

OCTOBER 1980

THE RAINBOW CONNECTION

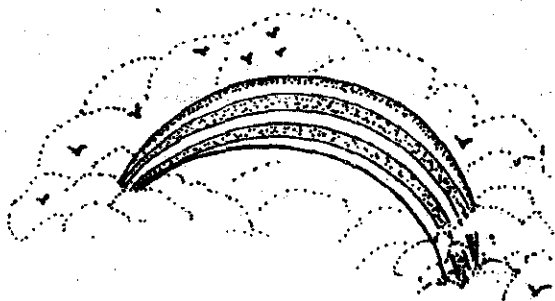
THE TWELVE STEPS OF N.A.

HOW IT WORKS

If you want what we have to offer, and are willing to make the effort to get it, then you are ready to take certain steps. These are suggested only, but they are the principles that made our recovery possible.

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us, and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of those steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

This sounds like a big order, and we can't do it all at once, we didn't become addicted in one day, so remember — EASY DOES IT.



The Rainbow Connection

Metro Atlanta Groups of Narcotics Anonymous
" . . . caring and sharing the NA way . . ."
Volume 2, Number 10 — October 1980

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Individual opinions expressed do not necessarily express those of NA as a whole. We welcome your story, article or perspective relating to NA recovery. Send to: The Rainbow Connection, 890 Atlanta Road, Marietta GA 30060

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Each of us came to N.A. a newcomer. I remember the feelings of fear and distrust and I had and yet a deep and strong desire to be accepted and allowed to have a chance at a new way of life. Had it not been for those people who took those extra steps across the room to welcome me, my own need to alienate myself from others might have driven me away using the countless games my head did and still does use to convince me I don't belong. My disease is one of denial, this serves sometimes to ease my memories of what I was really like in active addiction and early abstinence. Recovery for me has been a slow unfolding miracle. Many times I am unable to love myself and I serve as my own worst critic and can become intolerant and judgemental toward the addict who reminds me of the side of me that is defective and suffers from a disease. One thing that seems to make my recovery come to life and my problems lessen is selfless service to N.A. and personal service to the new member. Sometimes I am reluctant and impatient with the new person in our fellowship as I am with being good to myself. I have to remember that we all suffer from a serious disease that promises to destroy us if not arrested and recovery made possible for us. Unity and service will promote an atmosphere that each member can grow in. Today my life is one of contentment and I have found a sense of peace that allows me to practice those principles of honesty, open mindedness and willingness to try. I feel that we must strive to love and accept the newcomer as they are, and encourage them with their desire for recovery. Advice and condemnation may seem to serve our personal needs but can only be destructive to a new member who is uncomfortable and confused. May we pray for God to use us as instruments to share our honest experience strength and hope as it was freely shared with us.

George S. — Atlanta Lit Committee





Pilgrim stop your weary wandering
Your search is near it's end
The secret is within you
The prize you're sure to win.

If you heed what I have shown you
Listen now and you will see
Let there be no separation!
I-Am you and you are Me!

I-Am Alpha and Omega
The Beginning and the End
I-Am Past, Present, Future
Your Creator, Father, Friend.


I-Am here! My hand's extended!
The doors can open wide
Seek My word and know the Power
That comes only from inside.

"Seek ye first" is what I've told you
And yet again "Be still and know"
'Til you see Me in the Mirror
You've a few more steps to go.

Child be still! Accept My blessings!
The joys that you'll then know
Will exceed your greatest longings
Peace and Love will from Me flow.

I-Am Alpha and Omega
The Beginning and the End
I-Am your door to freedom
Child be still! Accept My hand!

Carolyn M. — Atlanta



NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS
STEP TEN

One of the quickest things that will trip us up in our daily living is taking on the attitude of being perfect or the unwillingness to let others know that there are things wrong with us. This will push us away from others quicker than anything. The more of an attitude of being perfect that we take on, the harder it is to even be honest with ourselves. We may even start believing our own lies. This will surely be the beginning of the end for us drug addicts. This all stems from foolish pride. Sometimes we like to think that we can take it all on by ourselves, that we don't need others to help us in our sobriety and daily living. Some of us would even choose "death before dishonor". This step will help us to constantly stay aware of these pitfalls so we can make an effort to change these things. If we constantly remind ourselves of things we feel to be harmful, it is pretty hard to continue those things.

Anonymous

Bristol Literature



CARRYING THE MESSAGE



"When you've got something like we've got, you can't just sit on it. You've got to move off it. You can't just sit on it and possess it, you've got to move off of it and give it to other people. It only works if you bring other people into it."

