

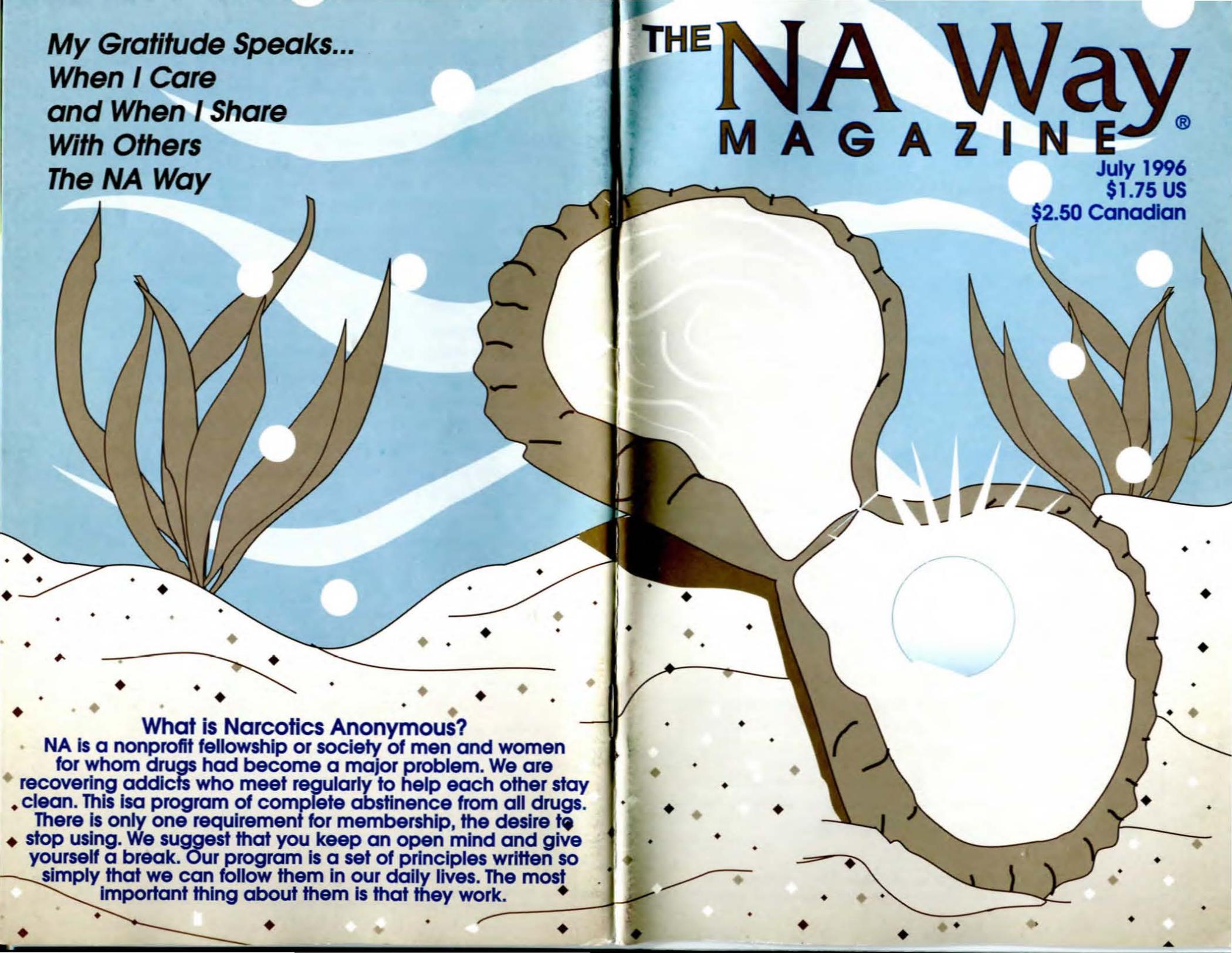
*My Gratitude Speaks...
When I Care
and When I Share
With Others
The NA Way*

THE NA Way MAGAZINE[®]

July 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

Box 9999
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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.

Subscription rates, 1 yr. \$15, 2 yrs. \$28, 3 yrs. \$39, single copies \$1.75. Canada 1 yr. \$20, 2 yrs. \$37, 3 yrs. \$52, single copies \$2.25. Please inquire about bulk rates.

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The NA Way Magazine is published monthly by World Service Office, Inc., 19737 Nordhoff Place, Chatsworth, CA 91311. Second class postage paid at Van Nuys, CA and other points. **POSTMASTER:** Please send address changes to *The NA Way Magazine*, PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409-9099.

From the editor



Update on the possible discontinuation of *The NA Way Magazine*

By the time this arrives in your mailbox, the issue of discontinuing *The NA Way* will have been discussed at the World Service Conference. There may be an insert in the envelope, or we may be sending one separately. I am trying to make sure our subscribers have the most up-to-date information.

As I stated last month, I realize that many of you have a strong attachment to the magazine and need to know that your feelings about its possible discontinuation are being heard. I am still keeping track of the phone calls and letters I've received, and I will keep sharing them here each month.

I should add to this that *nothing has changed yet*. We're still running your event announcements in Comin' Up. We're still looking for articles. We're still taking subscriptions. Above all, we're still interested in what you have to say and in providing the best possible service to our readers.

CT, Editor

From Alabama:

I opened up the April issue of *The NA Way* and out popped a piece of paper that said we are no longer willing to carry you slackers out there. . .

Could it be true? Could they really cancel *The NA Way Magazine*, the only worldwide publication by addicts, for addicts? The only place we can hear what's going on in the rest of NA? The only vehicle in which members of the fellowship can have open dialogue with one another? The only place for us to hear news about emerging NA communities?

Of course they can cancel it. It's not cost effective, the marching tune for NA in the nineties. I have met the enemy and it be accountants.

And the complacency of the Fellowship of NA! *Oh yes, I'll get a subscription . . . someday.*

Well, guess what? Someday is here. Are we going to let our fellowship's magazine roll over and die? Not me.

I have been reading and subscribing to *The NA Way* since its beginning. I have disagreed, heartily—with many of the articles in its pages. I have cheered and applauded others.

I have seen my own articles and articles from friends around the world. I have seen my NA world grow, and I have gained a burning desire to travel to other lands and meet other

addicts. I have been farther than I ever thought possible traveling to some of those lands, and I was met with open arms by members of the worldwide Fellowship of NA.

I have gotten information about fellowship functions, and have attended and shared at those functions. I have been in massive emotional pain and turned to *The NA Way* for solace and insight—and found those things there.

So what's in a magazine anyway? A little booklet that someone in a treatment center may see and stay clean because of. That alone would be worth a hundred million dollars, let alone a hundred thousand. Or maybe it's just that thing that comes in the mail once a month, but has the power to let my newcomer in New York know that he's part of a worldwide fellowship. That is worth all the tea in China (where we may have meetings soon). Or maybe it's just something consistent in the life of this addict who has been reading it for fourteen years. It reminds me that history is one of the most important things we have in our fellowship, and if I don't stick around that will be one more piece of history lost forever, you know, like that magazine we used to have. What was it called? Oh yeah, *The NA Way*.

KO

From Virginia:

I'm writing to express my disappointment about the decision to discontinue *The NA Way Magazine*. I look forward to the next issue every month, and I read every issue cover to cover. I am hoping that the magazine

will be able to continue, and I personally feel that it is such a beneficial tool, it is worth subsidizing.

CJ

From Washington:

I am writing to express my extreme displeasure at the idea of shutting down *The NA Way*. The reason seems to be centered on the lack of subscribers. In our fellowship's history, there have usually been times of growth, followed by times of reduction. This is normal and healthy, as overall the growth has been more than the downsizing. Your letter says that at one time there were ten thousand subscribers.

I think the fellowship as a whole should be allowed to decide the fate of *The NA Way*. There's lots of support for it out there, proven by the regional motion in the 1996 *Conference Agenda Report* to make it okay to read *The NA Way* in meetings. In the meetings I go to, articles that have been in the magazine often end up being the focus of our sharing.

Giving up on *The NA Way* because it is experiencing growing pains is not based on spiritual principles; it's based on economic principles. There are lots of places all over the world where NA began by one addict sitting alone in an NA meeting for months before someone else came. Can you imagine what would have happened if that addict had given up?

My sponsor has often told me that my area, region, and world NA communities will keep getting stronger as long as I keep coming back. It begins with me, and I am responsible.

JM

I can't help but be a better...

The topic at the meeting was, "Why work the steps?" It quickly became a discussion of how our spiritual lives are improved through practicing in our lives the spiritual principles connected with the steps. Then came a real shocker. One addict shared, "If I am working the Twelve Steps, I can't help but be a better Christian." Whoa! He said a "religion word." I just knew someone was going to slam him for that. But the next person to share was a Muslim. And he shared that if he was really working the Twelve Steps, he couldn't help but be a better Muslim.

