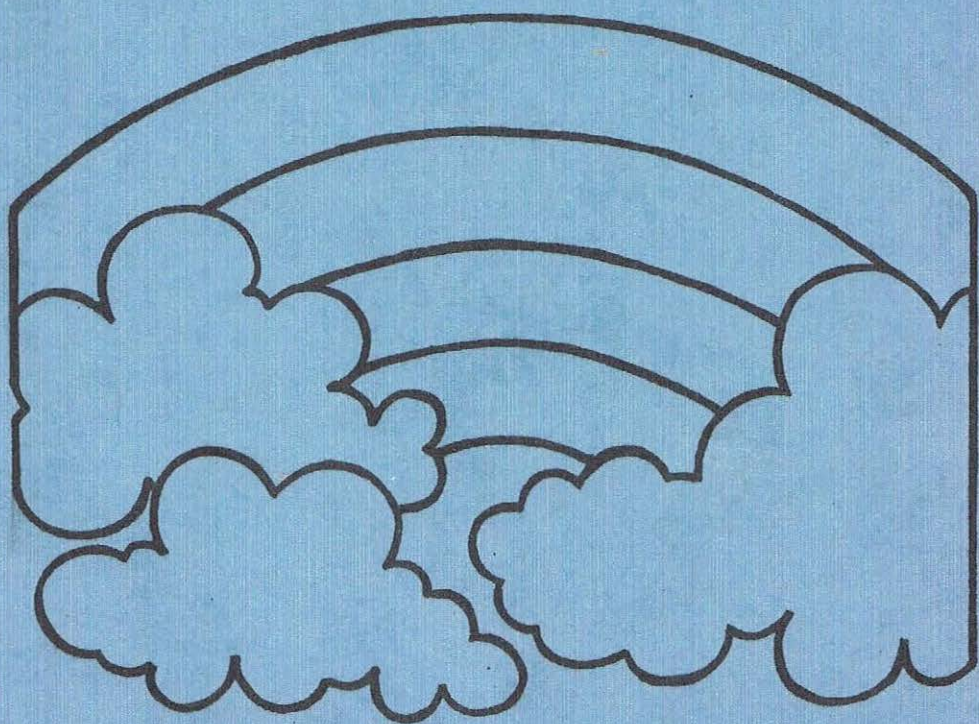


The Rainbow Connection



AUGUST 1984

The Rainbow Connection



" ... caring and sharing the N.A. way ... "

Volume Five

Number Two

August 1984

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Published as a monthly service of the
Marietta ASC.

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COMING HOME AGAIN



Some of us are people who wander in our recovery. Sometimes, we may stray from the people that love us and taught us to live the principles that made our recovery possible. It may be a slow, gradual and sometimes imperceptible process. We may begin to see our priorities in conflict with each other. This ought to be a warning signal to us that our disease is beginning to alter our perspectives and confuse us as to what is real and important to us as recovering addicts. Most of us want to improve our lives and become better people but some of our values can confuse us as to what better really means for us and where to start.

A basic form of denial for us is to discredit or underestimate the power of the disease in our lives, which can be expressed by a lack of willingness to surrender and go to any lengths to recover. When we edge our recovery out of our lives, in order to attend to other seemingly important priorities, we are in effect saying we have gained some power over addiction and can handle it on our own. Becoming more responsible and concentrating on social acceptability does not insure recovery, nor does it necessarily reflect a good spiritual condition. Appearances can be deceiving and deadly to an addict when he or she ignores the inside and sets out to fix all the externals in their life.

Our spiritual recovery is not an optional aspect of the program but the basis upon which we build our new way of living clean. Social recovery may look good but in my case it did not guard against relapse. The amount of clean time one has does

not put us on safe ground and as the disease silently progresses we are in need of more recovery to guide us and keep us from being victimized by some new form of denial aided by pride and ego. Becoming unwilling to try, and to surrender, and to admit your need for help is a no-win situation, and relapse is often the end result. Becoming cynical, frustrated, & overly concerned with our personal lives is a form of self-obsession and can drain us of our recovery. Dishonesty sets in on lives and we become less openminded to new ideas or suggestions from others. We may begin to find fault with meetings or other members and use this to disqualify ourselves and say we just don't fit in like we used to. We may question whether or not we are really loved and we may doubt that our Higher Power is really active in our lives or able to help us. We may feel very distant and be inwardly ashamed of how we feel and of our program. All of this happened in my life and the end result was relapse.