Ken Kesey 1965

In other words, we keep what we have by giving it away. This is one of the key phrases or slogans of the NA program, but how many of us really understand it's full meaning?

Sharing our experience, strength and hope with others is what keeps the recovery going. If it was the same group of people, meeting once or twice a week with no newcomers, eventually we would get bored with each others stories and drift away. The newcomer is the most important person at a meeting not only because he is just

starting his recovery process, but also because some of the questions he asks are also questions that need to be thought about by someone else at the meeting, regardless of how much time he or she has. How often have you sat at a meeting to hear a newcomer ask a question and receive an answer, only to find yourself saying, wow, I really needed to hear that?

One of the important and most necessary services an NA member can perform is the Twelfth Step call. The Twelfth Step is: Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts and to practice these principles in all our affairs. The part of the Step that we are dealing with here is the carrying of the message.

Often a using addict will hear of Narcotics Anonymous and later, seeking recovery, will call the central office or a local clubhouse. The person manning the phone will take the addict's phone number and immediately get in touch with a person on the Twelfth Step list who will call the addict right back. The Twelfth Stepper will talk to the addict, explain the program to him or her and frequently arrange for someone to pick them up for a meeting or take them to a hospital or a detox unit. Countless lives have been saved by the Twelfth Step call.

There are the practicing addicts who never heard of NA and some of them end up in hospitals, jails or mental institutions. This is the reason for our institutional committees. Many recovering addicts, dedicated to spreading the word, sponsor, serve and attend meetings held in institutions with patients or inmates. By doing this they open the doors of NA so the patients know that there is a place for them to go after their release.

This is how we keep what we have. Carrying the word is one of the most important and rewarding aspects of service work. Give it away, and it will stay with you.

Lots of Love - Tom M. Atlanta
1980





2nd Tradition

"For our group purpose there is but one authority—a loving God as he may express himself in our group conscience, our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern."

He is a loving God and expresses himself through the group conscience. We have to place God above our egos. We, as addicts, have big egos and we want to govern, want to rule, but this is not God's will. If our leaders governed there would be bickering and quarreling and nothing would be accomplished. Trusted servants do not govern, however there is one ultimate authority who does govern. Without Him there would be chaos and anarchy.

If we look to God for His will in our lives, then our groups should look to God for His will for the group. We, in group conscience, should try to look up to the one ultimate authority who does not rule with a sword or clenched fist. It is not that merciless, cruel God that we know in our active addictions that governs our groups, but a loving one. To know the group conscience is the will of God is reassurance that the group will continue to grow and evolve and continue as a whole.

United we stand, divided we fall, we are just trusted servants trying to realize His will together as a group. Our group purpose should be to help the suffering addict seeking recovery.

3rd Tradition

"the only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using"

To be a part of the fellowship of N.A. we need only realize we need help. Anyone can share the benefits of the N.A. program. It is hard enough getting the desire to stop and then trying to stay clean, without a lot of rules and regulations. The reason we even thought to stop using was the pain. The intense feeling that something or sometimes, every thing was wrong and pain gave us the desire to stop using. Pain is our dues for membership to the Narcotics Anonymous Program. We could not go on living a slow death, which was seemingly coming closer, when we came into N.A. there were other people there like us, wanting to stop using and looking for a way to do it. It does not matter who you are or what you have done in the past or what you are doing now just as long as you really want help. It does not matter what drugs you used how long you used, or when you used last, but that somewhere inside the pain is trying to tell you to stop. Many people have come to N.A. realizing only that they wanted to stop hurting and nothing more. We reached out to them, remembering that we too once felt that desperate. When an addict who wishes to get clean wants help getting or staying clean we must reach out and take that persons hand, and do what we can, regardless of who he is and where he came from. We will never turn any addict away, this is because of the third tradition. That is, anyone can come as long as they have "the desire to stop

using". 'Desire to stop using' does not mean that you have made a decision to QUIT using drugs the rest of your life. We do not need to know what you will be doing tomorrow, or the next day just that you are ready to stop using drugs right here and now and how we can help you. One of the groups held a group conscience meeting. The group was divided. The discussion was about tradition 3. One member said that people should have to prove that they are sincere about getting and staying clean. Another said that it was O.K. to come to the first meeting high, but should be told about it. And so went on the bickering. Finally the group got hold of itself and decided the third tradition should be taken literally. It tells us to open our hearts and reach out our hands to any addict who wants help and comes to us for it. Anyone who wants to do something about their addiction is welcomed with open arms. If you have the slightest trace of desire, please come because you have come to the right place. You are a welcomed member of the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. If you have been to one meeting or one thousand meetings as long as you have the desire to stop using drugs you are a full-fledged member of N.A.