Another religion word! What was NA coming to? The next addict followed suit, saying, "If I am really living the Twelve Steps, I can't help but be a better Wiccan." By this time I was really confused. How could NA's Twelve Steps help these addicts be better practitioners of three totally different religious faiths?

When I came into recovery, I was willing to accept the "God of our understanding" thing, but any mention of specific religion was as unaccept-

able to me as a mention of specific drugs—more so, in fact. When it was my turn to read "What is the Narcotics Anonymous Program?" I emphasized the phrase, ". . . or lack of religion." The church in which I was raised was a part of my first three Fourth Steps—on my resentment list.

I was willing to accept that the problems I had with churches and organized religion in general were *my* problems, but I was still so resentful that I practically had to be dragged into any meeting that took place in the worshipping part of a church structure, as does happen from time to time. I was okay with a generic God and believed that I always would be. When one of my sponsees would talk about going to church, I told her that she could if she wanted to, but it wasn't necessary to do that in order to stay clean. I made a point of putting down those churches that carried their messages into detoxes and treatment facilities. I believed they were trying to steal *our* addicts from us. After all, I thought, our literature does say that we had already tried medicine, religion, and psychiatry, and they didn't work. I guess I forgot to hear the real quote. It says "None of these methods was *sufficient* for us." Emphasis mine.

By the time I had three years clean, NA had become my religion. When some poor deluded fool would close a meeting with the Lord's Prayer instead of the Serenity Prayer or the Third Step Prayer, I agreed with those who said, "Our father who art in Narcotics Anonymous," though I

never quite had the nerve to join them out loud.

In meetings, I'd share things like, "If it weren't for my Higher Power I wouldn't be alive today," and discuss only sponsorship, steps, and service, totally leaving out the other s-word: spirituality. I was perfectly okay I thought, though I couldn't seem to understand why from time to time I felt overwhelmingly lonely or was in pain for no apparent reason.

At some point, I stopped being in pain from time to time; instead it was *all* the time. I could barely live inside myself. I became even more anti-religious, if that's possible. One night, one of my meetings discovered that all the chairs we normally used were locked up in a cabinet. Some wanted to meet in the chapel, but I insisted that we sit on the floor instead. I did like the lady who ran the church, and was at least polite to her whenever we met. I'd heard people in meetings talk about having spiritual advisors, and I thought she'd do if I ever needed one of those.

Within a couple of months, I knew I was in trouble and probably close to relapse. I still didn't have a clue about what was happening. As a result of a lot of "coincidences," I did go talk to the church lady one day and ended up attending church that night. Much to my surprise, everything echoed what I had been hearing in NA. I found that I was comfortable and happy with those "church people" I'd been putting down for so long.

I got involved and discovered that what I had heard at that meeting so long ago was true: the principles that had become part of my life through

working the Twelve Steps made me a better church member.

For a while, I kept this new involvement secondary to my NA program. I still didn't understand that they could work together. All I knew for sure was that the constant pain I had been in had stopped.

I continued doing H&I meetings for a while, but found myself in a new quandary. Now I found myself wanting to share about spirituality and God, but didn't feel that was appropriate in an H&I setting. Before too many months had passed, I realized that the God of my understanding had played a giant joke on me and totally changed all of my career plans. I began trying to get accepted into college so that I could follow my new calling. Meanwhile, I got a job at a treatment center where discussion of God and spirituality was encouraged, as long as we didn't proselytize the clients. No problem, that's pretty much how my church approaches things anyway.

Today I find myself 3,200 miles from home where I will be attending school for the next seven or eight years in order to enter the ministry of my religion of choice. I've found NA meetings on campus and in the area around the school. I wear the symbols of both NA and my church on a chain around my neck to remind me that these work together in my life today. "If I have the Twelve Steps in my life, I can't help but be a better..." turned out to be true for me, too.

Anonymous

Grateful to be your neighbor

After attending the twenty-fifth world convention in Paris last September, and the ninth United Kingdom convention in Bournemouth, England, I realized that there are basic, fundamental parts of the fellowship here in Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada, that I have simply taken for granted.

I came into recovery almost a year before the convention in Paris, and not in my wildest dreams had I ever imagined that I would be one of thousands of members in attendance there. About a month before we left for Paris, I was reading the "Comin' Up" section of *The NA Way Magazine* and realized that we would be able to go to the UK convention, too. An extra gift!

After a week of traveling through Europe on our way to Paris, I was feeling kind of homesick. I had gone to only one meeting in Amsterdam since we left home (I'm used to lots more than that). We arrived at the convention and immediately I felt that I was as close to home as I needed to be. I felt safe, and I had my pick of

workshop, speaker, and marathon meetings to attend for three whole days. It was incredible! I saw and felt global unity in Narcotics Anonymous. I also saw that NA is still growing throughout the world, and I got my first real sense of how strong NA is in North America.

My American neighbors who shared their experience, strength, and hope at the convention spoke about the power of working the Twelve Steps of NA with a sponsor. This was suggested to me by my sponsor as soon as I got clean. I was willing to take that suggestion because I wanted to stay clean.

What I learned on this trip is that I have had fellow recovering addicts around me from the beginning who have sponsors who work the steps, who have sponsors who work the steps, and so on. Because NA is so much younger and not as strong yet in many other parts of the world, there just isn't always this kind of support for newcomers or even many meetings. I am so grateful that I am in a country with a strong fellowship, right next door to the US, where NA started in 1953. I am very grateful for those who came before me, but most of all, I am grateful that I'm so close to you.

DB, British Columbia

Mended

5 October 1993, one year ago, I quit for the hundredth time. Three days later, desperate to stay clean, I confided in the person I feared and hated the most: my ex-husband. Though I felt this way about him, he was the only person I knew who wasn't using (and being a recovering addict himself, I knew he'd understand).

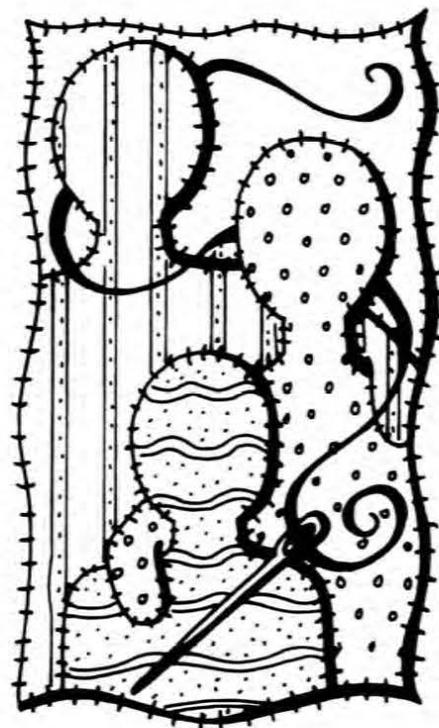
Due to court orders, we hadn't spoken to each other in two years and were just starting to talk again. It was a Friday, and time for his visitation with our four-year-old son. I walked into his house, sat down, and said, "I don't know if I can do this. I just don't know if I can."

That was the moment when I got introduced to NA and the beginning of a different life. From that moment, I began a search that would take me full circle back to his house. I struck out in search of a meeting, excited by the prospect of finding someone who would help me. Now that I knew about this NA thing, I didn't need his help. I wanted to do it alone.

I called the hotline for meeting locations, then drove to Auburn. My destination: Sacramento Street. Up and down Sacramento Street I drove. I couldn't find the meeting. The time for the meeting came and went, and eventually I gave up and drove home.

"I'll try again tomorrow," I said to myself. The next day I set out again. This time I was successful. But my excitement disappeared when I walked in and they were closing the meeting.

I was told there was a meeting starting in the park in fifteen minutes, so I set off for the park. It was dark and quiet. No one was around. At this point, I became desperate and went to a nearby house and knocked on the door. "Do you know where an NA meeting is around here?" I asked the man who answered the door. He couldn't help me, but gave me directions to another park. I was discouraged, but I pushed on and drove to the other park. I looked around, but I didn't see any group of people who



looked like they were having a meeting. So, with one last push of determination, I walked up to a man at the baseball diamond and asked, "Do you know where an NA meeting is?" He looked at me strangely and started to walk away, shaking his head. Then I noticed the beer can in his hand.

On the freeway driving home, my conscience and my addiction argued in my head. "Go back to your ex-husband's house . . . go to your connection's . . . go home and go to bed . . . no, go to your ex's . . ." So finally, I went to my ex-husband's house. "Hi, I'm back," I said. "I couldn't find a meeting."

