

New Awakenings

Groups Are Narcotics Anonymous

... UNTIL IN DESPERATION ...

We certainly don't do it with gusto until we hit this point. As a creature of habit[s], I seem to always seek my own council first. BIG MISTAKE!!! Here in lies the deception. "Who could possibly know more about my problems than me?" Wrong!!! Who could be less objective than me? Seeking help from each other can be the solution to desperation.

When life became critical, I became the desperado. Actions were generated from a point of hopelessness. None of these methods were sufficient. The disease teaches discouragement and despondency. What a wretched life that can be. It's familiar, yet dire and extreme.

How much despair can one person handle? In my experience and from what I have witnessed around me, it is truly awesome what pain we can endure. What a incredibly pitiful life it can become again at any turn of events. To once again feel that there is no remedy. To have hope again and return to the feeling that there is no attainable solution. All this simply from the unwillingness to communicate and seek help from those that are doing something.

At some point in time we recognize that we are SICK. Many of my derailments have come from forgetting this. Desperation has become a great motivator in my recovery. When I know that it is there to return to, I become aware that there are positive ways to put it to use.

Many come to this Fellowship with various reasons, in search of something. Those who find social recovery here are fortunate. Those of us who are truly desperate are blessed. Willing to run any risk to do what others have told us works for them, we stand a chance of finding all that this program has to offer. Some say it gets Easier..RIGHT..Returning to having all the right answers spells DOOM!!! God has never failed to show me my character defects when consulted.

This desperation thing has brought me from despondency to optimism, from being disheartened to being encouraged. It's taken me from a wretched existence to one of kindness, love and caring. No longer pitiful, I'm living a life that is not only joyous and abundant with freedom, but truly filled with a happiness that wouldn't have come without the recognized need.

So I have learned to go for it. I spend more time now, in my daily life, trying to get better and carry the message, than I did trying to stay loaded. My search is for the ones who have this same need, this same hunger. You taught me to step out on faith and brothers and sisters, <<<< I'M GOING >>>> WATCH OUT!!!

I AM TRULY A DESPERATE MAN!!!

LET'S GET DOWN AND DESPERATE TOGETHER
WRITE TO ME IN CARE OF THIS NEWSLETTER

Publishing Box

New Awakenings is an alternative service for the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. It is authorized by a number of N.A. Groups worldwide. We'd like to take this opportunity to reiterate some points we've made here in the past.

Narcotics Anonymous members, Groups, and committees may freely reproduce *New Awakenings* in whole or in part so long as the text is not altered: this would be a violation of our fellowship Spiritual trust.

Another point needing to be re-made is that we do not necessarily endorse any point of view appearing here. You write it, you read it, you don't like it, please rebut it. Healthy exchange.

We really want your articles, opinions, letters, feedback, etc. Stay in touch!

Financial Statement

Received:

New York	5.00
Ohio	5.00
California	10.00
Illinois	5.00
Virginia	10.00
England	5.00
Washington D.C.	15.00
Massachusetts	5.00
Florida	5.00
Maryland	14.43
Illinois	5.00
England	6.01
Pennsylvania	7.50
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	97.94 Total

Expenses Issue 4:

Paper	14.32
Printing	110.80
Postage	44.37
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	169.49 Total

Tradition 12

"Anonymity is the Spiritual Foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place Principles before Personalities."

"While we may Disagree as individuals, the Spiritual Principle of Anonymity makes us all Equal as Member of the Group. No Member is greater or Lesser than any other Member."

"Anonymity is one of the Basic elements of our Recovery and so pervades our Traditions and our Fellowship. It protects us from our own defects of character and renders personalities and their differences powerless. Anonymity in action makes it impossible for Personalities to come before Principles."

I have been clear and committed to Recovery in our beautiful Fellowship for some time now, but only recently have been learning about the joy and the freedom available by learning to apply the Traditions in my life (also). Where do I learn first hand about the Traditions? In our Groups, particularly my Home Group, where I am actively involved in Group Conscience. For some years in my Recovery I did not realize that every Member in our Groups is equal whether you have ONE DAY CLEAN or FIFTY YEARS. That every voice should be heard on matters especially effecting our Home Groups.

For my own Recovery recently I've found how I must start to put Principles before Personalities. To speak up for what I believe in and not be afraid. I will not recover if I live in fear or act through fear. Spiritual Principles should never be in conflict. Fear and Faith do not co-exist equally in me. One is usually greater than the other. Fear is a natural state for me. Faith requires practice and perseverance. Fear is a major shortcoming in my life. Recovery through the Spiritual Principles contained in our 12 Steps and 12 Traditions is the answer.

