

My Gratitude Speaks...
When I Care
and When I Share
with Others
The NA Way

THE NA Way[®]

MAGAZINE

January 1996 \$1.75 US \$2.50 Canadian

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.



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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THE NA Way MAGAZINE®

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

The NA 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 NA Way Magazine*, or World Service Office, Inc.

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From the editor



Too much hope?

"Get down to the nitty-gritty!"

"I need some good old blood and guts recovery."

"Isn't anyone ever in pain?"

"Would you please print some real stories about people who are suffering?"

These are some of the comments I've gotten lately about the content of the magazine, some from former subscribers who have chosen not to re-up for another year. But enough from current subscribers to make me feel compelled to respond in print.

I must say that I took it personally at first, and started racking my brains to think of how I could get some really miserable people to write for the magazine.

But then I realized something that should have been obvious. No one can share about something they've gone through in recovery—no matter how painful or insane—*without imparting a sense of hope.*

Every bit of sharing I've ever heard in a meeting and every manuscript submission I've ever received at the magazine supports this theory. And the reason why is simple: the people who are sharing their pain are still in recovery, back in recovery, or recommitted to recovery. We've printed plenty of stories

from people in pain, but we've never yet printed a story from someone who had lost all hope and decided to go relapse, stopping on the way to the connection's to drop a manuscript in the mail to us. We've never yet printed a story from someone who relapsed, but didn't make it back and so posted their manuscript from the Great Beyond.

There is always hope. Not only are we a society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem, we are a society of eternal optimists. Some part of us knows that it's our job as recovering addicts to find the silver lining in every dark cloud, extract it, and make sure that those who come after us can see it, too.

And a happy new year!

We have some great features planned for 1996. You can look forward to "Addicts Online," a story about and for all you net-surfers out there.

I'd like to thank all those who volunteered to be interviewed for a feature we're working on about NA members with a dual diagnosis. The story will appear within the next few months.

In addition, the World Service Board of Trustees is planning to de-

velop several new fellowship bulletins. As soon as they are approved, we'll print them in the magazine. The topics include: "non-alcoholic" beverages, the use of psychotropic drugs in recovery, violence and other inappropriate behavior at meetings and other fellowship events. Issues such as these have troubled the fellowship for years, and the trustees are hoping that by compiling into bulletins the experience and wisdom of the fellowship in dealing with these issues, NA communities worldwide will benefit from having access to this shared experience.

And one for our wish list: Anybody got a funnybone out there? We've had a few pleas for comic relief from our readers, and well, the staff of *The NA Way* could use a good laugh, too. We like multiple-choice tests, parodies of NA literature, and sneaky, sly "how-to" types of articles. Hint: NA conventions are an inexhaustible source of hilarious subject matter.

A reminder about "Comin' Up"

The NA Way is happy to run announcements for your upcoming NA events.

We must have a minimum of two-and-a-half-months notice in order to print your event announcement in the monthly issue of the magazine that corresponds with your event. In other words, if your event is in June, we need to know about it by 15 March in order to get it into the June issue of *The NA Way*.

If you want your event to run in more than one issue, we need even more notice. We do our absolute best to run the information as far in ad-

vance as possible. Your best bet is to let us know about your event as soon as you've set the dates for it, booked a location, and established contact phone numbers and/or an address. It's never too early to let us know. Send to:

The NA Way Magazine

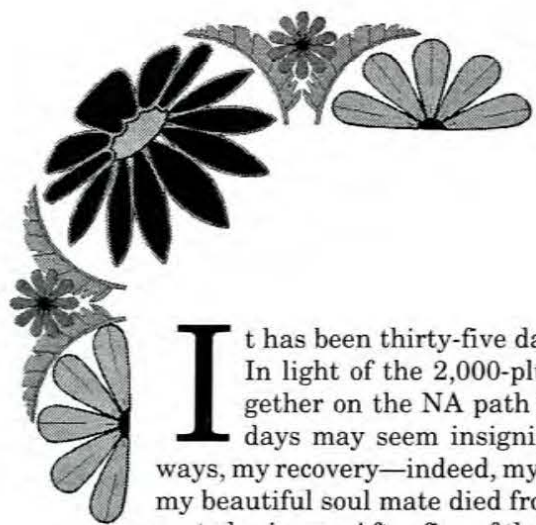
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As always, I look forward to hearing from our readers any time. You can reach me at (818) 773-9999.

CT, Editor

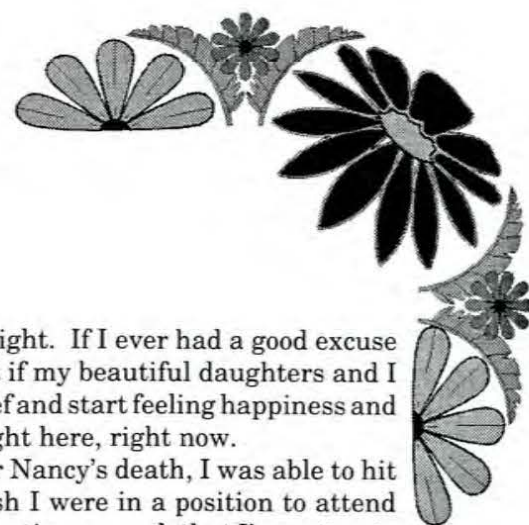


It has been thirty-five days since my wife died. In light of the 2,000-plus days I've actually put together on the NA path since 1988, these thirty-five days may seem insignificant to you. But in many ways, my recovery—indeed, my entire life started over when my beautiful soul mate died from complications of an unexpected seizure. After five of the most wonderful years of my life, my "NA storybook" marriage was over.

For the first 365 days of my recovery, I completed what I thought was an obligatory one-year abstinence from relationships. (I hadn't yet come to understand that having a desire to stop using is truly the only requirement for membership in NA.) Soon thereafter, I had the privilege of attending the NA World Service Office annual picnic, where one of our most endearing special workers, Dottie R, introduced me to her daughter, Nancy. Six months later, Nancy and I got married. When our first child, Chelsea, was born later that year, she was unofficially dubbed "the WSO baby."

A year or so later, we moved from California to Tennessee, where we immediately hooked into the local fellowship and soon expanded our family to include a second daughter, Brianna. Although I'm the only addict in my family, we've all come to know dozens of Nashville area NA members by first name, and the spiritual principles of this program are woven through the very fabric of our household.

I know without a doubt that these principles, along with the grace of my loving God, are sufficient to keep me recov-



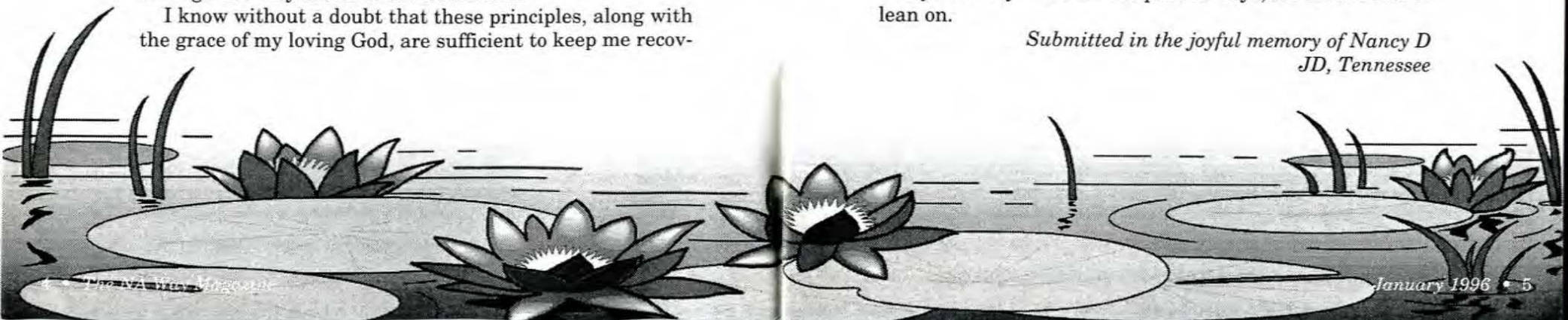
ering until I go to sleep tonight. If I ever had a good excuse to use, now's the time. But if my beautiful daughters and I are going to get past our grief and start feeling happiness and joy again, it has to start right here, right now.