I've heard that a person should chase her recovery like she chased a bag of dope. Well, in those few days I certainly did that. By the time my ex-husband took me to my first meeting, I had become humble, willing, and I wanted recovery real bad! He babysat me through it, and I was shocked to have someone run up to me with a welcome chip and a hug. I cried through most of the meeting. I was so grateful to be there. There is hope after all, I thought. I knew I was in the right place.

In the beginning, meetings were my fix. I carried a meeting schedule in my pocket wherever I went. When I started thinking about drugs, I would pull out my schedule and look for a meeting. Sometimes just looking at the schedule was all I needed. When I didn't get to enough meetings in a week, I knew it by how I felt. I would feel empty and lonely inside, like something was missing.

Although I wanted to keep my distance, I found myself going to most of

my meetings with my ex-husband. We would talk about the meetings afterward, and sometimes I would read to him from the book I bought. I didn't want to get too close to him. I liked being single. I liked living alone. We were divorced, and I liked it that way, yet I spent most of my free time with him. Our son enjoyed spending time with mom and dad together for the first time in his young life.

Two months into my recovery, my ex was suddenly homeless and jobless. I worried about him. What would he do? How would he cope? After some thought, I opened my home to the person whom I had thought I hated and feared the most. We agreed that it would only be for a little while, just until he found a job, and I could use the extra help around the house. As long as we didn't fight, I guessed it would be okay.

My plumbing broke, and he fixed it. My gate broke, and he fixed it. My car broke, and he fixed it. One evening I thanked him for all the help. He said, "I'll help you as long as you need me." Our son spoke up, "Daddy, we'll need you forever!"

Shortly afterward, he got a job, and we both agreed he could stay a little while longer, just until he found a place to live. Well, it's been almost a year, and he's still here. I've got some good things in my life: a truck, a refrigerator, a washer and dryer, and serenity and peace of mind. But what I'm most grateful for is my new family. What drugs tore apart, recovery has mended.

BK, California

Turning it over

For several months, I have struggled with the Third Step. Or, more accurately, I struggled with the prospect of formally writing out my experience with this step.

When I started, I thought this would be easy, especially since my morning prayer routine is to say, "Please, God, take my will and my life." This has become a big part of my program's foundation; it has to be because I know how painful my life becomes when I live according to my own will.

During my active addiction, living by my will meant I wanted it *now*, no

matter what the consequences. Even though I knew I would be out of control once I started using, I still was willing to turn my will over to drugs in exchange for any immediate gratification.

In recovery, I have also experienced the consequences of self-will. At times, it was my will to pick up hookers, gamble, or "just hang out" in a bar and drink soda. By doing these things, I felt guilt, uneasiness, and sometimes the desire to use.

I remember one particular time when I had about nine months clean. I was driving down Eleventh Avenue in Manhattan after being with a hooker. In a doorway, I noticed someone taking a blast on a stem. Suddenly, I wanted to get high so bad my hands were shaking on the steering wheel. I didn't know what else to do, so I asked God for help. I kept saying the words aloud in my car until the obsession passed. Having taken back my will, I had to surrender it again in order to stay clean.



For most of my clean time, I've known that the best way to stay clean is to surrender my will and try to do God's instead. So I thought formally working Step Three—writing about it, sharing it with my sponsor—would be easy. But I struggled to identify to whom or to what I was surrendering my will and life.

For quite a while, my understanding of God has been extremely simple: a force of goodness represented in the spiritual principles of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of NA. That was the understanding I relied on when I hit my knees every morning. That was the understanding I used whenever the topic came up at meetings. That was the understanding I used when I prayed before going to sleep. And that was the understanding I used when I prayed while driving down Eleventh Avenue that night.

It was an understanding that came from the heart. But when I started working on the Third Step, I felt I needed some greater level of understanding. I think I was looking for an understanding that was more specific, perhaps more intellectual. The search started out as a "speed bump" on my personal road of recovery, but grew during my search until it felt like a roadblock. I kept reading the essays on the Third Step in the Basic Text and *It Works: How and Why*. I read parts of other books about God. I looked for some specific mystical inspiration at the beach.

During this time my morning prayers felt weaker. I rushed through them, or daydreamed during them. I was no longer getting a feeling of

strength and hope from them. I started feeling disconnected from the fellowship, my family, my job, and my friends. Finally, I hit an emotional bottom with my Third Step struggle.

I came to realize that I was looking for something better when I already had something that was working for me. After going through much searching for an understanding of God, I returned to an acceptance of the simple understanding that had worked for me for a year and a half of recovery. That understanding kept me clean. Lately, I've felt better about my prayers and my connection with my Higher Power.

After resolving my understanding, I returned to the need to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understand Him. I hear some people talk about this step as if it were a passive experience—that to work this step, they just stand back and let God do the work. But the Basic Text tells me that this is an action step. Not only do I need to make the decision to turn over my will and my life, I need to live it. I surrender my will by doing the things NA tells me to do: helping a newcomer, cleaning up after a meeting, doing service work, recognizing what the right things are and trying to do them as often as possible. Sometimes, it's as simple as hugging someone I don't like.

Of course, I fail on a regular basis to put the action of this step to work in all aspects of my life. But I know that the more I do so, the better I feel about myself. And the better I feel about myself, the less likely I am to use.

JM, New Jersey

The best road

I was born 24 November 1953. My brother, B, was born a year later. We both grew up under the same roof with the same parents, and for many years we shared the same bedroom. We both got chased under the same bed for smashing my dad's wine collection when we were eight and nine years old. We even went to karate school together and practiced flipping each other on our little single beds.

Then B started going to a special school for his dyslexia, a reading problem where you see things backwards. We started to grow apart. I became the people pleaser, and he became the strong silent type. Of course, our dysfunctional parents weren't helping much either. Dad was a workaholic and was quickly becoming nonexistent in our home. Mom was rebelling against her severely strict upbringing and allowing the house to go to the dogs.

We both found that magic cure for our feelings—drugs—around the late sixties. We progressed in our active addiction, me one step ahead and my brother right behind me. In Boston, we had an apartment together off Kenmore Square. I was dabbling in

heroin. B was a senior in high school and just sniffing the stuff.

I started on the road to recovery in 1979. Two years and three hospitals later (one of my relapses assisted by B), in September of 1981, I hit bottom and went looking for help. I wound up in a treatment center on the other side of the state. By the grace of God, the first NA meeting in that town had started thirty days before I got there.

I found hope in that NA meeting in 1981. Of course, when I left the treatment center I was still doing things my way. I got back to town and wanted to use so bad I could taste it. I had a choice to make. I was either going to go down the same road I always had, the familiar one of using to ease the pain, or try a new road, the road marked by signposts pointing to honesty, surrender, and recovery.

I got honest with my girlfriend and told her that I wanted to use and that I was scared. She got me to a meeting and I stayed clean that day. And the next. And the next. Yesterday was 6 March and I counted thirteen years and six months clean in Narcotics Anonymous.

So what does this have to do with my brother, B? He kept choosing to go down the same old road. In 1982, he contracted HIV. The virus has been in remission, but his addiction has not. He has been in eleven treatment centers in the last twelve years. Every time he gets out, he gets some doctor friend to give him some pills and he's off to the races again.

I spoke to my dad the other day, and he told me that the virus has taken hold. "Your brother has lost a hundred pounds and has scabs all

over his body," my father told me. "His hair is falling out and half the time he doesn't know what's going on. We've made plans to put him in another treatment center in Alabama, and we need you to come get him and take him there."

So I'm in an airplane, writing this letter to you all because I don't know what else to do. I have to decide when I get there if it's worth driving him twelve hours away to a treatment center, or maybe just putting him in a hospice near home so he can die with dignity, surrounded by his family and friends.

Being in recovery and watching my brother relapse over and over again was just too hard for me. I did what I could and then detached. I detached with anger, and then with a little sibling rivalry, and then, I'm sad to say, I just stopped caring at all.

One of our major arguments was always about his smoking. He smoked cigarettes like a fiend, and I had surrendered them ten years ago. I would ask him not to do it around me, but every time he came to visit, he would light up in my face, in my car, and around my wife who is allergic to smoke. He was incapable of caring about anyone's needs other than his own. I let him know this in no uncertain terms. His smoking around my wife made her ill the last time we were together.

We went out for a walk on my last visit to his home in Florida. He asked me to tell him how I really felt. I said, "B Leo, I have been clean for thirteen years. I have worked all twelve steps. I have gone through family treatment twice, and a year of therapy. You, my

friend, are from Venus. That is how far out you appear to me." He heard what I was trying to share with him, if you can call that sharing. It probably felt more like shaming to him.