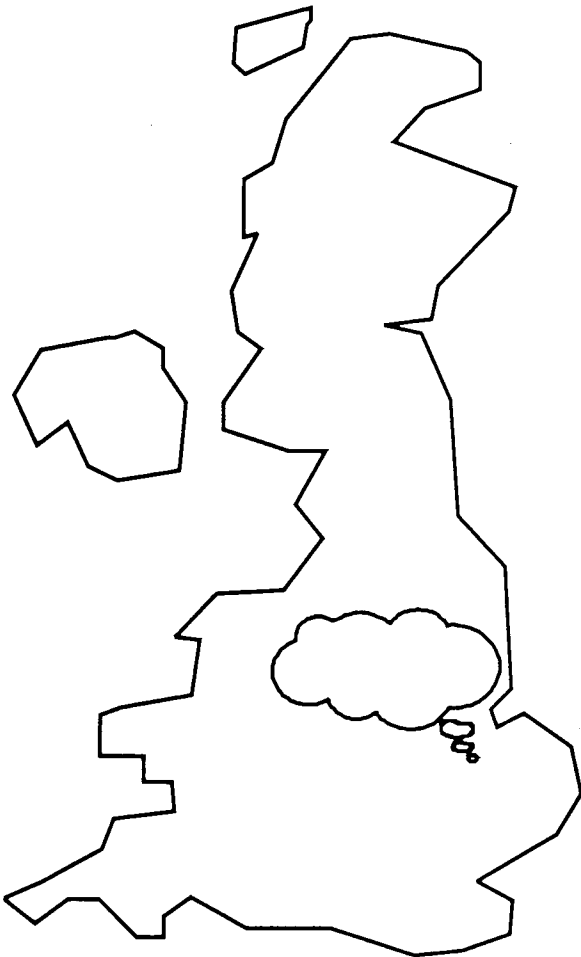
Today I don't have to run away in difficult times. I am learning to live life on life's terms. Life on my terms was killing me. Even in Recovery, life on my terms will kill the quality of my life. I have the Disease of Addiction that I can arrest through abstinence and treat only with spiritual Principles. And there is no equal to the help I have received from other Addicts.

It doesn't come natural for me to allow others their point of view, particularly when it completely opposes my view points, but it gets easier with practice. I am learning that we truly can "disagree without being disagreeable." If we can't I believe it says something about our own personal Recoveries. True Spiritual Principles will never be in conflict.

I have worked Steps to the best of my ability and today have a good relationship with my self and my higher power that I choose to call God. I have much to learn about applying the Traditions, to have better relationships with you, our Fellowship, people in my family, my work and society in general. These are exciting times for me indeed, for I know that more freedom will result.

Today secure in the Love of the Fellowship and my Higher Power I know once again, "It's not where we were that counts, but where we are going."

Reprinted from the Cambridge N.A. *New Attitudes*



GROUP CONSCIENCE

In service to NA, "...there is but one ultimate authority, a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience..."

What is this thing called group conscience? How does it develop? When can we be sure it has been expressed? Upon what does it depend? Our basic text warns us, "...We must be constantly on guard that our decisions are truly an expression of God's will. There is often a vast difference between group conscience and group opinion ... Some of our most painful growing experiences have come as a result of decisions made in the name of group conscience."

It seems that the gathering together of NA members to discuss and decide upon an issue does not insure that the result will be the conscience of that group or an expression of our Ultimate Authority. The limiting factors seem to be the accuracy and completeness of information provided, and quality of recovery, or spiritual base, of the members involved.

Group conscience is only a channel for the expression of our Ultimate Authority. The clarity of the channel is dependent upon each individual's ability to clear a channel to a personal Power greater than themselves. Active addiction, especially in the form of deceit, manipulation, and self-importance among participants, clogs this channel, and limits the ability of a group's conscience to accurately express an Ultimate Authority. The more surrender, faith, honesty, openmindedness, and humility a group shares, the more recovery exhibited by a group, the more accurately that group's conscience may express our Ultimate Authority.

We must have accurate information, however, and it needs to be presented without bias. Also, the group must have sufficient time for all voices to be heard, all experience shared and an atmosphere of service through recovery maintained.

Some may feel that this Ultimate Authority is all-seeing and all-knowing; that the power of a loving God expressing Himself through group conscience transcends the nasty reality of any lack of information or inaccurate information. This may be true. However, in our honest attempts to serve through participation in a group conscience, we each use all the logic, experience, and common sense we have. We trust the

personal integrity of our servants. We expect to receive accurate, complete, unbiased, timely information from which to draw conclusions and make decisions in the name of group conscience.

