

NOVEMBER 1982

Today We Have A Choice

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.

Story of the Month:

NA COMES TO TOKYO

WHEN I WAS just about 18 years old, in Japan, aside from heroin and amphetamines, you could purchase just about any drug you wanted at local drug stores without any trouble at all.

ONE DAY, OUT of curiosity, I tried sleeping pills with my brothers. I didn't know how it felt to get high on alcohol, but once the sleeping pills took effect I felt better than I had ever felt before. This was great! To get high on alcohol a person must undergo so much training, drinking so many times, vomiting so many times. With this drug I could get high so easily and without any training; this is the way I thought.

THAT WAS THE beginning of 16 years of hell for me. At first I took about four pills a day. But after a period of two years I found myself having to take 24 to 36 pills from two to four times a day.

AFTER TWO YEARS the federal regulations on sleeping pills were changed in order to decrease the abuse of such drugs. Thus, pills, which were so easy to obtain at one time, became more difficult to get hold of and my uneasiness about drugs increased.

MY DRUG OF choice had been readily available at any pharmacy, but as

regulations tightened I discovered that only three pharmacies would sell to me. Even the pharmacist who used to sell to me with such a pleasant smile would only reluctantly sell with a scowl on his face. I couldn't find anyone "kind enough" to sell to me. I was confused as to what I should do once no one would sell to me.

I FELT EXTREMELY guilty, as if I were buying something evil. I was filled with impatience to get a hold of drugs immediately, but when I'd arrive at a drug store I'd try to present an appearance of casualness that indicated, or so I thought, that there was no grave emergency involved in my request.

BUT THE RESULTS were always the same. I continued to invade drug stores with ever-increasing anxiety and ever-increasing amounts of money.

THE FINAL FEW years I was repeatedly committed to and released from a variety of mental hospitals. My family encouraged me to go into the hospital many times. But I was afraid that I would lose my license as a pharmacist if it were learned that I had become a patient in a mental hospital; so I continued to reject the idea of hospitalization.

BUT IF I stayed off of drugs for three days, I would start to hallucinate and I would later wake up and realize that I was in a mental hospital again. I was a patient in the same hospital nine times.

THE FOURTH TIME I was in the hospital

the doctor got angry and even if I had a cold, a headache, even if I couldn't sleep, he would give me absolutely no medication.

I WAS AN insomniac and I had to use drugs. But while in the hospital I gradually overcame the insomnia, the the drugs were no longer necessary. I gained the confidence to sleep without any medications.

"EVERYTHING IS all right now," I thought one time as I was released from the hospital. However, the evening of the third day after being released from the hospital, as I was taking a bath I started to wash my hair. The shampooing seemed to awaken me and I began to think that perhaps I wouldn't be able to sleep that night.

"ALL RIGHT! The medications these days are really strong. But a very mild tranquilizer would be good." I used just two capsules of a very mild tranquilizer. Just two days after that I was in the hospital a fifth time.

I HAD HAD ALL the best intentions of taking that "mild tranquilizer" only in the evenings. But, without my being really aware of it, I started to use it in the mornings too.

THUS, AS FAR as I was concerned, there was nothing more important than getting a hold of my drugs. There was no greater necessity in my life. For example, I would go to buy a hair brush, a tooth brush,

a nail clipper, hair tonic, eye drops, whatever; then I'd change my mind. "Oh! That's right! As long as I'm here I might as well just buy two boxes of my regular medication." In the end I would order the drug I had wanted in the first place.

I COULDN'T BUY enough for my habit on one pharmacy; so I would run to a second pharmacy to buy more. Filled with anxiety I would run around wondering if it was time for the pharmacy to close. Maybe the store would close early. Perhaps they'd be out of the medication I wanted.

IT IS NO exaggeration to say that I spent those 16 years of hell in constant running, the anxiety constantly growing more intense. The running from pharmacy to pharmacy was a race towards death. It was an endless flight, trying ever to keep from hell.