A few weeks ago, I went on a spiritual retreat where I learned that all those petty resentments are really unimportant. What's important is that he is my brother and I love him just the way he is. I got to call him up right after the retreat and share that with him. I told him I loved him and that I have prayed for him every day for the last thirteen years. I also told him how proud I was of his beautiful home in Florida and his talent as an artist. It was just a few weeks ago, just before the madness set in, just the way God planned it.

Thank you, God, for giving me back my brother. Even if it may be too late this time. For God's sake, if holding on to your petty (or not so petty) resentments is keeping you and your family apart, let them go! You only get one family, and heaven forbid they leave you and you don't get the chance to clear the air. Maybe they won't want to hear your words. But then again, maybe they will, even if they wish to go down the same old road of blaming and judging. You just go ahead and take the other road, the one of forgiveness and empathy. It's the better road.

KO, New York

WORDSEARCH

O H A P P T O L E R G P E A C
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ACCEPTANCE	GRATITUDE	LOVING
COMMITTED	HAPPINESS	OPENMINDEDNESS
COURAGE	HELPFUL	PATIENCE
DIGNITY	HONESTY	PEACE
DILIGENT	HOPE	PERSEVERANCE
FAITH	HUMILITY	TOLERANCE
FREEDOM	JOY	VIGILANCE
GRACIOUS	LOVE	WILLING

Home Group



Newsletters



Putting principles before personalities

From *What's Happening*, the Winnipeg, Manitoba, area newsletter

Sometimes it's hard to practice the principles in all my affairs. When I first started coming around, I was puzzled and perplexed, especially when I heard slogans like "principles before personalities" and "acceptance doesn't mean approval." Staying clean was hard enough. But as I kept coming back and started working the program, my mind slowly started to open and I was able to grasp such key concepts.

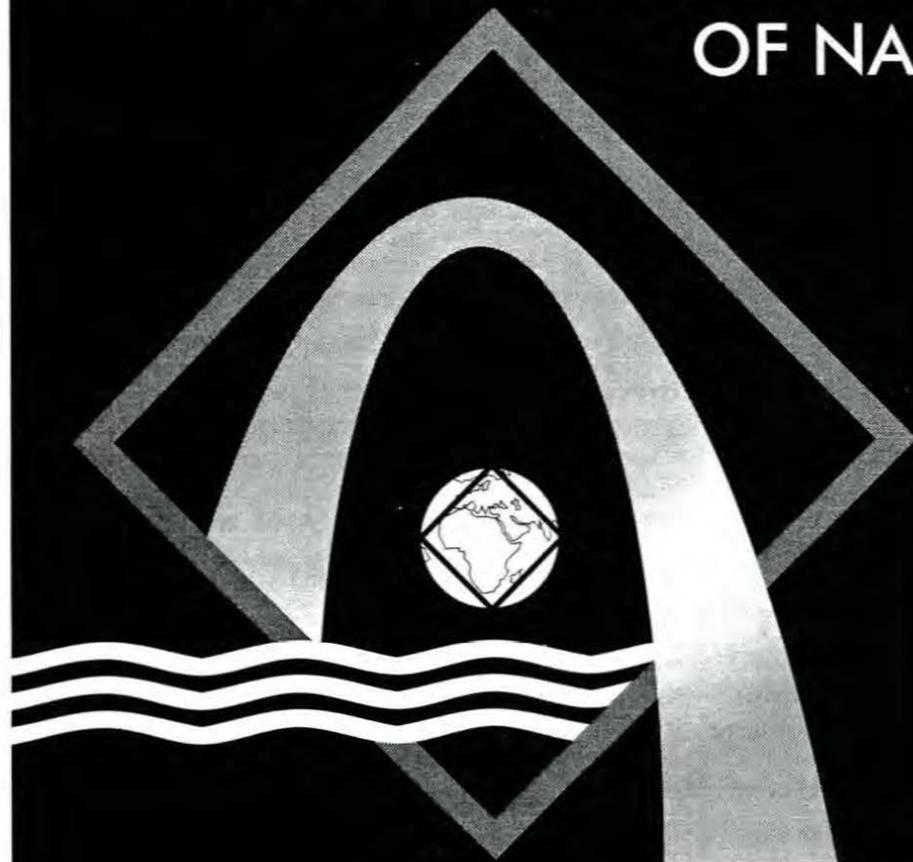
Today, I am fortunate to be guided by spiritual principles, but still my thinking, my feelings, and my disease get in the way of my choosing to practice spiritual principles.

It's becoming clear to me that my personal recovery is dependent upon a number of things, especially NA unity. It's so easy to get worked up about all sorts of things, but when I apply the principle of anonymity, I can overlook the differences that would cause me to feel apart from instead of a part of.

I have found that, when I begin to obsess on other people and find fault with them, I'm the one who pays the price. By working the steps and choosing to exercise loving care in the way I think about, speak to, and treat others, it's easier to be around other addicts and accept them—even those I don't particularly care for. As the essay on Tradition One in *It Works: How and Why* states: "With unity as our practical foundation, we find that our relationship with one another is more important than any issue that may arise to divide us."

In active addiction and even now, acting on self-will is often destructive and regrettable. How often do I step back and determine how the thinking or actions I am contemplating will affect myself, other addicts, or the unity of the fellowship? In working Steps One and Two, I have to remember I can't always rely on my own thinking. I'm quite capable of becoming self-righteous. With an attitude of surrender, working together with

26TH WORLD CONVENTION OF NA



Show Me How To Live

St. Louis, Missouri, USA
August 29, 30, 31 & September 1, 1996

An Open Letter to All Members...

Well, we suppose you've heard by now. NA is growing... growing at a rate and in ways we hardly imagined a few years ago. And if you ever want to see the evidence of all this growth in one place, all you have to do is come to a world convention. A world convention also seems to have all the things that challenge NA as a whole—plus a few of its own. There's a variety of languages spoken in NA; our members with special needs must be accommodated; getting to the convention site must somehow be managed; registration should be accomplished without having to stand in line for hours; and there should be enough merchandise. Most of all, we want our members who come to the world convention to enjoy our fellowship's celebration of recovery.

Making sure this happens requires that we take definite steps to ensure that our fellowship's diversity is properly supported. Last year, at WCNA-25, members from over twenty countries attended the convention. Anticipating such attendance, we translated the convention flyer into seven languages. While English was the official language of the convention, simultaneous translations in six languages were provided in the main meeting room throughout the weekend. Several bilingual meetings took place. Multilingual staff and volunteers were placed in key areas to help convention-goers find their way around and get their questions answered. We provided discount travel packages to the convention from as many places as possible. We had greeters stationed at the airports on the heavy arrival dates to assist travel-weary and bewildered members. The result was that we had the most diverse worldwide celebration of recovery in our history.

It is in this spirit that we would like to plan for all world conventions. We plan to translate the registration flyer from now on. We plan to continue to provide simultaneous translations equipment at all world conventions. We will make any accommodation possible for members with special needs. We plan to negotiate discount travel packages wherever possible.

We need your help. Don't wait until you register to tell us if you require translations assistance or have special needs. Please contact us as soon as possible so that we can arrange for the things you need. We also need your ideas. We are committed to making every world convention a special celebration of recovery for all who attend. Any input you have that will help us achieve this goal is more than welcome.

Please direct all questions, requests, and input to the World Service Office, (818) 773-9999, extension #172.

Thank you,
Board of Directors
World Convention Corporation

WCNA XXVI Registration

PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION CLEARLY

Last Name _____ First Name _____
Address _____
City _____ Province/State/Country _____
Zip/Postal Code _____ Telephone () _____
Additional Registrants _____

"Confirmation notices will not be mailed to you for any registration received after August 1st."

EVENT	PRICE	QUANTITY	TOTAL
Registration (before 7/1/96)	\$30.00 X	_____ = \$	_____
Late Registration (after 7/1/96)	\$40.00 X	_____ = \$	_____
**Stand-Up Comedy Show	\$15.00 X	_____ = \$	_____
**Live Concert	\$30.00 X	_____ = \$	_____
**Saturday Jazz Breakfast	\$15.00 X	_____ = \$	_____
*11oz. Coffee Mug	\$7.00 X	_____ = \$	_____
*Heavy Embroidered Tee-shirt	\$15.00 X	M _____ L _____ XL _____ XXL _____ = \$	_____

*Limited to one of each per registrant paid before 7/1/96.

See "SPECIAL MERCHANDISE OFFER" on back page.

**Limited seats available.

Newcomer Donation: \$ _____

Total Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

METHOD OF PAYMENT: U.S. Check Money Order Credit Card

Enclosed \$ _____ or charge my: AMEX VISA MasterCard Discover Diners Club

Charge Card # _____

Signature _____ Expiration Date _____

Do you need translations? If yes, what language? _____

Please specify any special needs: _____

Please fax credit card registrations to the WSO at (818) 700-0700

or

Make checks payable to WCNA XXVI and mail to:

WCNA XXVI

c/o World Service Office, Inc.