This makes us extremely vulnerable to manipulation by trusted servants who lack integrity and would control communication. Many very wrong decisions made in the name of group conscience have been the result of manipulation in form of incomplete, inaccurate or biased information. While encouraging the members responsible to change and grow, we should be highly critical of such actions.

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of participation in a group conscience comes when we try to resolve a recurring problem. Our primary purpose, maybe even the very lives of addicts seeking recovery, hangs in the balance. The problem looms larger than life. We have sought an answer through group conscience before but failed to find a solution. Old and new ideas fly around the room. We become frustrated and maybe even angry. What do we do? Each member seeks a conscious contact with their personal Higher Power. Perhaps a gentle voice from the rear of the group suggests quietly, "we could follow this new path..." The idea seems so clearly inspired, the group and its conscience feel very relieved, a loving Ultimate Authority has been expressed.

"Group Conscience"
originally published in
August 1984 NA Way magazine

...
"permission to reprint is
granted to all other service
boards and committees of the
Fellowship of Narcotics
Anonymous"...

This leaflet
printed by the Literature
Committee of the New
Waterford Group of Narcotics
Anonymous
to obtain copies for your
N.A.Group ...

-write-

HEALTHY CHANGE
PO BOX 42
COLUMBIANA,
OHIO 44408

Greetings

to all who are reading this article. Our love and prayers go out to you as recovering addicts in Narcotics Anonymous. The Together We Can Group of N.A. would like to share with you the process we use in finding out what God's Will is for our Group. We believe Group Conscience IS the will of God for our Group, a spiritual state of existence where the message of Narcotics Anonymous is shared freely. As a Group, we assert the Group is a collection of committed Home Group members and make a distinction between an event (or events) which happen(s) at the same place and time each week, and a Group which exists 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 52 weeks a year.

For us this is an important distinction. For every meeting which truly strives for an atmosphere of recovery and tries to carry the message, the only message an N.A. group carries, there is a group of people God needs as instruments to bring about a strong N.A. meeting. Most of us who belong to one of these groups call it our Home Group. The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous provide us with the only blueprint we need in building a cohesive, unified Group. The decision to become a member of Narcotics Anonymous is most beneficial if it is quickly followed with a decision to be involved in a Home Group. It is in our Home Groups that we can assert and express our membership in matters affecting the Group and N.A. as a whole. Commitment and dedication are the principles the individual addict needs to practice to receive the full benefit of membership. Consistency is the benchmark of a strong Group member.

We promised to share with you how our Group seeks guidance from the Ultimate Authority. It was necessary, however, to provide a brief background of the basic beliefs my fellow Home Group members share. As a Group we believe in distinguishing the business of the Group from the conscience of the Group. Ideally, the business of the Group will follow the conscience of the Group. Because of this distinction, we have two Group meetings each month: our Group Conscience Meeting and our Business Meeting. In fact, it is common in our part of the country for a Group to have separate meetings. We dedicate our Group Conscience Meeting to God and use it as a vehicle to discover His will for our Group. We do this through a regular inventory process. The format we use is simple and allows for free, orderly discussion between Group members. It stresses for our members to express their feelings on how we have been carrying the N.A. message in the last month. It also allows us to add or detract from our Group format to adjust for changing times, as well as providing a place where members may discuss matters affecting N.A. as a whole.

In essence, our Group Conscience Meeting is a purely spiritual event in which each Home Group member seeks their own conscience through conscious contact with their Higher Power and brings it to the Group. The process of taking our Group's inventory each is the most substantial effort we can make in allowing a loving God to influence the Group and so allows the Group to present meetings each week which make it easier for God's voice to be heard. The business of the Group, defined by us as "How we spend the material component of the Seventh Tradition (money)", is and always will be distinct from the spiritual business of the Group. The spiritual conscience of the Group influences how the money is spent. In conclusion, we meet monthly because we want to assure ourselves through the inventory process that God's will is running the meetings. It allows us to see if anything we do as a Group causes conflict. If it does we then know it is a spiritual issue we need to address. A Group conscience develops as a result of the process; indeed it is not the process itself.