It took some of us many years of hurting and using to get the sincere desire to stop using, others not as long. We were beaten to the point where there was no end in sight. It does not matter how hopeless you think you are. If a person wants to stay clean, the program works.

Hank F. — Marietta 1980

RESENTMENTS

I am finding it harder and harder to hang on to resentments since I got clean. In my addiction I could harbor resentments against people for a long time. Often I had the attitude that the people whom I had a resentment against were inferior to me. As often I felt that I was not good enough to confront them however.

Today I know that resentments are what builds walls between myself and others and that the only person who really suffers from my resentments is myself. If someone does something that hurts me or angers me, I have to let them know or the resentment will sit inside me and cause me unnecessary pain and discomfort and possibly affect my cleanliness. By letting them know, I don't have to go through this. Often they did not realize that they were hurting me. By letting them know, they will usually stop, but most importantly it's no longer inside me - IT'S ON them.

Pete B. - Bristol Literature



I HAVE PROBLEMS



Three years ago, I was released from a controlled environment to the so called "free world". Buford Prison had been my home for twenty one long months and being paroled from there was seemingly the best thing in the world that could happen to me. I was so happy to be out but inside I was scared. It seemed like I almost didn't want to get out because parole would have to be served and I was almost positive that I would violate it and be right back in prison again. I didn't want to get used to being free just to be locked up again. So I tried hiding my fears by going back to my old way of life before I was incarcerated, which was drugs.

Using drugs was my way of enjoying the time of freedom I'd been granted, saying to myself, well if I go back, I'll at least have gotten high while I was out. The time I had served was for robbery but drugs were the root of the crime. It was just one of the insane things I did for kicks while using. While doing my time, I told myself that I had learned my lesson because I knew that I would never rob anybody again.

My ego was really soaring because I'd had so much time to look at myself that I'd never have all the problems that were really the cause of my incarceration. As soon as I hit the streets, I started dealing with my insecurities about myself that were coming up to face me all in one day by using. The thing was that I didn't learn anything about my addiction to drugs and my old way of life. My life became unmanageable because I didn't deal with my problems through any source other than drugs. Because of this, the last three years have been more hell to me than the two years of my life in prison. I got to the point that I couldn't live with or without drugs. I wasn't maturing emotionally. Instead I was still living and hiding behind drugs.

Today I'm twenty-four years old but I feel like I'm that boy of thirteen who hid all his fears behind drugs. I thank God for letting me live long enough to make it to an NA meeting. The people in NA are giving me a program that offers me love for myself and even for my worst enemies. Being sober or "straight" is giving me a chance

to look at and deal with all my problems in a mature manner. It's also afforded me real freedom because I know that the longer I'm straight, the further behind me all my worries of jails, institutions and death are. Today I live for myself, to help other addicts in their recovery and my God's will as I interpret it. I am no longer afraid to admit that I have problems.

A Survivor

ANONYMOUS

A feeling that I used to have
of being where I'm supposed to be,
and seeing that I could be free
Living in reality.

Something I felt once in a dream,
And searched for years to find the spot
Where I could be me without the aid
Of drinking beer or smoking pot.

It's not a dream now, it is here.
Today I saw it oh so clear,
And felt it in my very bones,
That I have finally found a home,
It's in N.A. and not alone.

Anonymous

SECOND ANNUAL WORLD LITERATURE CONFERENCE

Lincoln, Nebraska — September 8-14, 1980

HISTORY

Although relatively few of the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous stood in the Lincoln Federal Building in September, 1980, the spirits of our contributors and of those still suffering addicts were all around us, encouraging us, sharing with us their hope and their pain. Those who enjoyed the actual effort were but servants of a larger whole.

From the moment that the early arrivals gazed into the empty hall in the Federal Building, it was apparent that this was the time and the place for the fulfillment of a dream. Men and women, who had had little or no previous acquaintance of one another, embraced each other readily, eager to enjoy what each had to share.

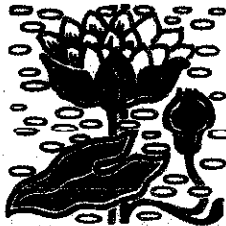
During that first day, there was a pervasive sense of awe. The impact of what we could accomplish sank into the group conscience and we were excited.

Although few individuals had had much experience and the group had had none, there was divine co-operation throughout the conference. The subject matter was so large; yet our outline work proceeded along a natural course. Our outline and the material fell together uncannily. Much of the time, the thoughts most appropriate fairly leaped from a page. From the hundreds of pages of collected material, we sorted, compiled, and read; and as we read, the ties that bind us were strengthened. We were made more whole by our work.

