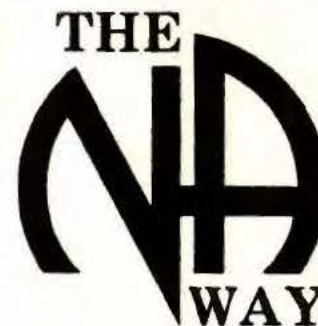


**My Gratitude Speaks
When I Care
And When I Share
With Others
The N.A. Way.**



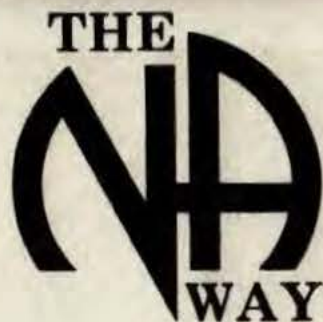
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From the Inside





THE INTERNATIONAL
JOURNAL OF THE FELLOWSHIP
OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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N.A.

N.A. is a non-profit Fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other to stay clean. This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only *one* requirement for membership, the honest desire to stop using. There are no musts in N.A., but we suggest that you keep an open mind and give yourself a break. Our program is a set of principles written so simply that we can follow them in our daily lives. The most important thing about them is that *they work*.

All members of Narcotics Anonymous are invited to participate in this "meeting in print." Send all input along with a signed copyright release form to: The N.A. Way; World Service Office, Inc.; P.O. Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409

THE TWELVE STEPS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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.*
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.*

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Carrying the Message

Sometimes in my life, I have found that I have put people too high up on a pedestal—so high that they could do no wrong. In my mind they were next to God-like; they were some kind of saint. I looked at them as "better than," they were better than me; they were almost perfect. I was blind to how they really were, that they too had faults.

You see they were just people too, and they had their own shortcomings. The problem with pedestals becomes obvious when I finally see that person clearly for the first time. There is a possibility that the chance of seeing their shortcomings may total our friendship altogether, and threaten my recovery.

I must realize that people who will let me place them up that high perhaps enjoy having that power. Perhaps they are just as sick with power as I am with insecurity. Instead of falling into that kind of relationship, I must find N.A. members who are truly carrying the message. And I must learn from them to be a carrier of the message.

Carrying the message is not as easy as it may sound. "The message" is not simply made up of information passed along, or the learned logic of the program. I feel it is so much more, because I believe the program is a set of simple tools, designed to unlock the heart. For within the heart lies the wisdom of God. And therein is the answer to living.

By living in God's center of wisdom—my heart—by being a living example, or guide, not just a giver of words, I can better support my fellow N.A. member. By giving of myself in this manner, I can better carry the message.

God help me continue to grow, and live from my heart so I can better carry your message today.

J.B.
California

N.A. Was There



I am on a plane from Baltimore to New York after attending the Sixth East Coast N.A. Convention. I thought I would be heading to Virginia where I live, but I spoke to my sister-in-law in New York at 3:30 p.m. and she told me straight out, "Your stepmother died!" So it's 5:30 p.m., and I'm on the plane to New York to go to her funeral tomorrow. She died from the disease!

Once again in my times of trouble Narcotics Anonymous and the God of my understanding are with me. My girlfriend who is in the program and two members from Pittsburgh came with me to the airport. I said goodbye to my girlfriend with plans to go straight to an N.A. meeting in N.Y.C. As I walked down the aisle of the plane I looked up to see two N.A. friends with an open seat next to them. God loves me and watches over me.

I remember waiting in line at the ticket counter and saying a silent prayer to my Higher Power: "God, help me through this one, Please!" I keep finding that all I have to do is ask for help in this program and I get it. I know where I would be without N.A. I'd be the one in the coffin in New York instead of my stepmother. I owe my life, my happiness, my girlfriend, my car, my job, my home and my God to the program of Narcotics Anonymous, and I don't have the heart to say no when someone needs help or some service work is needed. If that's all it takes to have the wonderful life I have today, I'll do it gladly.

I can't tell you about my stepmother's recovery except she doesn't use today. She pushed everyone away until she was left alone in a small cluttered apartment in New York with her belly swollen out from cirrhosis of the liver, and she still wanted to do it her way. I made an effort to help her by getting her in treatment where she stayed 40 days. She gave it her best shot, but when she left she still wanted to take her pain pills with her. Her disease had progressed too far and she couldn't hear the message. When I get to New York I will be staying with my big brother who is on 80 mg. of methadone a day. He has been looking for the right treatment to detox in for the last month. My stepmother wouldn't go in the hospital unless it was the "right" hospital. What's the difference? My brother's disease speaks just like my stepmother's, INSANE!!

I am angry right now, but at least I'm angry at the disease and not my brother or stepmother; they have no choice. Their disease is active, and it's gotten one of them. Hopefully God has different plans for the other. Maybe my stepmother had to die so my brother can live.

