "I" rather than "we" in the narrative? | Yes | No |
| 5. | Closing: | Are you generally satisfied with the closings? | Yes | No |
| 6. | Language: | Is the language consistent with your understanding of N.A. philosophy? | Yes | No |
| 7. | Content: | Do you know members to whom these entries would speak? | Yes | No |
| 8. | Tone: | Does the tone seem encouraging toward recovery? | Yes | No |

General Comments: Please use a separate page to refer to specific entries that you believe need to be refocused or rejected. If you have answered "no" to items above, it would be helpful to us for you to include a short explanation of what you see as lacking in these areas. Thanks for the input!

God's will

"God's will for us becomes our own true will for ourselves."

Basic Text, page 46

The Twelve Steps are a path to spiritual awakening. This awakening takes the form of a developing relationship with a loving Higher Power. Each succeeding step strengthens that relationship. As we continue to work the steps, the relationship grows, becoming ever more important in our lives.

In the course of working the steps, we make a personal decision to allow our loving Higher Power to direct us. That guidance is always available, if we have the patience to seek it. Often, that guidance manifests itself in the inner wisdom we call our conscience.

When we open our hearts wide enough to sense God's guidance, we feel a calm serenity. This peace is the beacon that guides us through our troubled feelings, that provides clear direction when our minds are busy and confused. When we seek and follow God's will in our lives, we find the contentment and joy that always elude us when we strike out on our own. Oh, we may experience troubling feelings when we attempt to carry out God's will. Fear may plague us, or doubt. But we've learned to trust the moment of clarity. Our greatest happiness lies in following the will of our loving Higher Power.

FOR TODAY: I will seek to strengthen the relationship with my Higher Power. I know from experience that knowledge of God's will provides a sense of clarity, direction, and peace.

Reflection

"Quieting the mind through meditation brings an inner peace that brings us into contact with the God within us."

Basic Text, page 45

As our recovery progresses, we often reflect on what brought us to Narcotics Anonymous in the first place, and we are able to appreciate how much the quality of our lives has improved. We no longer fear our own thoughts. And the more we pray and meditate, the more we experience a calm sense of well-being. The peace and tranquility we experience during our quiet times confirms that our most important needs--our spiritual needs--are being met.

We are able to empathize with other addicts and strengthen our conscience in the process. We learn to avoid judging others and experience the freedom to be ourselves. In our spiritual reflection, we intuitively find "the God within us" and see that we are in harmony with a Power greater than ourselves.

FOR TODAY: I will reflect upon the gift of recovery and listen quietly for my Higher Power's guidance.

A new way to live

"When at the end of the road we find that we can no longer function as... human being[s]... we all face the same dilemma: ...either go on as best we can to the bitter ends... or find a new way to live."

Basic Text, page 84

What was the worst aspect of active addiction? For me, it wasn't the chance that I might die some day of my disease. The worst part was the living death I experienced every day, the never-ending meaninglessness of my life. I felt like a walking ghost, not a living, loving part of the world around me.

In recovery, I've come to believe that I'm here for a reason: to love myself and to love others. In working the Twelve Steps, I have learned to accept myself. With that self-acceptance has come self-respect. I have seen that everything I do has an effect on others--I am a part of the lives of those around me, and they of mine. I've begun to trust other people and to acknowledge my responsibility to them. I've started learning how to love myself and how to love others.

In recovery, I've come back to life: a walking, breathing member of the human race. I maintain that "membership" by contributing to the welfare of the whole and seeking each day to do that better--that's where the Tenth, Eleventh, and Twelfth Steps come in. The days of living like a ghost are past, but only so long as I actively seek to be a healthy, loving, contributing part of my own life and of the lives of others around me.

FOR TODAY: I have found a new way to live. Today, I will seek to serve others with love and to love myself.

Responsibility

"We are not responsible for our disease, only for our recovery. As we begin to apply what we have learned, our lives begin to change for the better."

Basic Text, page 88

The further we go in recovery, the less we avoid responsibility for ourselves and our actions. By applying the principles of the Narcotics Anonymous program, we are able to change our lives. Our existence takes on new meaning as we accept responsibility and the freedom of choice responsibility implies. We do not take recovery for granted.

We take responsibility for our recovery by working the Twelve Steps with a sponsor. We go to meetings regularly and share with the newcomer what was freely given to us--the gift of recovery. We become involved with our home group and accept responsibility for our part in sharing recovery with the still-suffering addict. As we learn how to effectively practice spiritual principles in all areas of our lives, the quality of our lives improves.