The first week or so after Nancy's death, I was able to hit a meeting every day. I wish I were in a position to attend more than the one or two meetings a week that I've gotten to since that first week, but my baby girls have gone through such tremendous separation anxiety (Brianna was still nursing at the time of my wife's death) that I haven't been comfortable leaving them with a babysitter all day and then leaving them all evening, too, while I go to a meeting. Hence, I've been relegated to attending an evening meeting every Saturday night, and picking up a noon meeting here or there.

Nonetheless, I'm confident to the point of certainty that, by maintaining a regimen of daily spiritual activities (mostly prayer and meditation), staying in daily contact with other recovering addicts, and talking to my sponsor (or at least his voice mail) every day, I'll continue to recover one day at a time. As long as I keep seeking knowledge of God's will for me and the power to carry that out, I know without a doubt that I have a one-hundred percent chance of making it until bedtime tonight without picking up.

For more than 2,000 days now, that's been the bottom line in my recovery. And for the past 35 days, it's all I've had to lean on.

*Submitted in the joyful memory of Nancy D
JD, Tennessee*



The love that remains

I am in Daytona at my parents' house. I was prompted to visit because my father is ill. My father is eighty-two, and I suspect he's an addict. Still, I wasn't prepared for the hundred-and-twenty-pound, caved-in skeleton that awaited me. My dad's normal weight is two hundred pounds. He's dying of lung cancer and emphysema. He quit smoking thirty years ago.

Shock! Fear! My father and I have never communicated very well or very much (except when we were using together). In fact, we spent a lot of time and energy in not understanding or loving one another. I've been clean for a couple of years now and I still avoid confrontations and unpleasantness. I didn't want to visit my sick parent. I didn't want to deal with it.

I moved through those feelings and showed up for life. Like I said before, when I saw my father, I came completely unglued. We have never been a huggy, touchy type of family. But because of the program, I was able to walk through my apprehension. And you know what!? When I moved through the fear, the love remained.

Then my feelings started rolling. They were overwhelming. They kept coming and coming, tumbling over each other. I couldn't even name them. I found a meeting. It was in a large rehabilitation center. I didn't know anyone. They opened the meeting by asking, "Does anyone have a problem?" I cried and wailed and pounded on the table. I shared my anger, fear, resentment, and my love. I found that my love and my hate were almost interchangeable. I let people help me and hold me. They shared their experience with me. They told me it's okay to love and hate at the same time. It's okay to feel.

That was all good and wonderful, but it didn't stop the feelings. I did what I was supposed to do and still it didn't stop. I couldn't stand it. I went to a liquor store. I stood there and I thought, "Well, this would push Mom right over the edge. Maybe I should wait." I didn't use that night.

The next day I had a terrible time getting myself to the hospital to see my dad. I kept crying and going back to bed. I finally got to the hospital. I didn't last long. I was pretty freaked out. I sat with him, held him, and this thought just came rolling in of its own accord: "I wish he'd die now."

Bamm! I was slammed with guilt and shame. I went outside and shared it immediately with someone. She said, "When you see your cat suffering and dying, you put it to sleep. It's the kind thing to do, but we can't do it with people. What you thought and what you're feeling is perfectly normal." I am so glad I shared that.

I had gotten some phone numbers the night before. I called the women and met them at a meeting. I cried and shared again, but this time the anger and resentment were gone. My attitude started to change. People told me how they were using or just not there when loved ones had died. How bad they felt about lost opportunity. I began to see this thing as a gift. I began to feel my father's love for me. I began to forgive him, myself, and bad circumstances.

Before, I was never sure if my dad even liked me, but I knew then that he loved me. With this change of attitude came a tolerance and understanding of my family's behavior. We all have our roles that we've been playing since Day One.

My mom was at me, as usual, but I wasn't participating. I was reacting on the inside, but not on the outside. After a while, things got smoother and we began pulling together as a unit. We bonded. We needed each other.

I've been here five days now. I have a network here. I even found a group that meets three times a week. I'm using the phone. Things don't seem so bad now. I'm enjoying my father and my family, and I feel like I have some strength to offer. I met a lady who just found out that her son is dying. She was freaked. I shared with her. I held a girl who had relapsed. I let her cry on me. Another woman came up to me after the meeting and said, "I saw you at the hospital a few days ago. I was worried about you. You seem like a different person now."

I am. I haven't gone into denial. I know that my father is dying. He held my hand and told me so, but he also said that it's all right. I found out that there is love here, lots of it. I guess we didn't know, or were afraid of it, or maybe of being rejected. I have a newfound love and respect for the rest of my family and myself.

I'm far from all right with this death thing, but the fact is, my father is going to die whether I accept it or not. We made our amends to each other and it wasn't with a lot of words. It was with holding and eye contact and lots of tears. I felt a lot of peace and hope.

Now, when he does die, my mourning will not be poisoned with guilt. I won't be left with a bunch of loose ends and unsettled feelings. I may not see him alive or coherent again. I hope I will, but if I don't it will be okay. I feel honored to be his daughter and to have been allowed this time with him.

NA has given me this new understanding, and NA is the only place I've ever been where I could reach out and know with absolute certainty that you would reach out to meet me.

PL, Maryland

Death, life, and trust in God

Last April I celebrated five years in NA. This was the most unbelievable celebration in my life, and I want to share it with you.

My clean date was 22 April. I was eight-and-a-half months pregnant. Needless to say, I was emotional.

About halfway through the day, we were notified that my husband's grandfather had died. It was no longer my day. My husband's grief took precedence and we made arrangements for him to go to Ohio for the funeral. I couldn't travel, and that saddened both of us. It was a tough decision. I wanted to be by his side to support him through this, but we both knew that I couldn't. It was too close to my due date to take a chance like that. It had been a high-risk pregnancy, and the risks had not been eliminated. So the next day he left. He returned the following Tuesday.

Let me back up for a minute. Prior to my clean date, I found myself without a home group to celebrate with. I had a number of possibilities. The group that I chose was the home

group of someone who was celebrating his first year. He had invited me to join in his celebration, and his home group welcomed me. We had a plan . . .

As I said, my husband came home on Tuesday. Wednesday he wanted to take me out to dinner. First, I had to hang out the clothes to dry. While doing so, I experienced a heart palpitation that later registered 200 (normal is about 80-100 they told me). Before I knew what was happening, I was in an ambulance going to a naval hospital in another city.