Returning is not easy but there was nothing left for me to do, and the drugs held no good feelings or relief, and the devastation I felt afterwards was much worse than ever before in my using. Coming home to my true family was my only reward, and I did not have to use to surrender again and be willing to go to any lengths, but my disease made me feel that I was trapped and had to do it. I was convinced that using was the only relief left for me, and that the program wouldn't work any more. So I thought. I wasn't really and truly willing to let the program work. I was just going to have to live out the

mess my life was becoming, even if it killed me.

Today I feel some peace and acceptance of what happened, but I don't want to do it again. My main reason for sharing all of this and writing is to help another member who may be going through a similar pattern in their life. Details may vary, but when we allow other things to preside above our recovery we are courting disaster. What is helping me today is to go to meetings, center my life in Narcotics Anonymous by helping others get clean through sharing and being available when they are asking for help, praying to my Higher Power, and doing things like writing this article.

I also am beginning to work the Steps again, and live and practice them daily. The relief I am feeling by making a new surrender and coming back to the people who love me and realizing that God does have a purpose for me, is far better than any narcotic high. I can begin to feel useful and a part of the "WE" program, and not trapped in the "I" program that was killing me. No words can express my gratitude to all of you and to my Higher Power for your love and concern. I hope only that if anyone reading this is in the same dilemma that they might be able to see some of the warning signs, and realize that the worse it gets the harder it becomes to do anything about it. We must practice vigilance in our daily program and not get too proud to admit that we're still powerless over the disease of addiction, whether we are one day clean or ten years clean. I must remember that those who keep coming to out meetings regularly stay clean.

God Bless



BALANCE

How often have I heard the word balance used with members in the program? How many times have I been told, and told others that you need balance in your life?


So, being an addict, naturally I think that change is on the outside and I change the outside; the inside remains the same. It is the same with balance. I try to balance the outside first instead of the inside; putting the cart before the horse. I run about, thinking and trying to get the hours balanced between work, home, and meetings, a budget for money and other such things. I forget that I'm powerless over people, places, and things. And that the only thing I can do anything about are the things inside, thru God's Grace, by surrender and acceptance thru the 12 Steps. Truly only God has the power to change the outside and me on the inside.

Today, I think of a balance where inside, I'm more in recovery than in the disease, more in the answer than the problem, more accepting than rejecting, more kind than cruel, more loving than hating, more forgiving than unforgiving, more trusting than suspicious, more thankful than indifferent, more faith than fear, more peace than war!

When I look honestly and can, I still fall very short of anything even close to perfection. But, I'm grateful for what balance there is inside because today I'm more into not using than I am into using.

I'm also thankful that God balances the outside and not me! Otherwise I might get what I deserved instead of His Grace. He changes the inside, so I can have a new life!

HUMILITY



Humility is the opposite of pride, which has been called the "deadliest sin." It is indeed the subtlest of my defects of character. I find acting out of pride to be the most easily justified sick behavior. It creeps up on me and I think I'm doing OK when I am isolating from others in the Fellowship - still going to meetings, but not sharing my own feelings with others, still doing service, but out of pride, not love.

According to our book, this is the necessary spiritual principle of Step 7, which states, "WE humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings." Humility is the state of seeing yourself as you are, or living in truth. Pride weaves a matrix of lies and illusions around us, which we can't see through when we are caught in them. We can see these illusions quite clearly in the lives of others, however, especially those who we know well. That is one reason why we need each other to survive our ongoing disease. My recovery often depends on your vision.

Step 6 and 7 are the real change Steps of our recovery program, and I can't even begin to change if I am living in pride which will not allow me to admit the need for change. To maintain this illusion of being OK, I must isolate myself from others in N.A. because they will reveal the fallacy of my beliefs. The Fellowship is a magic, multi-faceted mirror which only reflects truth to me---never falsehood. N.A. will not cosign my bullshit, and for that I am grateful. It gives me a chance to grow, and not die in my disease.

This is how it works - The Steps and Traditions, the people of the Fellowship, and the God of our understanding all work together to effect the miracle of N.A.