FOR TODAY: Using the spiritual tools I've gained in recovery, I am willing and able to make responsible choices.

Prayer

"Prayer takes practice, and we should remind ourselves that skilled people were not born with their skills."

Basic Text, page 45

Many of us came into recovery with no experience in prayer and worried about not knowing the "right words." Some of us remembered the words we'd learned in childhood but weren't sure we believed in those words anymore. Whatever our background, in recovery we struggled to find words that spoke truly for our spirits.

Often the first prayer we attempt is a simple request to our Higher Power, asking for help staying clean each day. We may ask for guidance and courage or simply pray for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out. If we find ourselves stumbling in our prayers, we may ask other members to share with us about how they learned to pray. No matter whether we pray in need or pray in joy, the important thing is to keep making the effort.

Our prayers will be shaped by our experience with the Twelve Steps and our personal understanding of a Higher Power. As our relationship with that Higher Power develops, we become more comfortable with prayer. In time, prayer becomes a source of strength and comfort. We seek that source often and willingly.

FOR TODAY: I know that prayer can be simple. I will start where I am and practice.

Change and growth

*"When someone points out a shortcoming, our first reaction may be defensive.
There will always be room for growth."*

Basic Text, page 35

Recovery is a process that brings about change in our lives. We need that change if we are to continue our growth toward freedom. It's important that we remain open-minded when others point out our shortcomings, for they are bringing to light opportunities for us to change and grow. Reacting defensively limits our ability to receive the help they are offering us; letting go of our defenses opens the door to change, growth, and new freedom.

Each day in the recovery process will bring an opportunity for further change and growth. The more we learn to greet change with an open mind and heart, the more we will grow, and the more comfortable we will become with our recovery.

FOR TODAY: I will greet each opportunity for growth with an open mind.

Meeting the day's challenge

"The decision to ask for God's help is our greatest source of strength and courage."

Basic Text, page 26

A challenge is anything that dares us to succeed. Things new and unfamiliar serve as challenges, whether those things appear good or bad to us. We are challenged by obstacles and opposition from within ourselves and from without. New and difficult things, obstacles and opposition, are all a part of "life on life's terms." Living clean means learning to meet challenge.

Many of us, consciously or unconsciously, took drugs to avoid meeting challenge. We were afraid to fail and afraid to succeed. Each time we declined the day's challenge, we suffered a loss of self-esteem. Some of us used drugs to mask the shame we felt. Each time we did that, we became even less able to meet our challenges and more likely to use.

By working the N.A. program, we've found the tools we need to successfully meet any challenge. We've come to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, a Power that cares for our will and our lives. We've asked that Power to remove our character defects, those things that made our lives unmanageable. We've taken action to improve our conscious contact with that Higher Power. Through the steps, we've been given the ability to stop using drugs and start living.

Each day, we are faced with new challenges. And each day, through working our program of recovery, we are given the grace to meet those challenges.

FOR TODAY: I will seek the Power I need to meet today's challenge.

The masks have to go

"...we covered low self-esteem by hiding behind phony images that we hoped would fool people. The masks have to go."

Basic Text, page 32

Over-sensitivity, insecurity, and lack of identity are often associated with active addiction. We carry these with us into recovery; our fears of inadequacy, rejection, and lack of direction do not disappear overnight. Many of us have images, false personalities constructed either to protect ourselves or please others. Some of us use masks because we're not sure who we really are. Sometimes we think that the images built to protect us while using might also protect us in recovery.

We use false fronts to hide our true personality, to disguise our lack of self-esteem. These masks hide us from others and also from our own true selves. By living a lie, we are saying that we cannot live with the truth about ourselves. The more we hide our real selves, the more we damage our self-esteem.

One of the miracles of recovery is the recognition of ourselves, complete with assets and liabilities. Self-esteem begins with this recognition. Despite our fear of becoming vulnerable, we need to be willing to let go of our disguises. We need to be free of our masks and free to trust ourselves.

FOR TODAY: I will let go of my masks and allow my self-esteem to grow.

Embracing reality

"Recovery is a reality for us today."

Basic Text, page 97

Pain and misery were realities in our using lives. We were unwilling either to accept our living situation or to change what was unacceptable in our lives. We attempted to escape life's pain by taking drugs, but using only compounded our woes. Our altered sense of reality became a nightmare.

Through living the program of Narcotics Anonymous, we learn that our dreams can replace our nightmares. We grow and change. We acquire the freedom of choice. We are able to give and receive love. We can share honestly about ourselves, no longer magnifying or minimizing the truth. We accept the challenges real life offers us, facing them in a mature, responsible way.