THEN CAME THE time when I thought that if I joined the Japanese Self-Defense Forces then perhaps I would be able to discipline my spirit. Or, if I joined a body building center perhaps I could find physical discipline. If I got enough exercise I would not need medicine to sleep.

ACTUALLY, I did take a body building course. If I fasted, I thought, I would regain physical health, clean the drugs out of my system and thereafter be able to use my drugs with some sort of control.

I SWITCHED from sleeping pills to pain killers. If it went well then perhaps I could once again use a weaker medication. Then again, I thought, per-

haps it would be better just to get high on alcohol. I also thought that I had too much free time. What I needed was a hobby; then I would forget about drugs....I came up with just about every idea there was to come up with.

THE LAST TIME I was in the hospital I was in the drug addiction ward of a large national hospital. During that period I gave up the idea that I would ever be able to use drugs well. I gave up on myself and I thought that it would be better if I just died. I had reached the point where I used drugs without counting the capsules. I had also started giving myself a double punch by drinking alcohol with the medications.

I WAS ON THE final sprint as I raced towards the finish line of death. If I were to be able to live a long time I would have to be isolated from the rest of society. If that were the case I would be better off dead.

DURING THIS final hospitalization, the doctor said that if an abstaining drug addict were to use drugs just one more time again, his addiction would begin again. On hearing this a puzzle of 16 years began melting away for me.

"SO THAT'S WHAT it's all about! Until now I have been switching from strong drugs to weaker ones, trying so hard to decrease the amount. But there was always some drugs in my system. Is just one tablet or capsule harmful?"

EVEN IF I got out of the hospital I knew I really didn't have the ability to use even one tablet, then stop. What would I do once I was released from the hospital? But, just as I was in this state of confusion the message of AA was brought to me. I thought that alcoholics were so much different from drug-dependent persons. But perhaps, I thought, they had a clue as to how to keep from taking a drug even once.

MY PARENTS TOLD me that I was not welcome at home once I was released from the hospital. Since I had nowhere to go, I stumbled into the half-way house run by the member of the fellowship who had brought me the AA message.

I WENT TO AN AA meeting the day I was released from the hospital. As I listened to the alcoholics of the fellowship talk about "one cup of sake" and "one drink of alcohol," I tried to apply those words to my own drug problem. As the number of meetings I attended increased, the effort to replace the word drugs for alcohol went away.

GRADUALLY I began to understand that the process of the disease of alcoholism was the same as what happened to me. I realized that alcoholism and drug addiction are the same disease.

"BUT IT SHOULD be different," I thought. When the alcoholic has a headache he can take an aspirin, but I can't use any pain killers. Does the alcoholic have more leeway in recovery than I do? But I've never

known of an alcoholic who, when he or she has a toothache or a headache, has gotten rid of pain with alcohol. When I understood this my thoughts about alcohol and drug addiction being the same disease became even stronger. And since there are alcoholic members of the fellowship who are recovering, then, I thought, I too could recover.

AT MEETINGS I saw members of the fellowship using this same program being able, for today, one day at a time, to not drink alcohol. As I heard them speak, I came to a point where I gained confidence in this program. Through this program I continued to experience myself free of drugs.

AROUND THE TIME of my second birthday other drug addicts began to make their appearance in the fellowship. It was at this time that we were able to begin a closed meeting of just drug addicts.

AT THESE MEETINGS, when I heard from the mouths of these drug-dependent persons the names of the drugs that they had formerly used and how they used them, I felt like I had come home to my own native land from so far-off place. I at last felt relaxed and at home.

OF COURSE, A alcoholics are very important to me. But I came to feel that the drug-dependent members are a special fellowship to me. I felt that I was able to identify with the alcoholic members of AA, but I also felt that the recovering drug-dependent members had something special in common.

THERE WAS SO much that the drug addicts

of the fellowship could understand immediately which the alcoholics had difficulty in understanding. For example, there are medications which are dangerous for me even if I get sick, but which other members of the fellowship can use.