I thank God for my N.A. friends who are sitting next to me on this plane patiently watching me write, and for the East Coast Convention which is just what I needed to be spiritually fit to deal with this. I am shown once again—just for today, I don't have to live that way.

Anonymous
Virginia

Loving



Loving has cost me much. I often catch myself looking at the past, trying not to see how I lost at loving my wife—she died an addict. Was I successful at hiding my fears of loving again? Yes I was, until I came to N.A. and the members told me to wait a year before loving someone. I have a fear of loving because I look at what has been and not at what can be today.

I ask God to give me courage to love again, to take a chance on loving and to help me be a lover, not just to give love, but to get it—just to show my feelings, to learn to touch again and to weep so I can learn to be a giver of love.

Life is about loving and giving love. When I pray I don't pray to change things, but to change me so that I can love again. I was at an N.A. meeting where addicts were talking about love, and I listened. I heard and understood what they were saying instead of just hearing them talking. I heard that love is marvelous, that the more you give away the more you have, and that the real loving is in the giving of love, not the receiving. I am learning not to be a reaper of love, but to be a giver of love.

I'm not all that I should be and I'm thankful I'm not what I used to be. I'll keep attending meetings to hear other members' experience in loving. I love myself today; I'm growing.

J.F.
Washington State

Which Message?

Not long ago, the topic of our collective responsibility kept coming up in meetings. After verbally beating the subject to death, dealing with some resentments, and gaining a little more openmindedness, I found that my thoughts had changed. This is a miracle in itself, and I would like to share it with the Fellowship. Who knows, my thoughts could change again!

Like many others, much of my background is medical, both personal and professional. Hence, many of my resentments and frustrations lie with professionals. For the longest time, I considered my way of "carrying the message" to be in the general area of helping to "educate" doctors, nurses, pharmacists, etc.

I carried this attitude into my service involvement and was convinced that I was complying with Tradition Five. As I continued to share what I knew about drugs, drug seeking behavior and the like with other professionals, I soon became aware of my problem. Thanks to time, meetings, friends, my sponsor, and our literature, this awareness exploded into another growth experience for me.

I was sharing my personal knowledge of my **disease**! While this undoubtedly has some value, it has little to do with carrying the Narcotics Anonymous message of recovery! Again, I learned the hard way. The answer is disgustingly simple. I became a member of an N.A. service committee which acts in unity to simply let the professionals know that **recovery** is available in Narcotics Anonymous to anyone who seeks it!

Aside from being part of a good thing which works, I now feel less burdened and more enthusiastic!

As our Basic Text tells me, "...it is okay to not know all the answers" (First Edition page 83), and "each day more will be revealed" (First Edition page 92).

Humility can be a wonderful thing!

S.S.
Colorado

Addicts and Prescription Drugs

In the past six months, more and more people have brought up the subject of prescription drugs at meetings. For me, these are the most dangerous threat to remaining clean. I know just how cunning they can be, because I'm a "prescription junkie."

I have to remind myself from time to time that the "con" in me is alive and well. Justification, rationalization, the mind games that tell me that prescription drugs are legal, phantom or psychosomatic ailments—any of these can defeat me so easily in my recovery. I have found that the best way for me to protect myself from slipping back into oblivion is by working a vigilant program, including service work, and rigorous honesty with my own recovery needs first.

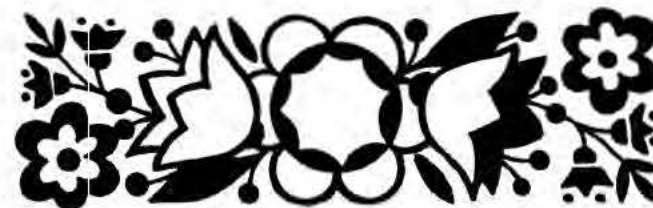
When I first came to the N.A. Program, I was not only scared, but very confused about what I should do to protect my program without putting my health in jeopardy. Of course, being an addict, it took me several meetings to understand that I also was suffering from "terminal uniqueness," and to get up the courage to ask what I could do. Some of us researched the N.A. literature for guidance in this particular circumstance, and a few suggestions were also thrown in by some of the members. Now it was up to me to get honest and do the footwork if I seriously wanted to recover. I'd like to share some of those suggestions:

1. Find a doctor who understands the problems associated with addiction and knows the Narcotics Anonymous Program (they can be our biggest enablers if they don't).
2. Identify yourself to him or her as an addict.
3. Be honest and follow directions.
4. If you are given a prescription, take the medicine only as directed.

5. Stay in close contact with other members of the group, and attend as many meetings as you can.
6. Ask for help from your Higher Power when in pain or before taking medicine. (We can't protect ourselves from us, but He can.)
7. If you have a clear, legitimate need to take medication, make a list of any medications you take each day and share that information with your sponsor. This is an important safeguard against using more than the prescribed dose.
8. Last but not least, don't let anyone try to play doctor. We aren't professionals! I've read accounts of addicts who quit taking a prescribed drug on their own out of guilt, or stopped on the advice of other members of the Fellowship. The end results were severe trauma, hospitalization, suicide or death.