As could be expected, there were problems with weariness, impatience and ego. We all wanted so much and had come so far. We all had to deal with the frustrations of working with others on a common goal, perhaps for the first time. Yet, we were able to overcome these very human obstacles and to offer encouragement to our fellow addicts. Our successes tempered our despair, and we reassured one another.

As long days grew into longer nights, we gave each other back-rubs and hugs; pausing often for meditation and prayer. We found need strength in maintaining contact with our Higher Power, and we endured long hours, personalities and problems.

As a result of addicts meeting in Lincoln, Nebraska, in September, 1980, a book — a dream — will be realized; but it would be inaccurate to say that we have written a book. We all came from many parts of the country and many walks of life. We had all, by the grace of our Higher Power and the help of our fellow addicts, survived a killing disease. In an effort to continue to survive, we have met here to share our experience, strength, and hope. The book is just a reflection of this effort. It is in this spirit that our book will come forth. Addicts all over the world will have the Narcotics Anonymous book for comfort and for study. When we find ourselves by ourselves, we need not be alone. We will have our book; and we will have each other.

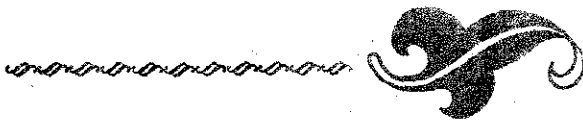


TRUE PEACE THROUGH DEPENDENCE

I can remember when peace to me meant the end of the war in Viet Nam. But when the war was over, I still had not found true peace. I was plagued with anger, resentment, self pity and guilt to name only a few. I could not find inner peace on a lasting basis. I found some relief through drugs. I felt good while I was high. I was unpredictable and dangerous. Drugs destroyed my peace of mind and filled me with self hatred, anger, remorse, self pity and guilt. These were the very things I was trying to escape. Then I came to N.A. and found better ways to deal with these negative emotions. I found that dependence on a power greater than myself could remove my emotional distress. I could indeed feel good again. God could and would remove these negative emotions in most cases when asked. I could dump my problems in an N.A. meeting and get sound advice on many of them. With drugs I had found a temporary release from my problems while high. But when the high was over the problems were back, usually with more problems I had caused while high. Through N.A. I have found true peace through dependence.

Member - Bristol, PA
Literature Committee





NEVER TOO YOUNG

I'm seventeen and I was too young for this to happen to me. Drugs came into my life when I was nine years old. The doctor had given me shots for headaches and when he quit giving me shots, I started popping pills.

I had always been shy and had an inferiority complex. I was shot when I was three and one eye was blinded. It pulled inward. It made me feel different so I became withdrawn from people.

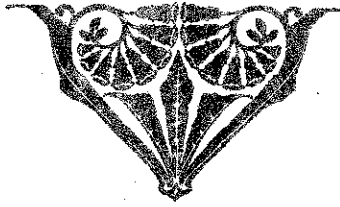
Alcohol came shortly after the drugs and produced the same good feeling drugs did. This started a period of a lot of hurting. When I got high, I could talk to people and I was no longer afraid. All the pain of my past seemed to go away. When I found I could be happy, I began to consume more drugs and alcohol. As my habit got worse, the fantasy world I lived in was closing in on me. I started having problems at home, at school and everywhere else. The fear came back, the pain and hurts of the past were there again and all the dreams I had were gone, I wanted to die.

I tried suicide and when that didn't work, I knew I was condemned to die a slow and painful death. I gave up hope and decided to stay high till the day I died. When church, counselors and everything else failed, I reached out one last time. This time someone was there and they told me of a way of life where I wouldn't have to use drugs and alcohol to be happy. I thought it was a joke.

But when I began to work the Twelve Steps of recovery, something began to happen and is still happening today. Finally there was hope. I began to be happy. I found serenity. For the first time in my life I could look at the past and not feel the hurt. I could love and be loved. I began to like Chris.

Today I am a senior in high school. My family problems have worked out and I am happy. For this I owe my life to Narcotics Anonymous.

