

THE **N.A. Way**
MAGAZINE®

November 1991

\$1.75



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.
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 these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Twelve Steps reprinted for adaptation by permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

THE N.A. Way[®]

M A G A Z I N E

Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA 91409
(818) 780-3951

volume nine, number eleven

from the editor	2
meeting in print	
Somewhere in Texas	4
Hit right were I am	6
Message received	9
Dear H.P., thank you	10
Tragic paradox	11
Aloha NA friends	12
Happy for ESO	18
home group	
Slugg's Sixth Step (part two)	19
the broad perspective	
Fellowship news	20
viewpoint	
Meeting together	22
Just show up	26
More "On basic respect"	27
Newcomer confusion	29
from our readers	
A selection of letters and short articles	30
comin' up	
A worldwide N.A. calendar	34

The N.A. Way Magazine welcomes the participation of its readers. You are invited to share with the entire N.A. Fellowship in our monthly international journal. Send us your experience in recovery, your views on N.A. matters, and feature items. All manuscripts submitted become the property of World Service Office, Inc.

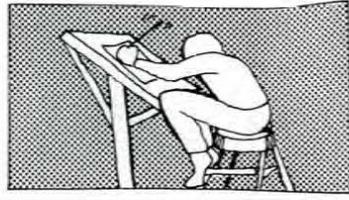
The N.A. Way Magazine presents the experiences and opinions of individual members of Narcotics Anonymous. The opinions expressed are not to be attributed to Narcotics Anonymous as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement by Narcotics Anonymous, *The N.A. Way Magazine* or World Service Office, Inc.

Subscription rates, please remit in U.S. or Canadian currency: 1 yr. \$15, 2 yrs. \$28, 3 yrs. \$39, single copies \$1.75. Please inquire about bulk rates.

The N.A. Way Magazine, (ISSN 1046-5421), copyright © 1991, World Service Office, Inc. Permission to reprint from this publication is granted to all Narcotics Anonymous service boards and committees, provided they cite the source. All other rights reserved. *The N.A. Way Magazine* and Narcotics Anonymous are registered trademarks of World Service Office, Inc.

The N.A. Way Magazine is published monthly by World Service Office, Inc., 16155 Wyandotte Street, Van Nuys, CA 91406. Second class postage paid at Van Nuys, CA., and other points. **POSTMASTER:** please send address changes to *The N.A. Way Magazine*, P.O. Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999.

From the editor



Its been some months since this section has been used, and this seems like the right time. The occasion is marked by the type of manuscripts we've been receiving, and a question considered by *The NA Way Magazine* review panel in early October.

"Are we changing?" was the question, posed by one of our veteran panel members. "Yes," is the answer. The changes are in some ways subtle, but after considering years of material, there appears a possible new trend.

Writers seem more willing to broach difficult or touchy subjects. Experiences of life in recovery are being described more pointedly, with a little less dependence on quoting conference approved precepts. While articles not related to recovery in Narcotics Anonymous are returned with thanks, and not printed; the relating of experience, strength and hope in Narcotics Anonymous recovery has progressively become more personally shared and expressed.

The basic question our review panel, editorial board and staff must regularly answer is whether our commonly-held principles are to be found in the necessarily personal experience of particular writers.

Very common during the last few years has been the receipt of stories

from addicts relating their experiences with recovery while coping with illnesses or problems other than addiction. Depressive disorders afflict many addicts, and are certainly as great a factor in their daily recoveries as are, for instance, employer-employee relations for non-depressed addicts. Should we allow someone a forum to describe how they applied the steps in relations with their boss, but deny the same opportunity for some one who must relate to an illness?

In a short paper titled "AIDS," the Narcotics Anonymous WSB stated in a 1988 paper, "As long as we maintain our awareness about the Twelve Traditions, we may openly talk about those issues which affect our recovery and are relevant to us."

Heterosexual addicts usually feel free to demonstrate principles via relationship-anecdotes, while gay addicts often hesitate to share how bereft or enriching are their relationships. Is the former "recovery" and the latter an "editorial" about an outside issue?

There seems no black-and-white, easy, rule of thumb for these matters. What we have tried, and continue to try, is to reflect what is going on throughout Narcotics Anonymous.

Judging by the material which we have available to fashion monthly issues, it appears you are willingly, or grudgingly, taking the risks that that may be involved with the disclosure of more individual, personal experience. Does a more inclusive, broader acceptance of diversity of opinion and expression imperil the foundational truths on which we base our recoveries?

The sharing that is printed in *The NA Way Magazine* is usually produced by addicts obviously doing their dead-level best to employ principles; but each is an individual person, a personality.

Editing criteria designed to glean pure principle from our submitted manuscripts results in very few, and very short, publishable stories. While "principles must come before personalities," without personalities we would have to wait for lightning or burning bushes for communication.

The magazine makes no pretense of being conference approved, though it is conference-sanctioned. For the last few years it has shared the nick-name, "a meeting in print." Most everyone seems happy that addicts use it, especially if they are isolated, as an adjunct to regular meetings, or about any way they can. But, the fact is, its a magazine!

The criteria now being used to determine appropriateness for publication is, "Does the writer's subject and expression clearly relate to the experience of recovery from addiction, the NA way?" If it does, and the material does not break anonymity, threaten our common welfare, endorse other institutions, or thwart the

intent of other traditions; the piece is deemed to have as much right to a forum as would a most eloquent and impersonally couched dissertation on abstractions of "surrender" or "Higher Power."

In the present issue two fervent and thought-provoking pieces aptly demonstrate the question. Both are heart-wrenchingly passionate reports of addicts' experiences in Narcotics Anonymous meetings. That one, both, or neither belonged more properly in one part of the magazine than another was a confounding problem.

The pieces are "Positively clean" and "Aloha NA friends," in *Viewpoint* and *Meeting In Print*, respectively.

Let us hear from you, about the publishing, and/or placement, of such articles.

One response to the fact that an increasing proportion of available articles describe personal conditions, and suggest personal views, might be to frame each piece in its own little niche, and rely more on readers themselves for discrimination between what is a correct grasp of principle and what is simply an addict's subjective experience.

Another solution would be for a heckuva lot more of you to start writing in impersonal terms, about the principles of our program. Whatever you decide, here's hoping the challenges and insights of modern NA are as joyful and adventure-filled for you as they are for the magazine production team.

Somewhere in Texas

About seventeen years ago I had the occasion to be working at an insurance company. I worked with a girl that I knew was exactly like me, an addict in nature. The only difference was that she was using prescription drugs and I was using street drugs. But I knew she was like me. We quickly became friends, as addicts do. In the course of working together we became very close. She sang very well, and as I was getting married to another practicing addict, I asked her to sing at my wedding, which she did. As time went on my disease naturally progressed. I could no longer work, and I was pregnant, with my disease working overtime.

This was right before my daughter was born, and all the complications that come with being pregnant and being an addict. My husband went into a psychiatric hospital. I was so alone, in the hospital having this baby, hoping she would make it, and who should come sit with me but my friend—and she was there when my daughter was born. When my husband came out of the hospital his disease kept progressing and I started to go to Narcotics Anonymous meetings in order to find out how to fix him,

even though I would not take a look at my own addiction. I figured that if he got clean then I would have no problem in getting clean myself. Well, while I sat in these meetings *for him*—I started listening. By the time my daughter was five months old my husband took his own life. I continued to go to meetings and learn about my addiction, instead of his. Somehow, by sitting in those meetings all those months, the program had started to sink in.