We never know from day to day what life has in store for us, but we are ultimately responsible for the actions we take. Be honest with yourself during tough times like medical situations, and remember... Easy Does It!

V.P.
Washington State





The Paradox

of Pain

On the eve of my second N.A. birthday it would be easy to reflect and wax nostalgic. But it is not where I have been that is important, but where I am and where I am going. It is not who I have been that matters, but who I am and who I am becoming.

It would be easy to speak of victories, yet it is from my defeats that I have learned about living. It would be easy to speak of successes, yet it is from my failures that I have learned about letting go. It would be easy to speak of the gains I have made, yet it is from my losses that I have profited most.

Now on the second anniversary of my last fix, pill or drink, things fall into a clearer perspective. I understand that the pain of failure is a gift, and from every defeat, I have stepped forward and never back. Today I understand the paradox of pain, and wouldn't trade one defeat for all my victories. Neither would I trade my failures or my losses, for it is through these that I change my old ways of thinking, stay clean and grow.

S.O.
Washington State

We Keep What We Have by Giving it Away

We are N.A.; we are the people who can share the gift of recovery with addicts who are still suffering and seeking a new way of life. We keep growing each day as individuals and as a Fellowship by leaps and bounds. Recently, I have been listening to the song, "We are the World"; I feel it could have been written for us. When the song talks of giving, I feel gratitude, because I have been given so much.

Before I came into recovery I suffered an accident that left me in a coma for 28 days. During this time my Higher Power reached out to me through a loved one who had died two years earlier. I heard my cousin tell me to hang in there—something we used to say to each other frequently. When I came out of the coma I recalled the experience which gave me the hope and the reaffirmation of God that I needed. I can't seem to put into words the feelings I experience when I hear of such selfless giving as in that song. It touches the part of me where God lives. I feel a contact with my fellow addicts that is stronger and more meaningful to me than anything else.

While I'm writing this, I am among fellow addicts at an N.A. area anniversary weekend. The love of God is with us, his presence is felt. I'm thinking ahead to the World Convention coming up on Labor Day weekend in Washington, D.C., and my thoughts are of the unconditional love that will be shared among us at that time. When I hear the song of giving, it is clear that we have a purpose in life—to help the still-suffering addict—and isn't it true, "We are the world," we are the people who can give what was so freely given to us: the love and hope needed for recovery. Let's share a song of life at WCNA-15. Let's give thanks for the opportunity to care and share, the N.A. way!

D.L.
Louisiana

Consistency and Regularity



Why me? Why am I the one who has to be an addict? I used to ask myself this question over and over. Surrender to this disease did not come easily. Before I could make a beginning in my recovery I had to admit powerlessness over a disease that I didn't really understand. I just knew intuitively I was powerless, but what is this disease that I am powerless over? I was full of unanswered questions.

To help me understand a bit better, an oldtimer put it to me this way: "Many comparisons have been made between addiction and other diseases, such as diabetes," he said. "Those are valid, but I have another comparison. I think addiction is a lot like B.O. Yeah, body odor. Think about it. If we were at a party and it was getting hot in the room, pretty soon all the people with B.O. would start to display the symptoms. They would be slightly offensive to be around, so they would notice a subtle wall going up between themselves and the people around them. Before long they would have their own part of the room to themselves. If one of the 'normal people' took the time to softly hint to any of them what the problem was, the afflicted ones would get indignant. They resent any mention of the condition whatever. Even when they suspect the real nature of the problem, they don't like to think about it or be reminded."

That was good for a chuckle, but it was when the story went on that the real wisdom of the comparison began to come through. "Medical science," said the older member, "in all its glory, has never found a cure for either addiction or B.O. Once you get either, it seems, you have it for life. But successful treatment has been discovered for both conditions. For B.O. it is regular bathing with soap and water. But the key is consistency and regularity. Who would try to bathe for an extended period of time to get super clean and then go for a week or two without cleaning up, thinking that he ought to be good for a while now. No matter how clean he got the first time, the symptoms would reappear in about the same time as after a normal bath. For addiction, that treatment is regular meetings of Narcotics Anonymous, but again the key is consistency and regularity."

As usual the wisdom of the oldtimer was worth listening to. I have been clean for a number of years now, and the principles of consistent and regular maintenance have become the cornerstones of my recovery program. To extend the comparison, I have learned in recovery to shower daily. I don't feel good these days if I'm not physically clean. All of my friends know I shower every morning, but none of them has ever come up to me and said, "You know, you have

smelled pretty good now for the last few years—don't you think you could quit taking those showers every day?" Even the least brilliant of them could figure that it's the daily showers that allow me to not smell bad. Yet the same people, seemingly sane in all other respects, sometimes say things like, "You have been clean for a number of years now; you have a good job, a good marriage, you don't seem like a drug addict anymore—why do you still have to go to those meetings?" The answer of course is "So that the line of reasoning you just outlined never becomes a little voice in the back of my own head. Maybe the rest of the world can afford a little insanity like that—I can't!"

