

THE **NA Way**
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Classics Issue



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.

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NA Way[®]

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God, gurus, and the promise

A turning point in recovery came for me at about eighteen months clean. It had taken that long for me to work Step One. Yes, I tried for a year and a half to exert power over my disease of addiction. I was drug free, yet my actions were still being controlled by obsession, compulsion, and impulses! It was through these repeated experiences of failure that I finally could feel and believe in my absolute powerlessness, not just over drugs—they had been out of my life for a while then—but over my addiction, as our First Step says.

All this led directly to Steps Two and Three. All seemed well. However, these steps proved to be another long and confusing struggle. It is this struggle, and some insight that came from it, which I would like to share with the fellowship.

Since I knew beyond question that I did not hold the answers to my problems, I went looking elsewhere. I found help in many places. Addicts, nonaddicts, so-called "divinely inspired methods" all seemed to offer something. Confusion set in! Other people were doing the same thing, so I decided to step back and watch them.

After many months, I began to get some insight. It seems that all of the resources were being turned into "gurus" of sorts. Many of us, in a fervent search for recovery, had received guidance from one source or another. We were now taking these sources and transforming them into all-powerful answers to life's problems.

It is difficult to explain, but somehow I and others were looking to individuals or individual methods for recovery. It was a new way to use people, places, and things. Instead of incorporating these resources into recovery, many of us turned our recovery over to another person or organization.

The destructiveness of all this soon became apparent as a much clearer picture of my disease emerged. Denial, in the form of refusing responsibility, was full blown. I had been trying to have someone else do my work while refusing to take Step Two and Three. This was stifling not only my own recovery but the recovery of others as well. By looking to individuals, I was helping them to believe that they had more power than they did. I was placing my own life and the lives of others on the line!

I began to search for a Higher Power that was greater than myself and my other resources. I found this greater power in NA. It works

through groups, areas, regions, world service conferences, and the fellowship, but not necessarily through any individuals. And it is mine. And it is not a guru. And it has no name. And it does not change other people to be the way I want them to be. And by its very existence it leads me through the steps to the one promise made in our Basic Text.

Our Basic Text states, "Narcotics Anonymous offers only one promise and that is freedom from active addiction, the solution that eluded us for so long. We will be freed from our self-made prisons." (p. 102)

This promise does not ensure a perfectly packaged life for me or anyone else. It simply gives me the opportunity to pursue it. I can go after what I want and periodically evaluate my motives and methods. When necessary, I can accept defeat on some things in life.

These notions and experiences are very dear to me. In fact, they are important enough to give away. They are yours if you want them!

S.S.
Colorado

Four stages of acceptance

Most everyone in recovery has learned of the need for acceptance. Whether we're dealing with something as serious as the death of a loved one or as trivial as our day at the beach being ruined by bad weather, most of us find we need to practice acceptance on a daily basis. Acceptance turns out to be an important part of finding serenity and happiness.

But what exactly does "acceptance" involve? How does a person come to accept something, especially something painful or tragic? It wasn't too long into recovery when I realized that I needed to learn a lot about acceptance in order to deal with many of the things that troubled me.

My sponsor helped. "Since you have learned to accept your addiction," my sponsor said to me, "why don't you think about how you

came to do so? It might help you learn what you need to do in order to accept those painful experiences in your life." At his suggestion, I began looking closely at the process that had led me to acceptance of my addiction.

In my first months in the program, I didn't really believe that I was an addict. I could easily acknowledge that I had used a lot of drugs. But an addict?—not me!

There were many factors that contributed to my denial, but the principal one was my belief that being a drug addict was a symp-

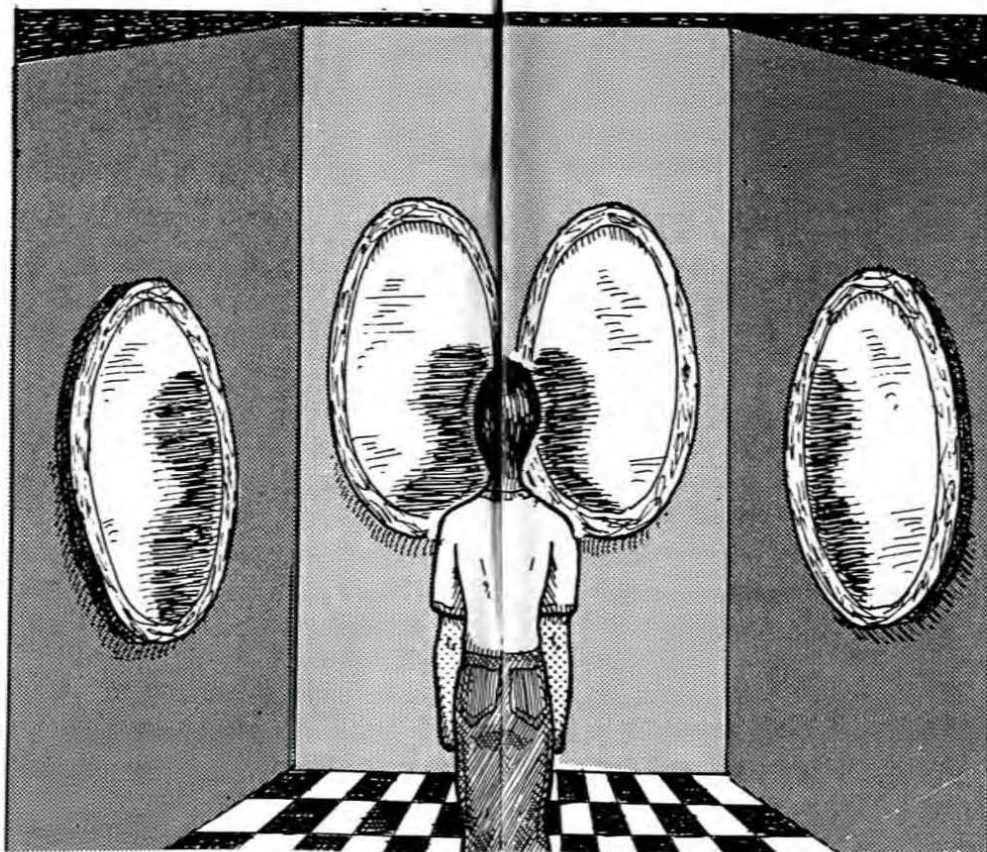
tom of moral weakness. For me, to acknowledge my addiction would have been tantamount to admitting that I was an immoral person, and that I was unable to do. But I kept going to meetings.