Although recovery does not give us immunity from the realities of life, in the N.A. Fellowship we can find the support, genuine care, and concern we need to face those realities. We need never hide from reality by using drugs again, for our unity with other recovering addicts gives us strength. Today, the support, the care, and the empathy of recovery give us a clean, clear window through which to view, experience, and appreciate reality as it is.

FOR TODAY: A gift of my recovery is living and enjoying life as it truly is. Today, I will embrace reality.

Surrender

In addiction, we try to run on our own power and direction, only to find we lack the power to control and manage our way to a better life. We must surrender.

Anonymous

When we were using, we did everything we could to run things our way. We used every scheme imaginable to bring our world under control. When we got what we wanted, we felt powerful, invincible; when we didn't, we felt vulnerable, defeated. But that didn't stop us--it only led to more efforts to control and manipulate our lives into a manageable state.

Scheming was our way of denying our powerlessness. As long as we could distract ourselves with our plans, we could put off accepting that we were out of control. Only gradually did we realize that our lives had become unmanageable and that all the conning and manipulating in the world was not going to put our lives back in order.

When we admit our powerlessness, we stop trying to control and manage our way to a better life--we surrender. Lacking sufficient power of our own, we seek a Power greater than ourselves; needing support and guidance, we ask that Power to care for our will and our lives. We ask others in recovery to share their experience with living the N.A. program instead of trying to program our own lives. The power and direction we seek is all around us; we need only turn away from self to find it.

FOR TODAY: I will not try to scheme and manipulate my way to a manageable life. Through the N.A. program, I will surrender myself to my Higher Power's care.

Surrendering self-will

"We want and demand that things always go our way. We should know from our past experience that our way of doing things did not work."

Basic Text, page 90

All of us have ideas, plans, goals for our lives. There's nothing in the N.A. program that says we shouldn't think for ourselves, take initiative, and put responsible plans into action. We run into problems only when our lives are driven by self-will.

When we are living willfully, we go beyond thinking *for* ourselves--we think only *of* ourselves. We forget that we are but a part of the world and that whatever personal strength we have is drawn from a Higher Power. We might even go so far as to imagine that other people exist solely to do our bidding. Quickly, we find ourselves at odds with everyone and everything around us.

At this point, we have two choices. We can continue in our slavery to self-will, making unreasonable demands and becoming frustrated because the planet doesn't spin our way. Or we can surrender, relax, seek knowledge of God's will and the power to carry that out, and find our way back to a condition of peace with the world. Thinking, taking initiative, making responsible plans--there's nothing wrong with these things, so long as they serve God's will, not merely our own.

FOR TODAY: I will plan to do God's will, not mine. If I find myself at odds with everything around me, I will surrender self-will.

Unconditional surrender

"Help for addicts begins only when we are able to admit complete defeat. This can be frightening, but it is the foundation on which we built our lives."

Basic Text, page 22

I've tried everything I can think of, exerted every ounce of force possible, to fill the spiritual hole inside me. Nothing--not drugs, not control and management, not sex, money, property, power, or prestige--has filled it. I *am* powerless; my life *is* unmanageable, at least by me alone. My denial will not change that fact.

So I surrender; I ask God to care for my will and my life. Sometimes in surrendering, I don't *know* that a Power greater than myself exists which can restore me to wholeness. Sometimes I'm not *sure* that the God of my understanding will care for my unmanageable life. My lack of certainty, though, does not affect the essential truth: I am powerless. My life is unmanageable. I must surrender. Only by doing so can I open myself wide--wide enough for my old ideas and past wreckage to be cleared, wide enough for God's grace to enter.

FOR TODAY: I will surrender unconditionally. I can make it as easy or as hard as I choose. Either way, I have to do it.

Recovery gardening

Gardening is long, slow, hard work--but if we want to reap, we've first got to sow.

Anonymous

Our recovery is like a garden. Before the seed of spiritual growth can be planted in our hearts, the hard ground of our addiction must be broken. The First Step does that, early in the spring of our recovery, by breaking through our denial. The beginnings of faith in the Second Step, and the decision to put that faith into action in the Third, turn the broken soil. Then, in the next steps, we identify the spiritual "weeds" in our lives and ask that they be removed. We clear the rocks from our recovery garden by making amends, making it easier to tend our spiritual growth. In Step Ten, we continue to weed our recovery garden, eliminating dangerous growths before they have a chance to sink their choking roots in our lives. By praying and meditating on a regular basis, we water our spirit. Finally, in Step Twelve, "having had a spiritual awakening," we reap the benefit of our long, patient effort. The harvest of our recovery garden is the fullness of a life worth living, a life recovered from the cold, flinty soil of our addiction--a life so full, in fact, that we have more than enough spirit to share with others.