At about six months clean I decided everyone I knew that was using should come to NA. The one person I especially wanted to bring to a meeting was this friend that I have been writing about. I felt that she needed to see what I was doing now. I decided to bring her to a meeting on my natal birthday—I guess my self-centeredness was still there because if she cleaned up on my natal birthday I would remember that date. I picked her up that night and asked her if she had used. She hadn't, and I told her I wanted to take her someplace and show her what I was doing now. Well, we went into the meeting and when they said, "Welcome to the... meeting of Narcotics Anonymous" she was quite upset. All I said was to, "Sit down, shut up and listen" for thirty minutes, and she did. After the meeting we went to coffee with some people and someone asked her if she was an addict. She said, "No I'm only here to support my friend."

Nevertheless, I continued to take her to meetings with me and she stayed clean and when she had thirty days clean she received her first key tag. She cried and I cried. I felt my

primary purpose of carrying the message had been done.

As time went on both our lives continued, with her moving out of state and my remarrying, someone in recovery, and also moving. We lost touch. I never knew what happened to my girlfriend that moved to Texas.

I had the chance the other night to be listening to some tapes from the 1989 Narcotics Anonymous World Convention in Florida. I was about to put the tape in the cassette. The topic of this tape was "Our Primary Purpose." To my surprise it was my friend from twelve years ago talking about

a girl with a little baby, taking her to her first Narcotics Anonymous meeting, and how angry she was at her friend for taking her to a meeting on her friend's birthday.

When I heard that tape, I started to cry and chills went through me like nothing before, because as I sit in California I know that somewhere in Texas lives my friend that I took to a meeting twelve years ago. And she's still in recovery—and that to me was my primary purpose. To carry the message to the addict who still suffered.

A.G., California



Hit right where I am

I am an addict. I also am a mother of two beautiful daughters, that are unable to be with me at this time. I have read a letter in your magazine, and it hit me right where I am in my struggle for recovery. ("Loving me," June 1991 *NA Way*)

Today in my life I am trying to find out who I really am. And slowly I am doing that, with the help of God and the NA program. I have always felt less than, and like shit.

Most of my life has been miserable and unhappy. I would try to fit in with people. And I try to please other people, being and becoming a complete fake. And not even realizing it. I had lost my identity. When I was nice to people trying to fit in, my kindness and friendliness was mistaken as a fool, or an air-head. And if I told people about it, and how I felt, it was a joke. I never had my mother in my life— abandoned.

I come from a "dysfunctional family." There was no communication. There was love, but most of it was shown through discipline.

Through the misfortune of a broken family, more of my identity was lost. And I looked for love and acceptance in stores, men, sex, reefer, etc. . . I thought that I had found "it," when actually all that it ever brought me

was temporary happiness, and also more pain for down the line.

I used all those things to fill the void of happiness, loneliness etc. . . in my life. As this failed over and over again, as it always has done, I turned to drugs, and found "it!" Real fake-ness. Just unhealthy sex, rape and not last but not least, true pain.

But that wasn't all. I also found and went to jail. I found out how to get quick money. Also how to steal, get shot at, etc. . . how to manipulate people, etc.

I pushed away everyone in my family that loved me.

I embarrassed myself and my family, I isolated to myself, thinking that it was ok. But it wasn't ok.

I also lost the most beautiful and precious thing in my life, (besides God!) my children. . . to the court system. . . twice.

But still, after all this miserable experience, I didn't change anything that I was doing. I instead, kept doing drugs. Moreso then ever before!

I sat in my self pity and disappointment and selfish feelings constantly!

Also frustrated because I didn't and couldn't see at all that anything could get better (worthless and hopeless).

The insane thing is that my addiction had total control over me. I still was and wanted to get high, and higher, to stop hurting at all costs.

Inside I knew that something was wrong and had to change, but what?

I was missing my children and I would look at their pictures. Because I couldn't hold them or kiss them good night. Nothing! So I just looked, cried and smoked.

I was an irresponsible mother and



the truth is I had chose drugs before the welfare and care of my children (pain, insanity!).

A special friend used to talk to me about recovery and change and life. Also pain.

But I didn't want to hear this. Besides, I felt that no-one really cares, etc. . . and because I still wanted to get high inside.

The love that I had pushed away from me, and that I isolated from, came and got me. My brothers put the choice right in my face, "Last chance!" Now! It was up to me.

After many lonely nights, pain, running away from reality, and jail, institutions, court, etc., unhealthy friends, and the loss of myself and my children! At last, I saw the bottom that I had hit a long time ago.

Today I am a grateful recovering addict. I'm also grateful for the tough love of my family and the concern for my children.

I needed for that to happen to me. My aunt and uncle have taken my children until I am able to take care of them myself, and, most important, take care of my addiction. Myself. So that I can find out who I really am. And what God wants out of life for me and my children.

Today I am finding out who I am. And what I want out of life. Through my Higher Power (God) and the NA program, I have a choice today! Today I don't have to use drugs to find out who I am. Nor to hide the pain of life.

Responsible person and adult, loving, caring mother to my children and a sister to my brother. Also a good respectable daughter, that my father can be proud of.

Life is hard enough to deal with alone. But in the program, I am having to learn that life is not always a basket of sweet strawberries all the time. That sometimes it is going to be hard. *But*, I don't have to do drugs to deal with life. God and the program have given me *hope*. For myself and that I can continue to recover and learn to love, respect, listen to God, (my Higher Power).

This is a different exciting feeling. It is also painful to see who I was, and what I was, but the advantage of recovery is that each day I get to learn more about me!

I also get surprised to find out that I like some of the good things about myself, that I didn't know.

I like the fact that I have feelings inside and I don't have to push them down and I don't have to use behind them either.

And whenever it gets hot and I am having trouble, I turn it over to God and he gets me through it. I still have a very long road ahead of me, but I also have God on my side, and my family. It is amazing what is possible in life when I chose to stop using drugs. I once had a lot of dreams, and I forgot about them. I remember some of them, and I also have got some of them.

The dreams that I still have can come true if I work for them! Well this is where I came from, and where I've been.

Now I don't know where I am going but I do know that no matter what happens in my life, I don't have to use drugs.

F.D., Rhode Island

Message received

A friend of mine suggested I write and share this experience.

I have been in the program for over eight and a half years now and am very grateful.

About three years ago, I married a woman in the program and inherited an immediate family. We now have three kids, one dog and three cats. Needless to say, financial problems are always there and for me it has been a chance for developing faith.

About one month ago I started finding a penny every day. I would say to myself "find a penny pick it up—all the day you have good luck." After a week of this, I thought—must be so many pennies, no one cares to even keep them. After two weeks (a penny every day). I began to think God was involved. After three weeks I told my friend and he said maybe God was telling me to start saving my money (we plan to build a house next spring). I was excited and thought that was great. But, still I was worrying again. I could not see how I was going to pay our present bills, never mind how saving some change would build a house. Then I started obsessing whether God wants me to save change (pennies, nickels etc.) or dollar bills or a savings

account. Three days ago I was out running on the parkway, and after about two miles I saw another penny in the road. I picked it up. Thanked God, and started obsessing. Finally, I said", God give me a clear message what this is about. It's making me crazy." Silence came to my mind and about thirty seconds later the words came into my mind. "In God we Trust." It flipped me out. The worry went away and I am at peace again (and I am not making myself crazy trying to save pennies and dimes). I ran a little further. I threw the penny into the woods signifying I had got the message. I have not found a penny since.