Many months later, I heard an oldtimer remark, "To say that I am an addict is not to make a moral judgment; it is to make a medical diagnosis." From that time on I began thinking differently. *Addiction is a disease! It really is a disease!* I had heard that dozens of times before, but on that day I internalized it.

I continued with meetings; "ninety meetings in ninety days" suddenly made sense! I went to libraries and read everything I could find about addiction. I took courses on it at a local university. I combed the Basic Text and other NA publications. I wanted to know everything about the disease—its physical side, its emotional side, its spiritual side, its mental side.

I wanted to learn how addicts came to recovery and how they stayed in recovery. I wanted to know what the steps meant and how to use them. I wanted to know about sponsors and how they could help. The energy that I had previously used to *deny* my addiction I now used to *recover* from addiction.

All of this was accompanied by both minor and major changes in my lifestyle. For example, my weekly schedule had to be adjusted to accommodate the meetings I needed. I had to be careful to avoid persons and places closely associated with using. I had to start building a community of friends who didn't use and who enjoyed life in recovery. I had to learn to use a telephone; to ask others for help; to take the important step of asking someone to sponsor me, and to take directions and suggestions from him; and to discover how to work the steps into the fabric of my life.



Many of these changes were uncomfortable. I was angry about being an addict and not being able to enjoy some of the things that non-addicts could enjoy. I became resentful when I found it wasn't safe to accept an invitation to a party where people would be using. I often felt lonely—sometimes even at meetings, and especially at those where I knew no one and no one seemed to care whether I was there or not. My sponsor suggested that I might have to change in order to feel more comfortable—and that, in itself, made me feel uncomfortable.

I became really concerned when, after a year or so, I realized that the changes that had occurred in me were putting a stress on my marriage. I was becoming a new person, and my wife was scared because she was on unfamiliar territory with me! For a while, I was afraid that my recovery might even cost me my marriage.

"God has not brought you this far to abandon you," my sponsor said and suggested that I work more on the Third Step. Not using was turning out to be the easy part of recovery; changing the person who had used was the tough part!

But what an adventure it turned out to be! As I worked on the steps, and as the steps worked on me, I started to become a very different person from the one I had been

when I was using. Despair, loneliness, resentment, self-pity, fear, self-centeredness, dishonesty, pride—all these negative qualities that had characterized much of me were gradually replaced by their opposites. As I became the person I had never been, I found myself grateful for the program which was now giving me my new self. I had come at last to accept my addiction.

As I thought about how this had happened, I saw that acceptance was not a single event that had occurred at a given time and in a given place. It was instead a series of spiritual "growings" that had gradually unfolded.

The first such "growing" was my recognition of reality, of what had to be accepted—namely, my addiction. I had to recognize, not just in my head but deep in my gut, that I was an addict. Part of that recognition was a clear understanding of what it is to be an addict and what consequences being an addict would have for my life. Meetings, especially ones around the First Step, together with all the learning I did about the disease constituted my recognition of the reality that I had to accept.

The second stage of the process was to free myself from the negative feelings I had about my disease. Anger, loneliness, anxiety, fear—these were some of the feel-

ings connected with my recognition of what addiction meant for me. I had to learn to experience and release those feelings.

That proved difficult! I was not used to feelings then. A lot of my using had served to cover them up. It took time for me to learn what I should have learned in childhood—how to feel, to express feelings, and how to free myself of them. But this difficult work had to be done if I wanted to continue on the road to real acceptance.

The third "growing" occurred as I adjusted my life in order to deal with my addiction—going to meetings, using the telephone, getting a sponsor and working with him. I had already come to understand what my disease meant and, serious about recovery, I needed to take effective action against it. For me to say, "I am an addict," but then do nothing more made no real sense. An important part of acceptance of my addiction was to do what I could to ensure that I would not return to using.

These three "growings" happened slowly. I don't know when the fourth and final one occurred but, one day, I found myself experiencing intense and overwhelming feelings of gratitude for my new life, for the new me. Not only was I grateful for the benefits which recovery had brought me, but in an odd way that gratitude also extended to my addiction it-

self. I was not particularly happy about having a disease that is incurable and potentially fatal. Acceptance of addiction did not have to include liking it! But I could say this much for addiction: It had brought me into the program and so had made a new life possible for me.

These four related processes I went through in coming to accept my addiction are the same ones I use whenever I need to find acceptance in any area of my life: recognition of reality; freeing myself from negative feelings about that reality; adjusting my life to that reality; and developing gratitude for that reality.

These four "growings" are stages of spiritual growth, and as such are almost always painful. They are especially difficult when I have to accept something of major importance—for example, the death of my son, or learning to live with a difficult and insensitive person.

I sometimes find that, through acceptance, I come to like what I had first resisted, but that isn't always the case. Acceptance, however, always includes an element of gratitude. And as that acceptance grows and deepens, it brings me to new levels of serenity and peace.

J.C., New York

To an NA area committee

I write this with love, care, and concern. It warms my heart to see an NA area service committee emerge. More addicts will find Narcotics Anonymous and live free due to your efforts. More groups will grow healthy and flourish, and you yourselves will grow in understanding of our program; the Traditions and Steps.

Some time ago, a trusted servant of your area called me with some questions. Your trusted servant knew that I had participated in and observed the emergence, formation, and development of several area service committees and asked me to share my experience. I was grateful for the opportunity. I've seen lots of areas get caught up in policies and procedures that have com-

promised our primary purpose and common welfare. I pray that the following can help.

My best experience/observation is this: All of our service problems can be resolved through recovery from addiction. The First Step of the Narcotics Anonymous program leads us to surrender and provides the basis for personal recovery. Our program, based on this First Step, is unique among self-help groups and anonymous fellowships. Our program deals with the problem, not the symptoms. We can never stress or re-emphasize this too much. People may abstain for months and even years and remain oblivious to this subtle yet monumental difference. The primary responsibility of those of us who have chosen to express our gratitude through structural service is to recover from addiction and share our recovery from addiction. We serve NA by attending NA meetings, basing our recovery exclusively in Narcotics Anonymous. We read and share recovery found in NA literature. We sponsor our newcomers into NA. To share other principles may mean that we have not surrendered to our powerlessness over the disease of addiction and we are not serving NA. Time abstinent means little or nothing here. We may only effectively serve the program we are personally committed to.