FOR TODAY: I will work my recovery garden and enjoy the fruit of the Twelve Steps. I will share that fruit with others and cultivate spiritual growth in all my affairs.

Self-acceptance

"The most effective means of achieving self acceptance is through applying the Twelve Steps of recovery."

IP-19, "Self Acceptance"

Most of us came to Narcotics Anonymous without much self-acceptance. We looked at the havoc we had wreaked in our active addiction, and we loathed ourselves. We had difficulty accepting our past, and the self-image produced by it.

Self-acceptance comes more quickly when we first accept that we have a disease called *addiction*, because it's easier to accept ourselves as sick people than as bad people. And the easier it is to accept ourselves, the easier it becomes to accept responsibility for ourselves.

We achieve self-acceptance through the process of ongoing recovery. Working the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous teaches us to accept ourselves and our lives. Spiritual principles like surrender, honesty, faith, and humility help relieve us of the burden of our past mistakes. Our attitude changes with the application of these principles in our daily lives. Self-acceptance grows as we grow in recovery.

FOR TODAY: Self-acceptance is a process set in motion by the Twelve Steps. Today, I will trust the process, practice the steps, and learn to better accept myself.

The group

"The Twelfth Step of our personal program also says that we carry the message to the addict who still suffers.... The group is the most powerful vehicle we have for carrying the message."

Basic Text, page 65

When we first come to Narcotics Anonymous meetings, we meet recovering addicts. We know they are *addicts* because they talk about the same experiences and feelings we've had. We know they are *recovering* because of their serenity--they've got something we want. We feel hope when other addicts share their recovery with us in N.A. meetings.

The atmosphere of recovery attracts us to the meetings. That atmosphere is created when group members make a commitment to work together. We try to enhance the atmosphere of recovery by helping set up for meetings, greeting newcomers, and talking with other addicts after the meeting. These demonstrations of our commitment make our meetings attractive and help our groups share their recovery.

Sharing experience in meetings is one way in which we help one another, and it's often the foundation for our sense of belonging. We identify with other addicts, so we trust their message of hope. Many of us would not have stayed in Narcotics Anonymous without that sense of belonging and hope. When we share at group meetings, we support our personal recovery while helping others.

FOR TODAY: I will reach out to another addict in my group and share my recovery.

**The Fourth Step--
fearing our feelings**

"We may fear that being in touch with our feelings will trigger an overwhelming chain reaction of pain and panic."

Basic Text, page 29

A common complaint about the Fourth Step is that it makes us painfully conscious of our defects of character. We may be tempted to falter in our program of recovery. Through surrender and acceptance, we can find the resources we need to keep working the steps.

It's not the awareness of our defects that causes the most agony--it's the defects themselves. When we were using, all we felt was the drugs; we could ignore the suffering our defects were causing us. Now that the drugs are gone, we feel that pain. Refusing to acknowledge the source of our anguish doesn't make it go away; denial *protects* the pain and makes it stronger. The Twelve Steps help us deal with the misery caused by our defects by dealing directly with the defects themselves.

If we hurt from the pain of our defects, we can remind ourselves of the nightmare of addiction, a nightmare from which we've now awoken. We can recall the hope for release the Second Step gave us. We can again turn our will and our lives over, through the Third Step, to the care of the God of our understanding. Our Higher Power cares for us by giving us the help we need to work the rest of the Twelve Steps. And with God caring for us, we don't have to fear our feelings. Just for today, we can continue in our recovery.

FOR TODAY: I won't be afraid of my feelings. With the help of my Higher Power, I'll continue in my recovery.

Anonymity and self-will

"The drive for personal gain... which brought so much pain in the past, falls by the wayside if we adhere to the principle of anonymity."

Basic Text, page 73

The word *anonymity* itself means *namelessness*, but there's a larger principle at work in the anonymity of the N.A. program: the principle of *selflessness*. When we admit our powerlessness to manage our own lives, we take our first step away from self-will and our first step toward selflessness. The less we try to run our lives on self-will, the more we find the power and direction once so sorely lacking in our lives.

But the principle of selflessness does a lot more than just make us feel better-- it helps us live better. Our ideas of how the world should be run begin to lose their importance, and we stop trying to impose our will on everyone and everything around us. And when we abandon our illusion of omnipotence and start recognizing the value of other peoples' experience, we start treating them with respect. The interests of others become as important to us as our own; we start to think about what's best for the group, rather than just what's best for us. We start living a life that's bigger than we are, that's more than just us, our name, our self--we start living the principle of anonymity.