FOR INSTANCE, one drug-dependent person of the fellowship used sleeping pills and pain killers. Whenever he used his drugs he would feel a burning sensation in his stomach. Then he would get a queasy feeling in his stomach and he would be sure that he had taken his drugs. After he joined the program, he would use Bufferin whenever he caught a cold. This would cause that same old sensation in his stomach and in turn he soon began to abuse even Bufferin. For me, bitter-tasting drugs worked in much the same way. What alcoholic could understand such thinking?

I CAME TO KNOW my own weaknesses through listening to the stories of other drug addicts. I came to know the difference between pure alcoholics and poly-addicted substance abusers. I came to know and appreciate my own weakness and that in this weakness I could live a safe and happy life. Furthermore, for me to come to a realization of my own weaknesses I now know that I need fellow drug addicts.

FINALLY, IN 1981 Narcotics Anonymous was started in Tokyo. I am deeply grateful for the AA fellowship which has brought me this far, with thanksgiving in my heart for the AA program which has given birth to NA

in Japan.

--Kiyoshi
Tokyo, Japan

FIGHTING INSANITY

When I came to this fellowship seeking help I wanted three things: relief from the insanity; a good woman, and a good car.

As I grew in the fellowship and my personal life, I began to notice two things. One, when I forgot to read the "Day By Day," pray and practice the basic tools of this program, my insanity woke up. Two, left unchecked my insanity quickly disrupted my priorities.

Usually my insanity came in attacks of anger, resentment, pride, justification for the way I was doing things and obsession with sex, motorcycles and service work.

At one time in my recovery I thought that would be "cured" by a thorough Fourth Step. After much writing and a Fifth Step, not with just one but with several people (each individually), I would still break out with insanity attacks.

To make matters worse, within an hour or two my priorities would get scrambled! Not knowing the true cause of my "problems," the old thinking came back and everything wrong would be anyone's fault but my own.

I would pray and pray, "God help those people. Restore them to sanity." No results. In fact, the problems would snowball! And there I would stand screaming, "When are YOU going to get YOUR act together?"

At a meeting one night a young lady brought up anger and resentment. The way she talked said to me INSANITY! It suddenly struck me, that's how my addictive personality shows itself. Looking back on my past experience I realized the days and weeks I practiced my basic program all was well. Maybe not my present ideal of what things should be, but by all means smooth and well.

I find it odd how God in His infinite wisdom sends people asking the questions about their life, the same questions I ask about mine, then gives me the answer.

Odder still is how God uses me as an instrument not only to help others, but myself as well.

--Anonymous

HOME GROUP

I would like to share with whoever reads this how I feel about having a home group.

In NA it seems to me we tend to drift around a lot. I also did this when I was first in the program. As I see it today, one of the things that helped bring stability into my life was getting a home group.

When it was first asked of me, "Where's your home group?" I didn't have the foggiest idea what the person was talking about. I rambled off some bullshit answer and the guy knew it was bullshit but out of kindness didn't push the conversation any further.

After being in and out of the program for four months, a guy asked me if I would support a new group that had just started close to my apartment. After several invitations to the meeting I showed up.

Of course it was small (him, me and one patient) and I was very disappointed. I was expecting all the other people that I had met in NA to show up. We (this other guy and I) had driven over to their meetings, why hadn't they come to this one? He told me not to worry about that and for us to talk to this newcomer instead.

Well, over the years I've watched a lot of things go down at this group. One week after we had sat in the meeting talking back and forth to each other and me sharing my hurt again, we decided to do something different. We decided it would be alright to pray for a newcomer for the meeting. Well, the next week when I walked into the meeting room expecting to see nobody there (right?) was I ever blown out of my socks! There milling around the coffee pot were nine new guys! I didn't know where to start or even what to do. The other guy came in and asked me where I got all the new people from and started laughing as hard as he could. Of course

it was an outrageous meeting and somewhere down inside me I knew something was at work in my life. I didn't understand it at all, but I couldn't deny it either. There was the proof in nine people.