1. Moment of silence/serenity prayer
2. Read entire text of the Second Tradition in the book Narcotics Anonymous.
3. Read minutes from previous Group Conscience meeting.
4. Group inventory of commitments and their related committees is taken. ("How are trusted servants doing").
5. How has Group done in the past month in carrying the message, serving the newcomer, and abiding by the Traditions?
6. GSR report and voting on any Group motions.
7. Unfinished issues (that may have been tabled in prior meetings).
8. New issues or motions.
9. Motion to close.
10. Moment of silence...serenity prayer

*"There are
no sides in
a circle."
-Larry North*

The following is from the "Chicago Draft" of the 12 steps of Narcotics Anonymous. It represented 7 years of work of addicts writing for addicts on "Our Steps" through July 1988. It is the last piece of literature written by the "old" process of workshops and literature conferences.

STEP FIVE

"We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs."

Recovery is more than just staying clean. When we have made a moral inventory, what are we to do with it? We have listed our resentments, fears, dishonesties and other character defects. We have brought all this material out of our past and put it down on paper. We are beginning to understand ourselves better than we have ever known ourselves before. Although we may have mixed feelings about our inventory, it is important to take Step Five immediately. Over a period of time we saw that if we wanted to recover, we had to work the steps.

We would hardly be human if we didn't experience some anxiety about this step. We are probably not used to being honest with ourselves or anyone else, and now we are asked to be honest about ourselves with another. It is a good idea to discuss our reservations with our sponsor, whose guidance and experience can be very helpful. Attending step meetings and studying the Basic Text can also provide many useful insights. We approach Step Five willingly because we need the relief that comes from sharing our secrets.

We have gained much knowledge of ourselves and we can feel alone with that knowledge. Through the process of sharing our inventory with God, ourselves and another human being, we break out of this isolation. We have been alone with our problems for far too long. We have a choice today to be free.

If we do not go on with Step Five and reveal our findings to God, ourselves and another human being, the process of self-justification reoccurs. Our recovery is affected and our egos take over. The longer we hold on to our Fourth Step, the longer the insanity goes on and the greater our chances of relapse.

The longer we held on to our Fourth Step, the longer the insanity went on. We realized that once we had done Step Four, it was best for us if we went right on to Step Five.

The key word in Step Five is "admitted." We saw that word also in Step One. Our first admission was of powerlessness, and that admission enabled us to begin our recovery. Now we have discovered some new truths about ourselves which need to be admitted in order to continue with our recovery. "Admit" is a potent word which seems to carry with it a certain amount of ego-deflation. None of us likes to admit anything unpleasant about ourselves. It can be a very humbling experience. We admit to God, ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs because it is the *only* way we can continue in our recovery.

As we begin to relate in an honest way to another person, we find that they can see a lot more about us than we tell them. As addicts, we never before were able to honestly admit how we were feeling; being secretive was a

large part of the denial of our disease. Admitting our feelings in Step Five is a vital part of our recovery. Being entirely open with another person is a big step in the right direction.

We found talking to another person about what we had done was humbling. Oddly enough, we found it was easier to talk about some of the bigger things we had done than some of the little ones.

It is important to remember we are making our admission to God and to ourselves, as well as another human being. Doing so is a crucial part of the step, not just an afterthought. We may ask, "Is it really necessary to admit these wrongs to God?" Some may believe that their Higher Power already recognizes their defects. However, we find that by sharing our inventory with God, we are better able to accept help.

When we admit our wrongs to the God of our understanding, we experience God's unconditional love and acceptance, and our trust becomes stronger. Our Basic Text tells us that although our Higher Power already knows us well, "the admission must come from our own lips to be truly effective."

What about admitting our wrongs to ourselves? Is this really necessary? It would be easy to rationalize that we already know our defects. Didn't we, in fact, write the Fourth Step inventory? Again, by being honest about who we really are with ourselves as well as God and another human being, we begin to face our problems directly and reverse our old pattern of running away. Even after we were clean for awhile, trusting was still very difficult for some of us.

It is important that we select a person whom we trust, and with whom we feel comfortable discussing all areas of our lives, even our deep-set secrets. This is, of course, easier said than done. As addicts, we have spent years in building walls around ourselves. The use of drugs was only one of the means we used to keep people out of our lives. If we allowed anyone into our lives, it was strictly on our terms. All our relationships were conditional. We found it difficult to trust people. We have had years of practice at shutting people out and now we must make an enormous effort to let someone in. We start with just one person and this marks the beginning of our ability to reach out to others.

We should also be careful to choose a person to whom the release of Fourth Step information would not prove harmful. Often, close friends or members of our immediate families would suffer if we discussed our Fourth Step with them, so we exercise caution here.