FOR TODAY: God, please free me from self-will. Help me understand the principle of anonymity; help me to live selflessly.

Freedom from guilt

"Our addiction enslaved us. We were prisoners of our own mind and were condemned by our own guilt."

Basic Text, page 7

Guilt is one of the most commonly-encountered stumbling blocks in recovery. One of the more notorious forms of guilt is the self-loathing that results when we try to forgive ourselves but don't feel forgiven.

How can we forgive ourselves so we *feel* it? First, we remember that guilt and failure are not links in an unbreakable chain. Honestly sharing with a sponsor and with other addicts shows this to be true. Often the result of such sharing is a more sensible awareness of the part we ourselves have played in our affairs. Sometimes we realize that our expectations have been too high. We increase our willingness to participate in the solutions rather than dwelling on the problems.

Somewhere along the way, we discover who we really are. We usually find that we are neither the angels nor the devils we had imagined ourselves to be. We need not live up to, or down to, our illusions; we need only live in reality.

FOR TODAY: I am grateful for my assets and accept my liabilities. Through willingness and humility, I am freed to progress in my recovery and achieve freedom from guilt.

Practicing honesty

"When we feel trapped or pressured, it takes great spiritual and emotional strength to be honest."

Basic Text, page 81

Many of us try to wiggle out of a difficult spot by being dishonest, only to have to humble ourselves later and tell the truth. Some of us twist our stories as a matter of course, even when we could just as easily tell the plain truth. Every time we try to avoid being honest, it backfires on us. Honesty may be uncomfortable, but the trouble we have to endure when we are dishonest is usually far worse than the discomfort of on-the-spot disclosures.

Honesty is one of the fundamental principles of recovery. We apply this principle right from the beginning of our recovery, when we finally admit our powerlessness and unmanageability. We continue to apply the principle of honesty each time we are faced with the option of living in fantasy or living life on its own terms. Learning to be honest isn't always easy, especially after the covering up and deception so many of us practiced in our addiction. Our voices may shake as we test our new-found honesty. But before long, the sound of the truth coming from our own mouths settles any doubts: Honesty feels good! It's easier living the truth than living a lie.

FOR TODAY: I will honestly embrace life, with all its pressures and demands. I will practice honesty, even when it is awkward to do so. Honesty will help, not hurt, my efforts to live clean and happy.

Fear

"We grow to feel comfortable with our Higher Power as a source of strength. As we learn to trust this Power, we begin to overcome our fear of life."

Basic Text, page 24

Powerless as we are, living on self-will is a frightening, unmanageable experience. In recovery, we have turned our will and our lives safely over to the care of the God of our understanding. When we lapse in our program, when we lose conscious contact with our Higher Power, we begin to take control of our own lives again, refusing the care of the God of our understanding. If we do not make a daily decision to surrender our lives to the care of our Higher Power, we may become overwhelmed with the fear of life born of our powerlessness.

Through working the Twelve Steps, we've found that faith in a Power greater than ourselves helps relieve our fear. As we draw closer to a loving God, we become more conscious of our Higher Power. And the more conscious we are of God's care for us, the less our fears.

When we feel afraid, we ask ourselves, "Is this fear an indication of the lack of faith in my life? Have I taken control again, only to find my life still unmanageable?" If we answer yes to these questions, we can overcome our fear by turning our will and our lives back over to care of the God of our understanding.

FOR TODAY: I will rely on the care of my Higher Power to relieve my fear of life.

New ideas

"We re-evaluate our old ideas, so we can become acquainted with the new ideas that lead to a new way of life."

Basic Text, page 91

Learning to live a new way of life can be difficult. Sometimes, when the going gets especially hard, we're tempted to follow the path of least resistance and live by our old ideas again. We forget that our old ideas were killing us. To live a new way of life, we need to open our minds to new ideas.

Working the steps, attending meetings, sharing with others, trusting a sponsor--these suggestions may meet our resistance, even rebellion. The N.A. program requires effort, but each step in the program brings us closer to becoming the kinds of people we truly want to be. We want to change, to grow, to become something more than we are today. To do that, we open our minds, try on the new ideas we've found in N.A., and learn to live a new way of life.

FOR TODAY: Higher Power, please open my mind to new ideas. Help me live my life in a new way.

The Ninth Step--reclaiming life

"We are achieving freedom from the wreckage of our past."