PO Box 9999

Van Nuys, CA 91409-9099, USA

For more registration information, please call 818-773-9999 ext. 200.

Ground Transportation

- The Lambert International Airport is approximately a thirty minute drive to downtown St. Louis.
 - The MetroLink Rail is located on the upper level of the Main Terminal. The cost is \$1 each way.
 - Taxi cabs are available outside the baggage claim area. The approximate fare is \$18-\$21 one-way.
 - Shuttle transportation via Airport Express is located on the lower level of the Main Terminal at exits 7 & 13, and on the lower level of the East Terminal. The fare is \$8 one-way, \$14 round-trip.
- From Amtrak St. Louis Station and the Greyhound Bus Station take the MetroLink.
- If you are driving to St. Louis, parking is approximately \$10 per day.

Hotels

WCNA XXVI will be held at the America's Convention Center

- 1 Adam's Mark** — This deluxe hotel serves as headquarters for the convention and is located six blocks from the Convention Center. Rooms are \$99.00/night.
- 2 Missouri Athletic Club** — This private executive athletic club boasts very comfortable historic sleeping rooms located two blocks from the Convention Center. Room rate includes continental breakfast and full use of the all athletic facilities. Rooms are \$85.00/night (no triple or quad accommodations). Suites with one queen bed are \$99.00/night.
- 3 Doubletree Downtown Suites** — This quaint European-style boutique hotel offers beautifully decorated suites and is located immediately across the street from the Convention Center. Suites with one or two beds are \$99.00/night.
- 4 Drury Inn Convention Center** — This moderately priced hotel situated in a historic building located two blocks from the Convention Center offers free Quickstart breakfast, coffee, and parking for all guests. Rooms are \$89.00/night.
- 5 Drury Inn Union Station*** — This economy hotel is located seventeen blocks from the Convention Center along the Metrolink line. Rooms include free Quickstart breakfast, coffee, and parking for all guests. Rooms are \$89.00/night.
- 6 Hampton Inn Union Station*** — This economy hotel is located nineteen blocks from the Convention Center and is accessible to the Metrolink line. Rooms include free Quickstart breakfast, coffee, and parking for all guests. Rooms are \$85.00/night.
- 7 Holiday Inn Convention Center** — This moderately priced hotel is located on the west side of the Convention Center. Guests are offered free coffee in the morning, and free cribs for children are available upon request. Rooms are \$79.00/night.
- 8 Holiday Inn Riverfront** — This budget hotel is located five blocks from the Convention Center. Suites include kitchens, and pots and pans are available for a small deposit. Rooms are \$69.00/night. Suites with one or two beds are \$79.00/night.
- 9 Hyatt Regency*** — This deluxe hotel situated in historic Union Station is among the most beautiful Hyatts in the USA. It is attached to the old train station which offers many shops and eateries. The hotel is located fifteen blocks from the Convention Center along the Metrolink line. Rooms are \$99.00/night.
- 10 Marriott's Pavilion** — This moderately priced hotel, offering free cribs upon request, is located ten blocks from the Convention Center. Rooms are \$85.00/night.

* Limited Bus Shuttles between these hotels and the Convention Center will be available between 11:00pm and 3:00am when the Metrolink is not running.

WCNA XXVI Hotel Reservation

PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION CLEARLY

IMPORTANT NOTE: It is very important that your reservations are made BEFORE the August 1st cut-off date. Convention rates may not apply and rooms may not be available after above cut-off date.

READ CAREFULLY: Confirmation will be sent by the hotel to the individual named in Part I. If more than one room is required, this form may be photocopied. If confirmation has not been received within thirty days following your acknowledgement from the Housing Bureau, contact assigned hotel directly.

Send To:
WCNA Housing Bureau
c/o St. Louis Convention & Visitors Commission
10 South Broadway, Suite 1000
St. Louis, MO 63102 USA

or Fax to (314) 621-9467

No telephone reservations will be accepted

PART I

Last Name _____ First Name _____
Address _____
City _____ Province/State/Country _____
Zip/Postal Code _____ Telephone () _____

PART II

NOTE: Rooms are assigned on a first-come/first-serve basis in the order received. If your first choice is not available, assignment will be made at next available choice. An acknowledgment of your room assignment will be mailed to you by the Housing Bureau. All changes and cancellations must be made directly with the hotel.

Select four choices from participating hotels. Enter name below:

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____
(first choice) (second choice) (third choice) (fourth choice)

Arrival date _____ Departure date _____

	Names of additional occupants:	Check room type:
Please check:	1. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Single—One Bed/One Person
<input type="checkbox"/> smoking	2. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Double—One Bed/Two Persons
<input type="checkbox"/> non-smoking	3. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Double/Double—Two Bed/Two Persons
		<input type="checkbox"/> Triple—Two Bed/Three Persons
		<input type="checkbox"/> Quad—Two Bed/Four Persons
		<input type="checkbox"/> *Suite—One Bed/One or Two Persons
		<input type="checkbox"/> *Suite—Two Bed/Two to Four Persons

*Suite accommodations refer only to hotels #2, #3, and #8 as described on the previous page.

PART III

An advance deposit of \$100 is required for each room. Forms will be returned to sender if received without deposit. Checks should be made payable to the **WCNA Housing Bureau**. The **WCNA Housing Bureau** accepts no liability once deposits are transferred to the assigned hotel. Deposits will be forfeited for any cancellation not made in writing directly with the hotel at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled arrival.

Enclosed \$ _____ or charge my: AMEX VISA MasterCard Discover Diners Club

Charge Card # _____

Signature _____ Expiration Date _____



- **ATTRACTIONS**
- A** America's Convention Center
- B** Union Station
- C** Greyhound Bus Terminal

- **HOTELS**
- 1** Adam's Mark
- 2** Missouri Athletic Club
- 3** Doubletree Downtown Suites
- 4** Drury Inn Convention Center
- 5** Drury Inn Union Station
- 6** Hampton Inn Union Station
- 7** Holiday Inn Convention Center
- 8** Holiday Inn Riverfront
- 9** Hyatt Regency
- 10** Marriott's Pavillion

METROLINK

Station **M**

Route - - -

Airport



Discount Airfare

Special discounted airfare is available on American Airlines as follows:

- A discount is being offered to St. Louis from all American airline cities in the United States; Canada; San Juan, Puerto Rico; St. Thomas; St. Croix; Bermuda; and the Bahamas. Reservations can be made directly with American Airlines by calling (800) 433-1790 and refer them to **Star file #S3086PA**.

You must give them the Star file number in order to receive the discount.

- For international flights from Europe, Central and South America, special rates are available for travel no more than seven days and six nights. To purchase tickets, please call your local American Airlines office. Ask for the international congress desk and give them the **Star file #S3086PA**.

You must give them the Star file number in order to receive the discount.

Additional discounts to St. Louis from all international cities are available for groups of ten or more traveling together to the convention. For more information, please contact the WSO at 19-1(818)773-9999, extension #172.

Special Convention Merchandise Offer

For the first time, you can now purchase a convention tee-shirt and mug with your registration. In our effort to assist registrants in obtaining convention merchandise, a special seven-ounce heavyweight embroidered tee-shirt and a large eleven-ounce coffee mug can now be purchased if you register before the July 1, 1996 general registration cut-off date.

This merchandise is limited to one of each item per paid registration. Please refer to the registration form to place your order.

All purchased merchandise will be available to be picked up on-site at the convention.

Wish to Speak?

Speakers must be at least eight years clean for main meetings, and at least five years clean for workshops. If you would like to be considered as a speaker or would like to recommend someone for consideration, please submit a tape along with the speaker's name, address, telephone number, and clean date.

Consideration will also be given to individuals without a tape if they are recommended by their area or regional service committee. This recommendation should also be accompanied by the speaker's name, address, telephone number, and clean date.

All tapes and speaker recommendations must be received by May 1, 1996.

All submissions should be sent to the:
WCNA XXVI Program Committee
 c/o World Service Office, Inc.
 PO Box 9999
 Van Nuys, CA 91409-9099 USA

Volunteering to Help?

If you would like to volunteer to help at the convention, or would like to chair a marathon meeting, please report to the convention information booth located in the Convention Center beginning Wednesday, August 28, 1996.

You are invited to join us at
WCNA XXVI
**Show Me
How to Live**
August 29, 30, 31, September 1, 1996
St. Louis, Missouri
featuring
Meetings, Workshops
Concert, Comedy Show
Nightly Coffeehouse, Dances
NA Art Gallery, Pool Party
Jazz Breakfast

This year's Host Committee welcomes you to enjoy the wide scope of restaurants, bistros, delis and shops. From shopping at Union Station or the St. Louis Center, to strolling the cobblestone streets of Laclede's Landing, or attending a Cardinals Baseball game, St. Louis has something for everyone. Forest Park, and the coffee shops and restaurants of the Central West End, are just a short trip away.