The reason I can't relates to something else that was passed along to me by that same oldtimer. He told me that what I lack that makes me an addict is an effective mental defense against using drugs. It's so true. During my active addiction, no matter how strong my reasons for not using, when a using situation presented itself, I got amnesia. Somehow I just didn't really consider the scope of the decision to use. No matter that I was risking my career, my relationships, my life, and most importantly, my self respect—I just used. Before long I was looking into someone's disappointed eyes again, feeling hollow and aching inside, wondering how I could have done it all over again. That's a feeling that used to haunt me every day of my life, and today I'm free of it. And you can bet your sanity I never want it back.

So just as my daily showers ward off the bad smell, the regular meetings ward off the possibility that I may degenerate to that defenseless state of mind again. I have been taught that this is a simple program, and when I look at it like this, I guess it really is.

Most of us realize after a time clean, though, that the central issues in our recovery no longer revolve around drugs, even though staying clean must always come first. An honest effort at the working the Twelve Steps and living by the Twelve Traditions sends us into a lifestyle that does not involve drugs, but does involve growing up and learning to meet life on its own terms. For me, even though the central issues change over time, the basic principles of staying clean don't. The word "clean" has grown to mean a

lot more to me than not using drugs, and I am learning to apply it to my life in general as I grow. Today I want to feel clean inside.

I understand today that my best insurance policy against ever feeling as unclean and worthless as I once felt is to apply the same principles of consistency and regularity to all aspects of my program as I do to meetings. As I learn to meditate, I find that to reap the benefits I must do it consistently and regularly. That way even though any single meditative experience may not be too spectacular, I am living with just a notch better conscious contact with my Higher Power than I would have without consistent, regular meditation. That pays off in many many ways.

I have found that if I pay my bills consistently and regularly, my financial problems diminish. If I see my sponsor consistently and regularly, we stay on top of my recovery much better. The principles of consistency and regularity, it turns out, are what make Narcotics Anonymous a program of spiritual fitness rather than one of constantly bailing myself out of jams. Of course in the real world I don't always live up to that ideal, but striving for it sure increases my quality of life.

My rule of thumb has become, "If it enhances my recovery to do something, then doing that thing consistently and regularly will enhance my whole life." I am undisciplined by nature, so progress in some areas is slow, but as long as I maintain my spirituality first, progress is also steady. I used to ask "Why me? Why am I the one who is an addict." Today I say, "How did I get so lucky as to end up in this program? It's the greatest gift God could have given me."

R.H.
California



SPECIAL FEATURE

This month's Special Feature spotlights N.A. recovery behind bars. Some of the following segments have appeared in the WSC publication, Reaching Out. Some were written as letters to the N.A. Way. The first segment is a series of letters written over some time by a woman in a prison in Tennessee. The asterisks separating the different sections represent some time elapsed as she updated the WSO staff on the progress of her group and her own recovery.

RECOVERY BEGINS WITH SURRENDER

My name is K.S., a recovering addict. I'm currently doing time in the Tennessee Prison for Women. I had escaped from this prison in 1982. While on escape I ran into Narcotics Anonymous (and not by mistake I might add). The program gave me, and continues to give me, a new outlook on life. I have 16 months clean now.

When I got to the ninth step I chose to work that step rather than get loaded. I turned myself back in to this prison January 7 of this year to finish my sentence. And things are working out great, thank God. When I got back here, there were no N.A. meetings, so along with a few inmates and myself we're trying to start one. We only have one N.A. book. I'm writing in hopes that you will help us out. Could you send us a starter kit for our meeting.

We've tried to get some outside help, but no luck yet. For the first time in its history, this prison has allowed us inmates to start our own group. And we can thank God for that. But we need some help "please," if you can.

From the Inside



* * * * *

I am writing to thank you for the support you have given our group here at the Tennessee Prison for Women. It is greatly appreciated; many, many thanks.

I would like to share some good news with you. Before coming back to this prison from escape, I was facing two years on top of the time I had previously served, but thanks to N.A. and a God that I do or don't understand, I'm going up for parole the eleventh of April. Four months is sure a lot better than two years. I've seen a lot of miracles happen in my life and in this prison. Many thanks go to God for that.

Turning myself in to this prison was I think the hardest thing I've ever done. But you know, it seems that all through my recovery, my painful times have been my growing times. I've been told that as long as I don't use, the painful times will pass, and this has been very true. I think the hardest time I've had since I've been back was when they put me in max, the worst place here, for 30 days punishment for escape. Plus they would not let me go to any meeting. At that point I thought I would die, but I turned it over to my Higher Power, and for the first time, this prison let me out of max to talk to a lady from the program. They have never done that before. To me that was a miracle. Plus out of about five women with escape charges, mine is the only one the D.A. has dropped. I've seen many miracles like that and it's great. God really is doing for me what I can't do for myself.