M.R., North Carolina



Dear H.P., thank you

A lot of unexpected changes have happened in my life over this past year. In my early days of recovery, if you would have told me that I would be dealing with my child being sexually abused by a loved one in later years of recovery, I think I would have abandoned ship right then. The pain I have had to endure from all these feelings of guilt, rage, betrayal, grief and fear flooding through my heart, have been extremely overwhelming at times. Somehow, through your love and constant guidance, I have survived this sad and painful ordeal and am finally at a place that I can look back and see how you carried not only me, but my family as well. Yeah, there were times when I felt abandoned by you during all of this, and there were times I felt mad as hell at you for allowing the abuse to happen. But each time I stood on the edge of hopelessness and despair, you revealed yourself to me through the love and understanding of my NA family. You even gifted me with a sponsor who, unbeknownst to me, had gone through the same thing as my child had. Together, through tears and hugs and sharing, my pain began to lessen. From that small release,

enough room was made in my heart to take some action on the Serenity Prayer, especially "changing the things I can." You've told me over and over that we're only as sick as the secrets we keep, and that's what gave me the strength and courage to fight off the denial and fear. You even lessened that struggle by connecting me back up with two long-time recovering friends from out of town, that were both in a profession I needed for information and direction.

It amazes me now, looking back at all you did do for me throughout this tragedy. It was like walking through a deep, dark tunnel filled with twists and turns, and at each place I faltered, you had someone from my N.A. family there waiting to walk with me as you lit the way.

Today, as I write this, many miracles of healing have taken place within my family. Because of the love and support you gave us through N.A., we have sought help to deal with the effects of sexual abuse, and our family has become closer, healthier and freer because of it.

When I first came into N.A., all I wanted was to stop using. By working the steps, you graced me with that a long time ago. With each passing year in recovery, you continue to show me how to apply all of the spiritual principles embodied in our steps and traditions to *everything* going on in my life. Thank you H.P. for helping me to survive this past year and for all the lessons I've learned throughout it. I trust "More will be revealed," and when it is, I trust you'll walk through it with me.

Anonymous

Tragic paradox

One week ago my friend was found dead in his apartment. The cause of death was drug overdose. At least that's what the paper said. Medically, they are correct, but his cause of death was not simply an overdose. I'm sure it was much, much more.

I met him three years ago when I was very much in active addiction. He was the typical nice guy with a good heart, who was throwing his life away. The tragic thing was he knew about the program, had *tried* it time after time, but always returned to dance with death again.

A little over a year ago he overdosed in my apartment. When the police arrived he was blue and they simply shrugged "He's gone." I couldn't believe it. My heart was pounding and my body began to shake. I cried out to the God of my childhood with an intensity I didn't even know I possessed, "Please don't let this happen!"

And it didn't. He came back to another year in hell and by the grace of God as I understand Him, I came into the program.

This has been the first experience of death for me, in recovery. The effect it has had on me is running the full gamut of emotions. Numbness, pain,

sorrow, anger, guilt, rage and today a bittersweet memory.

I never got to tell him what he did for me—how much our heart to heart talks gave me hope and planted the seed that has now blossomed into the most wonderful experience of my life and how his near-death a year ago—along with what I believe to be divine intervention, saved my life.

I'm writing this at the suggestion of many others in recovery. It's important that I share this and get it all out. I loved him and I will be eternally grateful to him for the part he played in showing me that there is a way out of the darkness.

I only wish he could have come with me.

Anonymous



Aloha NA friends

This is a letter to all those people who have been wondering why they haven't seen me in a meeting for a while. You haven't seen me because I haven't been going. I started sliding from four meetings a week down to two, and then I was making one a week. The morning came when I realized I hadn't been to a meeting in two weeks. It wasn't that I thought about going and didn't want to: I didn't even think of going.

That same morning I went to the post office and got my copy of the *NA Way For August*. I was reading through the issue when I came across a letter by M.S. from Virginia which has been reprinted in this Maui Newsletter I read that letter and was amazed because here was an addict in Virginia who was expressing things I had been feeling, but hadn't been able to share.

This addict in Virginia is concerned about the lack of people with time in NA meetings. "It wasn't that the oldtimers didn't exist. It was that they attended only their home group, they didn't attend meetings at all or they

had stopped coming to NA in favor of going to another Fellowship." It seems to me that this has been happening right here on good ol' Maui for the last few years.

I laughed when I read the line, "I didn't think we should worry about keeping the oldtimers coming back." I laughed because that seems to be everyone's attitude. *Only* newcomers are important. If someone with time slips through the door we just go around asking each other, "Gee, where is so and so. Haven't seen them at a meeting in ages." Then we answer each other, "Oh, they stopped coming to meetings." End of story, "They stopped coming to meetings." WHY? Why do people with time stop coming to meetings? Is it all their stuff? Are they completely at fault in the way they slack off or is there something that needs to be looked at in the fellowship itself?

When I first stopped going to meetings regularly a few months ago, I told myself it was this or that: I was isolating, I was going through some changes, I was being stubborn or resentful, I wasn't working my program. Eventually, I'd get my ass to a meeting and guess what? I'd leave the meeting feeling worse than before I went. I left meetings feeling judged, discounted, put down or used. After that happened a few times, I stopped going. I stayed connected with my friends and sponsees and reconnected with my sponsor, but I stopped going to meetings.

Back to the letter from Virginia. For the first time I read a few reasons why people like me stopped going to meetings or left NA for other fellow



ships that weren't taking my inventory. Maybe it is time we stopped taking the inventory of the people who stop coming to NA and take the Fellowship's inventory.

I have experienced the following reasons mentioned in M.S.'s letter. When I was a newcomer I experienced unconditional love and tolerance from NA members. Now I experience the

**"Oh, they
stopped coming
to meetings."
End of story.**

attitude that "I am not allowed...to make mistakes or say the wrong thing, or have a bad day," week or month. If I am having a hard time and am not able to 'be there' for other members most of the time they ignore me, or even worse, criticize me. Very few reach out to walk with me through my hard times. I have tried to participate in service and been accused of controlling things. I have rarely, if ever, been given "positive reinforcement for staying involved" but have received "constant criticism." I am never asked to share at or lead meetings. I am not asked to go for coffee after meetings. I usually invite myself if I really want to go, but, like M.S. says, "It would be nice sometimes to actually be invited along. . ."

Whenever I bring up the feelings I have as a long-time member of NA, you assume that I am asking for "recognition for length of clean time

or time and energy spent doing service work." That's really not it. I just get tired of being taken for granted and "treated like an old has-been." It hurts when you sponsor people and they "hardly even say hello anymore." It does seem like once people get their lives together that, "No longer have time for the friends that were there for them through the worst part of their early recovery."

The night I read the NA letter I decided to go to a meeting and share my feelings. I knew I needed to get back in the door before I'd been gone too long. I went to a meeting I considered to be 'home.' I shared about the NA Way letter and the feelings I'd been having I said how glad I felt to know I wasn't alone; that another member had felt what I felt. The meeting opened up and other members shared. I won't tell what was shared at the meeting, but I will say that I sat there feeling as if I had spoke in another language. I didn't hear one word of encouragement, compassion, concern for my recovery or happiness that I'd made it to that meeting to spill my guts. I left the meeting feeling judged, lectured and used.

I know a lot of you have judged and resented old-timers who "didn't come around and could not understand why they didn't want to give away what they had." Maybe its time to stop pointing the finger at individuals and ask ourselves what is the fellowship's part. Is there a general attitude of judgement, arrogance, disinterest or self-righteousness in our fellowship? Is this attitude conducive to our recovery?



I don't believe that there is a member in this fellowship who could love NA more than I do. I love NA enough to take this fellowship's inventory as honestly as I do my own. I ask you to ask yourselves the following questions: "Am I self-righteous, arrogant or lacking compassion in my dealings with any members of my fellowship, and if so,

Let's not give up on each other.

why?" Do I have an attitude of disinterest in other members, especially those members outside my own "clique" and, if so, does it affect the meeting I share at or the fellowship as a whole?" "Do I use information from outside the fellowship or terminology such as "co-dependency" to avoid practicing the principles of recover: "One addict helping another," compassion, tolerance and patience.?" When was the last time I called someone with time in recovery just to see how they were doing?" Is it possible when someone stops coming to NA meetings we need to look at, not just how *they* work their program, but how we work the program as a fellowship?