Take a horse drawn carriage ride or attend the annual St. Louis Blues Festival being held the same weekend.

*So meet us in St. Louis, the Gateway City, and
Show Me How to Live!*

other addicts becomes easier. Keeping focused on our primary purpose and surrendering to the group conscience allows the fellowship to be shaped by a loving Higher Power.

When I find myself judging and finding fault with you, I need to focus more on humility. It prepares me to set aside my obsessive and sick thinking to make room for open-mindedness and guidance from a loving Higher Power. I find it especially helpful to be aware of my own shortcomings when I begin to focus on yours. We need each other's help, acceptance, and encouragement, not each other's criticism or rejection. Choosing to smile rather than sneer or offering a hug instead of walking away isn't too hard to do, and it always makes me feel better.

Lately, it seems that our primary purpose has been to promote disunity and find fault with individuals and NA as a whole. With an attitude of selflessness, anonymity, gratitude, and goodwill, we can nurture and preserve unity and ourselves. Leaving behind our personal agendas and prejudices, we become free to help ourselves and others. After all, the ties that bind us together are stronger than those things that would tear us apart, as long as we continue to work toward understanding each other and the traditions.

It seems that the more we focus on what's wrong, we begin to lose sight of what's right and what this program has to offer. Our common welfare is unity, as Tradition One states. It is the spirit that joins members around the world in a spiritual fellowship that has the power to change people's

lives. Although I am incapable of removing my own shortcomings, I am responsible for the choices I make and how I choose to behave. Today, I choose to care and share the NA way. I choose unity, love, goodwill, and knowledge of God's will for me—to the best of my ability. Today, I choose to practice these principles in all my affairs.

*Love and gratitude,
Marc S*

I was misled

From NA Today, the Australia regional newsletter

I was misled. I'm trying to be honest, not melodramatic, but the fact is that some NA members gave me a bum steer.

I have only ever heard the regional service committee meetings described in the following terms:

"It's a bloody shit-fight."

"It's a room full of sick addicts egotripping."

"It's run by an old boys' clique."

"It's just politics."

I'm not exaggerating. Such descriptions are the only kind I've heard. Naturally, I avoided RSC meetings as long as possible.

I've always seen some sort of service as essential to my recovery. People who have what I want are people with a commitment to service at some level. And that's how I've recovered so far—by following examples.

I was only being flippant that day I volunteered to be alternate ASR. Then I suddenly got landed with the ASR position itself. That meant I had to go down to Sydney for that 'bloody shit-fight.' I felt sick.

So I turned up. And I was scared and self-conscious. But what I experienced was wonderful. I drove home high as a kite and with a love for NA that overwhelmed me.

What I saw was about twenty addicts who love the NA fellowship, trying their hardest to help addicts all over Australia. I thought about how only a few years ago, everyone in this room was alone somewhere writing themselves off. And here they are putting ten-and-a-half hours (!!!) of concentrated thought into how to help other people.

I'm very grateful for that experience and very proud to be a member of this fellowship.

If there's one addict out there who decides, from now on, not to believe everything they hear about service committees, then I reckon this article will be worth printing.

Kerry

A universal program

From NA Post, the Manhattan, New York, area newsletter:

Narcotics Anonymous is definitely a universal program. In this fellowship, I can go to a place I've never been before, not knowing anyone before I go, and end up being welcomed with open arms.

I recently went on a vacation to Puerto Rico, and I didn't know anyone in recovery there. I thought I would be treated like a stranger, that I would again feel like an outsider. To my surprise, I was received and treated like one of the family, and it made me feel right at home.

I have an issue with rejection. I've always felt different. I used and sold drugs to feel accepted. In NA, I've found that I don't have to have money or drugs in my pocket to be accepted.

The recovering addicts in Puerto Rico proved this to me. Going to meetings in the Greater New York Region and being welcomed is one thing, but going to an area with a different culture and language and being accepted gives one a feeling of gratitude for the consistency and beauty of this fellowship.

While in Puerto Rico, I was taken on a guided tour, taken out dancing, invited into people's homes, and was even asked to qualify in a meeting, all by recovering addicts who had never seen me before. It was the first time in my life that I felt comfortable meeting new people.

The recovery in Puerto Rico is a powerful experience. In fact, I attended the first year anniversary of a seventeen-year-old addict whose younger brother was also in the rooms and working on 10 months! This tells me that you're never too young to hear the message of hope and recovery. The program works if you work it.

"Somos un Milagro," or "We're a Miracle," was one of the slogans of the Second Puerto Rico NA Convention. I truly believe that each day I live without picking up is a miracle for me. I want to say thanks to the addicts in the rooms all over the world for carrying the message of hope to those seeking recovery from addiction. I also want to especially thank NA in Puerto Rico for showing me how it works there as well as here.

RC, New York

Recovery brewing: How to perk up your clean time

From The New Life Messenger, the Ottawa, Ontario, area newsletter:

I'm an addict, and my name is Rick. I could probably share many experiences with all of you, but today I would like to share about one of my most important ones: making coffee.

By the time I got around to making coffee for the first time, I had been around NA for about fourteen months. But, to be honest, those were not completely abstinent months. I had relapsed on three different occasions. I remember how I felt when I came back to NA after my last relapse. It is not something I ever want to feel again. It's a pain that cannot be described with words. All I can say is that if you've been there, you know, and if you haven't, I pray you never find out.

As I walked into the New Awareness Group, I was greeted by a gentleman I knew from my previous encoun-

to come back, interrupting people while sharing.

People using meetings to air personal grievances against others who were sitting in the same meeting. Emphasis on personalities before principles. Acting out personal vendettas at the area service committee meeting. People refusing to work the steps, and joking about it, boasting about it, in meetings. Women hating men, and starting two meetings, one of which prohibited the use of the word "God." "Goddess" was mandated. In the other, men who asked to sit in on the meeting once when their meeting place was closed were denied entrance. People, men and women, acting out in serious and highly detrimental ways, then boasting about it in meetings, actually saying, "it's for my recovery." Denial. Isolation. The sexual exploitation of newcomers being called a "step," and then "worked" more than any of the others. Turning away from and rejecting those of us (and there were a few) who honestly tried to carry the message of recovery. In short, absolute ignorance of the traditions.

The NA I came into was gone. I tried my best to change what I could through service, sharing about recovery, working with newcomers, and generally trying to set a good example. To their credit, so did others. The majority, however, continued to run with the disease, and a handful of people can't save a whole area.

That's why I left, for as the Serenity Prayer says, I had the "wisdom to know" I could do no more to salvage my fellowship. What I have seen in the other fellowship is, plain and

simple, recovery. Adherence to the steps and traditions, period. For my recovery, I need to be around people who have what I want and am working toward, not those who reflect where I came from.

Other NA members, not connected to me, also went. There was a sizable exodus of people leaving NA completely, or at least adding the other fellowship's meetings to their recovery. I myself had to be in one or the other, not both.

In the six months since I've left, not one of my erstwhile NA friends remains. This area subscribes to the theory that if you go to the other fellowship, you are beneath contempt, and that's what happened to me. Utter ostracism. This is the first time I have said why I left NA. When I left, I left with dignity, and very quietly. Yet others shunned, ignored, or openly slandered me. One woman frequently and vociferously spread the vicious lie that in the other fellowship, members don't drink, but they do drugs. The implication was that I left NA so I could relapse, exactly the opposite of the real reason.

So after two-and-a-half years, I'm without friends, without a home, the fellowship I loved, and a community. I feel betrayed. I did all that was asked of me and more, personally and in dealing with others. I carried the message. I worked a strong program. I sponsored women. My feeling is that the program of NA—and that of the other fellowship—is very hard, but worthwhile. Particularly when the alternatives are what they are. I've vigorously worked a program, and I really don't understand why others

can't do the same. I don't see NA as a place to go because no one will accept me anywhere else. I don't see NA as the place that should give license to act any old selfish way someone wants. NA is a place to go when we want to learn how to be acceptable by becoming better people, responsible and productive, as you say.

NA used to be that kind of place. It is truly a shame that, in my area at least, it no longer is. Working hard for the goal of recovery is too hard for the members in that area, now. Virtual, and in many cases, actual relapse is the trend, and acting "as if"—not as if you were into recovery, but as if you were using—is apparently mandatory.

What a disservice to the newcomer, that forgotten person! What a twisted interpretation of the Twelfth Step! What complete rejection of the traditions! To what end? Members leaving, newcomers not coming back, relapse, death.