God willing, in five more days I'll have 18 months clean. Another miracle, my clean time has been the best time of my life and I'm awfully grateful

for it. I have a life today, thanks to the program, that I've never known before; and I'll go to any lengths to keep it, one day at a time.

* * * * *

I am writing to keep you up to date on the development and growth of our N.A. group, here at the Tennessee Prison for Women. We held our third meeting today. It was a fantastic meeting.

Fifteen inmates were present, we seem to grow by two or three every week, which is great. Also today we had three visitors from a free world N.A. group. They said they would be back every week and would help any way they could. That, my friend, is a prayer answered.

Many thanks to Narcotics Anonymous, for without this program I would not be clean today. I am as grateful today as I know how to be, but not near as grateful as I should be.

When I first came back to this prison to make my amends for escaping and found there was no N.A. meeting to go to, I thought at first I'll never make it. But the second thought was, "Why not start one?" There seems to be a lot of red tape to go through in getting an N.A. meeting going in an institution. So for anyone who is trying to start an N.A. meeting in prison, don't give up. Turn it over to your Higher Power, and do the footwork. This is what I did here at T.P.W. and I've seen many miracles happen.

The N.A. program has given me a new life. A life of recovery that I truly enjoy today and I'll go to any length to keep it.

Great News! I made parole and will be going home in a week or two. God has blessed me many times over. It's great! It was also great talking to you folks last week. That really made my day. I do appreciate the love and support that N.A. has sent my way.

I believe I'm still in shock from this morning. Do you realize that I was to do two years at first. Then it was knocked down to eight months, and now it's only four months. God is working miracles in my life right and left. I can't thank Him enough.

Some other members from our group will be in contact with you as to how N.A. is going here. They are new in the program. They have done a lot of work to help here. I will continue to support this group any way I can. I believe the N.A. group here is a gift from God and we do appreciate it.

* * * * *

I'm a week late in keeping you up-to-date on our group here at T.P.W. Sorry about that. I think my feet have finally hit the ground. Making parole put me on cloud nine. Anyway, I'm back to earth now. The group is doing great. Last week we had chips. It was a great meeting—an emotional one. I thought the roof was going to come off. So many happy faces. Our Higher Power has blessed us greatly. We had five recovering addicts from the outside, it was great.

I've been asked to speak at an N.A. meeting in Nashville when I get out, so I'm going to ask the folks to help with the N.A. meeting at the annex and work-release. All they can do is say no. I've been taught that I can only keep what I have by giving it away. I just want to do all I can to help.

Many, many thanks for the love and support you folks have sent our way. Please know in your hearts that you're in my prayers and thoughts always, Keep up the good work.

K.S.
Tennessee

And from another member of the same group . . .

FREEDOM, INSIDE AND OUT

I went to prison in '81 for passing a forged check. I received a four year sentence, which was the law then. Before I had gotten in trouble, I had left my husband and was left with only my son. This was in '79. My son has not seen his father since he was four. I guess you could say I got to where I didn't give a damn. I had loved my husband very much and was very old fashioned, but I caught him being unfaithful. I started partying heavy and staying gone

constantly. My grandmother was babysitting and keeping my son all the time. My addiction was full blown.

I got my case and was sent to prison in June '81. I still didn't care about anything. I went to school and failed, so I came out and went on work crew here in the institution. I went to work-release in May '82.

I had been at work-release one week when the chaplain told me I needed to call my father. He was in very bad health. I knew these people at the prison were not going to let me go out of state to see my father. I only had six months left. My father was my world (besides my son).

I escaped from work-release that night, and I went and saw my father. I went through a lot of changes on escape. Guess you could call it growing up. I do! My father did die, and during Christmas of '82 I went to his funeral. I had to hitchhike because my father's people would not allow me to ride with them because I was on escape. I went anyway. My father had over 200 cars at his funeral. He was a well loved man. I met a man who I thought was wonderful. I lived with him for the two years or so I was on escape. I had my son with me also. I put him in school and got a job. The more I looked at what a nice life I could lead if I were clean and my name were cleared, the more I decided to turn myself in. I told my new boyfriend I would get my divorce and go back to prison to clear my name. We wanted that more than anything else in the world.

Two weeks later after my divorce was final I was picked up for escape on June 30, 1985. I returned to the prison on July 11, 1984. Since I had not received any new charges on escape, and was holding a job, my escape was put on a retired docket in court. I met the parole board September '84 and was waiting every day to leave. When I met with the board, they said my record spoke for itself, and I was granted parole. When I came back, I received 30 days in max (the hole), and the D.A. picked up my case after it was retired.

Therefore I had to stay. I had a new court date which was February of '85. During that time in jail, my fiance left me and sent my son to live with my Grandmother. I was alone again with my son, but I

couldn't see him either until release. I've learned a lot of patience, and my son and I talk on the phone once a week. I am still very proud of myself for clearing my name.

