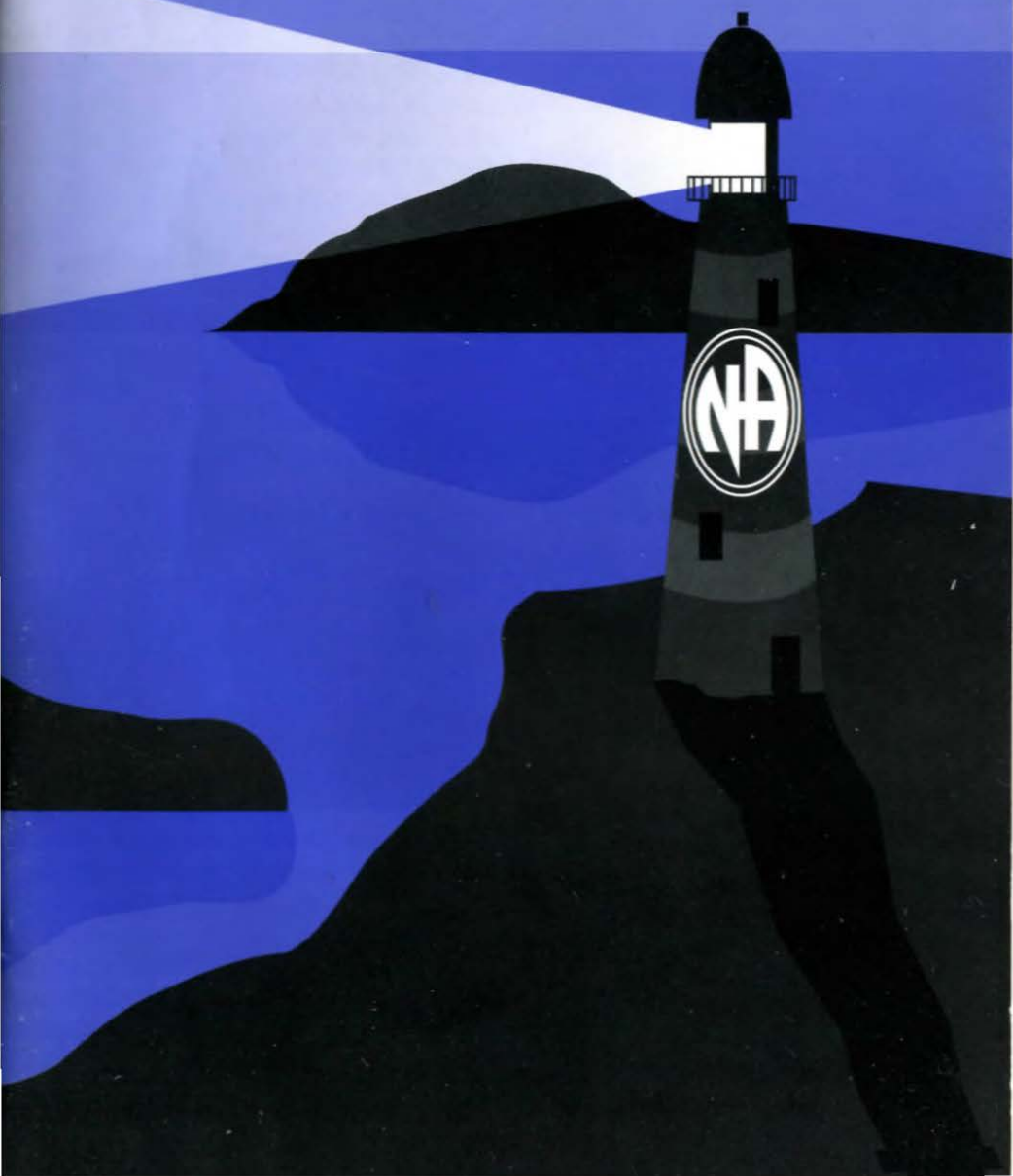


THE NA Way MAGAZINE®

January 1997 \$1.75 US \$2.50 Canadian



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
Van Nuys, CA 91409-9099
(818) 773-9999

volume fifteen, number one

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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. Periodical US postage paid at Chatsworth, CA and at additional entry points. **POSTMASTER:** Please send address changes to The NA Way Magazine, PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409-9099.