Sure, every fellowship and area has its problems. I'm sure that the ones I mentioned above have, at one time or another, been part of every group and area. The difference is that most groups and areas recognize problems and deal with them to strengthen the group and keep its primary purpose alive. The area I was from had lost all consciousness of its primary purpose.

Traditions are as vital as the steps. The NA I came to emphasized and adhered to both, and gave me a solid foundation in recovery. It is truly a shame that those now in that area won't have the same opportunity. It may cost them their lives.

KV, California

Warts and all

NA is a horrible place to hang out. The rooms are filled with people who don't know how to act, people who hurt others, people who are unemployed, people who need a bath. They all get together at regular intervals in church basements, where they indulge in unbridled self-absorption. They often don't respect the property they are renting, and lose it as a consequence. Sometimes they're even cruel to one another, sexist, racist, elitist, confrontational.

That's one view.

But that view pays more attention to what's wrong, rather than what's so incredibly right that it can hardly be described.

NA is a beautiful place to be. The rooms are filled with people who will forgo sleep, empty their wallets, and drive for hours just to help one addict stay clean for one day. They are people who seem to know exactly the right thing to say to comfort someone in pain. They are people who are CEOs of large organizations, taking home monstrously large paychecks, who never mention their glamorous jobs. They are people who spend long, quiet hours helping others in the community. They are people who devote

the bulk of their free time year after year to being of service to NA.

There is a program of Twelve Steps that calls on the people who commit themselves to those principles to be humble, to be compassionate, to say they're sorry and try not to do the same thing again, to believe in something larger than themselves, and to view the world with a sense of wonder and hope.

There are meetings. Places where people smile at one another between sips of coffee (a brew that is usually nothing to smile about). Safe havens where addicts who feel they are in danger of using can talk about it, confident that everyone in the room has been driven by the same obsession. Little islands of sanity and dignity in an insane world.

We came to NA because our lives were horrible. We'd hang out with anyone who would give us drugs. We didn't care about their politics, their prejudices, or how often they bathed. Chances are, our own ideas and bodies stank as badly as anybody's.

I've been slowly getting freedom from some character defects that have been ruling my life for many years in recovery. I was judgmental, bored in meetings, disgusted by seeing others act out in ways I didn't have to anymore. It's embarrassing to me that I could be in so much denial, be so self-righteous and mean, hurt so many people with the things I said and sometimes just the look on my face. I even noticed that people flinched sometimes, but never paid enough extended attention to anyone else to realize that I might have really wounded someone. If I thought any-

thing at all, it was that so-and-so was just too sensitive.

But lately I've become more aware of my mean behavior, and I've achieved a measure of freedom from some of it. I've come to understand that I need NA as much now as I did in the very beginning of my recovery. I'm a lot sicker than I ever imagined, and NA looks a lot better to me than it did a year ago. No, I haven't become naive. All the stuff I talked about at the beginning of this story hasn't gone away. But it isn't in my face any more. And I don't believe I can change it by constantly complaining about it, or even by being angry about it. Instead I find myself more in tune with the beauty of NA. There is something amazing and mysterious and wonderful happening to me. I, who used to frown at the floor most of the time, have been surprised by an unplanned smile forming on my face just because I was happy to see someone at a meeting. Sometimes I feel transported by a pure and uncomplicated joy. Unfortunately, it stops as soon as I notice it because it's just too scary and unfamiliar. But like everything else that's started out feeling scary and unfamiliar in my recovery, I just need to get used to it. I feel hope rising in my heart like I haven't felt in ten years, and it's welcome there.

I love NA, warts and all.

BG, California

From our readers



In the solution again

Hi. I am an addict, and my name is Wendy. I read a story in the magazine from someone who had relapsed and returned, and it gave me some hope. So I am writing my story now, hoping that someone can get the same hope from mine.

My recovery started in April of 1987. I didn't come into NA for myself. At the time, I was married and I thought *he* had a problem. We split up (many times) and he decided to go into treatment.

When he was in treatment, I decided to go to meetings with him. I had never heard of Narcotics Anonymous before this. Time passed, and I heard things that made me want to stick around. Eventually, he went back to his old ways and I continued on in recovery. I really felt like I found a place where I belonged. I felt real comfortable being at meetings and listening to people share. For a long time, I just kept coming. I stayed clean and just kept coming. At the time, there weren't a whole lot of NA meetings around, and the one I went to most often was like a social event.

At the meetings I heard things like, "don't pick up and you won't get high," "get a sponsor," and "work the steps." Eventually, I asked someone to be my sponsor. This person asked

if I was willing to go to any lengths to stay clean. When I said yes, she agreed to sponsor me. We worked the steps, and I thought I lived them. Maybe I did live them for a while, but as time went on and recovery started going to the back of my head instead of being my number-one priority, I stopped living them. I started getting very comfortable in my life—complacent, you might say. I was still writing on my steps, but I think that's all I did.

When I had five or six years clean, I thought that I probably didn't need to go to as many meetings. Boy, was I wrong! At this point, I was in the middle of writing a Fourth Step for the second time and had also gotten into a relationship with someone who was using.

It seemed like things were okay with this relationship for a little while (I was in denial). My meeting attendance really dropped off. My mind started wandering away from recovery and into the disease of addiction. This eventually led me to picking up and using after seven years of being clean.

This relapse was definitely a process. I was on the road to relapse instead of recovery. Being in this relationship, my disease started telling me that it was okay to have one of

whatever. And then, I did. My relapse lasted for four months. I lost all contact with myself and just about everyone I knew in NA.

I did finally talk to some recovering addicts and told them where I was and what I did. They were very supportive and told me that no matter what happened, they still loved me. I have now been back to NA for four months and a couple of days. I have gotten myself a new sponsor, and I am working the steps. I have committed to a home group and have gotten active in other groups.

In the process of writing out Step One, I came to the realization that I still had a reservation or I wouldn't have chosen to be in this relationship. Reading *It Works: How and Why* made me realize this reservation was still hanging over my head. I went to a convention, and there I received from the unity in this fellowship the courage and strength I needed. I am no longer in the relationship, and it is the best thing that has happened to me. Now the focus is on me. I'm able to look at me without any other distractions, and I know it will all be okay.

The people in Narcotics Anonymous are the best. I have so many wonderful friends in my life today. It's overwhelming. If it weren't for them giving me acceptance and loving me through all this, I wouldn't have returned. My sponsor is wonderful and has a very powerful message to pass on to me. She is willing to guide me through anything that comes my way. There is so much trust in our relationship. My Higher Power is also back into my life and I believe again.

This program called Narcotics Anonymous is the best thing that has ever happened to me. I know today that I need not pick up anything or anyone. You guys have saved my butt, and all I have to do now is the footwork.

For a while, I had a hard time accepting the fact that I relapsed after seven years, but now I know it's okay. I am okay and will stay okay as long as I'm in recovery and working it.

WW, New Hampshire

Making the effort to get it

I just found out about this magazine a few weeks ago. I've really gotten a lot out of what I've seen from my NA family in the magazine. It's given me a lot of gratitude.

I've been clean since 26 August 1994, when I was arrested. I started working the steps in September 1995, learning the meaning of words like "denial," "recovery," and "open-minded." There's just something special for me about going to meetings and listening to the sharing. The people in our meetings do care.

I found a Power greater than myself a long time ago, but never before just recently did I admit to myself or another person that I was an addict. I am reminded of that every time I attend a meeting.