During this time while I await release, I am involved in N.A. N.A. has changed and is changing my life. I felt as though my life was falling apart. I have been to every meeting since the third meeting here at our institution. It has shown me that I'm not the only one who goes through heartaches and learning and growing. I had been using an awful lot before. Thanks to N.A., my time is much better than it was before. I have received my G.E.D. with a high score. I am very proud of that. I love the people in N.A.. There is a life out there for all of us.

I'm proud to say I am going to be living in Nashville, and I do know someone there—the N.A. people. I plan on spending a lot of time with my son and N.A. N.A. has taught me about myself, about how to be happy, to be independent, and most of all to know a Higher Power of my understanding. My son's happy I'm almost free. I've been in trouble since I was 17. I'm 26 years old. I go home on August 2, 1985 at the latest. I do know myself a lot better, and better yet, I have learned to love me. So yes, from the bottom of my heart I thank my family and friends, and I thank you, N.A. It works!

B.L.
Tennessee

FACING REALITY

More and more the reality that the problem in my life is me—that drugs are just symptoms—is ringing true. My newfound friends in the N.A. Fellowship, who tried in all earnest to help themselves and me to recover, came to a parting of ways. My bitterness and anger had a lot to do with it. How quickly I turned my back on them. Not thinking of all the things they did **every** day, that helped me to stay alive—just showing their weaknesses and fears. Like the animal I was when I walked into their Fellowship 18 months ago (old ways come too easy), to realize I am wrong and admit it is a newfound freedom. As long as the ties that

bind us together are stronger than those that would tear us apart, all will be well. It took a man to drive over 800 miles to see me in jail just because he cared to make me realize my mistake. I love you T—. Thanks. There is one thing more than anything else that will defeat us in our recovery, this is an attitude of indifference or intolerance toward spiritual principles.

B.L.
Cody, WY

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY IN N.A.

I was told work the steps or die. I finally got the message and I am doing the steps the best way I know how while I'm in my hiding place where the sun don't shine and the lights never go off all the way. I read N.A. literature and I pray every day for that willingness to stay clean today and the desire to be cool so I'll get out of my hiding place real soon and stay out of my hiding place so I can be a member of society instead of a menace to society and a big dummy. Today I feel free from the obsession to use or self-destruct.

I am really grateful to the N.A. Way and the World Service Office for sending the June issue of the N.A. Way and the new pamphlet for the loner that ain't in circulation yet. I am a loner and I stay away from people while I'm in this place 'cause I just can't get along with people too well 'cause I have a bad attitude, but I have been in maximum security for a total of five months and I am flying home tomorrow night and I just can't wait. I also will be grateful for my freedom 'cause I am really convinced that I can't handle the street life like I was when I was using. I need N.A. out there. I really don't like being isolated from the free world. God bless you all in N.A.

C.E.
Nevada

Recovery

There is a program of recovery in the N.A. Fellowship. For me N.A. is the only way. Since I've been in this Fellowship I've been recovering on a daily basis. Due to the meetings, fellowship and friends, recovery is possible. Having a sponsor, a friend in whom I trust, makes all the difference. I have a friend, a real friend for the first time who cares about me and who I feel the same towards. I never had this before.

Recovery is an uphill journey, as stated in the Basic Text. That's another part of my daily recovery. When I first came around I couldn't read, let alone talk, but I was desperate and willing to stay clean more than anything else. A good friend of mine from N.A. suggested I read the Basic Text. He said "try it." I did. I've been reading it ever since. I have been able to expand my horizons due to this book. Once again, it was written by addicts who have everything in common with me. The Basic Text has all the answers.

N.A. has become a way of living for me. I never knew that being this alive was possible. I know that for me I have to be grateful every day for my recovery. That's why I'm writing this letter. Without N.A. I don't know what would have happened to me.

Whenever I go away, N.A. is always with me. I make meetings and meet new people, and I get the same love, like in my home town. There is always another caring addict around. I have to reach out for it, to let people know I'm out of town. Recovery is my responsibility no matter where I go.

I just want to say I am grateful to the Fellowship of N.A. I wouldn't trade my life today for any other, and by the grace of God I will try to recover just for today.

N—
New Jersey

Recovery and Sobriety

There's a part of the format used at various functions in Narcotics Anonymous, especially during conventions, which has often been called a "sobriety countdown" during which members are asked to stand for various lengths of "sobriety." Wouldn't it be better described as a "recovery countdown" for various lengths of clean time?

It's understandable that initial exposure to Twelve Step Programs may have required the use of such words as sobriety and sober even though it was uncomfortable, and in some cases not applicable. It is not unusual to find that a newcomer uses the word "sobriety" simply because that is what is heard upon attendance at several meetings. But if we are truly addressing the disease of addiction, sobriety and being sober is not enough.