Were we going to have our baby early? Would he be healthy? Gosh, I can't begin to tell you what was going on with me, the fears I had. The last thing on my mind was my birthday celebration.

The next day we had a son, a tiny miracle. He was healthy for the most part, but there was still some concern. He didn't go to the nursery like other babies; he went to the neonatal intensive care unit. I went to recuperate, and I wasn't allowed to see him for two days. When I did manage to make it to NICU, I wasn't prepared for what I saw: this little tiny person hooked up to so many tubes and cords. I felt like the breath was being sucked out of me every time I saw him.

I had some complications myself that delayed my getting around and out of the hospital. I was to be released on Monday, the night I was supposed to celebrate my birthday. As God would have it, that was the day my son was released from NICU and allowed to room with me. It was a magnificent day for all three of us.

They decided to keep me in the hospital one more day. That night when I was alone, I thought about the meeting going on without me. I was sad. The next day, my husband came to take us home. He told me all about the meeting. The celebration of recovery took place in my absence, and there was an empty chair designated for me. I was touched in a way I had never experienced before. You people amaze me; NA amazes me; God's will amazes me.

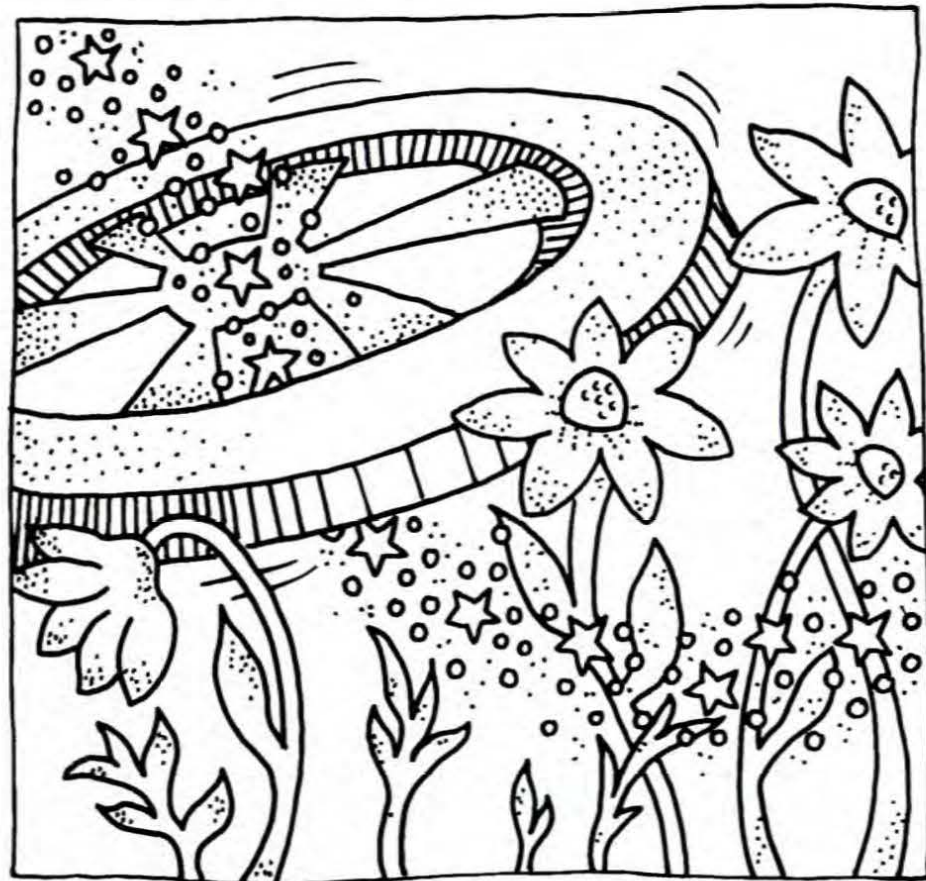
After my release from the hospital, I walked into our house full of balloons, gifts, and cards passed

around in my honor. I was so full of joy and felt so much love.

I learned how powerful God is in my life and in the lives of those around me. Our emotions were rocked by an ended life and a new life in one week, as well as a celebration of recovery.

And all I need to do to be okay is trust that God is in control and can handle things just fine without my interference. My sixth birthday celebration is a ways off yet, but it's going to be interesting to see what God has in store for me this year.

Anonymous, Virginia



Committed

Today I truly feel a part of the miracle of NA. By the grace of my Higher Power and NA, I'm celebrating two years of continuous clean time. Two years might not impress some of you, but it impresses the hell out of me.

I've worked very hard on my recovery. The gifts I have received are many: peace of mind, spirituality, love for myself and others. Also, an opportunity to work with other addicts through the NA service structure.

Service is a big part of my recovery. I have learned a lot about myself through service commitments. Service has given me a chance to work on my defects and shortcomings. It's not always easy to work with different personalities. Patience, tolerance, acceptance, and my own control issues come into play.

Webster's New World Dictionary defines "commitment" as: "to bind, as by a promise or pledge." Commitments for me before recovery were things that were made to be broken. Broken promises, broken hearts, broken trust, and broken self-esteem. Today, however, commitment means for me to fulfill, to grow as a person, take responsibility, prioritize, and be of service.

By committing myself to a service position and fulfilling that commitment to the very end of the term, I'm learning to be an active, responsible member of NA, to contribute to the unity that NA depends on.

And today, I can also be depended on. Not only in NA service, but in all areas of my life. Work, friends, family, creditors—that's a good one—and, yes, even my fiancée can depend on me. It's truly a miracle, the changes in my life. By staying clean one day at a time, working the steps, praying for guidance, and staying in service, my Higher Power has given me the gift of recovery.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve and grow as a productive human being, in and out of these rooms of NA. Let us not forget our primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. Stay committed to your service position and let us grow together. Thank you, NA.

JO, California

Growing up

God has granted me a teacher whose lessons have been like a mirror in my life. Ian is my nine-month-old son. He's at that wobbly stage of crawling and beginning to walk. It may sound pretty typical for you, but not for me.

The other day he was walking and took a fall. As a parent, I wanted to go to him and comfort him. Instead I knew I needed to urge him to get back up on his own and start again. His cries were of defeat and fear. He looked to me for protection. I held him close. I whispered to him, "I know it's scary growing up, but once you fall, you just pick yourself up again and keep going. I promise it gets easier." At that moment, the lesson was clear to me.



So many times in my recovery, I've been an infant falling down and had to pick myself up again. I appreciate that my words of wisdom, if you will, were from my own experience. I am sure he understood, because once the tears were dried, he was right back at it with much effort.

I never realized the impact my own experience would have on my parenting abilities. I've grown so much in recovery. Ian is my living proof that miracles happen and dreams come true. I empathize with his fears and doubts.

It wasn't long ago that I lived with overwhelming fear and what seemed like irreparable self-doubt. Through working the Twelve Steps with a sponsor, believing in a Power greater than myself, and living—not just working—the program in my life, I've grown up. I've taken those first steps as a newcomer, but I had to crawl first. I crawled into Narcotics Anonymous and surrendered. I admitted that I didn't know how to do this on my own and that I needed help.

For my first six months, I crawled from one meeting to another and learned how to live without using. When a good friend of mine killed herself, and I stayed clean through it, I realized I was ready to walk. My first step was to get a sponsor in NA.