A NEW WAY OF LIFE

When I was using drugs I only knew one way to live. I lived with people who had already chosen their destiny. So had I. I was ready to die with them. The way we were going to die wasn't very pretty. I had a lot of denial and said I wasn't an addict. But something was wrong. My eyes were closed. I never thought about what I was doing to myself. I was committing suicide. Slowly, but surely, I was dying and didn't know it. It's not a good feeling, calling and begging your family to send you money to get home on. The past seven years have gone to hell and bounced off the bottom, and so have I.

But now I have a second chance to live. I had to put the old way in the garbage can and let the garbage men carry it off before I could start over. I had to listen to what people in NA said, and then do it. It's hard at first, but after a while it does get better. When I first came back, I was going to do it all in one day. Wrong! It takes time and effort. It really does get better in time. This is a simple program but it isn't easy. I have to remember to use the people in the program before I use drugs.

OLD PLAYMATES AND OLD PLAYGROUNDS



I have come to learn that staying away from old playmates and old playgrounds is a must. Unfortunately, I had to learn the hard way. Being the sick addict that I am I couldn't listen to what my sponsor and others said. I had to take the insane route. Old bars and using companions, I've learned, cannot be a part of my program. Having been clean a few months, I thought I was "well" enough to go out with a using friend. He said he understood that I was an addict (as best he could, I am sure) and that was cool. On the way to the bar he asked me to roll a joint for him. I told myself, "I am not that sick, I can handle him smoking in front of me." I knew I couldn't handle touching the stuff. Therefore he rolled the joint and smoked it. I found the conversation drastically changed within two minutes of his using. We went to the bar and he ordered me a DIET PEPSI and himself a "real drink." Throughout the night I felt uneasiness as though we had nothing in common. We weren't on the same wavelength. He was the kind of guy I would have fallen in love with overnight (good-looking, crazy and wild) if I were still using. We were supposedly having fun. It was the kind of supposedly "fun" I had while drinking and drugging. I realized during the night that this was a perfect setup to use. This made me more determined to prove to myself I could handle it.

Throughout the course of the night I drank my DIET PEPSI and he proceeded to get more shit-faced. I didn't use but the next few days after I felt like shit. I saw how close I was to ruining my life. The next day I went to two meetings and went crazy in my mind. I didn't use but I was into my old lifestyle.

Stay away from old playmates and old playgrounds," Boy, do I know now that it is a must. I can have real fun now and go out with fun, wild and good-looking clean guys that share that common bond. I have a choice today---and I've chosen to stay clean one day at a time.

SERVING IN THE RIGHT PLACE

Service is inseparable from recovery. Everyone who has stayed clean for a long period of time has been active in service. The service of some is more obvious than that of others, but a close look will always reveal service in one form or another. We serve according to our abilities and God's will for us, but we all serve in some way. It is important for us to serve in ways in which we are suited. Service is its own reward and it is also direct evidence of the presence of a Higher Power in our lives.

POWERLESS

I was just reading a Rainbow Connection the other day and the article was on being powerless. That word scares me to death -- POWERLESS. When I was using I wasn't powerless. I could do anything I wanted. But when the high came down I was scared. Then I was powerless and I could not function without using. I didn't know how to be a responsible human being without being stoned.

Now, I am in the program of Narcotics Anonymous. I can learn how to be mature, responsible, and productive without dope. It's hard, but it's possible. In the beginning nothing seemed possible, but little by little things started to fall into place. I have to listen to what people tell me to do, because if I listen to what my head tells me to do, I'll get loaded. And that's the last thing I want to do!

I have to have my own program. I can't work your program. I have to stay clean because I want to, not because my mom and dad spent so many thousands of dollars on me.

If you're like me, you'll die if you go back out and use dope. It gets worse and worse, and there's no guarantee that I'll ever make it back again. I have to put 110% into my program or I'll die. This program is my last resort. There may be another fix, pill, drink, or toke, but not today. That's another thing-- I have to live one day at a time.

Work the Steps, don't use, go to meetings, and if you have a problem let somebody know. Chances are, they know what you're going through, because we've all been through it. Use the people in the program, before you use dope. You'll feel a hell of a lot better if you do.

I was tired of the dry heaves, hangovers, and blackouts. All of that gets old. The party fades after a while. So work the Steps, don't use, go to meetings, and use the people in the program before you use drugs.