Narcotics Anonymous deals with recovery from addiction by practicing complete abstinence from all drugs. It seems to make sense that we would be striving for recovery, not just sobriety; that we do not just stay sober, we stay clean.

Numerous members have explained that they feel comfortable and find identification in N.A. meetings but remain confused about being sober and having sobriety. What does it mean? Does it apply to addicts? We can talk about recovery and complete abstinence from drugs today. Narcotics Anonymous has come of age and is mature enough to describe the recovery it provides in its own terms. There is no reason to continue to use words from a different Fellowship simply because they were the only ones available 32 years ago.

In places where the old terminology is used, it's as though coming to Narcotics Anonymous is like getting handed a new suit of clothes to wear that don't

quite fit. They're too small, too restricting. We use it for lack of something better, but now's the time to exchange that suit for something that fits. Let's make a change for the better.

We have a unique program we can be proud of. It allows us the opportunity to be clean and carry the message of recovery to others—so let's do it. No addict need ever walk into a Narcotics Anonymous meeting and wonder whether our members are staying clean or staying sober. It's our responsibility to make it clear and be sure that people realize what recovery is.

Being clean and having clean time is the result of "working" a program of recovery that includes the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous, emphasizing spiritual values, positive thinking and a productive lifestyle.

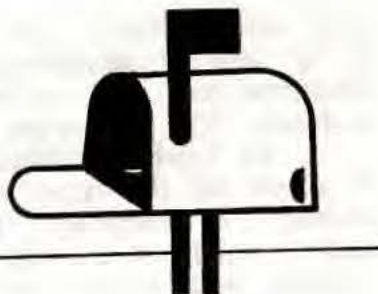
D.B.
California



"O.k., so I've used drugs once or twice."

From the Inland Empire Message

Letters from Our Readers...



Dear N.A. Way,

I have been a member of Narcotics Anonymous for the past three and one half years. During this time I have had a number of experiences that stand out as highlights in my recovery. Attending WSC 84-85 definitely falls into the category of highlights.

Two years ago I was grappling with a concept of group conscience and I was trying hard to understand the service structure. I can see today that my understanding at that time was quite restricted.

When the question of only RSR's voting at WSC 82-83 came up, I supported it very vocally. The understanding that I had at that time told me that the Board of Trustees and the WSC Committee represented no groups and therefore could carry no conscience. I believed that their vocal expression would be sufficient to provide the guidance necessary for the Fellowship. I thought that for true conscience, only representatives of regions could have an honest feel for the pulse of the Fellowship.

When the issue came up again for WSC 83-84, I continued to support it vocally. Once again the idea of voting by regional representation seemed the only way to achieve a "true" group conscience.

This year for WSC 84-85 I attended the conference as a representative. I attended with the same feelings about the voting issue that I had held for the past two years.

I thank God that I have achieved a small amount of openmindedness in my recovery. As I opened myself to the total experience of the WSC, my concepts changed. I began to understand the conscience that the Trustees carry.

The Trustees carry the conscience of the thousands of addicts in the program who have no representation. The Trustees carry balance for the conscience of addicts who are represented by people, like myself, who serve with great love but with perhaps somewhat narrow vision due to limited experience and due to representing a "region." I also feel the Trustees represent the thousands of addicts who have not yet found this program, and the ones who have died looking for or hoping for recovery.

It seems that Trustees voting helps to protect us from ourselves. The experience of the years of clean living and the years of involvement with the program helps keep us from making the same mistakes over and over again.

I am grateful for the experience of attending the WSC 84-85. I wish that each member of Narcotics Anonymous could see that part of the Fellowship at work.

J.G.
Florida

Dear N.A. Way,

My name is Linda and I'm an addict. I was reading your monthly issue for March, and I loved the story called "Mother, Grandmother, Addict" written by J.R. from Scotland. I identified a lot with her. I have been in the N.A. Program just over two years now, and it's taken me until now to get the Program because I wouldn't accept that I was an addict. After all, I mainly took prescribed drugs.

I was put in to a psychiatric centre when I was 14, and that was when I started taking drugs. It was only three weeks later I was back in that same centre for a different reason. This time I overdosed. I was to spend the next two years in and out of that place for overdoses every fortnight at least. During that two years I had two to three real suicide attempts.

My adolescence was spent in and out of the loony bin, using numerous prescriptions. Between the age of 17 and 26 I lived in slum houses and I couldn't work. My life was drugs, which by that time included a lot of alcohol, and nut houses. There was a time—

age 23 to 25—when I held down a responsible job in a child care centre, and I loved it. I had my own flat near the beach and I was doing my child care certificate at tech.

In November 1981 I had a baby which was born dead. This was when I really dove into the pills and booze. I just wanted to sleep all day every day. My relationships went down hill quickly. When I lost my job I tried to kill myself again and it was only a couple of months later I was on my own again. I lost my job, my baby, my lover, my tech course, my flat and finally my sanity.