There is no power or control in service. Those two concepts are mutually exclusive. Sincere surrender, willingness to act, and prayer and meditation lead us to real selfless service, "doing the right thing for the right reasons." "One thing will defeat us in our recovery" and in our service, "an attitude of intolerance or indifference toward spiritual principles."

My experience tells me that the several critical spiritual principles in structural service are:

1) Surrender—personal powerlessness over the disease of addiction; the First Step of NA, the basic premise of the message of recovery from addiction that we share in our primary purpose.

2) Our Second Tradition—defining who we serve: our ultimate authority as expressed through group conscience; and defining who we are: trusted servants who do not govern.

3) Our Ninth Tradition—provides for any and all NA structural services and tells us quite explicitly how to structure services: so that they are directly responsible to those they serve. Simplicity promotes effectiveness.

4) Our First Tradition—personal recovery is dependent on NA unity; therefore, we work for our common welfare. We inform, we communicate, we write it down so that we may give it away in order to keep it.

5) Our Fifth Tradition—the reason we have NA services, so that no addict need die without having the chance to recover. As service committees, we work to make the NA message of recovery from addiction more generally available and help groups to fulfill our primary purpose.

We, as addicts, often treat spiritual principles as rules and defiantly search for ways to work around them in our attitude of indifference or intolerance. We perceive service titles and committee participation as positions of power, prestige, and control. We may even become so radically self-obsessed that we attempt to manipulate the conscience of groups. We forget that services are directly responsible to groups and members, not the other way around. Energy, enthusiasm, and misinformation lead us to believe that we alone know what's best for NA. Sometimes the very worst violation of our spiritual principles comes from the very best of intentions. I know, I've been there. Experience and observation have taught me to reach out, share my problems and ideas, ask for help, pray and meditate, take direction, and then proceed humbly.

Several basic concepts that come from my experience in area service are:

1) Anonymity—In records of area meetings, it seems much more appropriate to refer to reports, motions, and discussion in terms of the group represented or the service specialty instead of the personality. For example: The Saturday Night Recovery Group GSR moved that "our ASC define a prudent reserve as one month's operating expenses and pass all the rest up to the region," rather than Joe Blow moved that "We save all money in our treasury for a yearly party."

The second half of our name is Anonymous. We as trusted servants can encourage anonymity by participating in it.

2) Recovery—Perhaps the very best activity I've seen an ASC sponsor is a Twelve Step retreat.

3) Trusted servant training—Each trusted servant should have one or two alternates, just as group representatives do, to learn how to perform the required service effectively and help us not to continue to make the same mistakes over and over as service committees.

Seminars or learning days allow us to share the experience of others from outside our area who have lived through service experiences and learned how to apply the spiritual principles in the traditions of NA.

4) Simplicity—Our service manual shares the latest, most effective basics of setting up an area service committee. It seems that

the more simply services are structured, the more effective and directly responsible they become.

5) Communication—Verbal messages are often misunderstood or misinterpreted. Part of the willingness to serve is the willingness to report or represent accurately. All reports, motions, and other important information should be written. That way, misunderstanding and misinformation due to poor communication is minimized. If we want unity, we must communicate effectively, write it down simply, and share it.

6) Flexibility and humor—Area committees serve according to the needs of their members groups. When we take ourselves too seriously and form intricate rules of service, our groups seem to treat us as governing bodies and refuse to participate.

Area service is a learning experience. Some of us may succeed in manipulating and controlling for some time. Eventually, however, our ultimate authority will guide us to truly serve if we are recovering from addiction. The spiritual principles in our steps and traditions are pure. The truth of recovery from the disease of addiction is patient, but powerful. Narcotics Anonymous can save lives through our dedicated selfless service, commitment, and follow-through. It's free for the surrender.

Anonymous

From: *The NA Way Magazine* • April 1983

An atmosphere of recovery

We come to this program from homes and apartments, offices and schools, treatment centers and jails, parks and gutters. We come from many different places, but they're all called loneliness, and pain, and fear. Somehow addiction draws us together, to Narcotics Anonymous

We come to this program for many different reasons, but those of us who stay all do so for the same reason: the desire to stop using and to stay clean. After we've actually stopped, and after the fog has cleared a bit, most of us take a look around to see what this program is all about. We start trying to do the things that we see those around us doing. Eventually we come to the Twelve Steps and try to work them as best we can. The result is a degree of freedom we have never known before. We find freedom from drugs and the obsession to use them, and in time a bit of freedom from that part of ourselves that has been destroying us.

We're taught that we can only keep what we have by giving it away, so we seek out or are led to other addicts who have problems like ours who want help. Usually, one of the things we try to do when we're working with a new person is to get them to a meeting as soon as possible. After all, that's what worked for us.

Why is this so? What is it about our meetings that's so special? Usually about all we can say is that there's a feeling there; a feeling of strength, hope, and love; an atmosphere of recovery. Our meetings are very special to most of us: a place that's "safe," a place where we fit in. But what keeps them that way? One would think that any time people like us got together, the result would be chaos. Groups of self-centered, strong-willed, isolated individuals just can't meet together peacefully and safely—but we do. The reason we can is that we have Twelve Traditions which help to keep our groups safe and free.

For most of us, understanding of these traditions came slowly over a period of time. We pick up a little information here and there as we talk to members and visit various groups. It usually isn't until we get involved in service when someone points out that "personal recovery (our recovery) depends on NA unity" and that unity depends on how well we stick to our traditions. Because we hear "suggested" steps and "no musts" so often, some of us make a mistake and assume this applies to our groups the same way it applies to the individual member. The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous are not suggested; they are not negotiable. They are the rules that keep our fellowship alive and free.

By following these principles in our dealings with others in NA and with society at large, we avoid many problems. This isn't to say our traditions eliminate all of our problems. We still have to face difficulties as they arise: communication problems, differences of opinion, internal controversies, problems with individuals and groups outside the fellowship, and the like. However, when we apply these principles, we avoid some of the pitfalls.

Many of our problems are much like those our predecessors had to face and overcome. Their hard won experience gave birth to the traditions, and our own experience has shown that these principles are just as valid today as they were yesterday. Our traditions are what protect us from internal and external forces that could destroy us. They are truly the ties that bind us together, but they don't work automatically: it is only through understanding and application that they have power.