When we are ready to take this step, we look for a person with whom we are willing to share our experience without reservation. We make no requirement about this personal decision; however, it is suggested we use a sponsor in Narcotics Anonymous. Taking it with someone who has more recovery than us, helps us put our Fifth Step into perspective with the remaining seven steps. Furthermore, we often feel that only another recovering addict can fully appreciate the life-and-death nature of this step. Our sponsor may already know a lot about us and probably has experienced many of the same feelings. So even when the details of our life stories vary, another member is not likely to be shocked or uncomfortable with what we've thought and done in our past. They will very likely share a piece or

two from their own past, and perhaps of problems they've overcome. This acceptance is essential to our recovery.

For those of us who did this step with our sponsors, we found that most of them shared with us things they had done that were similar to ours. They shared how they had judged themselves harshly before doing the Fifth Step. This helped us ease our own judgement of ourselves. They talked to us about getting our minds off our old ideas of what was moral and getting our eyes on God and what His will was for us. They shared the experiences that they had gone through.

We move steadily forward, setting aside our pride, ego and fear. As we continue, we find a new kind of humility—a sense of relief, not embarrassment. As we reveal our past, we usually feel genuine acceptance. We may also find ourselves experiencing new dimensions of honesty.

If we leave something out of our inventory because we are afraid to share it, we are the ones who suffer. The other person is not affected by our omissions. However, we need to remember that we are preparing ourselves for a new way of life. We want to break out of our isolation and move in a spiritual direction. Admitting the exact nature of our wrongs to another person lessens the overwhelming burden we have carried for so long. We must first recognize our defects of character in order to do anything toward correcting them. We must be willing to take action and accept direction to expect any change in our lives.

Sometimes we start by saying a prayer together to ease the tension. This is also a good time to turn our fear and anxiety over to our Higher Power. We gather up all of our honesty and courage and begin to share our Fourth Step inventory. We discuss everything in the inventory, leaving nothing out. We read to our sponsor's exactly what is on our papers. We need to take the words we have on paper and transfer them into feelings and talk about our feelings.

We saw that what we needed to reflect on here were not the wrong things we had done, it was the nature of those wrongs. We saw that there was a difference between the nature of our wrongs and our wrongs themselves. We could list in a day's time all the things we have done that we consider wrong. The exact nature of our wrongs is harder to identify. The nature of our wrongs is the opposite of the principles of the program. Our Fifth Step revealed that much of the wrong we did stemmed from defects of our character.

There were things in our inventory we would never have told another human being if it weren't for this program. Again, we did that for the freedom it would afford us. Once those secrets had been told, they no longer had to be a big deal. We were free of them and the fear that people would know that about us. Now someone else did know that about us and they didn't think any the less of us, they still loved us.

When we were finally able to tell these things about ourselves, we felt a wave of relief. We felt as if we had lost a lot of weight that had been burdening us down a long time. Some of us though, hadn't felt this big relief right afterwards. We had heard others say how they had felt such great relief. Even though some of us didn't feel that relief, we realized that was really not why we took the step. We didn't take it to feel good. We took it because we needed to take it. We needed to let somebody else know the way we were.

We no longer have to regret or hide our past because we

have faced and admitted it. We have told the truth at last, and have finally found some of the freedom we have heard experienced members talk about.

We felt lonely before we came to the program. After a while, we weren't lonely anymore. We stopped being lonely because we finally found out who we were. We didn't have to look to people, places, and things to fill our loneliness.

Perhaps for the first time, we begin to understand that the pain and desperation we suffered in our using brought us to the doors of Narcotics Anonymous. We experience a tremendous relief knowing that we are finally where we belong. If we had any doubts or reservations before, taking the Fifth Step makes clear to us the truth that we are addicts and cannot manage our own lives, and that we have a home and an opportunity to recover in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

After we had written out our Fourth Step and taken our Fifth Step, we began to see the patterns in what we had done. Those patterns revealed the nature of our wrongs to us. Also, we saw those patterns were still affecting the things that happened in our recovery. It was still pretty much the same pattern. We were still self-destructive and we were still self-centered and unkind. It wasn't yet our nature to love people and extend ourselves. We found that those weren't things we were capable of changing in ourselves. So we talked with our sponsors about acceptance of ourselves. The Fifth Step and learning about acceptance carried us through this early stage.

Some of the things we learned about ourselves here in the first five steps we put into practice in our daily lives. We started to feel some goodwill in our hearts.

We grew in trust. After we had taken this step that demanded some real trust from us, we grew in our ability to trust. We had revealed the exact nature of our wrongs and developed a bond with another person. It was a bond that was based not on manipulation and self-seeking, but on honesty and trust. It was a bond that would grow stronger over the years. We told people about what we had gained from our Fifth Steps and the trust we had found in another human being.

They shared with us how they had gone on to the next step. We were asked to reflect on what we had found out about ourselves in this step.