Chris
Joplin Literature Committee

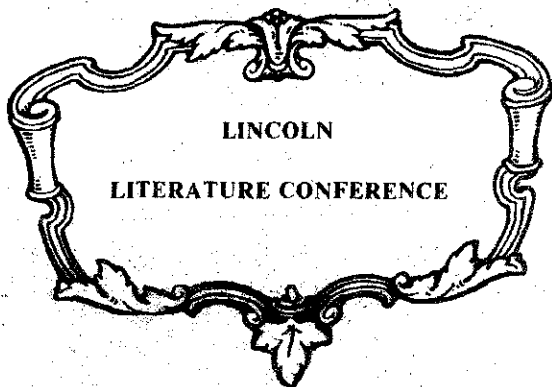


BALANCE

Sometimes people in the program become very involved which is good but sometimes they overdo it. Addicts have a tendency to over do everything. Some of us in good faith take on commitments after commitments. We have a tendency to become too involved. Other members might warn us but to no avail. We become so involved there aren't enough hours in a day to do what we need to do. We seem to have to be everywhere at once. There is no time to sleep, no relaxation or recreation. Soon we have no time to take daily inventory of ourselves. We start getting burned out sober. All we begin to know is the program and we become very self-righteous. This usually feeds our egos and causes conflicts with others. We find ourselves turning to God and saying what am I doing wrong. Things seem to fall apart all over the place. We're tired, hungry and can't seem to think right. We seem to lose identity with ourselves and find out it isn't others who are the problem but ourselves. It is hard to come out of this because you have to change a lot of things you're doing at once.

Take less commitments, turn some down, start planning time to be with yourself to relax and do something that you really enjoy. Make yourself start sleeping and eating right and start talking to others because you will go through a lot of feelings. Your ego will be deflated. Telling others you could not handle the load you took on. You should start working H.A.L.T. Soon you will feel better about yourself. Thank you God for being there when we need you.

Joplin, MO



The Second World Literature Conference of Narcotics Anonymous added at least one thousand man hours to the effort towards a basic text for our Fellowship. Attending members came from all parts of our Fellowship to sort and paste-up items for material collected over past years. Chapter headings were established as named in the White Booklet with two additions. Just for Today dealing with spiritual maintenance and More Will Be Revealed for ongoing recovery. Material as first sorted by chapter heading and then according to a topic outline for each chapter. Individual items of thought and feeling were cut out and pasted up on numbered sheets to establish content and flow of ideas. This material was then typed up in a "we book form." The first three and a half chapters were typed up by the end of the Conference. The balance will be typed and a series of packets will be sent out to all parts of the Fellowship for changes. Each packet will contain a chapter. The first mailout will contain chapter one and assorted background information to help members get started. The second packet will be Chapter Two and-so-on until all chapters have been gone over. We pray for a consensus to emerge, sufficient to warrant submitting a final draft to the 1981 World Service Conference for approval. Stories illustrating NA recovery will be dealt with after the basic text portion. An additional chapter heading might emerge before the material is completed. This will occur if a body of material develops which goes beyond the chapter headings we now have.

The Third World Literature Conference will be held in Memphis, Tennessee in early February of 1981. The purpose of the Conference will be to draw a consensus for each chapter. The biggest need we have for additional material is in the area of the Twelve Traditions. Please pass the word and encourage members to write and send in material on the Traditions. If we achieve consensus at Memphis, the search for stories will begin.

The Lincoln-Conference will be remembered as the occasion where our book began to take shape. Individual sacrifice and dedication on the part of the Lincoln Fellowship went far beyond merely setting up the Conference. The positive atmosphere, lodging for attending members in homes and fine meetings each night went a long way towards raising spirit and enthusiasm for the effort. They got us the first floor of the Lincoln Federal Building, a fine copier which turned out to be the main piece of equipment for the Conference and five electric typewriters. About ten thousand copies were consumed by the Conference. We worked together the last seventy-two hours almost straight through. The personal support from the members from Lincoln made all this possible. We are grateful. See you at Memphis!

Patience and tolerance are two of the most helpful tools that I have. After being around for a year and a half, I've learned that there is a lot of knowledge to gain from people on the program, it's just a matter of getting it out of them. I've found that I can learn at least something from everyone on the program, from the one day person to the person with seven years, to the person with twenty-four years. But some problems that I'd thought only people relatively new to the program had, such as rambling mindlessly at a meeting, or refusing to answer a direct question, I'm coming to learn that some people in the program for seven years have too, only seven fold.

Mind you, I did qualify my above statement by saying "some". After someone has been coming to meetings for several years he is bound to learn something about the program, and after he works a few or all of his steps, he is bound to know more than before. No matter how much someone knows about the program or the steps, there is always something else to learn. **YOU WILL NEVER KNOW IT ALL!** As a matter of fact, it's what you learn after you think you know it all, that really counts. And when you come to a point where you think that you know it all or most of it, than it's time to shut up and start listening.