Many things have happened to me and the group since then. I've got to watch the group grow (with ups and downs) from that point to where today it is not uncommon that if you don't get there early, 7:30 or so, you have trouble getting a seat.

To get to see all this go down does cost something--giving your word that you will show up early every week. At the start it was from week to week but today it is, and feels so, very much a part of my life. At times I've cried many tears over the changes that have gone on, but I've also cried many tears of joy watching the many, many newcomers that the Spirit has sent through the doors of that meeting. I had it happen last week when a member came to the group to get a year chip and after the meeting came up to me and shared how much it meant to her to see me there and how it had helped her so much during the year knowing that the hope she had found at her first meeting there was still there and getting stronger.

I know today it takes a lot of hard work on my part to have a good home group. I also know it is damn well worth the price. I get a special feeling from my home group that I don't get anywhere else. I get that feeling that we (me doing my part whatever it is) together are making NA as a whole

stronger and stronger; doing for the addict who needs help what nobody else can.

The message of Recovery can be carried in many ways and this is just one that I have found has helped me over the last five years. I know today it has taken more dedication than I was ever willing to give. Day by day, week by week, it has come. Today I can share that I've only missed five meetings of my home group in the last five years. All of the credit for that goes to you people and to a Loving Spirit who had led me to this way of life.

--Motorcycle Ed
Smyrna, GA

STEP TEN

"WE CONTINUED TO TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY AND WHEN WE WERE WRONG PROMPTLY ADMITTED IT."

This step keeps us growing and changing. It is easy after dealing with the past in the other nine steps to become complacent and to think we have it "all together." Although we have made some changes in our lives, having it "all together" is far from the truth. We need to keep looking at ourselves in order to maintain a sense of manageability in our daily lives. Also to keep old forms of behavior from creeping back in on us.

We all have days when nothing goes right--or at least not the way we think

it should. The world is full of injustice and we as human beings get our share and naturally we feel angry and hurt. But we must remember that in order to keep ourselves on an even keel, we must not allow ourselves to be carried away by these or other negative emotions. How many nights have we spent restlessly nursing a resentment while the supposed subject of our resentment probably slept calmly and quietly?

We need to deal with ourselves first, realizing where we were wrong or maybe just what can I do to make things better, rather than "take others' inventory" and forget about our own defects.

--Anonymous

NA AND ME

We can do what I couldn't
Love myself, I wouldn't
I've got you by my side,
I don't need to run and hide.

Give me the support I need.
With love, my heart you feed.
Together we'll make it today.
But, I need you to show me the way.

Guide me through the shadows,
Walk me through the meadows,
Hold my hand very tight,
Take me for a free flight.

Love me with not one condition.
Help me with that indecision.
Put me to my bed of rest.
Assure me that this life is best.

- Molly

"...MEDICINE, RELIGION AND PSYCHI-
ATRY HAD NO ANSWERS FOR US THAT WE
COULD USE...."

Addiction is the disease. But the human denial system is so strong that we search for answers, not to the problem but to the symptoms. Therefore, psychology, sociology and medicine treat differing symptoms differently. The treatment of only the symptoms denies recovery to the addict. It reinforces their natural reaction (chemical denial) preceding surrender.

Acceptance of our First Step means an end to confusion in our personal identity. Before, we thought of ourselves as heroin addicts, pot-heads, speed freaks, alcoholics, cross addicts, dual addicts, poly-addicts or drug addicts. Acceptance of NA's First Step shows us that heroin, pot, speed, alcohol, crosses, duals, polys or drugs aren't the disease. Addiction is the disease!

--Anonymi

F E L L O W S H I P

Good Morning Everybody!

I'm laying up in St. Joe's waiting for them to bring breakfast. I had a pretty good night's sleep last night as far as that goes in a hospital, with buzzers going off, nurses in and our and wires and tubes trying to strangle me.

I understand the topic last night was "Fellowship." I would like to give

you some feedback on what it means to me, if you have a second.