EDITORIAL NOTE: This material is from the introduction to Chapter Six of the review form of the Basic Text—much of it does not appear in our Basic Text as approved. We felt you would enjoy seeing it and have reprinted it here with permission from the WSC Literature Committee.

From: *The NA Way Magazine*
June 1986

Ten reasons why I attend NA meetings

In no particular order of importance:

1. In order to feel the atmosphere of recovery. Nine times out of ten, I feel much better after attending a meeting than before I came, no matter where I'm at before going to a meeting.
2. To learn how to apply the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in my daily life. Meetings are a good place to learn about practicing these principles in all of my affairs.
3. To share my experience, strength, and hope in order to help others, just as others sharing their recovery helps me.
4. To watch others grow in their recovery and to grow in my recovery. One of the most beautiful experiences life offers me today is the joy of watching a newcomer grow right before my eyes. A loving God, as I understand God, working through clean NA members brings about many miracles in all of our lives. This is proof of

the fact that NA works if we work it!

5. In order to spend time with other recovering men and women. I've found more caring and sharing people in my recovery than I at one time believed existed. I can recall very well a time in life (quite a long period of time) when I believed very few people cared about anyone but themselves. *How wrong I was!*

6. To be reminded of where I came from and what awaits me if I pick up that first drug. "If we use, we lose."

7. To be with men and women I truly love and care about and who love and care about me—and show it.

8. To see many smiling faces and to return those smiles. Everyone needs to be with people who are happy.

9. To hear my Higher Power speak through recovering addicts. Since I haven't got a direct line to God, that is the way my HP works: through others and through me.

10. Just because I'm an addict. Attending NA meetings allows me and anyone else who wants recovery to feel very good about ourselves and about what we as a fellowship of men and women are doing—staying clean a day at a time, losing the desire to use, and learning a new way of life. I love NA.

J.B., Wisconsin

An oldtimer with a newcomer's attitude

I am what some NA members consider an oldtimer. My Higher Power has graced me with over four years clean time. Even though I have always professed "quality, not quantity," not too long ago I started *feeling* like an oldtimer, and it almost cost me everything.

I thought I had read the Basic Text inside and out, sacrificed myself in service work, and burned up enough phonelines to sit back and enjoy my recovery for free. It didn't take long for the insanity to return and make my life a living hell once again. I felt as hopeless as I did before I walked into my first NA meeting, without even having to pick up and use again. Self-centeredness quickly replaced the spiritual principles I had worked so hard for the last four years.

At the few meetings I did attend, my sharing was only lip service. My ego wouldn't let me share the pain in my gut. I had to protect this

"oldtimer" image. If I told of the anger, the fear, the isolation I was feeling, they would know I wasn't even working the program. If I told of the many nights I sat up crying my eyes out because I was so unhappy and didn't want to cope with life anymore, they would know I had just been "talking the talk" and not "walking the walk." Besides that, I knew what I needed to do. I didn't need anyone telling me, the oldtimer, what I already knew.

Finally, in the early morning hours not too long ago, I seriously thought about suicide. I was so tired, physically and mentally, of trying to cope with the realities going on in my world that it seemed like the easiest way out.

Relapse was never a choice at the time because I knew it would be too slow and painful. As I sat alone in the darkness feeling totally drained, I thought about the four years of recovery I had under my belt and wondered how the serenity, the faith, and the hope could have slipped away so fast.

Somewhere inside me, a humble cry of surrender came pouring out to the Higher Power I had trusted and loved for so long but had somehow edged out of my life in recent months. Through tears of anguish and pain, I promised my God I'd do whatever he wanted me to do if he'd just help me. At the same time, I repeated out loud the First Step. Even though I wasn't us-

ing, I knew I was powerless over my addiction and that my life was unmanageable.

I had heard a million times that using was only one symptom of my disease. Now it was all of the other symptoms that were causing so much pain.

That night I started over. I made a conscious decision to work my program with a different attitude—a newcomer's attitude. I had to, or I knew I'd die. I had to have the honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness that it took for me in the beginning of my recovery. Somehow I had let ego and complacency take over my spiritual program, and, as the saying goes, "If you don't use it, you lose it."

The following day, a phone call allowed me to work the Second Step. Four very special recovering addicts called from New Orleans, Louisiana. They were leaving the 1987 world convention and asked if they could stop and spend the night before making their way home two states away. As I hung up the phone, I was overcome with gratitude and hope. My Higher Power was bringing the world convention to my home through those four recovering addicts.

Needless to say, they brought with them a "convention high" filled with love and spirituality. Three of those NA friends had known me since the beginning of my recovery. We had shared a lot



of growth together until I moved a year ago. After a lot of hugs and settling in, two of my friends and I got comfortable on my couch together while everyone else went to sleep.

The hours that followed are hard to describe. For the first time in several months, I shared everything in my heart: the pain, the hopelessness, the thoughts of suicide. I had never felt God's presence like I did in those early morning hours with those two recovering addicts. They shared with me the theme heard throughout the world convention: Work the steps! They reminded me: When you are tired of fighting, you surrender and become willing.

I believe today with all my heart that God brought me those NA friends because he knew I could be honest with them (they knew me too well for me not to be!) and that I would be able to hear what they had to share. The heart of NA beat with much love and hope that night.

During the days that followed, I did a lot of self-searching. I started doing the things I had done for so long in the beginning of my recovery: reading, praying, going to meetings. But most importantly of all, I shared *me* with other recovering addicts. I was reminded that I have to ask for help to receive it.

Today, my recovery still isn't what I want it to be but, with restored faith in my Higher Power, I'm sure it's where it's supposed to be. I know from painful experience that complacency is my worst enemy. I have to leave my clean time *quantity* outside of the meeting, and bring my open-mindedness and the desire for *quality* in. Only in this way can I grow.

The basic tools of my recovery today are the ones I learned when I was a newcomer: honesty (sharing humbly from my heart, not my head), open-mindedness (staying teachable), and willingness (working the steps over and over and over). I heard someone say that we work Steps One through Twelve for recovery, and go from Step Twelve back to One for humility. Today that is also my experience.

Through the grace of my Higher Power and the love of our fellowship, so much has been revealed to this recovering addict. Today, when someone refers to me as an oldtimer, I say, "Yeah, but in order for me to recover I have to keep a newcomer's attitude!" No one can take a free ride in this fellowship for very long without paying a price. For that painful lesson, I am grateful!