I believe my Higher Power is working in my life. The day after I shared at the meeting I was feeling so discouraged I called another member with time. We talked about

our feelings. A few days later another member who has basically left NA for the 'other fellowship' called me to say she wanted to write an article for this newsletter on apathy in NA. She asked for my assistance. I said I would be happy to write my experiences. Today, one of the newsletter staff called me to say she wanted my help on an article about why some people stopped going to meetings. She had called others in the fellowship who had stopped going, to get their input. I asked her if she knew about the article this other member was working on and she said no. None of these people knew anything about the letter from the addict in the *NA Way*. I realized this was something my Higher Power didn't want me to give up on.

Let's not give up on each other. This isn't just about me, or M.S. in Virginia, or the guy who quit going to meetings last year; its about all of us, our recovery and our fellowship. Let's take this fellowship's inventory just like we would take our own, and then, let's do whatever needs to be done to let everyone know our doors and our hearts are really open.

Rena R., Hawaii

P.S., Keep coming back, M.S., you are not alone!



Happy for ESO

Thank you ESO (European Service Office) and it's superb, extra special worker. You were not operational when I was introduced to Narcotics Anonymous in a small town in Germany. But you have been a big part of my recovery ever since.

I knew after my first meeting that the NA way was the kind of recovery I wanted. So the first thing I did was buy a Basic Text and upon returning to Belgium, where I work, I wrote to the WSO (World Service Office).

I received from WSO a *Newsline*, a copy of *The NA Way Magazine*, two hopelessly outdated contact phone numbers and letter of encouragement. Thanks to all of you I have not been alone since.

With the help of the Paris NA Area, meetings had been taking place for over a year. We started sharing together at meetings through an interpreter (we now have trusted servant positions for interpretation at our bi/tri-lingual meetings). Then it evolved into an area service committee for the whole country.

In between the establishment of the meetings and "Area Belgie" a real miracle came out of nowhere. We first heard the news at the annual European conference/convention (held in Barcelona that year of 1989). A European Service Office was opening in London. In Belgium, as well as many other countries, we were overjoyed. An office in Europe where we could buy our literature, get support for fledging groups, assist with translations and coordinate efforts with other areas! I feel the morale of our groups went up one-hundred percent. We could now have a little piece of the WSO all to ourselves. It is hard to express how significant I think that was. ESO has been the fire to light our NA candles ever since. The US is so far from where we needed help. Mail takes months, phoning costs a fortune and it just seems so forbearing, all that distance. Think about the reverse, how would you go about contacting and relating with someone in Belgium, Norway or Ireland?

European NA currently has no completely unified voice or integrated service structure (though it is under discussion). But thanks in large part to the ESO, we can better feel like we're a part of the NA world. ESO has given us a common hand-hold which we can share. An anchor of unity, which we desperately needed.

What an essential service WSO's "branch office" provides! This is one addict who is here to tell you that ESO and it's marvelous one-woman staff are heaven sent. I pray it stays open forever, for it forever opened my heart.

P.F., Belgium

Home Group

Slugg's Sixth Step part two



The broad perspective

Almost 2,000 addicts from all over the world gathered in Sydney, Australia, to participate in WCNA 21, "The Gift," October 4-6, and early reports indicate it was a joyous and profound experience for many.

Of the ten-degree warmer-than-usual weekend weather one participant said, "It was like the God of our understanding knew what people went through to get there." Slight cloudiness in the morning gave way to sunshine and 80 degree afternoons for the convention-goers.

It was said that many non-Australians were pleased by the local convention tradition of a Sunday evening event, rather than the mid-day Sunday good-byes we are used to in America and Europe. Several hundred were still on hand for the presentation "Rainbow Down Under," a play written and produced by Australian addict-actors Sunday night.

Witnesses said the hour-long play was fun and very moving, and that the crowd seemed to really appreciate it. "Rainbow Down Under" is an adaptation of the "Wizard of Oz." As an addict "Dot" is shown first at odds with Auntie M about getting a job and changing her ways. After a tornado, Dot discovers herself at an NA meeting, not quite understanding how she

got there, and sure she is in the wrong place.

"Straw," "Leo," "Rusty," and "Glenda" are counterparts of the classic cast, and for this adaptation a new character named "Diz," (for the disease of addiction) tries to entice Dorothy off the road to recovery.

In circumstances commonly faced by members of NA, each player was given the opportunity to discover desired character traits as a result of going through pain and self-acceptance. Rusty's presumed-to-be missing heart is broken in love, for instance, and Dot (an aspiring stage performer) discovers her talent really exists, in being herself, after surmounting illusions that had been cultivated by "Diz."

A mixing of cultures that one attendee said, "Brought about a warm, loving feeling that set the tone for the whole weekend" was demonstrated by a single speaker meeting that included sharing from addicts native to Japan, Germany, France, New Zealand, Australia, Bahrain, and the US.

Approximately 50 members from New Zealand were able to attend, which was said to be more than anticipated.

An organizer of logistics for the event said a most inspiring part of the weekend for him came when it was realized that a large shipment of accounting material, posters and other WCNA material was lost. "The freight company could not tell us whether it was gone to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia or the Philippines," he said, "But the entire committee rose to the occasion, and members from everywhere just volunteered to help."

By the efforts of volunteers and canvassing local vendors, the necessary materials were located or replacements pressed into service with hardly an interruption. "We had it all back together in about 24 hours," he said.

About 1500 people formally registered for the convention, with several hundred more attending one or more meetings and events. One spokesperson said "This was a once-in-a-lifetime chance for many members. With the placement of World Conventions as they are now planned, it might be that long before another can be put on in that part of the world."

Multi-National Forum

In September the Narcotics Anonymous Board of Trustees sent a letter to conference participants detailing the situation regarding the continuing effort to have equitably represented WSC input from throughout the world NA community.

As a next stage in this process plans are being made, and support sought, for a multi-national forum just prior to the 1992 WSC similar to the one conducted last year.

Of the 1991 event the trustee communication says, ". . . an apparent shift of thinking took place which gave those members attending a global understanding of our fellowship. . . These discussions were extremely valuable to both the US and non-US representatives as we saw how similarly local NA communities experience both growth and growing pains throughout our fellowship."

A motion was unanimously approved during WSC 1991, "To make the Multinational Development Forum an annual event of the WSC." Additionally, three motions relating to financial considerations for such development were referred to the interim committee.

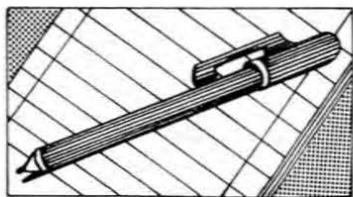
Two of the approved motions allowed the possibility of a "quarterly" Multinational Development Forum during 1991, but the plan had to be scrapped when funds were not deemed available.

The third related motion, also passed, was to "To add \$15,000 to the fixed cost of the WSC annual meeting, for the purpose of subsidizing representatives' travel from outside North America to WSC 1992."

Having recounted these circumstances the WSB letter additionally says, "We are therefore making this appeal to the fellowship through conference participants. Since the International (Multinational) Development Forum was the first item on the discretionary list, we see that it is now time to "put our money where our mouth is" . . . now is the time to show our support.

"If the necessary funds are not received by the WSC by December of this year, we will be unable to have this event. We, as WSC participants, will have said we will do something, and then won't be able to live up to our intentions. Our hopes are that conference participants will inform the rest of the fellowship of the financial need for this event to occur. We need your help in this matter, and thank you in advance for your help with this important issue.

Viewpoint



Meeting together

I am a recovering addict living with HIV+, and I am a grateful member of the "Positively Clean" meeting of Narcotics Anonymous in Miami, Fla.