The sad part about this whole affair is that the people who need this advice most will read right over it and not absorb any of it because they know too damn much. This is where patience and tolerance comes in. When I need something, some information, experience, strength, or hope from a knowledgeable person who lacks humility of his knowledge, I'm at thier mercy, and they take the oppurtunity to tell me how much they know. But if I'm patient, and tolerate the intolerable, than I benefit from it. As for me, I'm glad I'm green and hope to stay that way, because being green means that I'm teachable.

FEELINGS TO HANG ONTO



Feelings to Hang Onto

"To Hell with this!" I shout. "Why can't I just go about my business, living a serene and productive life, and forget about all these damned emotions?"

Feelings go through me like electrical shocks. That is just the way I was put together. For the longest time, I really thought that I was put together wrong, and there was no excuse for me. Before I met you all, my sister and brother addicts, I thought that I was one of the few people that was as wild as me, outside an institution. I was ashamed of my emotions, and I did all I could possibly do to keep them under cover, especially to hide them from myself. My cover-up techniques included escape (drugs, sex, leaving town, etc.), rationalization (blaming other people or circumstances), denial, and justification.

Facing my feelings as they really are, no matter how inappropriate, is a new thing for me. It doesn't come naturally either, and sometimes I have to be backed up to a wall before I will deal with them. But, some of my feelings are really neat. I want to admit them and I want to get into them. The odd thing about the good feelings is that I tend to try to escape them too, maybe out of habit, and partly out of projecting that I'd better not get my hopes up too high that they'll last forever, and that way, I won't be too disappointed when they're over.

Anyhow, I've been thinking alot lately about which feelings I would like to hang onto, and what to do with the rest. As usual, I've come up with some theories, which I am putting into practice in my own life. They're still experimental, but they seem to work well for me.

Now, all of my feelings have two sides. The first is the immediate urge, and the second is the long term lingering. If I face the immediate urge, I can quickly make a decision as to whether or not I want to continue with the long term linger. If I don't face it, the chances are good that I'll hang onto a sort of undercurrent of my reactions to things, until it all builds up into a big, sloppy pile. When things get lumped into that pile, after a while, even attempting to sort them out seems impossible. So, the first thing I've got to do, is deal with the emotion right when it hits me.

Take fear, (please!) Let's pretend I'm standing around, waiting for a bus and I see the best looking man I've ever seen, and he's right next to me. One of my feelings is going to be pleasure, just to have him next to me. But another feeling is probably going to be fear, fear of rejection, along with fear of losing control. If I don't admit to myself that I do feel pleasure and that I do feel fear, I will wind up trying to ignore the guy, and walking off without benefitting from the experience, just with a vague feeling of loss, and a little more inhibition. On the other hand, if I do admit that I really would like to meet the man, but I'm scared, I have a choice as to whether or not to give in to my fear (which compounds self-doubt), or to at least smile at the man (which is always a good idea). And, with the feelings upfront where I can really look at them, whether I ever get to meet the man or not, is minor compared to the lesson I can learn about myself and my reactions.

Now, suppose you and I are at my house, hanging pictures. Since I'm not very good at hammering, I volunteer to hold the nail up to the wall. You're not very good at hammering either, and so... You guessed it! I scream obscenely at the top of my lungs. If we want to we can see the situation for what it is, and let it go, laughing about it later. But, we do have a choice. We could use it as a wedge between us. You could say you're sorry over

and over again, and then I could tell you that I knew you hit my finger on purpose, and then you could get indignant that I would think you would do such a thing, and we could both hold onto burning resentments, avoiding each other, and backstabbing each other for the next six months. It could get pretty complicated, if we wanted it to. But if we want to keep it simple, I bet we could hang up all the pictures, and still be buddies.

And, the feelings I can hang onto out of both those examples are the positive ones. I can hang onto the fact that I'm lucky to have feelings now, and not to have to cover them up. I can hang onto gratitude and contentment, instead of anxiety and resentment. Whereas, the long term lingering joy turns into contentment, the long term lingering appreciation turns into gratitude, and those are the kind of emotions I want to have floating around in my guts most of the time. They sort of coat my tummy so the negative stuff doesn't hit me so hard.

Gina H.
Nashville, Tenn.



~~+~~ TOO YOUNG ~~+~~

When I came to NA, I was a scared little girl of fourteen. I had reached a deadend. I had dropped out of the human race years before. Drugs and alcohol soothed the pain for a while, but soon they became the problem. I existed for one purpose: to get stoned and to stay that way!