Anonymous

God as we understood Him

Step Three is a mighty step. Taking this step is often the key to whether or not we stay clean. I am certain that it is the only road to spiritual progress.

I made a decision early in life, after being "failed" by others over and over again, to rely solely on my own resources. My motto was, "If you want something done, do it yourself." So, when it was suggested that I make a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God, I balked at first, then felt perplexed and frightened.

"Could God be trusted to care for me?" I thought. It seemed that no one else in my life had ever been caring. Beatings, incest, rape, suicide, attempted murder, kidnapping, addiction, and frantic unreasonableness were the experiences that had led me to believe I could never safely trust anyone. God was a force that I turned to as a child each night in prayer, but I later came to feel he had no power over the darker side of human nature and thus no power to keep me safe from heartache. I gave up all hope in a Higher Power, falsely concluding that self-will was the answer to living.

Just recently I started to feel this way again after sixteen months of living clean. I told myself, "Maybe the only way I will become productive is by pulling myself up by my own bootstraps." Life's daily stresses and living near poverty became too much for me. Doubt about the existence of a God crept into my mind. "How could a God who really cares for me seemingly leave me to my own devices?" I had done the footwork—where were the results? Was NA just another man-made solution? It became clear to me that I was in a spiritual crisis. Although I felt myself slipping into despair, I continued to pray. "Get to a meeting" was the message I received.

Only after deep prayer did the memories of the miracle hit me. I'm clean! I see others getting and staying clean after years of active addiction. My heart is full and my conscience clear! I do have enough for today. God does care for me—one day at a time.

When darkness seems to be closing in on every side, I can take comfort in knowing that as long as I continue to make a daily decision to turn my will and life over to a caring God, my daily needs will be

met. Yes—perhaps things do not come together quite the way I think they should. I may not be able to feel God working in my life. Everything may be falling apart around me. Despair and discouragement may engulf me. Yet, deep in my soul my Third Step decision will build for me an impenetrable spiritual fortress where I can take refuge in knowing that my well-being is resting safely in the hands of God.

T.Z., Hawaii

From: *The NA Way Magazine* • December 1983

I am but a speck in the universe

I am but a speck in the universe, but the power of my God is within me.

When I first came to you, I was broken in spirit and did not know what to do. You were there for me, called me, loved and accepted me, shared, held me, let go, identified, and most of all cared what happened to me. You introduced me to the Twelve Steps of recovery from addiction. You told me and showed me what worked for you, and I was interested enough to come back. I found a peace, joy, and freedom with you I had never found before yet had been seeking for a long time.

I surrendered and threw myself to you and hoped NA was for real. I hoped it would work for me; that I could enjoy what you had found. Some of you seemed a little hyped-up, and I learned that was your desperation. I could identify, and I loved you. Some of you held back; I knew your fear. Some of you gave it your all; the change was reflected in your lives. That is what I wanted. I'm a 100% addict, and I wanted a 100% change when I got here. I tried to surrender 100% by doing what was asked, the way I was asked whenever I was asked, and it worked for me. It hasn't always made sense, but that's just the God of my understanding's will and his way of keeping me from messing up a miracle. Some of you forgot and were petty. Your pain let me know the program of NA was for real. Your pain gave guidance and helped me avoid my pitfalls and side issues.

I am but a speck in the universe, but the power of my God is within me.

As I grow in the ways of real love and follow the path of recovery, my deepest dreams take form and become real. My deepest fears crack, melt, and are washed away as I realize I can "starve the bastards out" if I just don't get sucked into a losing set-up. If that happens, my ability to see and avoid a losing set-up will increase a hundredfold.

I saw fear rise. Ignorance seemed to prevail ten thousand

times, but never won. Always, at the end, love and recovery would still be there. Fear would be lost and ignorance replaced with answers. All I had to do was keep the faith, do what I could to help, not pick up the first fix, pill, or drink, and stay for the whole movie. I was really grateful for this last bit because I had nowhere else to go. If NA couldn't have stood up to all this, I would have no basis for surrender or belief today. After all, I'm a real addict and the program had better be real. The Twelve Steps of NA got me out of my primary losing set-up by eliminating my need to attempt to regain the comfort I had once known through using. NA gave me a better way. The steps guided me into a relationship with my Creator which I had seen before but never was able to establish. My defects became expendable, my way was cleared through willingness to admit faults and make amends. Prayer and meditation allowed me to set my house in order and have plenty left for others. The best thing I can give another is my time, either directly or through serious well-wishing. Always the place to change is in my heart. There is no way to obtain something in the world without it first being in my heart. When I am hurting or looking for something, today I first look in my heart. If it is clean and I find it there, then the rest takes care of itself. This has come to me as a direct result of NA. I did not

get it before NA got me.

My interest in others has gotten better. I am more willing to give to them than at any other time in my life. I have found the joy of giving through service work, group service, and personal service to others. They all seem the same to me except that service work takes more surrender.

I am but a speck in the universe, but the power of my God is within me.

The truth I have found in NA is that even though we are addicts and suffer to some degree from our affliction all our days clean, we can enjoy life and live pretty well as others do. We don't become powerful through the NA steps, but we become complete. We become whole enough to exercise some reason and judgment in our lives. Whatever others think of us, however they praise or dismiss our recovery, each of us comes out ahead. We find the ways and means to take care of our needs without harming others. We find in time ways to help others without causing harm or diminishing what our Higher Powers have given us. A paradox is only a phase of learning before the parts become one.

A Spirit is within us as it is in all creatures great and small. The Power used to get diverted from its primary purpose and siphoned off into our disease. In recovery, our health is energized and it doesn't get wasted. I am what I believe. I become what I think. However you

believe in the God of your understanding, the Power of your God becomes a real force in your life in recovery. This power directs and controls you because you have surrendered, became willing, and have the courage to try. Long live the difference from the way we used to be. Even in times of pain and suffering, we are never alone. We celebrate our lives clean. We do what we can for others. We can enjoy life without getting hung up on any particular thing. We see that life is a plan, not a destination.

Just for Today

Do what you're able to do.

Read NA literature.

Share with other recovering addicts.

Direct your obsessiveness toward recovery.

Develop your own program that fits.

Treat yourself as you would a friend.