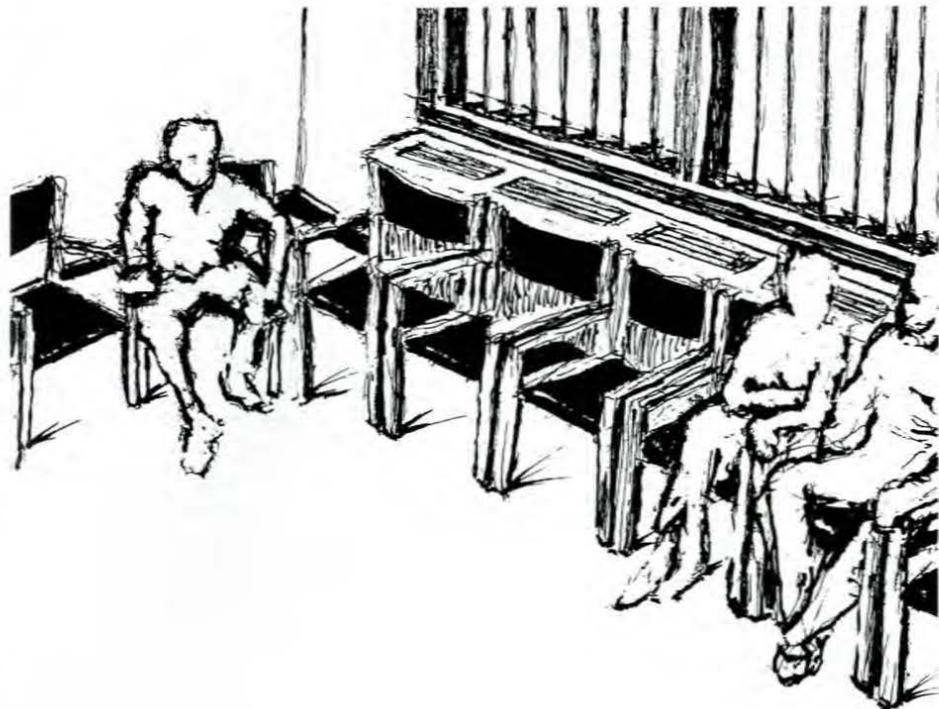
Some might ask why am I willing to share with you my experience, strength and hope, about all of me. First of all, I have never written about living with AIDS before, and got the story in a newsletter, or wherever this story hopefully gets printed. Second of all, I got this sponsor that helps me stay involved. He said I would be doing an injustice to the fellowship and society if I didn't carry the message, to everyone; I am a recovering addict, I found out that I am HIV positive in 1986, and now it is September 1991.

I am writing to you in the hope that maybe there is something in my message that will help another addict living with AIDS (or any addict seeking to recover from the disease of addiction) to learn how to live a better life,

and a way to make life full of peace and love one day, one moment, and one breath at a time.

Back in May of 1986, when I found I was HIV+, my first thought was to deny it, even though I was shooting drugs and "acting out" in many unhealthy behaviors. On the outside I was not going to accept that I had a life threatening illness, but inside I knew that there was this virus eating away at my blood, and I didn't want to face the fact that I had to change my whole life. I started to panic. What am I going to do? I started to use more and more drugs, "stuffing" all these thoughts and feelings of fear and isolation. Who could I tell? I would be rejected for sure. I started rejecting everyone, before they rejected me. I felt I was alone, I was afraid to die, and I was at the point of not wanting to even save myself. My old behavior patterns became tenfold. I was using and staying out late in bars, and practicing unsafe sexual behaviors, not even thinking that I could infect someone else. Thank God the money ran out. I became hopeless, homeless, dopeless and finally desperate enough to stop using drugs.

I decided to seek help. I got on the phone and called NA, but I didn't believe that the meetings I was told about would help me, so I rejected the idea. I was getting very stressed out



and went to a drug treatment center. I said, "I need help to stop using drugs or I'm gonna kill myself." The answer I got to that remark was something like, "We're sorry, we can not help you. You are suicidal, you should go to a hospital." I was too afraid to tell anyone about my HIV. If I had, who knows, maybe I would have gotten the help I needed at that time. I went to a hospital and said, "Help! I want to stop using drugs, and I can't do it, will you help me?" Do you have insurance?" I was asked. "No," I said. "Well, we're sorry. You have a drug problem. You should go to a drug program," was the message. Now I was having this feeling of total rejection, no one wanted to help me, and I learned of a way to get the quick help I needed. I cut my wrist, and got in the hospital. During the next couple of years I ended up in at least ten different mental hospitals.

The day finally came when I took that great step in my first NA meetings. If I had followed through on that first phone call to NA in the beginning, I probably wouldn't have had to put myself through all the pain that I went through, but I guess that's what I had to go through, that was the path that I took to get to NA. So be it.

First thing I needed to do was to get a sponsor. I didn't have to look for too long. I didn't go up to this person and say, "I need a sponsor." I said, "Will you be my sponsor?" He said, "Yes, call me every day," and I did. The willingness that I had from that first day has carried on to this day, today. Within the first six months, working the first three steps, I found my God, and

I was willing to go to any lengths to recover from the hopelessness of drug addiction. Around this time I told my sponsor "I am HIV+." I started my Fourth Step and got it down on paper. At that time that was the only thing I did about my other disease, but it was a start.

I still hadn't told anyone else about being HIV+, not even my mother, and it was eating me up inside. It was this great secret that only me and my sponsor knew about, but my sponsor had other plans for me. One day he said, "I want you to start dealing with this problem about HIV." I understood I needed to learn who to tell, when to tell, and how to educate others; in other words, to carry the message of recovery with AIDS.

So I took one day a week to get educated about AIDS in a chemical dependency-oriented HIV group. It was the first group of its kind that I knew of, and I was part of it. I felt pretty good about it all, and I got to meet people just like me, addicts living with AIDS. Most of them were in NA, learning how to stay clean and to live life to its fullest. I told my sponsor how things had been working out with me on this issue, and he seemed grateful and proud of me, and I started to like myself more.

Service became so much more important to me. I started to learn that I do have something to give away.

I finally got the clean time requirement to get on the NA helpline, and to this day I work that shift. And I learned how to love another human.

H&I meetings became a big part of my life in NA, my sponsor had me going with him to many H&I meetings,

and soon enough I was capable of bringing H&I meetings to recovery houses. Finally I started to open up about how I have been surviving with HIV in my life. I really couldn't tell my story in an honest way without telling about my HIV, so out it came; and in came the gratitude, and all the willingness, the self-worth and all the love that has been returned to me tenfold.

I started learning of many different hospitals and halfway houses, but there was this one place that stuck out to me more than all the others. It was a hospice for addicts with AIDS.

In the early days of AIDS and HIV, and if you had this disease, you were thought to die. So these addicts were sent there to die, but the drugs were killing them first. I got this idea to bring a meeting there, to carry the message of recovery, the NA way.

So, I went to my sponsor, and told him of the trouble with getting this meeting going. He said, "Let's see if we could make it a H&I meeting. Great. I went to the next area H&I committee meeting and, at that meeting, I became a panel chairperson for the first "Positively Clean" meeting of NA.

It was a speaker meeting. It wasn't really that easy. I went door to door saying, "NA. meeting-time, do you want to go to a meeting?" Funds for

AIDS in 1986 and 87 were minimal, and the hospice was just getting on its feet, so there were no wheelchairs. I remember one of those addicts saying, "Yes, I want to go to the meeting, but I can't walk to the other side of the building, will you help me?" I picked up this special person in my arms and carried him to his NA meeting. That's

what it was like in those early days of Positively Clean."