Basic Text, page 40

When we start the Ninth Step, we've reached an exciting stage in our lives. The damage done in our lives is what led many of us to seek help in the first place. Now, we have a chance to clean up that wreckage, amend our past, and reclaim our lives.

We've spent a long time and much effort preparing for this step. When we came to N.A., facing the debris of our past was probably the last thing we wanted to do. We started doing it privately with a personal inventory. Then, we opened our past up to the scrutiny of a select, trusted few: ourselves, our God, and one other person. We took a look at our shortcomings, the source of much of the chaos in our lives, and asked that all those defects of character be removed. Finally, we listed the amends needed to set our wrongs right--*all* of them--and became willing to make them.

Now, we have the opportunity to make amends--to acquire freedom from the wreckage of our past. Everything we've done so far in N.A. has led us here. At this point in the process of our recovery, the Ninth Step is exactly what we want to do. With the Twelve Steps and the help of a Higher Power, we are clearing away the rubble that for so long has stood in the way of our progress; we are gaining the freedom to live.

FOR TODAY: I will take advantage of the opportunity to reclaim my life. I will experience freedom from the wreckage of my past.

Accepting life as it is

"In our recovery, we find it essential to accept reality. Once we can do this, we do not find it necessary to use drugs in an attempt to change our perceptions."

Basic Text, page 87

Drugs used to buffer us from the full force of life. When we stop using drugs and enter recovery, we find ourselves confronted directly with life. We may experience disappointment, frustration, or anger. Events may not happen the way we want them to. The self-centeredness we cultivated in our addiction has skewed our perceptions of life; it is difficult to let go of our expectations and accept life as it is.

We learn to accept our lives by working the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. We discover how to change our attitudes and let go of character defects. We no longer need to distort the truth or to run from situations. The more we practice the spiritual principles contained in the steps, the easier it becomes to accept life exactly as it comes to us.

FOR TODAY: I will accept my life, just as it is.

Risking vulnerability

"As we grow, we learn to overcome the tendency to run and hide from ourselves and our feelings."

Basic Text, page 81

Rather than risk vulnerability, many of us have developed habits that keep others at a safe distance. These patterns of emotional isolation can give us the feeling we are hopelessly locked behind our masks. We used to take risks with our lives; now we can take risks with our feelings. Through sharing with other addicts, we learn that we are not unique; we do not make ourselves unduly vulnerable simply by letting others know who we are, for we are in good company. And by working the Twelve Steps of the N.A. program, we grow and change. We no longer want or need to hide our emerging selves. We are offered the opportunity to shed the emotional camouflage we developed to survive our active addiction.

By opening ourselves to others, we risk becoming vulnerable, but that risk is well worth the rewards. With the help of our sponsors and other recovering addicts, we learn how to express our feelings honestly and openly. In turn, we become nourished and encouraged by the unconditional love of our companions. As we practice spiritual principles, we find strength and freedom, both in ourselves and in those around us. We are set free to be ourselves and to enjoy the company of our fellows.

FOR TODAY: I will openly and honestly share with another recovering addict. I will risk becoming vulnerable and celebrate my self and my camaraderie with other N.A. members. I will grow.

**Trusting a sponsor--
worth the risk**

"A sponsor is... someone we can trust to share our life experiences with..."

I.P. #11, "Sponsorship"

The idea of sponsorship may be new to us. We have spent many years without direction, relying only on self-interest, suspecting everyone, trusting no one. Now that we're learning to live in recovery, we find we need help. We can't do it alone anymore; we must take the risk of trusting another human being. Often, the first person we take that risk with is our sponsor--someone we respect, someone we identify with, someone we have reason to trust.

As we open up to our sponsor, a bond develops between us. We disclose our secrets and develop confidence in our sponsor's discretion. We share our concerns and learn to value our sponsor's experience. We share our pain and are met with empathy. We get to know one another, respect one another, love one another. The more we trust our sponsor, the more we discover that our sponsor is worthy of our trust.

Trust helps us move away from a life of fear, confusion, suspicion, and indirection. In the beginning, it feels risky to trust another addict. But that trust is the same principle we apply in our relationship with a Higher Power--risky or not, our experience tells us we can't do without it. And the more we take the risk of trusting our sponsor, the more open we will feel about our lives.

FOR TODAY: I want to grow and change. I will risk trusting my sponsor and find the rewards of sharing.

**Self-pity or recovery--
it's our choice**

"Self-pity is one of the most destructive of defects; it will drain us of all positive energy."