I made a commitment to Narcotics Anonymous, just like I had made a commitment to active addiction. This meant I had to go to any lengths to stay clean. I accepted that I was powerless over my addiction as stated in the First Step, and that

encompassed anything and everything my disease thrived on.

It was at that point that I became a toddler in the program. I spent many years falling down. I was bruised and scratched up a bit. This time it was not from any abuse done by myself or another. It was all in learning the lessons of life. I have been blessed with a few beautiful, loving sponsors since I've been around. And you know, not one of them picked me up when I fell. There were times when I wished they would. I wanted them to give me the answers. They loved me enough to allow me to pick myself up and learn on my own. In the end, they were there to celebrate my growth and share with me how proud they were of me. Many heartfelt thanks go to them for permitting me to grow.

I consider myself pretty lucky because I had good teachers—the best. I look at my son and question my ability, wonder if I can do such a job. My answers come when I look into that innocent face and take in all the love that he offers me unconditionally.

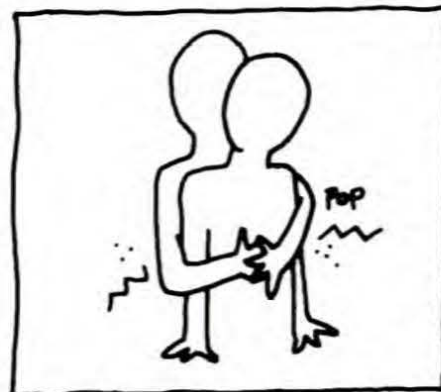
LS, Virginia

A Guide to Hugs in Narcotics Anonymous

There exist around NA many different types of hugs. Below are helpful descriptions that should give both newcomers and old-timers one of the most helpful guides ever published. Included in the descriptions are suggestions for use, warnings, and possible side effects

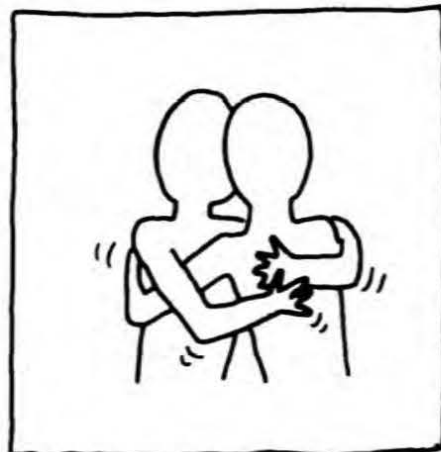
THE WINDMILL

Approach with one arm stretched out to the side, the other up in the air, switching arm positions as often as necessary until both people participating have the same arms in the neck-hugging position at the same time.



THE CHIROPRACTOR

Hug the other person as hard as you can, increasing pressure until you begin to hear popping noises coming from the spinal area. If you always hug this way, people with back injuries will begin saying, "Be careful of my back!" and cringing as you approach.



THE MACHO

Despite its name, this hug is not restricted solely to the male gender. It is performed by two people who seem to be trying to find out who can thump the other's back harder while hugging. This hug should be avoided during sunburn season.

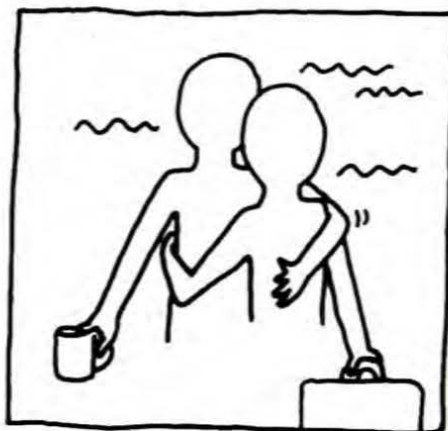
THE MOMMY

As its name implies, this hug is most commonly dispensed by mommies; however, we have seen even hardened, calloused, former back-thumpers engaging in this hug. (Just don't tell them we told you!) Gently pat the other person on the back while hugging. Warning: Occasionally, the addict being hugged this way will burp in your ear.



LEAP & HUG

Take off into the air from three feet away and wrap most of your body around someone's neck. This hug is usually reserved for someone you are really happy to see. Suggestion: Let the other person see you coming before leaping in order to assure having a body in position to hug when you land.



THE ONE-ARMED SERVICE HUG

This one is common to GSRs, group secretaries, and other service junkies who are usually lugging a briefcase in one hand and a cup of coffee in the other. Warning: This can be dangerous if the cup of coffee is as hot as NA coffee usually is. It is best to let your targets empty their hands before hugging.



THE UNWILLING

Stand perfectly still with your arms at your sides while allowing the other person to hug you. This hug is often performed by newcomers who are *really* in pain, usually right before they surrender. Keep coming back, it gets easier.

THE "ARE YOU WEARING A BRA?"

HUG

The hugger rubs his hands up and down the huggee's back, usually a bit longer than the huggee is entirely comfortable with.

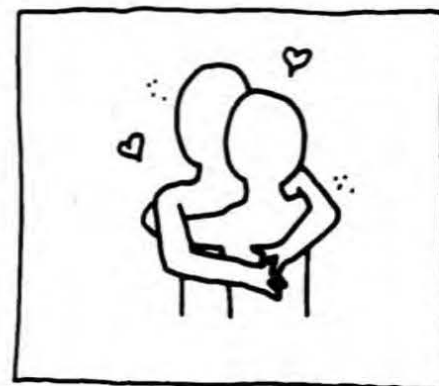


"I LOVE YOU BUT . . ."

Approach slowly and rather reluctantly. Hug with the arms and shoulder area only, carefully keeping the pelvis at least a foot away from the other person. Break away as quickly as possible.

THE "I WANT TO LOVE YOU" HUG

A full-body extension of "Are You Wearing A Bra?" Dispensers of this hug will often find their targets responding with the "I Love You But..." hug.



A SIMPLE, LOVING HUG

This is the only hug described in our Basic Text, so it's highly recommended. Hold each other for a moment gently but firmly, thus expressing the love you feel for each other as addicts; no posturing, patting, slapping, or rubbing, just hugging. This one makes all the difference.

Anonymous

WORDSEARCH

Hidden below are titles of NA's literature and publications. Words appear diagonally, horizontally, and vertically, both backwards and forwards. See how many you can find. Answers appear on page 27.

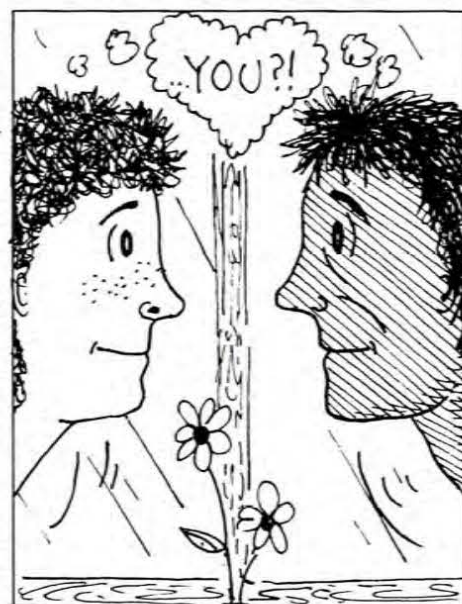
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AM I AN ADDICT
ANOTHER LOOK
BASIC TEXT
BEHIND THE WALLS
CONFERENCE DIGEST
CONFERENCE REPORT
FOR THE NEWCOMER
FOR THOSE IN TREATMENT
H&I AND THE NA MEMBER

H&I TIME ILLNESS
IT WORK: HOW ANDHY
JUST FOR TODAY
LIVING THE PROGRAM
MEETING BY MAIL
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RECOVERY AND RELAPSE

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Home Group



Group Services Corner

Each month *The NA Way Magazine* brings it subscribers the shared recovery of members around the world, a thought-provoking viewpoint section, and a variety of other features. It also happens that each month, the World Service Office gets dozens of letters from groups, individuals, area service committees, and subcommittees. Well, it got us thinking . . . there's tremendous interest out there about issues that concern members and groups—maybe there's some way we at *The NA Way* can spread this information around and solicit our readers' experience as well.