Reality was a total turnoff. My fantasy world was one of love, peace and harmony, but too soon it came crashing down on my head and turned into a world of paranoia, confusion, loneliness and anger. I was determined to survive but I wanted to do it on my own. I rationalized that I wasn't an addict. I was just a cool kid who liked to party, totally ignoring the fact that I had to force down a drink just to stop my body from shaking convulsively.

Yea, I was a real cool kid!

When I reached my bottom, I was desperate for something; anything or anyone to put an end to the hell. Somehow I found it in NA. It's no bed of roses. Don't let anyone con you into thinking it's all peaches and cream. But it's better than the streets and drugs and with each day I grow a little more. Most important of all, I like myself and I think that is the most precious gift this program has given me. I can honestly say that today I am happy and sober and for that I'm truly grateful.

Anonymous - Nashville 1980

~~+~~ ALWAYS A HOOK ~~+~~

It's weird the way drugs don't work. There's always a hook to them. They are so unpredictable they work one way one time, then when you try the exact same thing at another time they backfire.

One thing I've found with the program is you don't have to be alone. If you take the time to ask, you'll always find something to do, someone to be with, some way to stay out of trouble, and some way out of your head besides drugs.

Even if you can't feel good, being with people feeling bad - a little better.

Ray W.

EASY MONEY

"Money, it's a bit. Don't give me that do goody-good frog spit." That's been my outlook on the buck ever since I heard those words years ago. Goes hand in hand with "If it feels good, do it." As good as both these sayings sound, putting those words into practice nearly killed me on several occasions.

I've always been lazy, always looked for the easy way out. In school the easy way out was getting stoned and doing acid, PCP or whatever came along to make me forget about responsibility and work. When I got out of school and was faced with the reality of having to work to stay alive, my mind immediately began to scheme and scam and dream up ways of hitting the big time without having to work.

I set aside my fantasy about being a rock star (too much work, I decided) and set about scaming up some way to manufacture MDA. I found the chemist to do it, but needed the equipment and one highly illegal chemical, isosaphrol, the main ingredient. Somehow or other I ran into a guy who worked at a chemical plant and he stole four pounds of isosaphrol for me. We set about getting the rest of the equipment but somehow our plan fell apart.

Along this same point in time, another guy had fronted me several thousand hits of speed at a price where I should've made big bucks. But somehow or other I barely broke even, all my profit went in my mouth and in my arm.

Also along this part of my life a fast talking sob told me he could get me five hundred prescription Qualudes for \$350. I got a friend of mine to front me the money, drove the "man" to the "man's" apartment and he ran in the front door and out the back. I never saw him again.

So for a few years I made do with piddly low paying jobs. What little money I made I blew on drinking and dope.

I came into the program in February 1980 thinking I would never use again. But I still had the "easy money" mentality. So when I was at someone's house one day and they asked me if I could move 1,000 ludes in a week and I said "Sure!" Dollar signs lit up my eyes. I moved the 1,000 ludes in four days, and missed four meetings. I stayed clean through the second thousand, which took me five days to move. I picked up the third thousand on a Friday night, and that Sunday decided I would do one. I had sold around 2500 without doing any, so I conned myself into believing I could handle it. Well, that 1 lude turned into many ludes and the slip lasted from February until November. I was up to 10 Qualudes a day and enormous amounts of beer and liquor.

All this made me see the truth in the talk about changing old playgrounds and playmates. If you're an addict, you can't afford to be around drugs and druggies. My experience with Qualudes and dealing thousands and thousands of them ended up in a state mental hospital. Nowhere to be and no way to go.

So, now, along with praying for my higher power to remove the compulsion to use, I pray for Him to please remove the compulsion to make the quick buck through dealing. Easy money is a big part of my addiction.

RAC — Marietta 1980



1ST EAST COAST CONVENTION OF NA

We seldom say I love you
And then it's too late
Or our love has gone
So when I say I love you
It doesn't mean I know
You'll never go
Only that I want you
To always stay . . .