Things were just beginning to happen, awareness in NA was spreading of this meeting. Many people were not very pleased with this outside issue. I was saying, "It's not a "outside" issue, its in the rooms, its in my blood; I'm in

the rooms." I am a addict living with AIDS, and a blind man can see the "denial" in this fellowship; a blind person has better vision than the people that don't give a damn about addicts with AIDS.

After much discussion a motion passed in the ASC that Positively Clean was now a open meeting, to all seeking recovery from addiction.

As the support of society to people with AIDS got stronger, so did the support of NA get stronger for the members of Positively Clean. We finally got the name of the group in the meeting lists, and some time later the letters "HIV" were put next to the name to identify the meeting as open to all, and HIV is welcome.

I understood
I needed to
learn who to tell,
when to tell . . .

Our prayer, that we still use today, is, "I place my hand in yours, and together we can do something that we cannot do alone."

Yes, as time passes, many of our group members have passed away, but they didn't die from drug addiction or with a needle in their arms, or an overdose. They died clean, with the help of NA. We have learned how to live life to its fullest.

The here and right now is all we truly have, anything else is projection or already passed. We learned that a relapse to an addict with AIDS is a death sentence. I know that the drugs will kill me before AIDS does, so staying clean has to come first in my life. With that I have another chance to live.

Never again will addicts living with HIV have to be alone in NA, because something very great has started to happen.

We needed an open meeting, a meeting where everyone could go. It took such a long time to see this happen, the controversy was tremendous, but we did it. The seed was planted, and now there are other Positively Clean meetings all around Florida, and others starting around the country. We served our purpose, we carried the message to addicts, and to addicts with AIDS, and we members of Positively Clean thank you for your support. Miracles do happen.

*In loving service,
John S., Florida*

Just show up

I have never written to the NA Way before. I had to after reading two back-to-back articles in the August, '91 issue.

Winter soldier and Keep coming back?

Two years ago, I moved from a large recovery area in northern California to a suburb of that area. The first thing I did after unpacking was to call the helpline. I had been in recovery four and a half years, spent exclusively in our fellowship, and I knew it was time to reach out. I got an answering service that read me the schedule. I had a schedule—I just needed a map. They couldn't help me with directions. I was feeling a bit lonely, so I called another fellowship hoping I could find a dope-fiend "hiding out." I did. I found a lot of them. I asked them where NA met. They were helpful, but told me they would see me back at the place they were. I kept up my search. I would arrive at scheduled meetings early and stay until ten minutes after starting time, still the only one there!

I finally found one meeting near my house. I loved it, until my schedule at work and childcare made it impossible. Frustrated and craving the Twelve Steps, I talked to my God and my sponsor—expressed my feelings of

being a traitor and went to another fellowship. I stayed there for fifteen months. I felt I was welcomed with open arms and hearts. I sponsored women who considered themselves "cross-addicted." I tried to feel ok. I got by.

Right about March of this year I attended a Narcotics Anonymous regional convention. I went and felt great. I knew it was time to go home. To come back to NA, no matter what! I found a meeting in my area and went. I have gone every week I possibly could since then. I have taken sponsees and a service position. I just show up. But I have never felt a part of.

There are very few people with over three years of recovery and I think we are put on "pedestals." I learned a long time ago what this can do. I don't want it. When I was new I was welcomed. When I was new in the area I was scared, and when I finally spoke up no one helped.

I came from a large area. It grew in unity. Everyone is accepted and has a chair. I have moved to a small area that seems more obsessed with why people leave for other fellowships, than keeping those who are already there. Although I hope I never consider myself an old-timer at six and a half years, I understand why those folks I know with fifteen and twenty years stick together. I don't know it all. I do need help. I cannot do it alone. I am not so spiritually fit that I have become no earthly good.

I love NA. It gave me a life. For that I am truly grateful and will keep coming back, and just show up!

K.M., California

More "On basic respect"

In response to "On basic respect," D.P., Florida, from the October, 1991, issue of *The N.A. Way*: D.P., kudos to you!!! Never before have I read a viewpoint piece in which I felt the author was speaking straight from my own heart. The author simply could not have done a better job of illustrating the sadness and embarrassment of those of us who sit in frozen silence. I would only like to add my thoughts about the words that are shouted during readings. I believe that our choice of language, the things we choose to say and how we choose to say them, reveals more about our character than anything else. So pay heed, those of you who scream; you are telling everyone in the room of your most deeply held values, or lack of them; you are announcing what you believe in; you are making your innermost self crystal clear to large group of people.

The screaming of "thirteen" after our steps are read made me hang my head in shame, especially when I just lost a sponsee last year as a result of that "step." How appalling can you get!? Let's think about what the "thirteenth step" means in terms of a human life: A newcomer walks into his or her (yes, it goes both ways) first

meeting. The newcomer often has no self-respect and probably can no more "just say no" to the senseless, shallow, and selfish people who prey on them than he or she can "just say no" to drugs.

Not too much time passes before we no longer see that newcomer at our meetings. What may have been mistaken as easy virtue could have been, in reality, a painful loneliness and a deep need to be loved. He or she can be driven out the door by shame. He or she may be dying at this moment. And that, it seems to me, is what we glorify or think is cute when we scream "thirteen" at a convention. The usual "call your sponsor" response only dignifies the first shout, and the ensuing giggling only encourages the screamers to continue to be "funny."

What about the "boinging" and "ripping" during the reading of the Twelve Traditions? I suspect that something has "boinged" or "ripped" in the gray matter of the screamers when I hear this nonsense. These shouts, in particular, are patently vapid, especially in contrast to the brilliance of our traditions. I think painting a mustache on the Mona Lisa, or filling in the Grand Canyon to build condos, would demonstrate more taste and refinement than "boinging" and "ripping" do.

We do reveal something about ourselves when we participate in this verbal flatulence. Unfortunately, what we reveal is most unflattering. I've sensed more admirable characteristics in the average Fifth Step than I do from these outbursts. So please, fellow members, think about it next

time you're at a convention. Your behavior tells your fellow members who you are and what makes you tick.

Cindy S., Southern California

Newcomer confusion

I attend a meeting on Saturday nights where there are many newcomers, attending their first meeting of Narcotics Anonymous. There is also a residential treatment program that buses in their people to hear the speakers and take their chips. My concern about the traditions at this meeting is growing because of the increasing number of confused newcomers.

I watch numerous people get up to take their chips and/or cakes and then proceed to thank another fellowship, quote outside literature and use language not consistent with NA recovery, all the while not mentioning one word about NA, not even acknowledging that they are taking their chip and/or cake at an NA meeting. This is when I see the newcomers start to look a little confused.

Then the people get up to share and speak about what is happening at their residential treatment program, again while not mentioning anything about NA or the steps, other than how their rehab program has them working the steps. What ever happened to sponsors teaching steps?

It's not over there. I keep walking out of every one of these meetings by the time the speaker starts to share, as all I hear is how they found another fellowship and got "clean and sober" there. I'm not talking about them saying "another fellowship" either, they name it without even batting an eye. They then proceed to recommend outside fellowships' literature boldly and blatantly without even mentioning the NA Basic Text. They have even gone so far as to just talk about their sobriety without even attempting to be respectful of our fellowship's language.

I would just stop going completely if it weren't for the numerous times newcomers lean over and ask me "am I in an NA meeting or what?" I think I still go to try to let the newcomer know what NA is about.

I get criticized for "butting into someone else's program" or "taking their inventory," but this is not the case. How someone works their steps is between them and their sponsor and I don't have a say about it. However, the traditions I do have a say about, as a member of Narcotics Anonymous, and I do have the right to speak out when they are broken.

The traditions are in place for a reason. Such meetings not only confuse the newcomer, clouding the issue of what NA recovery is, but blatantly express opinions about outside issues, endorse outside organizations and imply an affiliation with outside recovery facilities.