So here's our effort—a new column. We hope you enjoy it.

In a dilemma

Hi. My name is LW, and I'm an addict.

I'm writing because we are a new area. Okay, half the area is saying that the dilemma statement isn't world-approved, so can you please send us the answer to our problem?

Thanks,
LW, Illinois

Dear LW,

This is in response to your letter regarding the "dilemma statement." The only thing we can possibly think of that would be called the dilemma statement would be: "When at the end of the road we find that we can no longer function as a human being, either with or without drugs, we all face the same dilemma. What is there left to do? There seems to be this alternative: either go on as best we can to the bitter ends—jails, institutions, or death—or find a new way to live. In years gone by, very few addicts ever had this last choice. Those who are addicted today are more fortunate. For the first time in history, a simple way has been proving itself in the lives of many addicts. It is available to us all. This is a simple spiritual—not religious—program, known as Narcotics Anonymous."

This quote appears in two places in NA's literature. First, it is in the Basic Text on page 84, and it is also in the White Booklet under the heading, "We Do Recover." Both of these sources are fellowship-approved literature, and can be read from at any Narcotics Anonymous function.

Groups worldwide use a variety of quotes from fellowship-approved literature. This is one way in which a group gives a sort of signature to its meeting. The quote chosen is the one that the groups feels expresses its group conscience.

We hope this information is helpful, and if we can be of further service, please contact us.

Newsletters



Got your number

From the *Bronx NA Connection*, the Bronx, New York, area newsletter:

Newcomers are vulnerable creatures when they walk through the doors of their first Narcotics Anonymous meeting. They are very frequently told, "If you don't believe what you hear, at least believe what you see."

If I was a newcomer today, I'm not sure that what I see would keep me here. What is being displayed visually and verbally is what I call misinformation. We have to be very careful about small changes that are happening that actually stunt the growth of a newcomer.

For example, we tell the newcomer to make ninety meetings in ninety days and to get a phone number at each meeting. In theory, after ninety days, the newcomer will have ninety new friends. Well, in our zeal-

ousness to keep newcomers, we may be stunting their development process when one of us takes a meeting list and passes it around for everyone to write his or her name and phone number.

What happens is that the newcomer doesn't work on his or her own, and can't remember ten new faces and names anyway. It's harder to make a phone call when the number you're calling is just a name, not attached to a face belonging to someone with whom you've spoken. I have yet to receive a phone call from anyone who was calling my number from such a list.

When I came into the rooms of NA seven years ago, getting phone numbers was *my* job. When I came to a meeting, I had work to do. I was afraid, but I sat in the meeting and listened to the speaker and people sharing. When I identified with someone, I targeted that person for a talk after the meeting. That's when I got my phone numbers.

Then, at home later, confronted with a list of phone numbers, I had three ways of remembering who so-and-so was. I had heard the name (maybe twice). I had seen the face. I identified with the sharing. I would think, this person might become my sponsor or at least a friend.

There is inherent therapy in the action of asking for a phone number. It helps the newcomer and the old-timer, too. So please! Let's not take that away. We have to allow newcomers to make a commitment to help themselves. We can guide, but we cannot do it for them.

Anonymous

Living my dream

From *The Recoverer*, the Washington/Southern Idaho regional newsletter:

As far back as I can remember, I felt different. I was too tall, too skinny, too shy, and well, just too weird. I never knew what to say, how to act, or what to wear. I never, ever felt like I fit in anywhere.

If someone asked me to pick out a record to play, I froze. What if I picked the wrong band, the uncool band? I didn't even know what kind of music I liked, much less what would please a crowd. And I so desperately wanted to please the crowd. All I wanted in life, or so I thought, was to be liked, to be pretty, popular, bouncy, and full of smiles. But I was not. I was quiet, walked with my head down, and frowned most of the time. A good book was much more exciting to me than a football game.

The thought of speaking to a group of people, even a small group, terrified me.

So I continued to withdraw, and wither, and lose myself more and more in the confusion and darkness of self-hatred, worthlessness, depression, and fear. Those were my constant companions; without them, I would have been utterly alone.

Then I found drugs, and I wasn't alone anymore. All I had to do was use, and I was suddenly accepted. I embraced the hippie movement like it was God. I thought I had found the answer, and then the answer faded, lost popularity, and was gone. And I was all alone. But I still had self-hatred, worthlessness, depression, fear, and now, lots of drugs.

I worked at my dream and soon became successful, at least outwardly. I had always wanted to be a horse trainer, and I had built up my business to be one of the largest in the country. I was praised for my work with the handicapped, and appeared on the front page of every local newspaper. I had two lovely daughters, was active in 4-H, and supposedly "had it all." But behind closed doors, things were different. I drank heavily, used other drugs when I could sneak away from my husband, and hated myself more each day.

Then the bottom fell out. I lost my marriage, my business, my home, my community respect, all my personal belongings, and finally, my two sweet, innocent daughters. My babies! Gone! I couldn't believe it; they were gone. And my self-hatred and sense of worthlessness were now

well-founded. I had failed at everything. I was a hopeless dope fiend, lost for good, doomed to die on the streets like a rat. Or so I thought.

Several horrible years later, after wandering on the streets, in and out of jails and institutions, watching my friends die from overdoses and violence, I was court-ordered to treatment and NA. It was rocky at first, and I spent the first eighteen months relapsing, but today I can gratefully say that I have four-and-a-half years of joyous and continuous clean time.

This is a program of paradoxes, and I am continually amazed at the humor therein. Only when I had reached rock bottom, admitting total powerlessness, could I obtain true power. When I finally admitted that I was alone and afraid, I became surrounded with friends and courage. When I agreed that I was insane and lacking in any spirituality, I began to recover, to think clearly, and to fill the giant hole within.

All through my addiction I was afraid of people. I isolated and ran and hid. The program told me that I had to reach out. I had to get a sponsor. I had to have a home group and do service work. I was at a place in my addiction where I would have done anything to find some peace. So I just kept coming back, listening, and following direction.

Today I am proud to be a member of The Asbury Women of NA, my home group and clean connection. Where once women were my enemies, now they are my lifeline, my support, my joy. I have managed to make and hold onto women friends in a way that I never dreamed possible.

I have received much more than I have ever given, and so I gratefully keep giving and giving. That's the way it works.

When I was a child, all I ever wanted was a big birthday party, but I was afraid that if I had one, no one would show up. When my fourth NA birthday rolled around, my husband asked me what I wanted. I said, "A party!" I was still afraid no one would show up, but NA has taught me to walk through my fears. When the day finally arrived, the doorbell began to ring and they began to come. And they came, and more came, and soon the back yard was full. Most of my wonderful home group's members were there, and my family, and my two precious (now teen-aged) daughters, and my little son. I guess I didn't realize how many friends I have today. That scared little girl who lives inside of me wants to hide sometimes, but the program teaches me to reach out anyway.