Rationalization has no place in your life.

Allow yourself to actively seek recovery.

Don't deny you have denial.

Know you are loved and accepted.

Love and accept

Anonymous

Home Group

Sought through prayer



World service news

No more "shooting from the hip"

The Interim Committee has put forth a motion suggesting that no new projects be taken on during the 1993-94 conference year so that world services as a whole may engage in an inventory process.

Although the idea of an inventory has been brought up in "hallway discussions," said Mary Kay B., WSO Board of Directors chairperson, the idea "really became formal at the [Cincinnati] quarterly."

The inventory process is expected to focus on defining ways that world services can better serve the groups. "This isn't about us sitting in room and talking about ourselves," said Becky M., World Service Board of Trustees chairperson.

The World Service Conference met on its own for the first time in 1978. In the fifteen years since, Narcotics Anonymous has grown so rapidly that members of the WSC felt pressed to develop new literature and service manuals or embark on other projects. "We've never taken the time to look

at how we respond to the needs of the groups," said Dave T., WSC chairperson.

"World services have grown to the point where we are overwhelming our world-level trusted servants, leaving numerous volunteers burnt out and disillusioned," said Mary Kay B. Citing career problems and divorce or other relationship problems experienced by many world-level trusted servants, Bob McK., a member of the World Service Board of Trustees, agreed.

Trying to keep up with the ever-increasing workload has left very little time for members involved in world services to examine how services are being delivered or how to better communicate with the fellowship. "We just throw paper at them," said Dave T. "Our overgrown bureaucracy has substituted a deluge of detail for true communication," added Mary Kay B.

Though a detailed plan for actually carrying out an inventory has not yet been developed, members of world services are in agreement that planning is essential. "We've got to stop shooting from the hip," said Bob McK. He also expressed his hope that the inventory process would include looking at the process used to accomplish tasks, role definition for those who set policy and those who accom-

plish tasks, and the relationship between boards and committees at every level of service.

Members of world services expressed hope for the results of an inventory. The goals are to implement better planning, improve communication with the rest of the fellowship, and, as Dave T. put it, "the ultimate hope is to better serve the addict who still suffers."

WSC Development Forum

For the third year, the World Service Conference is focusing its energies on helping developing NA communities grow.

Originally called the International Development Forum, then renamed the Multinational Development Forum, this year's WSC Development Forum promises to be more inclusive of all developing NA communities.

"We're going to involve RSRs a lot more this year," said Becky M., World Service Board chairperson. "They'll be group facilitators, group spokespeople; our hope is to get them all involved so it's *their* development forum."

Funding discussions have already taken place, resulting in fifteen developing NA communities outside North America being invited to attend at WSC expense. The response to date indicates that all invited participants will be attending.

As the thinking in world services has become more global and inclusive, the agenda for the development forum has kept up. The early thinking had it that developing NA communities outside North America should be the focal point. But as NA evolves into a truly worldwide fellowship, agenda items are being selected that encompass the cultural diversity of Narcotics Anonymous as a whole. The tentative agenda includes discussions on how world services can support the growth and development of NA groups, outreach efforts, communication, funding concerns, and literature development and translation.

Small-group sessions will again take place. Participants in these sessions will discuss issues which are affecting groups or individuals in their local NA communities. A tentative list of topics has been compiled. These topics were culled from a list of questions submitted to RSRs in Cincinnati, the trustees, and other world-level trusted servants. "I asked them what affected NA where they lived," said Becky M. "The number one response was prejudice—not just racism, but all the kinds of rigid thinking we get into."

It is hoped that the WSC Development Forum will serve as an opportunity to address these issues and others like them. The emphasis is on discussion. After all, Becky noted, "it's what keeps us together as a worldwide fellowship."

Newsletters

From: *The Voice of NA Newsletter* • 1968

The NA Way Magazine • January 1984

Tradition One

*"Our common welfare should come first;
personal recovery depends on NA unity."*

Maintenance of recovery is based on a spiritual foundation whose main aspect is service to others. Haphazard methods can bring no lasting results. Lack of a unified group purpose for our common welfare could soon end in individual effort with self-seeking reward as its goal. Our experience and observations have pointed to this grave defect in the past. It is not our policy to try to ameliorate this condition by rules or regulations (we could not enforce them anyway) but to show the desirability of group effort and its healing influence through unity of purpose at both the personal and group levels. There is not the slightest indication in our policy of authoritarian control or a powerful hierarchy; we have no need of either. Knowing our type of personality, it might be feared that our society would become a form of anarchy. In anarchy, self-determination is license, not liberty. We know this destructive force from the past and all the problems it presents. In anarchy, there would be no real freedom and without freedom, no recovery. One is a foundation for the other. Responsibility as the corollary of freedom is the cohesive, constructive force that eliminates self-willed anarchy.

There are two aspects of our past that make a new approach imperative. They are stronger than any rule or law that we might lay down for ourselves.

1. The progressive, destructive pattern of an unmanageable life controlled by drugs.

2. The inability to form satisfactory relationships with other human beings which result in lasting happiness of any kind.

In setting ourselves to a common purpose and action, we are willing to submerge our own personal wishes and desires so that others may be given a better opportunity to recover. In practicing our personal programs, we become more aware of our impulsive and addictive nature. Through the living problems and difficulties we encounter, we realize the deep need to surrender to spiritual principles. Unseen principles are the root of our society, stronger than any visible power; our seen leadership rotates and is the servant of our fellowship. The invisible power is the real ruler of our actions.

If we do not alter or modify our thinking and actions in accord with these, we again face total destruction; here the decision is ours alone to make. When we honestly face this alternative, make our decision, and find a more desirable way of life, we realize that to keep what we have, we must share it by offering it to others.

Since no man can be truly free alone, but only in some kind of fellowship, group activity becomes a

necessity. Lone egocentric activity seldom, if ever, removes the bars that imprison us. We need something and somebody else to care about in order to find balance. Fellowship provides both. We inspire and are inspired by group efforts and common goals. Unity springs from and grows in this kind of action.

Spontaneity in freedom we should encourage at all levels in our society. Let what restrictions we ask of ourselves be in this spirit, guided by our individual and group conscience. We can withstand any pressures from without or within if we remain realistically flexible. Only in responsible freedom can we grow to maturity. Any rules or restrictions imposed by others will only limit our usefulness and bring about rigidity in our attitudes. This we should try to avoid for our common welfare.