This step was a big turning point for so many of us. It made a big difference in the way we did and saw everything in our lives. More and more we were doing what we had to do. We often couldn't see the virtue in that. Often we didn't see that there were principles we could gain from doing things, not because we were going to get something back by doing them, but because it was the right thing to do.

We begin to understand why we acted and felt the way we did, and we are hopeful for change through application of the succeeding steps. We began to experience goodwill and trust and some of the other principles that everyone talked about. The spirit of Narcotics Anonymous started to become a way of life.

The Fifth Step helped us gain more freedom. It allowed us to clear away the shambles of our lives. Now we were able to hold up our heads and be human beings again. The only way we could get the best was to give the best, to do the very best job we could do. Then we were ready to do the Sixth Step.

CHARACTER**DEFECTS**

Abrasive	(Gentle)
Aggressive	(Peaceful)
Aloof	(Involved)
Angry	(Serene)
Anxious	(Confident)
Apathetic	(Concerned)
Argumentative	(Agreeable)
Arrogant	(Humble)
Attention-seeking	(Attention-Giving)
Bitter	(Forgiving)
Bossy	(Cooperative)
Careless	(Careful)
Cold	(Warm)
Complaining	(Accepting)
Compulsive	(Flexible)
Conceited	(Modest)
Critical	(Approving)
Cruel	(Kind)
Deceitful	(Honest)
Defensive	(Open)
Dependant	(Self-Sufficient)
Depressed	(Cheerful)
Dishonest	(Honest)
Disorganized	(Organized)
Distant	(Sociable)
Distrustful	(Trusting)
Dominating	(Permissive)
Dramatic	(Unassuming)
Egocentric	(Selfless)
Envious	(Giving)
Evasive	(Straightforward)
Fearful	(Confident)
Flighty	(Persistent)
Forgetful	(Considerate)
Grandiose	(Realistic)
Greedy	(Spiritual)
Guilty	(Guilt-Free)
Headstrong	(Flexible)
Hostile	(Friendly)
Humorless	(Witty)
Immature	(Thoughtful)
Impatient	(Patient)
Impulsive	(Planful)
Inconsiderate	(Considerate)
Indecisive	(Decisive)
Indulgent	(Controlled)
Inhibited	(Relaxed)
Insensitive	(Sensative)
Intolerant	(Loving)
Irritable	(Tolerant)

Submitted by the

Late-nite Friday- nite

(CHARACTER**ASSETS)**

Isolated	(Social)
Jealous	(Content)
Lazy	(Industrious)
Manipulative	(Accepting)
Negative	(Optimistic)
Neglectful	(Attentive)
Obsessed	(Free)
Opinionated	(Open)
Over-cautious	(Venturous)
Passive	(Involved)
Perfectionistic	(Realistic)
Pessimistic	(Optimistic)
Preoccupied	(Sensitive)
Procrastinating	(Reliable)
Proud	(Humble)
Quarrelsome	(Cooperative)
Rebellious	(Lawful)
Reckless	(Cautious)
Resentful	(Forgiving)
Rude	(Polite)
Sarcastic	(Nice)
Secretive	(Open)
Self-centered	(Extroverted)
Self-doubting	(Confident)
Self-hating	(Self-Liking)
Selfish	(Generous)
Self-pitying	(Outgoing)
Self-seeking	(Helpful)
Shy	(Assertive)
Snobbish	(Tolerant)
Stingy	(Giving)
Stubborn	(Willing)
Submissive	(Assertive)
Suspicious	(Trusting)
Thin-Skinned	(Accepting)
Thoughtless	(Considerate)
Timid	(Bold)
Uncritical	(Analytical)
Undependable	(Dependable)
Unemotional	(Involved)
Unfriendly	(Friendly)
Unrealistic	(Realistic)
Unscrupulous	(Honest)
Unstable	(Steady)
Vague	(Specific)
Vain	(Modest)
Vindictive	(Forgiving)
Vulgar	(Considerate)
Withdrawn	(Outgoing)
Workaddict	(Moderate)

Group Georgetown,

Washington, D.C.

WORD JUMBLE: Find the Missing Words.

Only three people were present when the words were lost. They may be backwards, forwards, upside down or diagonal.