All of the things I looked for in using, I have found in NA. When I became willing to stay clean, I was freed—not just from the compulsion to use, but also from the loneliness, self-hatred, and fear. I finally feel as if I fit in, as if I have a family who accepts me and loves me unconditionally. I no longer feel as if I have to please the crowd. I just have to stay clean and work the steps and keep coming back.

Julie A

Viewpoint



It's good to see you back

No, this is not a relapse story. This is the airing of a pet peeve.

A couple of months ago, one of my sponsees was greeted at a meeting with, "It's good to see you back in meetings again." She'd been going to four or five meetings a week, but because of a change in her schedule, she had also changed her meetings.

A month later, the same person said the same thing to me when I showed up at one of the "popular" meetings in the area for the first time in several months. Like my sponsee, a job transfer had made it necessary for me to attend meetings in another town in our area, and, also like my sponsee, I had been going to at least four or five meetings a week, plus my H&I commitments (which I don't count as regular meetings).

Yesterday, my sponsor and I attended a noon meeting together and someone said, "It's nice to see your

sponsor has decided to come back to the rooms."

Oh. I didn't know she had left.

What I did know was that her work schedule had made it impossible for her to attend the noon meeting more than once a month, that she'd had to change home groups for the same reason, and that she was mostly attending meetings in another part of the same area because that's where her job took her.

In an area that is about sixty miles wide, forty miles long, and has thirty-four meetings each week, there is a really good chance that I can go months without seeing a certain person. I can think of several people I haven't seen at a meeting in a year or so, but I see them at ASC representing a group at the south end of the southernmost county in our area. I tell them it's good to see them, but I do not assume that they aren't going to meetings just because they don't go to the same ones I do.

With the exception of my home group, I never know where I'm going to be on any given night. I could be at a meeting forty miles from home, the one around the corner, or giving a person who called the helpline a ride to the meeting near her home. For the last couple of years, I have made a point of trying to get to meetings

whose GSR has requested "support from addicts who have some time in recovery," instead of just attending ones that are a convenient travel distance. As a result, people who attend only the "popular" meetings near my home rarely see me. That does *not* mean I'm not attending meetings.

Give me a break. Tell me it's good to see me, but let me and my sponsor worry about which meetings I attend. After all, I haven't see you at meetings lately, either.

Anonymous

Bringing recovery into service

I'm GSR for my home group, and I've just returned from an area meeting. During the three-hour drive home, I went through a lot of emotions that compelled me to write.

During the area meeting, a couple of things happened that made me realize how important NA is to me and how important it is to place principles before personalities.

Our area service committee has started doing a workshop on service to help us newcomers learn the ropes. For myself, I find this very helpful because we don't "just know" the right thing to do when we first

start doing service work. What I learned at this workshop was that we must all strive to ensure that the work we do and the choices we make are based on our HP's will, not our own.

One of the things discussed was that we should feel the same in our committee meetings as we do in our home groups. When I heard this, I realized I wasn't using the moment of silence at the start of the area meeting the same way I used it at my home group.

When I first learned to use the moment of silence at the start of a recovery meeting to ask for help in my recovery and help for those around me, I started to feel that the meetings had more of a message. Now I hope this small effort might help me feel that our service efforts are more helpful to the still-suffering addict and to each other.

At the most recent ASC meeting, our ASR resigned after reporting that the last two regional meetings were cancelled because not enough people showed up to form a quorum. We were without an ASR-alternate and had to decide what to do about our area being represented. We did have two members volunteer, but all the way home I felt insecure. I realized how important NA has become to me and how vital it is to my ongoing recovery.

I think service is an important part of recovery, but we must get a firm base in our personal recovery before we can carry into our service work the same feeling that we get in our home groups. I think if we all took that moment of silence at the

beginning of every service meeting and asked "for the knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out," we would be less likely to have our personalities get in the way of the principles of NA.

I am very young in NA. I have just fourteen months clean, and I know I have many lessons to learn in recovery, but I'm learning to take them one at a time. Our region is young, and I believe with God's help we'll get through these growing pains.

Look at what else we've gotten from this experience. I've written my first letter to *The NA Way Magazine*. Thanks to all of you in NA for being there.

MF, Nova Scotia

A call to consider

I've been reading in *The NA Way* about Motion 39 and its successors since the magazine first began running stories about it. I've read mostly with a modest amount of ambivalence and a major amount of indifference. When I was our area's literature chairperson, we even circulated and posted some *NA Way* articles and other information about Motion 39. Still, I thought, why be concerned about it? It doesn't affect me. I'm beyond all that.

But after reading an article from Germany about this issue, I realized how self-centered I had been and how far-reaching the actions generated by the introduction of Motion 39 may be.

It has become clear to me that we really must deal with the God and gender issue as an issue of worldwide, multicultural proportions, if, in fact, we really want to be the worldwide fellowship we claim to be. Otherwise, we are just a mainstream American program available in some other countries.

Another question which comes to mind involves all of our NA literature. If we change wording in our steps and traditions, mustn't we extend these changes to all of our other publications? This is all starting to sound like a big order, maybe even unmanageable. It seems that in looking at the potential changes that could ultimately result from making changes to our steps and traditions, we better keep in mind the practicality of the "solutions" we turn over to our WSC and WSO for implementation. This means considering our financial condition and other limitations as the reality of our circumstances may involve.

As you can see, I have many more questions than answers. While no longer as indifferent, I still have mixed feelings about changing our steps and traditions. Yet I too will have to choose on this issue—as will each of us.

The reassurance I feel in this dilemma is my faith in the fellowship of NA, our collective conscience, and our service structure. However, my

higher power has rarely dumped into my lap a solution to a significant problem when I have been capable of doing some of the legwork myself. So, I shall continue to read about this issue in *The NA Way*, try to stimulate discussion of these issues within the parts of the fellowship I can reach, and listen to the direction of my higher power in order to develop my own conscience on these issues.

Last, but not least, I wish to thank all of those who have contributed their thoughts in writing to *The NA Way*, as well as those who have helped facilitate interest and communication within the fellowship in other ways. Your service in this respect made a difference to this addict.

KW, Texas

Need or want?

It seems to me that this issue of gender in the steps and traditions is ridiculous. Have we forgotten the reason for having NA groups? I did not start coming to NA to argue or be upset about terminology. I wanted relief from an addictive way of living that had become unbearable.

To dwell on such a blatantly stupid issue as this tells me that some people are either going to boring

meetings, or they have fully recovered and now have extra time on their hands to tear down steps and traditions that have worked for years.

Recovery is a lifetime process that I must engage in daily. If I have the time to debate God's gender, then I am either not practicing acceptance in my program or I am getting a resentment.

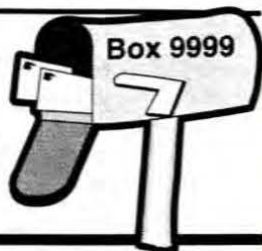
I can remember where I was before finding the NA way of life. I was more worried about what I was than what God is.