Basic Text, page 77

In active addiction, many of us used self-pity as a survival mechanism. We didn't believe there was an alternative to living in our disease--or perhaps we didn't want to believe. As long as we could feel sorry for ourselves and blame someone else for our troubles, we didn't have to accept the consequences of our actions; believing ourselves powerless to change, we didn't have to accept the need for change. Using this "survival mechanism" kept us from entering recovery and led us closer, day by day, to self-destruction. Self-pity is a tool of our disease; we need to stop using it and learn instead to use the new tools we find in the N.A. program.

We have come to believe that effective help is available for us; when we seek that help and find it in the N.A. program, self-pity is displaced by gratitude. Many tools are at our disposal: the Twelve Steps, the support of our sponsor, the fellowship of other recovering addicts, and the care of our Higher Power. The availability of all these tools is more than enough reason to be grateful. We no longer live in isolation, without hope; we have certain help at hand for anything we may face. The surest way to become grateful is to take advantage of the help available to us in the N.A. program and to experience the improvement the program will bring in our lives.

FOR TODAY: I will be grateful for the hope N.A. has given me. I will cultivate my recovery and stop cultivating self-pity.

Surviving our emotions

"We use the tools available to us, and we develop the ability to survive our emotions."

Basic Text, page 30

Survive my emotions? You've got to be kidding! When I was using, I never gave myself the chance to *learn* how to survive them. You don't survive your feelings, I thought--you drug them. The problem was, that "cure" for my unsurvivable emotions was killing me. That's when I came to Narcotics Anonymous, started working the Twelve Steps and, as a result, began to mature emotionally.

I found emotional relief right from the start. I was tired of pretending that my addiction and my life were under control; it actually felt good to finally admit they weren't. After sharing my inventory with my sponsor, I began to feel like I didn't have to deny who I was or what I felt in order to be accepted. When I'd finished making my amends, I knew I didn't have to suffer with guilt; I could own up to it, and it wouldn't kill me. The more I worked the N.A. program, the better I felt about living life as it came to me.

The program works today as well as it ever did. By taking stock of my day, getting honest about my part in it, and surrendering to reality, I can survive the feelings life throws my way. By using the tools available to me, I've developed the ability to survive my emotions.

FOR TODAY: I will not deny my feelings. I will practice honesty and surrender to life as it is. I will use the tools of this program to survive my emotions.

Gratefully recovering

"We entertained the thought that staying clean was not paying off, and the old thinking stirred up self-pity, resentment and anger."

Basic Text, page 98

There are days when some of us wallow in self-pity. It's easy to do. We may have expectations about how our lives *should* be in recovery, expectations that aren't always met. Maybe we've tried to control someone without success, or we think circumstances should be different. Perhaps we've compared ourselves with other recovering addicts and found ourselves lacking. The more we try to make our life conform to our expectations, the more uncomfortable we feel. Self-pity arises from living in our expectations instead of in the world as it actually is.

When the world doesn't measure up to our expectations, it's our expectations that need adjusting, not the world. We can start by comparing our lives today with the way they used to be, cultivating gratitude for our recovery. We can extend this exercise in gratitude by counting the good things in our lives, becoming thankful that the world does not conform to our expectations but exceeds them. And if we continue working the Twelve Steps, further cultivating gratitude and acceptance, what we can expect in the future is more growth, more happiness, and more peace of mind.

We've been given much in recovery; staying clean *has* paid off. Acceptance of our lives, a day at a time, frees us from our self-pity.

FOR TODAY: I will accept my life, gratefully, just as it is.

Courage to change

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.

The Serenity Prayer

Recovery means change, and change means doing things differently. The problem is, I resist doing things differently; what I'm doing may not be working, but at least I'm familiar with it. It takes courage to step out into the unknown. How do I find that courage?

First, I look around myself at N.A. meetings. There, I see others who've found they needed to change what they were doing and who've done so successfully. Not only does that still my fear that change--any change--spells disaster, it also gives me the benefit of their experience with what *does* work, experience I can use in changing what *doesn't*.

Second, I look at my own recovery experience. Even if that experience, so far, has been limited to stopping the use of drugs, still I *have* made many changes in my life--changes for the good. Whatever aspect of my life I have applied the steps to, I have found no comparison between surrender and denial, recovery and addiction.

My own experience and the experience of others in N.A. tells me that "changing the things I can" is a big part of what recovery is all about. The steps and the Power to practice them give me the direction and courage I need to change. I have nothing to fear.

FOR TODAY: I welcome change. With the help of my Higher Power, I will find the courage to change the things I can.

Seeking God's will

"We learn to be careful of praying for specific things...."