One might ask, "Are we truly autonomous? What about our service committees, our offices, activities, and all the other things that go on in N.A.?" **The answer is that these things are not N.A.** They are services we utilize to help us in our recovery and to further the primary purpose of our groups. Narcotics Anonymous is a Fellowship of men and women; addicts meeting in groups and using a given set of spiritual principles to find freedom from addiction and a new way to live. **All else is not N.A.** Those things we mentioned are the result of members caring enough to reach out and offer their help and experience so that our road might be easier. **Whether we choose to utilize these services is up to the group.**

-from the Original 4th Tradition, Narcotics Anonymous

T	O	P	N	A	E	W	L	L	Q
C	T	S	G	N	I	H	T	E	Z
S	H	N	O	S	S	E	H	A	M
N	A	O	T	U	N	T	A	N	O
Z	T	P	O	I	T	H	E	S	E
I	A	A	N	S	H	E	E	W	U
S	R	U	L	O	E	R	A	E	W
E	S	E	H	T	V	Z	O	R	P
C	O	E	Z	I	L	I	T	U	T
A	H	P	C	E	V	O	O	H	N
H	L	E	S	L	E	R	N	C	I

An Open Letter To The Fellowship

Wednesday

15 September 1993

Greetings Fellow Addicts;

I must first express gratitude at being allowed to serve the fellowship. It is my hope to act according to God's will. To that end, I shall seek this guidance often in our meetings.

In the next year I hope we see a period of growth and change for the benefit of all. In the end it is the still suffering addict we are here for. They must be our first and last concern. Over the last four years our local fellowship has been absorbed in policy. This has been defeating Group Conscience. From my own involvement in service, I have learned the value of surrender.

Surrender is a process of learning how to get out of God's way. Not only humility can be gained, but selflessness and openmindedness as well. I have learned that my will gets in the way of God's. When I have been able to get out of the way, good things happen. People are reached, one less addict dies.

There is currently a policy of "privileged vote" in the service structure of N.A.. Where one voice becomes equal to that of many. This is in disregard of our Traditions. This policy of action is an affront to the groups. This can be the grounds for some unwillingness to participate in the service structure.

When we fail to abide by the Twelve Traditions, we cease to be of value to the groups we serve. Thus becoming less effective for the still suffering addict. Sadly, we become part of the problem.

"Around every corner we will meet the disease again, and the first thing he will tell us is, 'I'm not him'."

I would ask those with a position of "privileged vote" to give it up. Group conscience can and does work, only if all addicts have an equal voice.

In recovery, with God's will and power we can do anything. Without we are lost to our dope fiend moves once again. Let us all seek God's guidance to act according to his will.

I.L.S.

What Happened? 1983-1993

As a witness to many of the changes in our Service Structure and our Fellowship since the middle seventies, I want to submit the following. My observations are my own yet they hopefully will present some combinations that allow us to take advantage of certain developments and head off further trouble in other areas.

N.A. growth took off in the seventies and by the end of the decade, a Fellowship wide spiritual awakening took place. Efforts to write our Basic Text gained momentum and thousands of members from all over the Fellowship began to act in a coordinated manner to achieve a variety of goals.

One explanation for this is that Fellowship goals and resources were matched up along common sense lines within our Traditions by World Services and unprecedented results followed. When the book was completed and published in 1983, a new group came in to upgrade the World Service Office and the Fellowship exploded with activity. We carried our message as never before. Administrative and symbolic leadership was mutually supportive.

Within a few years, the fund flow at WSO had grown into several million annually. The number of employees and the effect these additional resources had on the previously all volunteer service structure could not be fully appreciated in advance. As the staff at WSO organized ever more tightly to try to get new literature written, the N.A. service structure tried to accommodate their efforts into the general scheme of things.

There are plenty of warnings in our Twelve Traditions to indicate that trouble comes when we find ourselves at cross purposed. We can have only one Ultimate Authority and our groups have but one primary purpose. It is nonsense to think increased fund flow will equal recovery in N.A. Money can be no more than a side issue as we approach our spiritual goals. Setting paid staff members against the volunteers who had produced the new literature was the beginning of the end for the Literature Committee.

The intrusion of a separate management system within our service structure in the eighties and early nineties led to difficulties foreseen by only a few members. One of the first major departures from all existing N.A. policy and guidelines was the signing of a contract with a professional writer to produce the book, It Works, How and Why. This took place weeks before the WSC that was to vote on this issue. In the first of a series of tearful presentations, Bob Stone got up and gave the Fellowship representatives a story about how he had to sign the contract or risk losing the writer. Whether the Fellowship representatives forgave him or was simply out maneuvered has never been clear.

Throughout the eighties, group conscience policies and procedures were systematically dismantled in favor of management policies. Those loyal members who resisted these alterations were seen as having a personal investment in the system. It did not appear to others that the resistance was staunchly supporting Traditional procedures to insure anonymity and spiritually supportive ways of doing things.