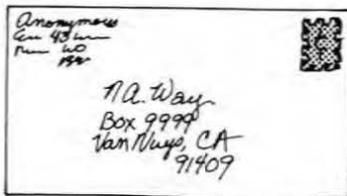
I almost got to the point of really losing it when I saw people approach a newcomer and offer them a meeting directory of another fellowship, as well. Whatever happened to taking

our responsibility as NA members seriously? How about handing them an NA directory, asking them if they have an NA sponsor, inviting them for coffee, giving them an NA Basic Text, etc. They did come to an NA meeting, so why don't we give that to them? Haven't they been told they are in the "wrong place" enough?

I was taught that recovery is about life on life's terms. I have yet to go to a seafood place and be told the food is better at a hamburger joint around the corner, or to a supermarket and been greeted at the door by an employee saying that I should shop at another store. I also don't go to a bakery to buy meat. Maybe when I was using, but not in recovery. To me, life on life's terms also means that if you are not where you want to be, then you should go there. If you are participating in something you believe in, then support that, not something else. I think that if you are in an NA meeting, you should conduct yourself like you know you are in an NA meeting. What do the newcomers think about our grasp of reality in meetings where everyone is talking about someplace else? What must they think about NA's ability to help an addict get clean, if the chip and/or cake takers are thanking something other than NA? Aren't they mistakenly sending a message to the newcomer that NA doesn't work? We all know that to be a lie, so why is this going on? Granted we cannot censor sharing, but we can carefully choose speakers who will truly respect Narcotics Anonymous' Fifth Tradition, not that of another fellowship.

L.R., California

From our readers



Just For Today

Today was moving day, it was also a day I had planned to spend a little time with each of my sponsees. I learned some time ago not to put expectations on anyone—especially sponsees.

While spending sometime with one, she said all the things people say when someone is going on down the road. "I'll miss you, what will I do. I can't relate to anyone else," etc. Then she said "I had already planned on celebrating your birthday with you."

One day at a time, I was approaching five years.

I told her she was helping me celebrate, as I feel in my gut, *today* is the most important day of my recovery. She did help me celebrate, she said she had planned on getting me a card that said, "Today you're five," and a gift, and. . .

I asked her if we had shared with each other? If we had cried together? If we had laughed together? If we had hugged, if we had faced fears together?

Of course she couldn't see it just then, but she had given me many gifts. Gifts that could not get lost, gifts that would be with me whenever I choose to use them.

She shared her with me, it was like looking into a mirror. I met her, she

didn't like me and she kept her eyes down.

One day she called me, we had lunch and she asked me to be her sponsor. We began working on us. After all sponsorship is a two way street. We worked steps, we laughed, we cried, we shared.

She began to hold her head up and look into my eyes, she began to take care of herself.

Many days and nights she helped me celebrate my birthday, it's *today* whatever day it is, that is the most important day of my recovery.

Many people have helped this addict, but there's something special about those who are like her, willing to go to any lengths.

Thank you, to the many recovering addicts along my path, and *happy today* to every one of you. Recovering,
Robin, Minnesota

On coping with complaisance

It seems the longer I'm in recovery, the less happy I'm becoming. Maybe my expectations were too high, or I listened to the promises of a better life with misunderstanding. At any rate, I'm approaching my fourth anniversary this month and my life, in many ways, is no better than it was before

I hit bottom. The "pink cloud" effect wore off long ago, leaving me with feelings of, "Now what?" and wondering if all the soul-searching has been worthwhile. I'm still making many of the same old errors in judgement, and wonder if I've learned much of anything during my recovery process. Sound like a pretty big cry-baby, don't I? Maybe so, but if I've learned only one thing in the last four years, it's that nothing is going to change unless I whine so much that I make *myself* tired of hearing about it.

Why cast this shadow of gloom? It certainly isn't to discourage the newcomer who is still cloud-surfing. The purpose is merely to point out what happens to me when I drop the ball on the ten yard line, when I think I only need one meeting a week because I "know" what I'll hear in the meetings, when I can't recall the last conversation I had with my sponsor. I become a product of complacency. It astounds me how unnoticed this condition goes until it reaches the severe stages.

How many have witnessed other addicts suffering from the same affliction, knowing something is wrong but not being able to put a finger on it, and saying "I'll never get like that?"

Well amigos, never say never. I think we have, or will, all experience this deadly form of our disease to one degree or another.

The best way I've heard of is getting back to the basics, the very same things that have all those happy, joyous and free newcomers on Cloud Pink. Work the steps, go to meetings, share at the meetings, call the sponsor, be there to help someone else, live

just for today and remember to be grateful for something. Amazing how easy it is to forget such simple things.

It often happens that years into recovery I find that my problems are much deeper than I had thought, that underneath the problems of my first two or three Fourth Steps inventories lie even more intense and painful memories, worse still than the ones I've already dealt with.

For me, I think it may just a beginning. I believe my God has waited for me to be ready for these issues, and now waits for me to face my fear of them. When the pain of life as it is surpasses the fear, then our (God and mine) work will begin. I think each of us has his or her own level of despair that we must sink to before we become willing to look for the exit door. It's too dark in here for me to find that way out, but my God can see in the dark. Together, we'll find that door, but not until I'm ready to look for it. God, grant me the willingness to be ready, and give me courage.

L.S., Ohio

Pain in recovery

Getting clean and believing life was to get instantly and forever better was my first mistake. This leading to staying clean with no other changes in my life. Shortly before I was to pick up my two year medallion, the pain was great. Life's problems were still there. All that changed was that I was clean now.

Without the ability to sedate myself I was living dangerously. Pain seemed more intense than before I had got clean. I didn't know that was because

I was no longer hiding my emotions. I truly felt being clean was more painful than using. But because of attending so many meetings I knew in my heart that using wasn't my answer. What else is there to do? Well, that didn't take long for me to figure out. Loneliness had set in. The steps were of no importance in my life and I never felt worse. I wanted hope and I wanted help—still I found no answers. At the time no one in my area discussed the steps (or things of a spiritual nature). My solution, silently waiting while I was self-destructing, had to wait a little while longer. Soon the pain was too great and I could no longer hang on. Not wanting to get high I took the only other choice I knew. This decision was to end the pain by ending something, that today is very precious to me, my life.

I believe God had other plans. I ended up in a hospital in intensive care for a month, then in a surgical unit for a month. Now with extreme physical pain on top of my emotional pain. I needed an answer. I contacted NA. At that time the Florida Regional Convention was going on in Miami. The convention theme ironically was "The Gift of Life." Some addicts brought meetings to me from the convention then, in weeks to come, local members brought meetings to me. They shared about God and the steps. I came to believe in a power greater than myself and took my first honest Third Step. This step I took in a hospital bed with IV's, tubes, catheter and bandages. I wanted help. I wasn't happy about the way my answer came, but I did believe God was now giving me another chance. He gave me the gift of life.

Today I realize life isn't always perfect. I've come to listen to addicts suffering clean. We lose loved ones when we're clean. A lot of us lose jobs, money, financial security. We get ill—some chronic, some terminal. Disasters still arise in our lives. I've spent the past six years since my incident listening to real pain in recovery.

Life can be and is wonderful today. But my message is clear. Recovery doesn't mean freedom from pain. Sometimes things feel real bad. I personally suffer from a chronic physical condition that causes much turmoil in my life. But in recovery we can deal with it together. Using is not the answer. Problems happen whether or not we are clean but clean we can face them. Despite the problems I live with on a daily basis I love life today.

More pain than using? I no longer self medicate to deal with problems. Changes needed to occur. The steps are no longer silent. I believe in the principles of the steps and today they are my answer. I'm not alone and that is where my biggest desperation comes from, is dealing with life's hardships alone. I need God today and I need my fellow addict. Most of all I need to depend on others.