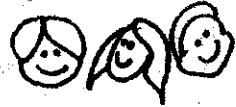


HOW NOT TO GET WELL

1. Find fault with your group and the Trusted Servants.
2. Don't go to meetings when you're feeling bad---you don't want anyone to know you're sick.
3. If you go to a meeting, be late.
4. Above all, don't listen. This could be fatal.
5. Be cynical, getting well is difficult if you find fault and criticize.
6. Don't talk to others, take phone numbers, or visit people.



RELATIONSHIPS



What can I do without other people? Well, I can shoot dope, run cons, quit or get fired from jobs, live in "splendid" isolation, and die. Humans are social creatures and need, thrive on other people. We spur each other on, compete, nurture, fight, and feel deeply for one another.

We are capable of putting one person on a pedestal so high that when they fall off, we are crushed - and blame it all on the name of love.

Through the power of Narcotics Anonymous today I am learning to have a relationship with me. By relating to others I am learning how to treat me. People really respond to kindness, honesty, patience, and encouragement. I too, am finding that I can turn these same things in toward myself and practice these principles with me.

I deserve a good relationship with myself. I hid from me and all I felt - today I don't have to. Just for today, as I relate to you people I will continue to bring these relationships home.

Tell yourself:

JUST FOR TODAY my thoughts will be on my recovery, living and enjoying life without the use of drugs.

JUST FOR TODAY I will have faith in someone in N.A. who believes in me and wants to help me in my recovery.

From OUR BOOK



TAKING CARE OF THE LITTLE THINGS

I became aware tonight that taking care of the little things is hard to do. For some reason, my pride is such that I really believe that I'm capable of solving major life-threatening problems. I'm forever telling myself that all the little things aren't really that important, they are only troublesome, time - consuming, and others less capable than myself should take care of them. I told you that I have a big ego! I'm also lazy, and it's hard for me to do things that require effort, that I don't really enjoy doing.

Anyway, somehow by practicing the little things, which is somehow spiritual, the big things are either taken care of in the process and don't appear, or if they do appear, you are prepared for them. Even the big things are overcome in little steps. It's like the program, God gave us a lifetime, but we live it a day at a time.

When I'm not doing the little things, like picking up after myself, checking the oil in the car and etc. and I'm telling myself that this major problem is more important, perhaps I'm really just spinning my wheels. All these little things sure are hard to do, perhaps because they are so simple.

FIGHTING THE MONKEY



Sometimes I feel so good living without drugs in my body that I need to be reminded that I am a drug addict. Two days ago, a feeling of anxiety and extreme discomfort inside made me miserable. I felt like I used to feel when I had done too much cocaine. My disease told me that I needed a shot of morphine to calm me down and end my discomfort. On my own, I was destined to get that shot. This was my first overpowering urge to use in a long time. It was very real.

So I wanted to use. So what? I was taught very early in my recovery that I had to be willing to do whatever it takes to stay clean. I've been taught that when an urge to use comes on, talk to another recovering addict about it. I did. I sought help from my Higher Power and got it. I'm grateful that the absolute bottom line in my recovery is that I don't use - no matter what. I've learned everything I know about recovery and staying clean in Narcotics Anonymous.

. I didn't use and now I feel fine. I can't - WE can, it works!

JUST FOR TODAY I will have a program. I will try to follow it to the best of my ability.

JUST FOR TODAY through N.A. I will try to get a better perspective on my life.

From OUR BOOK



REAL JOY

I use to think real joy was bouncing on my
brother's bed,
snickering as our mother yelled
I use to think real joy was riding my
bike through mud,
or exploring the great wilds of a vacant lot

then I thought it was the sky
then I thought it was being high

for a while I thought it was a myth
for a while I was sure of this

then I longed for it, seeking it jealously
in the sparkle of a child's eye
then I looked for it,
in the sparkle of a man's eye

now I've found it

at first I found it in a chip---30 days
to be exact
then again at 60, 90, and one year

I think now real joy is in today
I think now real joy is in this way

now I think it is God
now I think it is the group

for now I see it
for now I can achieve it

now I look for it,
seeking it out in everyday situations
now I look for it,
in the still-shaking voice of a "newcomer"

now I've found it



at first I found it in a chip---30 days
to be exact
then again at 60, 90, and one year

I think now real joy is in today
I think now real joy is in the N.A. way!