Basic Text, page 45

In our active addiction, we usually did not pray for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry it out. On the contrary, most of our prayers were for God to get us out of the mess we had made for ourselves. We treated God like the genie in Aladdin's lamp, expecting miracles on demand. That kind of thinking and praying changes when we begin practicing the Eleventh Step. The only way out of the trouble we have made for ourselves is through surrender to a Power greater than ourselves.

In recovery, we learn acceptance. We seek knowledge in our prayers and meditation of how we are to greet the circumstances that come our way. We stop fighting, surrender our own ideas of how things should be, ask for knowledge, and listen for the answers. The answers usually won't come in a flash of white light accompanied by a drum roll. Usually, the answers will come merely with a quiet sense of assurance that our lives are on course, that a Power greater than ourselves is guiding us on our paths.

We have a choice. We can spend all our time fighting to make things come out our way, or we can surrender to God's will. Peace can only be found in accepting the ebb and flow of life.

FOR TODAY: I will surrender my expectations, look to my Higher Power for guidance, and accept life.

Surrendering self-will

"Our fears are lessened, and faith begins to grow as we learn the true meaning of surrender. We are no longer fighting fear, anger, guilt, self-pity or depression."

Basic Text, page 26

Surrender is the beginning of a new way of life. When driven primarily by self-will, we constantly wondered whether we'd covered all the bases, whether we'd manipulated that person in just the right way to achieve our ends, whether we'd missed a critical detail in our efforts to control and manage the world. We either felt afraid, fearing our schemes would fail; angry or self-pitying when they fell through; or guilty when we pulled them off. It was hard, living on self-will, but we didn't know any other way.

Not that surrender is easy. On the contrary, surrender is very difficult, especially in the beginning. Still, it's easier to trust God, a Power capable of managing our lives, than to trust only ourselves, whose lives are unmanageable. And the more we surrender, the easier it gets.

When we surrender, asking the God of our understanding to care for our will and our lives, we no longer have to cover all the bases--our Higher Power has already done so. All we have to do is our part, as responsibly and conscientiously as we can, and leave the results to God. By surrendering, acting on faith, and living our lives according to the simple spiritual principles of this program, we can stop worrying and start living.

FOR TODAY: I will surrender self-will. I will seek knowledge of God's will for me and the power to carry it out. I will leave the results in my Higher Power's hands.

New levels of honesty

"We have been experts at self-deception and rationalization."

Basic Text, page 27

When we come to our first meeting and hear that we must be honest, we may think, "Well now, that shouldn't be too difficult. All I have to do is stop lying." To some of us, this comes easily. We no longer have to lie to our employers about our absence from work. We no longer have to lie to our families about where we were the night before. By not using drugs anymore, we find we have less to lie about. Some of us may have difficulty even with this kind of honesty, but at least learning not to lie is simple--you just don't do it, no matter what. With courage, determined practice, the support of our fellow N.A. members, and the help of our Higher Power, most of us eventually succeed at this kind of honesty.

Honesty, though, means more than just not lying. The kind of honesty that is truly indispensable in recovery is self-honesty, which is neither easy nor simple to achieve. In our addiction, we created a storm of self-deception and rationalization, a whirlwind of lies in which the small, quiet voice of self-honesty could not be heard. To become honest with ourselves, we first must stop lying to ourselves. In our Eleventh Step meditations, we must become quiet. Then, in the resulting stillness, we must listen for truth. When we become silent, self-honesty will be there for us to find.

FOR TODAY: I will be quiet and still, listening for the voice of truth within myself. I will honor the truth I find.

Amends and sponsors

"We want to be free of our guilt, but we don't wish to do so at the expense of anyone else."

Basic Text, page 39

Let's face it: Most of us left a trail of destruction in our wakes and harmed anyone who got in our way. Some of the people we hurt most in our addiction were the people we loved most. In an effort to purge ourselves of the guilt we feel for what we've done, we may be tempted to share with our loved ones, in gruesome detail, things that are better left unsaid. Such disclosures could do much harm and may do little good.

The Ninth Step is not about easing our guilty consciences; it's about taking responsibility for the wrongs we've done. In working our Eighth and Ninth Steps, we should seek the guidance of our sponsors and amend our wrongs in a manner that won't cause us to owe more amends. We are not just seeking freedom from remorse—we are seeking freedom from our defects. We never again want to inflict harm on our loved ones. One way to insure that we do not is by working the Ninth Step responsibly, checking our motives, and discussing with a fellow addict the particular amends we plan to make before we make them.

FOR TODAY: I wish to accept responsibility for my actions. Before making any amends, I will talk with my sponsor.