Time and time again history has revealed mistakes and weaknesses, from which mankind as a whole has drawn few lasting lessons. If they have learned so little from the authoritarian organizations and governments that comprise their societies that they perpetuate their errors, then what, we might ask, are our chances for survival? Our answer is really simple: We are guided neither by their rules nor their goals. Our steps and traditions are a means to a different end.

Self-seeking, power-hungry, prestige-collecting, status-conscious, wealth-collecting hu-

manity has another side we have either seen or heard about. It is not as well publicized, perhaps, or as well thought of, but is always there between the lines of history.

When disaster strikes in its myriad forms, we will always find men and women who will, in the face of calamity and distress, give comfort, solace, and help to each other; they will give freely of whatever they have to each other. Recently, we saw this when tragedy, at the hands of an assassin, struck down a wealthy young presidential candidate. A Mexican-American porter cradled the bleeding head above the floor in his right hand; with his left, he gave a prized possession, his crucifix, to the dying Robert F. Kennedy. No rewards sought, no prestige hoped for. In the adjoining hall, people from all economic backgrounds, religious affiliations, and racial sources clasped each other's hands and exchanged tears of grief on each other's shoulders. Honest emotion, the remover of barriers, is a goal to be sought. We know this basic need for another human being from the depths of our own fear and isolation. Here is the area for our answers, not the weakness of one, but the strength of many acting according to their inherent nature, coming together in honest and decent emotion.

An old story of service and love for another is told regarding the starving beggar in China. This man crawled to the door of a crude hut where lived an old man and woman. In all the world, they had

only enough rice left for that day. The wife looked to the husband for an answer. He said, "If we give him our rice, we may die tomorrow." She replied, "If we don't, he may die today."

What are we willing to give or give up that will have meaning in life or living? Our pride of self in accomplishment? Our bias that says I'm different? Our closed mind that says mine is the right and only way? Are we willing to give others the right to their voice and opinion and see if experience proves them one way or another?

Are we willing to try new ideas wholeheartedly? Are we willing to apply to others and the group the same tolerance and patience we show ourselves when we fall short of our personal ideals? Are we willing to do in concerted effort what we cannot do alone? When things do not go well, do we scatter to lick our wounds and nurse our grudges, or can we pick up the pieces and with more understanding build in a better way?

We are neither saints nor geniuses, but if we pool those talents we all do possess, great and small, we can change the course of our history and the lives of many we have yet to meet.

Without a dream, a man is only half a man; without a vision, a fellowship is a farce; with both, all things are possible.

Anonymous

Viewpoint

From: *The NA Way Magazine* • January 1988

Viewpoint: fellowship behavior at conventions

The following article was written by a member of the board of directors of the World Convention Corporation for Narcotics Anonymous at the request of The NA Way.

There has been a growing concern about the behavior of individuals in the fellowship at conventions. Recently NA has grown to the point where almost all regions are having conventions to celebrate their recovery. This has resulted in problems when members have shown more concern for their own freedom to act as they please than for the unity of our fellowship.

Experience has shown us that when the profile of the convention committee is lax and nonconfrontive of the membership, more incidents occur than if a stricter posture is maintained.

The question has been raised when discussing this issue: "How can we confront a member? Wouldn't that be standing in judgment of another member?" This question presents the issue that is the basis of the problem. Convention committees must be prepared to ask them-

selves, "When is it appropriate to hold a member accountable for affecting NA as a whole?"

Our experience in working with conventions indicates that the actions of one member can affect NA as a whole. This can be seen when, because of damage we have done, we are asked to not come back to a hotel, or not use an entire hotel chain.

The NA message becomes blocked when we can no longer have a convention in a certain city or when hotels are unwilling to negotiate with us. Addicts who might otherwise have found recovery at a particular convention or workshop are robbed of this opportunity. Based on this concern, we have encouraged convention committees to maintain a high profile in confronting members who act inappropriately, deface hotel property, or in any other way blatantly disregard our traditions. In conjunction with this, it is strongly suggested that conventions issue a statement within their printed program explaining the need for appropriate behavior.

Looking at this from the perspective of an NA member, there are several concerns. One is the question, is a convention really NA? And if it is not (if it is called a convention for NA rather than of NA), then some members feel our actions will not reflect back on the NA program. There may be

philosophical disagreement on this point, but one thing is certain: A hotel executive would definitely attribute the vandalism of a hotel hallway to NA if it occurred the weekend that one of our conventions was held in the hotel.

That simple reality speaks much louder than any philosophical position one may take about it. For example, let's say an NA member draws the NA logo with spray paint in a hotel hallway. The hotel presents the convention committee with a bill for the damages to their property. The committee could argue from the philosophical position that this member is not a representative of NA or that the committee is not responsible for the member's actions because the convention is for NA, not of NA.

What would you say the truth is? Do we use a "philosophical" position to deny responsibility, or do we admit that we owe the hotel for the damages caused by the individual member?

Picture this scenario as if you were the convention committee representative: The hotel convention services representative walks into the banquet meeting and asks if he could talk to you outside. Outside he informs you that there has been some damage discovered on the fifth floor of the hotel; he wants you to go and look at it with him.

Upon exiting the elevator on the fifth floor, you look down the hallway and see the NA logo spray-painted on the wall. Ask yourself at this point, "Is NA responsible for this?" My spiritual principles tell me that we owe the hotel an amend for the damage caused by that member and that for me to try to convince the hotel representative otherwise would be dishonest and irresponsible. This arises out of my personal commitment to recovery.

The technicalities of whether or not we owe an amend is one consideration. The other is that the program I love and that has saved my life has been reduced to a spray-painted logo on a hotel wall. This is the simple truth: We as members of NA reflect the message of our recovery and truly express the working of a Higher Power by the way we live in this world.

So what will be your response to the hotel representative? Will you look up and say to him, "This is not NA," or will you amend the wrong?

As members of NA we must consider our actions as they directly affect our fellowship. Are they the reflection of our Higher Power? Of course, we are all in different stages of reflecting our Higher Power in our everyday actions, and we all require assistance and guidance on the road to estab-

lishing that conscious contact.

As a member attending a convention, if you see someone acting inappropriately, you must be responsible to your fellow member and take the time to talk to him about it. We are all connected as members of this fellowship, regardless of our disapproval of another's behavior. Don't wait for the convention committee to act on these problems. This is your program that is being displayed, not just the convention committee's.