Step Three tells me that God is of my own understanding. I am allowed to believe the way I deem necessary for my successful recovery. If we change the most fundamental principles of our program, what will happen next? Yes, I know that change means growth, but we are talking about a growth that is from within each of us. Instead of showing difference over something we can't answer, let's concentrate on unity. The spirit of the program will be damaged greatly if we lose sight of our common goal: staying clean.

I come to NA for a reason. I come so that my life will have some sort of purpose, a purpose that shows me how I, as an addict, can live in society as a free person, able to go anywhere I can or want to. We should ask ourselves one question: Do we *need* to change our steps and traditions or do we just *want* to?

JH, Tennessee

From our readers



A little less stubborn, a lot more willing

It has taken me forever to write this letter. But being the addict I am, I procrastinate.

It's been only this year in recovery that my understanding of NA principles has really kicked in. I have four years clean, and oftentimes I think I should do it my way instead of totally surrendering to my Higher Power and the Twelve Steps.

So much has happened since I got clean, some bad things and some good. Somehow I managed not to use drugs over the bad stuff. I know for me I need to have this kind of balance in my recovery. In order for me to have good days, I need to first walk through the bad.

This past year has been a real eye-opener for me. I saw friends die from the disease of addiction. Some of them tried NA, some did not. I saw friends relapse. Many of them are giving NA another chance. It has been a very humbling experience to see friends die from this disease. It has made me realize that I am not unique and that it could just as well be me dead or on the streets using drugs.

I have also been blessed with good things in recovery. I got married,

went back to college, and recently had my first baby. I also got to see my father get clean, which was, and still is, a complete miracle.

When I first came to NA, I heard that we cannot keep what we have unless we give it away. How true! Because of what I have gotten from practicing the principles in my life, I am more able to spread the message of recovery to newcomers. Sometimes I think my Higher Power just takes over and guides me down the spiritual path.

I know a little more than I did four years ago. I am a little less stubborn and a lot more willing. I try to work the steps to the best of my ability, especially Steps Three and Twelve. For me, totally surrendering to NA's principles has given me the tools to live a more productive life and deal with the ups and downs of my recovery.

JJ, California

Those necessary things

During my first year in recovery, I had my share of ups and downs: however, I tried to the best of my ability to follow suggestions and so I got involved in service work. It brought me peace of mind and I enjoyed it.

A few months after I celebrated my first year clean, I went back to school full time, while continuing to work full time. I thought I could handle it since I'd been going to a lot of meetings.

However, I couldn't continue my H&I commitment. It didn't take long for my inner peace, which was a result of my H&I work and spirituality, to go out the window. It became difficult for me to apply spiritual principles in my life.

I was miserable, and had thoughts of using or killing myself. For the first time since I got clean, going to meetings didn't change the way I felt. It seemed as if the program wasn't working for me anymore.

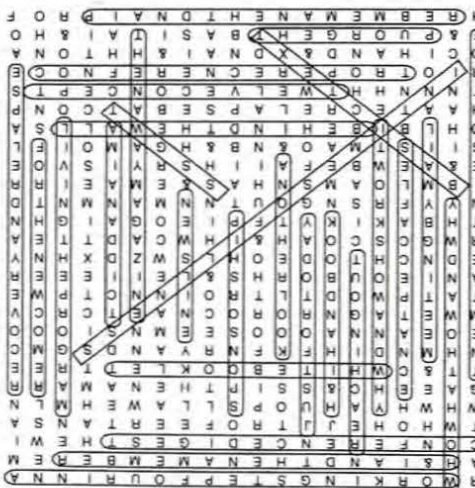
Fortunately, I stayed in constant contact with my sponsor. One thing I knew for sure was that I didn't want to spend the rest of my life feeling miserable. My focus was on what I didn't have; my energy went towards trying to get it. This almost took me out of the rooms of NA. My life went on like this for over a year.

After talking to several people about the way I felt, it became obvious that I needed to make some changes. I finally began making changes when the pain hurt so bad that I couldn't take it anymore.

I changed my school schedule to part-time. I started going to more meetings. I went to some gay and lesbian meetings, and began to feel a part of again. I got involved in service work again, and I began to reach out to other NA members. I started to feel better. Today I have over three years clean, by the grace of God.

All it took was me doing those necessary things—the things that brought me peace of mind when I first got clean. I hope I always remember this lesson.

AJ, North Carolina



Comin'up

Calendar						
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20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

CANADA

British Columbia: 22-24 Mar.; South Vancouver Island Area Convention; Victoria; info: (604) 479-1682; SVIACNA, PO Box 8284, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada V8W 3R9

Manitoba: 7-9 June; Winnipeg Area Convention; Robert A. Stein Community Center, Winnipeg; info: (204) 586-4432 or (204) 774-5991; WACCNA, PO Box 25173, 1650 Main Street, Wrg, MB, Canada R2V 4C8

Quebec: 5-7 Apr.; 7th Quebec City Area Convention; Quebec Hilton; rsvns: (800) 447-2411; info: (418) 649-8865; Quebec City Area, 83 De L'Espina, Quebec City, Quebec, Canada O1L 2H3

INDIA

West Bengal: 12-14 Jan.; First Calcutta Area Convention; Kishore Bharati Krirangen, Jadavpur, Santoshpur, Calcutta; info: please address fax to Sunil J 0091-033-294948

Maharashtra: 26-28 Jan.; 4th Bombay Area Convention; St. Xavier's Villa, Khandala; info: (0091) 22-627-1904 or (0091) 22-642-6520; fax: (0091) 22-605-0460

PHILIPPINES

Manila: 12-14 Jan.; 1st Philippines Regional Convention; Manila; info: address fax to Tata 632-8100279

SWITZERLAND

Baselland: 15-17 Mar.; 2nd Swiss Convention; Basel; fax: (061) 6311556; info: (061) 3812536; SCNA, Postfach 360, CH-4010 Basel, Switzerland

UNITED KINGDOM

Greater London: 12-14 Apr. 1996; 7th Annual London Convention; London, England; info: 0171-538-0422; fax: 0171-515-5300

UNITED STATES

Arizona: 15-17 Mar.; 3rd Sanity is Possible Campout; White Tank Mountain, Phoenix; info: (602) 412-0184; SIPNA, Box 39075, Phoenix, AZ 85069

Arkansas: 8-10 Mar.; Arkansas River

Valley Area Convention; rsvns: (501) 783-1000; info: (501) 452-6198 or (501) 783-6942; ARVNA, Box 5631, Fort Smith, AR 72913

California: 26-28 Jan.; 1st San Fernando Valley Area Convention; Burbank; rsvns: (800) 840-6540; info: (818) 753-5395

2) 9-11 Feb.; 4th Central California Regional Convention; Doubletree Inn, Ventura; rsvns: (805) 643-6000; info: (805) 486-3373; CCRCNA, Box 281, Somis, CA 93066

3) 5-7 Apr.; 5th Southern California Regional Spring Gathering; Manhattan Beach Radisson Hotel; rsvns: (800) 333-3333; info: (310) 693-5110; Box 2543, Orange, CA 92669

Florida: 29-31 Mar.; Florida Spring Service Break; info: (407) 735-0601

2) 25-28 Apr.; North Atlanta Area 20th Annual Reunion and Fun in the Sun Convention; Panama City Beach, Florida; rsvns: (800) 224-4853 info: (904) 248-9155; 2480 Briarcliff Road, Box 243, Atlanta, GA 30329