I am so grateful to be a part of you. I have always wanted to be a useful part of something, to be loved and accepted. All of my life I went from organizations, church, drugs, sex, rock 'n' roll to anywhere else my monkey would take me. I've traveled many miles trying to find acceptance. It was nowhere. Finally, like you, by the Grace of God I stumbled upon NA. When I walked in, I was immediately loved and accepted. I was not different. No one expected anything from me except to stay clean. There were no country club dues, no dares, no anything. I didn't have to like you or myself for that matter. Granted, it took a few days of coming back before I realized this, but that was my own stinking thinking.

As I write this, I feel relatively good. My spirit is way up. This is the first time after being in the hospital dozens of times for the same thing that I didn't wake up crying and sitting on the "pity pot." A brother (NA) woke me up this morning by giving me a call to let me know I was loved. What a wonderful thing! In the past my family stood beside me. When they were not here, a roommate or a friend (maybe) would call half-heartedly. Last night I went to sleep knowing God was taking care of me. I had three calls from my NA family and that shows you love me. I know I am in your prayers as you are in mine.

I checked in here because I did not trust myself with any kind of pain script. I know what my past track record was and that wasn't very good. It just shows He is taking care of me and all of our prayers are being answered. I have not had anything stronger than Tefenol yet. I can't promise for it to continue this way, but I know that your strength is flowing through to me and I can withstand a helluva lot more than if I was up here alone.

I guess what I am saying is I am grateful to have each of you to lean on. You give me strength and hope. None of us knows just how long we will stay here or stay clean, but One Day At A Time, with all of this love we can go on forever.

I thank each of you and the group conscious for your love and support. In the past month you have shown me a new way of life, given me something to believe in and supported me and walked me through hard times. This is what you as my family of fellowship means. I'll see you at the first meeting I can get to when I'm out.

--In gratitude and love,
Cheryl S.
Atlanta, GA

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THINK YOU HAVE A DRUG PROBLEM?

CALL THE N. A. HOT LINE

404-875-3995

* * * * *

TO A NEWCOMER

The journey sometimes seems too rough. I know. I've been there, too. I wish I had some magic carpet that I could give you and make it easy and make you smile.

"Getting there is half the fun." That's what they told me, friend. On this road you'll someday see that you'll never reach the end. A journey with no destination? It seems too much to endure.

Remember, you have a malady for which there is no cure. We can stay clean and sober and even have fun--

IF we remember to do it one day at a time. Just don't take that fix, pill or drink today and sooner or later everything will be fine.

The clouds that sometimes seem to come out of nowhere to block the light which we cling to so desperately could offer a bright reflection if we will only look for the good in ourselves and in others.

Many people pass this way, our brothers and sisters. "You must give it away in order to keep it." You'll hear that time and time again. Working with others like yourself will help you ease the pains of just existing.

Just keep getting yourself to a meeting each day and one day your attitude will switch to one of sunshine that no cloud will ever be able to hide. No problem will ever again be able to cover the love you have inside.

--Anonymous

WHAT AM I?

If I act before I think
then what am I?
If I pray and not believe
then what am I?
If I do not believe in anything,
what am I?
If I have no trust
then where am I?
If I become dependent on chemi-
cals, who am I fooling?
If I keep isolated,
what am I denying?
If I allow my ego to become
all important,
what happens?

--Anonymous

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The Rainbow Staff

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Marietta, GA 30060

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF N.A.

WHY IT WORKS

We keep what we have only with vigilance and just as freedom for the individual comes from the Twelve Steps so freedom for the groups springs from our traditions.

As long as the ties that bind us together are stronger than those that would tear us apart, all will be well.

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.
2. For our Group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our Group conscience, our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.
4. Each Group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other Groups, or N.A., as a whole.
5. Each Group has but one primary purpose — to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An N.A. Group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every N.A. Group out to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our Service Centers may employ special workers.
9. N.A., as such ought never be organized; but we create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. N.A. has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