God loves me and wants me to be happy. So with all it's hardships, I thank God for the gift of life.

M.K., Florida

Addict in recovery

I would like to share my gratitude of being an addict in recovery.

I will have three years clean in September 1991. I was going through some of my papers and journals, I had

written, when I was detoxing from methadone and struggling to get clean in June 1988. I found two *NA Way* magazines. One dated June 1988, the other September 1988.

On September 7, 1988 I received my twenty-four hour key tag. I was so happy, afraid, relieved that I finally had one day clean.

I would read these two magazines front, back, over and over. I didn't have a text book at the time. In reading *NA Way*, I was trying to keep in mind that I could stay clean one day at a time, with my Higher Power and the we of Narcotics Anonymous.

Today I have subscribed to *NA Way*, also I have a Basic Text, a sponsor, home group, sponsoree, and the most important, a God in my life to help me stay clean. "One day at a time."

L.P., Pennsylvania

Freedom

No one told me that recovery would be like the voyage that the Pilgrims had when they sailed the *Mayflower* in search of freedom. Yes, recovery has been an adventure, but no longer are my spirits bound by the chains of addiction. I can have freedom from active addiction through the Twelve Steps.

Only after surrendering to the disease of addiction did I start experiencing personal freedom gained by working the Twelve Steps of NA. Powerlessness actually meant that I now have a choice, and Just For Today I don't have to use. Once bound by the chain of addiction, there was no choice, except to use.

Along with this new found choice came the freedom to experience new frontiers that were open to me as I learned to live. By clearing the wreckage of the past, I felt relief from the guilt. Once I walked along with my head held down with guilt and shame, now I can face the world and society with my head held up with self respect. And it is also my responsibility to keep the wreckage of the present clear in order to fully enjoy this freedom.

And I should be grateful for the freedom to be myself. No longer do I have to isolate and be lonely. I now have the ability to get into the mainstream of life and learn to live day by day. Facing life on it's terms without using. After acceptance of myself for who I really was, I can now honestly express myself freely and openly not only in meetings, but out in society as well. By learning to love myself, I slowly learned to love and accept others for who they really are. Better awareness comes from opening that once closed mind to new spiritual and physical experiences. I am now free to be exactly who I am, because I know who I am!

At last, personal freedom is gained, no longer do I face the same dilemma. I am truly fortunate to have the alternative of hope—freedom from active addiction, and a new way of life. Now a once broken spirit learns to live happy, joyous, and free! The lie is dead, we do recover.

R.C., South Carolina

Comin' up



LET US KNOW!

We'll be happy to announce your up-coming events. Just let us know at least three months in advance. Include dates, event name and location, N.A. office or phonenumber, and a post office box. (Sorry, but we can't print personal phone numbers or addresses.)

The **N.A. Way**
MAGAZINE

P.O. Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA 91409.
(818) 780-3951.

FLORIDA: Nov. 14-17, 1991; 10th Serenity in the Sun-Recovery; Ramada Hotel Resort, 603 Clearwater Park Road, West Palm Beach, FL 33401; info (407) 844-7726; Palm Coast ASC, PO Box 3151, West Palm Beach, FL 33402

GEORGIA: Jan. 17-19, 1992; CSRA Peace in Recovery IV; "Living in the Solution"; Sheraton Hotel; info (404) 667-9181; Route 2, Box 281A, Harlem, GA 30814

MARYLAND: Jan. 17-19, 1992; First Free State Regional Convention; Omni Hotel, 101 West Fayette Street, Baltimore, MD 21201; info (301) 752-1100; Convention Committee, PO Box 65008, Baltimore, MD 21209

MASSACHUSETTS: Nov. 22, 1991; 10 Year Celebration of NA; Holiday Inn, Route 1, Peabody, MA; info (617) 424-0958

OHIO: Nov. 29—Dec. 1, 1991; 1st Greater Cincinnati Area Convention; Cincinnati Marriott, 11320 Chester Road, Cincinnati, OH 45246; rsvn.s (800) 228-9290; G.C.A.S.C.N.A., PO Box 8257, Cincinnati, OH 45208

2) Dec. 27-29, 1991; 3rd Central Ohio Area Convention; Radisson Hotel Columbus North; rsvn.s (800) 333-3333; info (614) 297-7472; COACNA III, PO Box 0944, Columbus, OH 43209

OKLAHOMA: Jan. 17-19, 1992; 2nd Norman Winter Convention; Norman Holiday Inn, S. I-35 and West Main; rsvn.s (405) 329-1624; Norman Winter Convention, PO Box 2653, Norman, OK 73080

PENNSYLVANIA: Nov. 15-17, 1991; 9th Tri-State Regional Convention; Pittsburgh Hilton Hotel and Towers; rsvn.s (412) 391-4600; TSRSO Inc., PO Box 110217, Pittsburgh, PA 15232

2) Nov. 28,—Dec. 1, 1991; 2nd Bee Hive Area Birthday Convention; Public Square, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702; rsvn.s (717) 824-7100; info 675-3283; Bee Hive Conv. Comm., PO Box 291, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18703

SOUTH CAROLINA: Jan. 25-27, 1992; 12th Annual USCANA Convention; "Catch the Spirit"; Ramada Hotel, 1001 South Church Street, Greenville, SC 29601; info (803) 294-1242; USCANA, PO Box 4407, Greenville, SC 29608

TENNESSEE: Nov. 27—Dec. 1, 1991; 9th Volunteer Regional Convention; River Terrace Resort, Gatlinburg, TN 37738; rsvn.s (800) 251-2040; VRC 9, PO Box 90203, Knoxville, TN 37990

VIRGINIA: Jan. 3-5, 1992; 10th AVCNA; Cavalier Hotel, Virginia Beach, VA; info (804) 588-4154; 10th AVCNA, PO Box 11604, Norfolk, VA 23517



We need stories!

Remember, this section of *The N.A. Way* is your meeting in print. Like any other meeting you're a part of, you'll get the most out of this one by participating.

Who writes stories?

You do!

The stories you see in this magazine are written by N.A. members—like you! You don't need to be a "great writer." All you need is your personal experience in recovery, and the willingness to share it. Without it, we don't have a message to carry. In every sense, that's *The N.A. Way*.

What do I write?

Share as you would at any other meeting. Is there a topic you've enjoyed hearing or sharing about at a recent meeting? Are you on a particular step, and having some eye-opening experiences? Has there been a recent turning point in your personal recovery? Share it with your fellow N.A. Way readers. We'd love to hear from you! Write us at:

The N.A. Way Magazine
P.O. Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA 91409 U.S.A.

N.A. Way

M A G A Z I N E[®]

Box 9999, Van Nuys CA 91409
(818) 780-3951

Subscription one year \$15 US or Canadian
 two years \$28 US or Canadian
 three years \$39 US or Canadian

Payment enclosed
 not enclosed—bill me

Multiple orders
Bulk sales Contact our office for details.

Subscription 10 or more 1-year subscriptions
 to a single address @ \$12 US or
 Canadian each.
 *Minimum order \$120 US or
 Canadian. Prepaid only.*
 (Canadian subscribers add 7%
 Goods and Services Tax)

Address correction If you have moved, fill in your new
 address and attach your old address label
 to this form.

Name _____
Address _____

**Allow four to six weeks for your first
issue to arrive.**

3TEA

The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous

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 ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. N.A., as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Narcotics Anonymous 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.

Twelve Traditions reprinted by permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

What is Narcotics Anonymous?

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 stay clean. This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only one requirement for membership, the desire to stop using. 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.

*My gratitude speaks
when I care
and when I share
with others
the N.A. way*