SS, Washington

Comin' up

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Canada

British Columbia: 10-11 Aug.; Camp Bananarama; Camp Nassichuck, Powell River; info: (604) 483-2131; 5452 Maple Ave., Powell River, British Columbia V8A 4N1

2) 23-25 Aug.; Oh-Yah-Man '96 Campout; info: (604) 832-3718 or (604) 833-4837; Oh-Yah-Man, Box 23, Salmon Arm, British Columbia V1E 4N2

Nova Scotia: 2-4 Aug.; 7th Nova Scotia Area Convention; Truro; info: (902) 477-1983; Box 65, Central Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 2L4

Ontario: 12-14 July; North Western Ontario Area Convention; Thunder Bay; info: (807) 345-6936 or (807) 768-0879

2) 20 July; NA Family Recovery Days Boat Cruise; Midland Dock, Midland; info: (705) 538-0672; Box 29030, Barrie, Ontario L4N 7W1

New Zealand

North Island: 20-22 Sept.; Aoteroa New Zealand Regional Convention; Flock House Estate, Bulls; info: Box 133, Palmerston North, New Zealand

Norway

Vest Agder: 16-18 Aug.; Norwegian NA Convention; info: 47/38095521; NA-Kristiansand, Postbox 58, 4601 Kristiansand S, Norway

Portugal

Lisbon: 26-28 July; 13th European Convention and Conference; Centro Cultural de Belem, Lisbon; rsvns: Hotel da Torre 351/1/3636262, Hotel Atlantico 351/1/4685170, Hotel Estoril Sol 351/1/4868541, Pensao Setubalense 351/1/3636639;

United Kingdom

West Midlands: 9-11 Aug.; United Kingdom Convention; Birmingham Metropole Hotel, National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham; rsvns: 44/121/7804242; info: 44/171/2729040 or 44/171/7300009; UKCNA-10, c/o NA Helpline, 38 Ebury Street, London SW1, England

United States

California: 28 July; Bay Cities Area Rockfest '96; Wilson Park, Torrance; info: (310) 325-3776 or (310) 542-1546 or e-mail: bigdaddy@winteractive.com;

2) 10 Aug.; Southern California Region presents NA's 43rd Birthday Celebration, Bren Events Center, UC Irvine Campus; info: (714) 824-5050

Connecticut: 27-29 Sep.; United Shoreline Area Spiritual Weekend, Enders Island, Mystic; info: (860) 767-3299; USANA Spiritual Weekend, Box 354, Centerbrook, CT 06409

Florida: 4-7 July; 15th Florida Regional Convention; Grenelefe Resort, Haines City; rsvns: (813) 422-7511; info: (813) 874-2300; FRCNA-15, c/o RSO, 2940 W Columbus Dr., Tampa, FL 33607

2) 9-11 Aug.; Uncoast Area Convention; Holiday Inn Sunspree, Daytona Beach; rsvns: (800) 767-4471; info: (352) 338-7929 or e-mail: mikek@gmv.fdt.net; UCACNA, Box 12151, Gainesville, FL 32604

Georgia: 8-11 Aug.; Midtown Atlanta Area Convention; Radisson Hotel, Courtland & International Blvds.; rsvns: (800) 333-3333 or (404) 659-6500; info: (404) 753-5206; MACNA, Box 17557, Atlanta, GE 30316

Hawaii: 12-14 July; Maui Gathering, Camp Keanae; info: (808) 879-6412; Maui Gathering, Box 3002, Kahului, HI 96732

Idaho: 12-14 July; Southern Idaho Region Serenity in the Wilderness; Chemeketan Campground, Sawtooth Recreational Area, Stanley; info: (208) 467-9910; HDASCNA, Box 9291, Nampa, ID 83652-9291

Illinois: 12-14 July; Honest Beginner's/Joliet Area Camping Trip; White Oaks Campground, Utica; info: (708) 759-2593 or (815) 755-9058

Iowa: 5-7 July; Iowa Regional Convention; Holiday Inn and Convention Center, Waterloo; rsvns: (319) 233-7560; info: (319) 233-2906; IRCNA, Box 1886, Waterloo, IA 50704

Kentucky: 20-22 Sept.; Western Kentucky Area Campout; info: (502) 443-5874; Box 2866, Paducah, KY 42002

Maine: 20-22 Sep.; Southern Maine Area Conv.; Notre Dame Spiritual Center, Alfred; info: (207) 832-5129; Box 5309, Portland, ME 04101

Massachusetts: 19-21 July; Western Massachusetts Area Convention; Springfield Marriott; rsvns: (800) 228-9290 or (413) 781-7111; info: (413) 536-2468; WMACNA, Box 5914, Springfield, MA 01101

Michigan: 4-7 July; Michigan Regional Convention; Flint Radisson; rsvns: (800) 333-3333; info: (810) 545-2179; Box 7116, Novi, MI 48376

Minnesota: 16-18 Aug.; 2nd "Just For the Weekend" Campout; Whispering Pines Campground, Houston; rsvns: (507) 281-4923; info: (507) 289-4104; Campout, 220 13th Avenue SE, Rochester, MN 55904

Missouri: 29 Aug. - 1 Sept.; 26th World Convention of Narcotics Anonymous; St. Louis; info: (818) 773-9999, ext. 200; WCNA-26, Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409

Nebraska: 20-21 July; Eastern Nebraska Area Convention; Airport Ramada Inn; rsvns: (800) 999-1240; info: (402) 330-6090; ENNA, Box 3937, Omaha, NE 68103

2) 16-18 Aug.; Wyo-braska Unity Days; Camp Kiwanis, Riverside 200, Scotssbluff; info: (308) 783-2370; Box 262, Minatare, NE 69356

Nevada: 19-21 July; 5th California-Arizona-Nevada Area Convention; Riverside Resort, Laughlin; rsvns: (800) 227-3849; info: (520) 763-9734; CANAC, Box 21975, Bullhead City, AZ 86439

New Hampshire: 19-21 July; Seacoast Area Campout, Freedom Under the Stars; Camp Wakuta, Freedom, New Hampshire; info: Campout, Box 682, Dover, NH 03821

New York: 26-28 July; Northern New York Regional Conv.; Wells College Campus, Aurora; info: (716) 467-1234; Box 1425, Rochester, NY 14603

North Carolina: 4-7 July; Carolina Regional Convention; Holiday Inn Four Seasons, Greensboro; rsvns: (910) 292-9161; info: (910) 282-6689

2) 19-21 July; 3rd New Hope Area Convention; Omni Durham Hotel; rsvns: (800) THE-OMNI or (919) 683-6664; info: (919) 409-3190; NHACNA, Box 25043, Durham, NC 27702

3) 27-29 Sept.; Central Piedmont Area Convention; Holiday Inn, Jake Alexander Blvd. South, Salisbury; info: (704) 663-0560 or (704) 637-9027; CPANA, Box 1294, Mooresville, NC 28115

Ohio: 12-14 July; 1st Dayton Area Convention; Days Inn South, Dayton; rsvns: (513) 847-8422; info: (513) 274-3380 or (513) 252-5840; DASCNACC, Box 578, 3470 Salem Ave., Dayton, OH 45406

2) 19-21 July; GLASCNA North Coast Recovery Roast; Tri-County Kamp Inn; 17147 GAR Highway, Montville; info: (216) 481-8353

3) 16-18 Aug.; Gateway to Freedom; Holiday Inn, Westlake; rsvns: (800) 762-7416 or (216) 871-6000; info: (216) 486-6644; Tri-Area Convention, Box 999, Shaker Heights, OH 44120

Oregon: 16-18 Aug. 1996; Campout & Fish Fry; Canal Creek, Waldport; info: Newport NA Fish Fry, PO Box 2071, Waldport, OR 97394

Pennsylvania: 2-4 Aug.; Unity Weekend; Brookdale Campground, Meadville; info: (814) 336-3527; Box 1281, Meadville, PA 16335

Puerto Rico: 26-28 July; Puerto Rico Regional Convention; Condado Plaza Hotel, San Juan; rsvns: (800) 468-8588 or (809) 721-1000; info: (809) 274-0488; Unidos Podemos, PO Box 362313, San Juan, PR 00936

South Carolina: 16-18 Aug.; Carolina Regional Awareness Weekend; Ramada Inn, Clemson; rsvns: (800) 288-2828 or (803) 654-7501; info: (704) 566-1974; 1327 Beeman Pl. #9, Greensboro, NC 27408

Tennessee: 5-7 July; 5th Annual Fourth of July Campout; Cookeville; info: (615) 520-0996

Texas: 5-7 July; Houston Area Convention; Houston; rsvns: (800) 465-4329; info: (713) 473-7367; HACNA, Box 7649, Houston, TX 77270

Tennessee: 16-18 Aug.; Unity in the Mountains; Kingsport Inn, Kingsport; rsvns: (423) 247-3133; info: (423) 357-7464; MACNA, Box 5609, Johnson City, TN 37603

2) 2 Sept.; Greater Smokey Mountain Area Unity Day; Panther Creek State Park; info: (800) 249-0012 or (423) 453-3924

Utah: 19-21 July; Utah Regional Campvention; Weber Memorial Park, Ogden; info: (801) 489-1321; URCNA, Box 994, Springville, UT 84663

Vermont: 16-18 Aug.; Back to Basics Campout; Wallingford; info: (802) 773-5575

Virginia: 9-11 Aug.; 10th Almost Heaven Area Convention; 4-H Education Center, Front Royal, Virginia; info: (304) 274-1522; CCC, Box 3329, Martinsburg, WV 25410

Wisconsin: 9-11 Aug.; Kettle Moraine Area Campout; Camp Y-Koda, Sheboygan; info: (414) 458-7078; Box 1022, Sheboygan, WI 53082

Wyoming: 27-29 Sept.; Convention on Unity; Rawlins; (307) 875-5867; info: CUNA, Box 325, Green River, WY 82935

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The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on NA 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 NA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every NA 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. NA, 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 NA 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.

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