I found N.A. in January 1983 through my first detox centre. I went in there because a friend thought I had a drug problem. I didn't think I had to give up completely. I believed I just had a slight problem and I had to learn how to take the prescribed amount and not a prescription every day.

I still remember all too well the night I found myself on a park bench trying to clean up. Every time I sat up I fell down going to sleep and leaning over the side spewing my guts up. I remember ringing the rehab saying I wanted to go back. I waited on the park bench for them to pick me up, but they didn't turn up. I went to the coffee shop and they drove me back. I split again the next morning and still continued to use. I decided, no more rehabs or detox units. I figured I couldn't give up.

In June of last year I left Sydney—another geographical cure—to come up here to Coffs Harbour to visit my sister. I stayed with her for three days, found new friends to con, and after a few months, phoned a member of the Fellowship. Even though I went to meetings every night, it took some time before I finally got clean. I believe now that there were two things getting in my way:

1. I thought I could do the program starting at Step Four. I didn't believe in God and I hated Him. I blamed Him for the death of my baby. Then someone told me there were Twelve Steps, not nine.

2. I always vowed I'd never let go of the resentments and hate I had for my mother. I blamed her for my addiction.

Well one day I decided to have a go at Steps Two and Three. I was serious and sick of using. Since that day, I haven't had to use drugs in any form, and I now have contact with mum today. Today I love her. I don't blame her any longer, and although I still have mixed feelings about God I am willing to be willing. N.A. has helped me to come a very long way.

N.S.W. Australia
Linda

Comin' Up

This space has been reserved for coming events anywhere in N.A. If you wish to list an event, send us a flier or note at least two months in advance. Include title, location, dates, contacts.

CALIFORNIA: Aug 2-4; San Diego RCNA 1; Town & Country Hotel and Conv Ctr; 500 Hotel Circle N; write SDNACC, PO Box 4921, San Diego, CA 92104

2) Aug 16-18; Lyons Lake; High Country Campout; (209) Barbara 532-0882; Anita 586-1588

3) Oct 25-27; 7th Anni S Cal Conv; Hyatt Hotel LAX; Stu (805) 584-1135; Terry (213) 370-9875; Preston (714) 761-3222; Bridget (818) 762-2305

4) DEC 24-25; United East County Holiday Narcathon; 240 So. Magnolia; El Cajon, CA

CONNECTICUT: Jan 3-5, 86; Connecticut's first convention; Marriott Hotel, Farmington; Mike or Al (203) 347-7856

INDIANA: Nov 1-3; Mid Coast RCNA; Atkinson Hotel, Indy; Box 2182, Indianapolis, IN 46206; (317) Terry 873-3295; Micky 873-6519;

IRELAND: Oct 25-27; Ireland's First Convention; Dublin Sport Hotel; Kilterman, Co Dublin, Tel: 893631; PO Box 1368, Sherriff St Dublin

MICHIGAN: Aug 3; F.A.S.C.N.A. Dance; St. Andrews Church, 1922 Iowa St., Flint, Michigan; call N.A. Hotline 238-3636

OHIO: July 6; C.O.A.O.N.A. Fundraiser; Overbrook John Belitz Retreat Center; Harlem Road; Sunbury, OH; (614) 252-1700 for more info.

OREGON: Oct 11-13; 8th Annl Pacific NW Conv for NA; Valley River Inn, Eugene; (503) Martin or Susan 485-1397; Rick 746-7466; Doug 689-7711

PENNSYLVANIA: Oct 25-27; Tri-State RCNA III; Ptsbrgh, PA; Airport Htn Inn; (412) Carmina 695-7333; Terry 681-4532; Yvonne (304) 232-5858;

SOUTH CAROLINA: Nov 8-10; Serenity Festival III; Myrtle Beach, SC; Jeff F. (919) 746-3583; Michael D. (803) 762-1690

TENNESSEE: Nov 27-Dec 1; Volunteer RCNA; Benchmark Hotel, 164 Union Ave, Memphis, TN; (901) Bill 525-4798; Gene 454-1313; Joseph 529-8779

UTAH: Aug 16-18; Serenity Campout; Valley Camp (primitive Campground); Liberty UT; 801 hotline 488-2141, Dean 394-3179

WASHINGTON, DC: Aug 29-Sept 1; 15th Annl. WORLD CONVENTION of NA; Shorham Hotel; WCNA-15, Box 2232, Washington, DC 20013; travel agent contracted; 1-800-368-3527; register soon—late fee after 7-31

WISCONSIN: Oct 11-13; 2nd annl Wisc Conv; Wausau Holiday Inn; Box 502, Wausau 54401; (715) Heidi 845-5545; Bob 875-6673; Marilyn 675-2563



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THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

1. *Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.*
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.
2. *The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.*
3. *Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or N.A. as a whole.*
4. *Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.*
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.
5. *Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.*
6. *Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.*
7. *N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.*
8. *Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.*
9. *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.*
10. *Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.*