Georgia: 12-14 Jan.; Peace in Recovery 8; Augusta; info: (706) 796-2964

2) 15-18 Feb.; Georgia Regional Conv.; Crowne Plaza Ravinia Hotel, Atlanta; rsvns: (770) 395-7700 or (800) HOLIDAY; info: (770) 787-7834; Box 1653, Monroe, CA 30655

Hawaii: 22-24 Mar.; 12th Annual Gathering of the Fellowship on Oahu; Camp Mokuleia, North Shore, Oahu; info: (808) 676-9125 or (808) 988-7194; Oahu Gathering, 1654 Alena Drive, Honolulu, HI 96817

Idaho: 12-14 Apr.; So. Idaho Regional Conv.; Holiday Inn, Pocatello; rsvns: (800) 465-4329 or (208) 237-1400; info: (208) 236-8954; SIRCNA, Box 4342, Pocatello, ID 83201

Illinois: 2-4 Feb.; Greater Illinois Region Presents Rock River Convention; Holidome, South Beloit; rsvns: (815) 389-3481; info: (815) 332-4130; Box 1891, Rockford, IL 61110

2) 23-25 Feb.; 8th Chicagoland Regional Convention; Sheraton Chicago; info: From 9 am to 5 pm CST call (708) 848-2211, 7 pm to midnight CST call (708) 891-0759; Regional Convention, 212 S Marion, Oak Park, IL 60304

3) 7-9 June; Show-Me Regional Convention; Cape Girardeau; info: SMRCNA, Box 1226, Cape Girardeau, MO 63702

Indiana: 29-31 Mar.; Indiana State Convention; Fort Wayne Hilton, Fort Wayne; info: Box 12047, Fort Wayne, IN 46802

Kansas: 5-7 Apr.; 13th Mid-America Regional Convention; Ramada Inn, Hutchinson; rsvns: (800) 362-5018; info: (316) 241-6230; MARCNA, Box 3926, Topeka, KS 66604

2) 26-28 Apr.; Living Miracles Convention; Mount St. Scholastica Convention Center, Atchison; info: (913) 367-1197 or (913) 367-3867; ALMCC, 714 N 3rd, Atchison, KS 66002

Kentucky: 19-21 Jan.; Louisville Area Convention; The Galt House, Louisville; rsvns: in KY (800) 962-0150, outside KY (800) 626-1814; info: (812) 280-0523

2) 4-7 Apr.; Kentuckiana Regional Convention; University Plaza Hotel; rsvns: (502) 745-0088; info: (502) 745-7631; KRCNA, Box 556, Bowling Green, KY 42102

Maryland: 29-31 Mar.; 10th Chesapeake Potomac Regional Convention; rsvns: (800) 654-5440; info: (301) 515-9484; CPCRNA, Box 8006, Silver Spring, MD 20907

Massachusetts: 12-14 Jan.; Boston Area Convention; Sheraton Boston; rsvns: (800) 325-3535; info: (617) 427-6367

Michigan: 4-7 July; Michigan Regional Convention; send speaker tapes before 31 Jan. to: MRCNA, Box 7116, Novi, MI 48376

Mississippi: 12-14 Apr.; 14th Mississippi Regional Convention; Lake Tiak-O'Khata, Louisville; rsvns: (601) 773-7853; info: Spirit of Change, Box 5660, Brandon, MS 39047

Missouri: 16-18 Feb.; Cabin Fever Prevention Convention; Lodge of the Four Seasons, Lake of the Ozarks; info: (314) 581-5771; Cabin Fever, Box 7114, Jefferson City, MO 65109

2) 7-9 June; Show-Me Regional Convention; Holiday Inn/Exit 96, Cape Girardeau; rsvns: (314) 334-4491; info: (618) 661-1527; SMRCNA, 320 N Frederick, Box 1226, Cape Girardeau, MO 63702

Nevada: 14-17 Mar.; Las Vegas Convention; Sahara Hotel, Las Vegas; rsvns: (800) 634-6666; info: (702) 656-7909; SNCC, 4542 East Tropicana, Suite 101, Las Vegas, NV 89121

New Hampshire: 21-23 June; Granite State Area's Fellowship in the Field; Bethlehem; info: (603) 645-4777

New Jersey: 23-25 Feb.; Cape/Atlantic Area Convention; Seaview Marriott Country Club; rsvns: (800) 932-8000; info: (609) 863-9156; Convention, Box 7386, Atlantic City, NJ 08404

2) 29-31 Mar.; Capital Area Convention; East Windsor; rsvns: (609) 443-8000; info: (609) 882-5692; Box 741, Trenton, NJ 08604

3) 24-26 May; 11th New Jersey Regional Convention; Berkeley Carteret, Asbury Park; rsvns: (800) 776-6011 or (908) 776-6700; info: (908) 826-2148; Box 576, Keyport, NJ 07735

New York: 8-10 Mar.; 2nd Rochester Area Convention; Holiday Inn Airport, Rochester; rsvns: (800) 465-4329; info: (716) 467-1234; RACNA, Box 458, Rochester, NY 14603

North Carolina: 12-14 Jan.; Western North Carolina Area Convention; Asheville; rsvns: (704) 667-4501; info: (704) 253-8789

2) 16-18 Feb.; Central Carolina Area Convention; Hilton Head Island; info: (803) 798-5408

Oklahoma: 19-21 Jan.; 6th Norman Winter Convention; Norman; info: (405) 366-1807;

2) 29-31 Mar.; OK Regional Convention; Meridian Plaza Hotel, Oklahoma City; info: (405) 524-7068; Box 23112, Oklahoma City, OK 73123

Pennsylvania: 9-11 Feb.; Mid-Atlantic Regional Learning Conference; Ramada Inn, Harrisburg; rsvns: (717) 234-5021; info: (717) 236-1288 or (717) 561-2065; MARLCNA, Box 523, Camp Hill, PA 17001

South Carolina: 16-18 Feb.; Central Carolina Area Conv.; Hilton Head Island; rsvns: (800) ISLAND1 or (803) 842-4402; info: (803) 798-5408; Box 23534, Columbia, SC 29224

Tennessee: 24-25 Feb.; Upper Cumberland Area 4th Anniversary; Cookeville; rsvns: (615) 526-7125; info: (615) 686-8104

2) 3-5 May; Recovery on the Ridge; Big Ridge State Park, Andersonville; info: (800) 249-0012; Box 864, Knoxville, TN 37901

Texas: 17-18 Feb.; Tejas Bluebonnet Steps and Traditions Weekend; Seven Oaks Hotel, San Antonio; rsvns: (800) 346-5866 or (210) 824-5371; info: (512) 832-9914

2) 23-25 Feb.; TACNA-12; info: (903) 547-3092 or (903) 793-3421

3) 5-7 Apr.; 11th Lone Star Regional Convention; Dallas/Ft. Worth Airport Hyatt; rsvns: (214) 453-1234; info: (214) 245-8972 or (800) 747-8972; LSRSO, 1510 Randolph #205, Carrollton, TX 75006

Utah: 8-10 Mar. 1996; 3rd Northern Utah Area Convention; Holiday Inn, Ogden; info: NUACNA, Box 242, Ogden, UT 84401

Virginia: 5-7 Jan. 1996; 14th Annual Virginia Convention; Holiday Inn, Hampton; rsvns: (800) 842-9370 or (804) 838-0200; info: (804) 877-4921

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