Doing away with the WSC Finance Committee at the very point where the Fellowship had need of financial expertise and services to keep up with growth at home and make issues at world level understandable to the general membership is an example of this. I was the Board of Trustee liaison to the WSC Finance Committee for two years before it was shut down. One of the last Chairs of the Committee was very concerned about avoiding credit card abuse. He was a bank manager and knew what he was talking about. The Committee was canceled. It was called cost efficient but really it deprived the Fellowship of its forum for discussion and consideration of financial issues. The Fellowship was given reasons to close down the WSC Finance Committee by World Services. Was this leadership or direction?

Had the committee not been dissolved, the WSO would have had an informed group of members who might not approve what they wanted to do. There will be those today who feel it is out of line to bring this up yet there are plenty of organizations that have subcommittees to help members keep financial matters from getting in the way of the primary goals of their organizations. Our structure was intended to have these checks and balances. With World Finance gone, it was easy to get motions relating to finance through because there were only a few Chair persons to convince who might have successfully opposed some changes.

Important contributors to the common welfare were alienated and other members were recruited to sensitive world service positions without prior experience with the committee they would be serving. The term oligarchy came into discussions describing World Services. Anyone not following the new plan was sectioned off and dumped. The method was simple. They stopped getting their airplane tickets. No one complained that

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I know of; they were too dumbfounded to feel the effects of power politics in a spiritual Fellowship. The administrations didn't take up for committee members elected at the WSC who were ousted in this manner. There were other abuses. To me the main abuse was when a small group of people stopped following our written Service Structure and pretty well did what they pleased, avoiding open violations where possible and working character assassination on any who dared to challenge their actions.

The idea of the vice-chair being a training position to insure continuity of effort within the ongoing aims and objectives of the WSC Sub-Committees was replaced with a weak vice chair system where the vice chair almost never became the chair. This helped insure that new chairs would be uninformed and compliant with what was expected of them. The incredibly poor accomplishment of these chairs is the saddest confirmation of the fact that this approach did not work.

The cancellation of the world directory was the final blow to the emphasis on our N.A. groups. A few members at WSO thought it was too expensive and troublesome to maintain. It was seen as not cost efficient and updating had been sporadic in the years the new WSO was setting up. While Regional Representatives came in to the annual WSC, the current meeting lists were not deemed accurate enough to warrant printing the directory of meetings. Voting mechanics and writing guidelines seemed to be more important.

The Twelve Concepts contain certain inaccuracies that make them the most pronounced assault on our Twelve Traditions that has ever occurred. Any student of anonymous recovery knows the material has serious flaws yet no one seems to have processed all the events of the past few years to come out openly against the errors in the Concepts. While many NA members believe that the Concepts have come to us from a reliable source, this is not the case. They were prepared hastily and poorly with little to recommend themselves except the authority of World Services. When read in a group setting, the theories begin to breakdown and the problems begin to show. The groups that held study sessions last year seemed to move to unanimity on this. Other groups seemed to take the attitude that if World Service says we need them, they must be Ok. Any small flaws can be worked out. I sincerely recommend that these flaws be worked out this year, without delay.

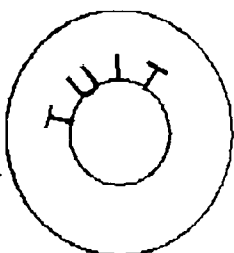
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Dear Folks,

This newsletter needs you to subscribe and send a little more if you are able. Everything that goes in the *New Awakenings* account is spent printing & mailing newsletters. There's no travel expenses taken out; we get around just fine. No hotel bills; we sleep on each others floors. No per diem meal allowance; we was going to eat anyway.

As new names were put on the mailing list we were sending out three issues in the hopes you would respond. We're cutting that to two effective immediately.

We know some of you keep meaning to send a few dollars but have trouble getting a round to it, so we have provided (above). Now is this SERVICE or what?



To get *New Awakenings*

Just send us your name and address. Use this form if you wish. Send us a letter if you can. We publish the first week of every other month. Getting you one issue #4 in the U.S. cost 65.9¢. Projecting from this cost we figure a year's subscription (6 issues) should be \$3.96. Sending more enables *New Awakenings* to go out to addicts who haven't seen it yet.

Name _____

Address _____

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For example, there is a line that says, "the Twelve Traditions were written to guide groups, not the service structure." Elsewhere, it says, "Group conscience is not a decision making process." We have newcomers reading this material and memorizing it in this form. Shall I explain to them later what happened, or shall you? If other members are concerned about these things, wouldn't it be good to change them?

Part 2: Next Issue

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