A celebration of recovery has great power in carrying our message to the addict who still suffers. We hope all addicts receive the best message possible when attending a convention. We hope to make that message obvious, too, to those hotel staff members who come in contact with our fellowship.

Depending on what the public sees displayed in the message we carry, all individuals may some day come to know that no addict need die from addiction, that there is a place and a way to recover. Let us never do anything to obscure the fact that the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous is that place and that way.

Comin' up



CALIFORNIA: Apr. 9-11, 1993; 2nd Annual Southern California Spring Gathering; Radisson Plaza Hotel and Golf Course, 1400 Parkview Avenue, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266; rsvn.s (800) 333-3333; info (714) 635-2805; SC Spring Gathering, PO Box 2017, Huntington Beach, CA 92647

2) Apr. 15-18, 1993; 15th Northern California Regional Convention; "Out of the Fog"; Civic Center, 99 Grove Street, San Francisco 94102; Host Hotel, Cathedral Harold Hotel; rsvn.s California only (800) 622-0855 or Continental US (800) 227-4730; NCCNA XV, 6116 Merced Avenue, Box 142, Oakland, CA 94611

3) Apr. 24-May 1, 1993; World Service Conference annual meeting; AirTel Plaza Hotel, Sherman Way and Valjean, Van Nuys; info (818) 780-3951; WSC, PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409

CONNECTICUT: Apr. 2-4, 1993; Connecticut River Valley Twelve Step Retreat; "Became Willing VII"; A closed retreat for members only, sponsored by Powerless, Clean, and Serene, Miracles on Main St., Saturday Night Sanity NA Groups; Ivoryton, CT; info (203) 347-3324; Retreat, PO Box 1056, Middletown, CT 06457-1056

FLORIDA: Mar. 26-28, 1993; 4th Annual Florida Spring Service Break Conference; hosted by the South Florida Region; Eden Roc, 4525 Collins Avenue Miami Beach, FL 33140; rsvn.s (305) 531-0000; info (305) 437-1892; FSSBNA IV, 10668 SW 76th Terrace, Miami, FL 33173

4) Jul. 1-5, 1993; 12th Annual Florida Regional Convention; "A Spiritual Awakening"; Grenelefe Resort, Haines City, FL; rsvn.s (800) 422-5333; info (407) 897-2003 (RSO); Speakers needed, (5 years clean time) send tapes by March 31, 1993; FRSO, 709 Brookhaven Drive, Suite 3, Orlando, FL 32803

GEORGIA: Mar. 18-21, 1993; 12th Annual Georgia Regional Convention; Radisson Hotel, Augusta, Ga; info (404) 382-5657; rsvn.s (706) 722-8900

HAWAII: Mar. 26-28, 1993; 9th Annual Gathering of the Fellowship on Oahu; Camp Mokuleia, North Shore, Oahu, HI; info (808) 947-0828; Oahu Gathering, PO Box 75271, Honolulu, HI 96836

IDAHO: Apr. 2-4, 1993; 4th Annual Southern Idaho Regional Convention; "Surrender: The Gateway to Recovery"; Howard Johnson Hotel, 1399 Bench Road, Pocatello, ID 83201; info (208) 233-0965; SRVNA, PO Box 4342, Pocatello, ID 83201

KANSAS: Apr. 2-4, 1993; 10th Mid-America Regional Convention; Red Coach Inn, I-135 & US-56, McPherson, KS; MARCNA-10, PO Box 208, Emporia, KS 66801-0208

KENTUCKY: Apr. 9-11, 1993; 7th Kentucky Regional Convention; Executive Inn, 600 Walnut Street, Evansville, Indiana 47708; info (502) 827-0476; rsvn.s (800) 457-3841

MARYLAND: Apr. 2-4, 1993; 7th Chesapeake & Potomac Regional Convention; Ocean City Convention Center, Ocean City, Maryland; info (301) 890-8187; CPRCNA VII, PO Box 472, Burtonsville, MD 20866

NEW YORK: Apr. 16-18, 1993; Greater New York Regional Convention Freedom Eight; Concord Resort Hotel, Kiamesha Lake, NY 12751; info (718) 638-2866 or (718) 398-0012

OHIO: Apr. 2-4, 1993; 3rd Annual Buckeye Multi Regional Learning Conference; Beachwood Holiday Inn; Beachwood, OH; rsvn.s (216) 831-3300; Convention, PO Box 35348, Cleveland, OH 44135

OKLAHOMA: Mar. 26-28, 1993; 7th Oklahoma Regional Convention; "The Light of Recovery"; Grand Lake, Afton, OK; OKRSO, PO Box 52465, Tulsa, OK 74152

QUEBEC: Apr. 9-11, 1993; 1st Northeast Quebec Regional Convention; Quebec City; RSC Le Nordet du Quebec, CP 1412, Terminus Quebec, Quebec, QC G1K 7G7

TEXAS: Apr. 9-11, 1993; LSRCNA VIII; Hyatt-Regency, Town Lake, Austin; LSRCNA VIII, PO Box 19444, Austin, TX 78760

Slugg Mugg

Slugg's charming visage first thing in the morning? Absolutely! Or, you can choose the NA Way mug which has *The NA Way Magazine* nameplate embossed in white on a black background. These new NA Way products are now available from WSO. The mugs sell for \$5 each and are intended to boost fellowship awareness of *The NA Way Magazine*.



To order, specify the mug you want and enclose a check or money for \$5 per mug plus shipping and handling.

Shipping fee \$.01—\$25.00 add \$2.50, \$25.01—\$50.00 add \$3.50, \$50.01—\$150.00 add 8%, \$150.01—\$500.00 add 7%, \$500.00—and up add 6%. California orders include 8.25% sales tax.

Slugg Mugg _____ @ \$5.00 = \$ _____
 QUANTITY TOTAL \$

NA Way Mug _____ @ \$5.00 = \$ _____
 QUANTITY TOTAL \$

Calif. Residents add 8.25% sales tax \$ _____
 Shipping and Handling (see schedule) \$ _____

TOTAL _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State, Province, or Country: _____

Postal Code: _____

Look for more NA Way products in the future. A "Home Group" calendar is being designed and should be available by April 1993.

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

What is Narcotics Anonymous?

NA is a nonprofit 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 NA way