DEALING WITH PROBLEMS

In my experience in N.A., I've had a lot of problems pop up. Living with or being married to another addict doesn't help much. However, I have found that every little thing I deal with without using, helps me to be able to cope with the next thing.

A lot of the problems are too personal to bring up at meetings, for me anyway. This is where 1 of my 3 sponsors come in. Personally, I'm one who pushes these things down inside. Within the next day or two someone will say, "Are you OK?" or "Do you need someone to talk to?" And it starts surfacing again. As I talk to others, one on one, I find that mostly all I have to do is accept it.

Acceptance of where I'm at and acceptance of where other people are at. So really I guess if we get out of ourselves and not hold it in we learn a lot. This is something I have to practice on an hourly basis.

A RECOVERING ADDICT

ARTICLE

Everything I said I would never do I did. I will smoke pot but I will never stick a needle in my arm. What a fool! Funny how quick we forgot the things we will never do. The "I will never do's" got me here and I am one of the lucky ones. The other ones die.

Steve J.

VACATIONS DON'T HAVE TO BE A DRAG

Routines are of great value to this obsessive addict. As long as I am in school or doing some service work, my day to day recovery is generally simple and meaningful. Awakening early, doing that thing of responsible value during the day, and getting that evening N.A. fix puts me in great spiritual shape by bedtime.

However, everything seems to fall apart at the seams when I go on vacation. When I wake up late, I begin to feel lost. Not having anything of structural value to keep me busy during the day, I am left with far too much time on my hands. Consequently, I start thinking excessively and my disease starts playing games with me. I start making mountains out of mole-hills. Minor responsibilities become monumental tasks. I overdose on my 10th Step, finding only flaws in myself and magnifying them without mercy. I am alone and in bad company.

When my Higher Power gave me the gift of recovery, He intended for it to be utilized in every aspect of my life; social as well as business. I am beginning to realize that I can learn how to enjoy my free time.

While on vacation from school this summer, I intend to make some changes from my vacation patterns of the past. I will continue to awaken early and get involved in some stimulating activities during the day. I will get on a weight lifting program, trying to work on the physical aspect of my addiction. Given my enjoyment of travel and the Fellowship, I plan to hit the greater N.A. trail, sucking up some of that fine recovery on the road. Finally, I will write some more articles for this and some other newsletters. To break up the monotony, I will enjoy the spirit of the mountains on a periodic camping trip.

With the help of the program and my Higher Power, I will enjoy this vacation.



Glenn R.
Macon, GA

JUST FOR TODAY I will be unafraid, my thoughts will be on my new associations, people who are not using and who have found a new way of life. So long as I follow that way. I have nothing to fear.

From OUR BOOK

ANNOUNCEMENTS & CALENDAR

REGIONAL RETREAT - Nebraska RSC. Swimming-hiking-meetings. July 20-22 Fremont Lakes.

HIGH ON LIFE PICNIC - Show Me Region. July 27-29 Stockton Lake.



1ST WESTERN STATES UNITY CONVENTION - 11 Western States July 27-29, Nevada at the Sahara Hotel. WSUC, P.O. Box 42355, Las Vegas, NV 89116. (702)647-2680 (702)452-

1ST ANNUAL UNITY WEEKEND - Washington Metropolitan Area, August 3,4,&5, 1984. George Washington University, D.C. P.O. Box 2232, Washington, D.C. 20013. (202) 338-7989.

5TH BCNA RALLY at Vancouver August 18-20

14TH WORLD CONVENTION OF N.A. at Chicago - Miracles Happen. August 30 - Sept 2. Hotel Continental, Bx 24, 1744 W. Devon, Chicago IL 60660.

1ST AUSTRALIAN REGIONAL CONVENTION - New Zealand. Living Proof, Sept 29-30 and Oct 1. Sydney, Australia.

7TH PACIFIC NORTHWEST CONVENTION - Vision of Hope. October 5-7, Thunderbird Inn at the Quay. P.O. Box 5158 Vancouver, WA 98668 or (206) 254-0179 (206) 693-0038.

2ND TRI-STATE REGIONAL CONVENTION - T.S. R.C.N.A. October 5,6,7 at the Holiday Inn Pittsburgh. (412)361-4005 (412)921-4865