Hi, my name is George and I'm a drug addict and alcoholic. I would like to say how happy I am to be here. I love you all; this Convention has been a very spiritual experience for me. I hope that I have got the chance to meet everyone of you so that way I can take a little bit of everyone home with me. You people made me feel love, happiness, tears of sorrow and tears of joy. I'm proud to be a member of this fellowship and would like to say that I learned an awful lot this weekend. I feel my life has changed. I would like to thank all of you for being there when I really needed you. I would like to share a time in my life sober that I thought I knew it all that I didn't need meetings and I was really close to just two people I didn't spread myself out at all and I ended up getting busted. This was about fifteen months ago. Me and one of my girl friends used to go to one meeting a week. I thought I was doing great. Well at this time my best friend blew and started drinking regularly. I could not accept this. I went through some changes and I couldn't see how he could do it. I was really hurt. Well, about two weeks later me and my old girl friend who up to this time had lived with me for about a year blew and moved out. We tried working it out and I was going through a lot of pain. Then I had my dog left. He ran away a week after she did. Man I was really hurting but the clincher was when she totally broke up with me and started going with my best friend. Well, man, my head was blown off. I felt so much anger, hurt, man, I was crazy and very, very depressed. I felt totally depressed for almost three months straight everyday. Man, I needed people bad. I started making meetings and the people were there. I needed people to hold me at night and tell me they cared. I used to cry every day four, five or six times and this was at two years sober. The loneliness I felt was worse then when I came into the program because I couldn't hide my feelings. I was lonely and everyone knew it. Well, I started going to meetings and talking and people cared. People said they loved me and I cried cause I was scared. Since then I have grown tremendously. I am never alone as I have this program and the people are always there when you need them. Today I'm close to a lot of people and God. I haven't felt lonely for months. This program works. I am very grateful to be up here today and to feel like I am loved and cared about and prayed for by everyone of you. There is no way I can give back to the program everything that it's given to me. I really love you all and see you all soon. My gratitude speaks right now. I thank my Higher Power for giving me all these things.

George R. Bristol Literature
Written at the 1st East Coast
Convention of Narcotics Anonymous



An Open Letter of Love to the Atlanta Community:

Boy! Do I miss all of you! Being here in Maryland has been good for me in many ways though. If I was going to be sane and serene during my stay up here (to finish school) I knew I had to get at least one N.A. meeting started in the town where I was living. And lo and behold two meetings got started. Our two meetings then linked up with five meetings being held in Washington D.C. and, lo and behold, an Area Service Committee began. Then Baltimore asked if its two meetings could be represented on the Area Service Committee. And so our last meeting saw a representation of nine groups—a beautiful thing to behold. Next week our Area will go up to Pennsylvania and ask for admittance to the Region. And so it grows! As they say, just as an addict can't make it alone, so a group can't make it alone, and so an area can't make it alone, etc., etc.

Particularly beautiful has been the opportunity to work with my Black brothers and sisters in N.A. (The majority of N.A. members in Washington are Black). Then you really get the experience of unity. I pray that the same type of thing can happen in Atlanta.

I am really looking forward to returning to Atlanta. Because of all the love there (as well as the wisdom, light, faith, joy, hope, etc.) I feel it is the next step for me to take to enter more into Living Spirit. (Also I really miss all those characters, especially that Lynn W. fellow).



Much love and light,
Greg R.

A time for love a time for friends
Comes a time when the past must end,
A time for today to finally begin. . .

Things that I have held on too
Old friends who pulled me through
The hardest of times and always
Were there when I would be down:
Friends who always stood by me. . .

I never thought the time would come
To say farewell to those very special ones. . .
But, today the time has arrived,
To part from you and carry on,
To live in today, let the past be gone. . .

With a tear of sorrow I face the dawn. . .

That one tear of sorrow has been replaced by a
Flood of tears of joy that I have found within N.A.
Sharing a love and understanding that's truly
Beyond my wildest dreams. It has been worth it!

Anonymous




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Anonymous





A MIRACLE



I entered my first N.A. meeting and sat
in a chair,
The things that were said made me
glad I was there,
I'd lost all hope and was truly
defeated,
But they said without drugs I could
be treated,
At first I was scared of the change that would
take place,
But through their experience, strength and hope
my fears I was able to face,
So I surrendered myself to the beauty of,
Their patience, forgiveness and unconditional
love,
The fact I'm alive is a miracle I once wouldn't
have believed,
Today my sobriety shows gratitude for the
help I've recieved,
And this poem's just a simple, humble
way,
For me to say thanks to the people of N.A.

Charles T.
Marietta



The Rainbow Connection

NASHVILLE
NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS
MEETINGS

MONDAY--8pm West End Methodist Church
23rd and West End Ave. 3rd Floor

TUESDAY--7:30pm West End Methodist Church
3rd Floor

WEDNESDAY--6:00pm Spencer Youth Center
Stewarts Ferry Road

THURSDAY--8:00pm Central State Hospital
Hawk Building

SUNDAY--6:00pm Unity Church Woodmont Blvd.
& Amanda Ave.
Food and Fellowship, bring
a dish to share.
7:30pm Step Meeting
*Naranon Meeting in the next
room for friends and family
members

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