From the editor

WSO board to propose new NA Way Magazine

For those of you who may be new subscribers and to recap for those who have been around awhile, we have been discussing for about a year ways to deal with the problems facing *The NA Way Magazine*.

The magazine has been plagued for several years with a dwindling subscriber base. This has happened despite of our best efforts to market the magazine and improve its editorial quality. In fact, our marketing projections predict that only with the most unlikely scenario (price increase to \$29.95 a year, marketing efforts tripled and response to those efforts doubled) would we be able to break even—by the year 2000!

We're not interested in turning a profit, but we're not interested in spending fellowship money on something that isn't serving the fellowship, either.

Last April we notified the fellowship that it seemed prudent to discontinue publication of *The NA Way* due to the poor response and its projected \$136,000 loss for 1996. We believed that the money could be devoted to services that served more of the fellowship or were more essential. When we approached the fellowship with our recommendation, you re-

sponded with a resounding: no way! At least, you said, not until some other possibilities had been explored.

Since WSC'95, when that happened, we have been exploring those other possibilities and have come up with something we think will truly serve our worldwide fellowship.

We propose expanding the content of *The NA Way Magazine* to include material that currently appears in the *WSO Newslines*, the *Conference Digest*, the *H&I News*, and the *PI News*, and changing the frequency to four times a year. We further propose changing the format to 8½ x 11 inches and implementing an attractive new design. And last, but certainly not least, we propose that the new NA Way be distributed *free* to the combined mailing lists of the all the above publications, and *translated* into French, German, Portuguese, and Spanish for distribution to our members who speak those languages. We can do this for about \$40,000 less than we're currently spending on *The NA Way* and the other newsletters.

We want the new magazine to look great. We want it to be a celebration of our members and of recovery. We want it to be a place where local trusted servants can be honored for their efforts. We want it to be informative about news and issues that affect NA as a whole. We want it to

have open access, where members from Calcutta to Kalamazoo have the opportunity to write and have it published internationally. We want it to reflect the diversity and vitality of our worldwide fellowship. Most of all, we want it to be *your* magazine.

A prototype of the new *NA Way Magazine* and an informational package will be sent out to all conference participants, and the informational package will be available to others. If you have input about this proposal, participating in your local service structure is the best way to go about making sure your input is considered. However, if you are isolated, incarcerated, or otherwise unable to participate in local CAR reviews and discussions, please address any input you may have to:

WSO Board of Directors
PO Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA 91409

We hope that you approve of our efforts to keep providing publishing services to the fellowship. If you'd like additional information, please call me.

Cindy T, Editor

We need stories!

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

Who writes stories?

You do!

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

What do I write?

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

The NA Way Magazine
PO Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA 91409

Light on the path

The steps are the path—of that I am convinced—and I have said that to many others. I have tried to follow the path of the steps, mostly on my own, these past ten years in Narcotics Anonymous. Today I am convinced of the need for a guide, as I haven't been since I had just a few days clean.

Members have offered me guidance over the years, and I have had about eight different sponsors. Sponsorship has been rocky for me. I've had a lot of trouble finding a match. It seems like every year or two I get motivated to once again find and use a sponsor. Eventually, I lose the motivation—or the sponsor—and I am back to looking again. My sponsors either quit or they become friends.

Recently I decided once again to find and use a sponsor. I had been working on the steps with a longtime friend, but our friendship hampered our efforts, and we ended up not doing a lot of step work. So I started looking around.

One morning I got to my home group late, and a member had just finished sharing. He was celebrating more than a dozen years clean, and someone who shared after him thanked him for his honesty.

After the meeting I decided to approach him to see if we could talk. Honestly, I was just interested in talking. He asked me if I was asking him to be my sponsor. I was caught off guard, but, after a pause, I replied that I was. He eliminated the opportunity for me to judge him inadequate to the task of sponsoring me (which I think I have done too often in the past).

It is so hard to find super-human people in Narcotics Anonymous. I believe I had been convinced that I needed someone who was more than human. For the first time in a long time, I feel like I have a guide, a human one, and that has been really helpful.

During our first and second discussions he was able to share some valuable experience with me. I began to feel like I could move forward on the path again—working the steps deliberately and in order. Without the guidance I have already received, I know that I would be right back where I was—stuck on the Sixth Step. I made a leap of faith and it was worth it.

Ten years clean doesn't eliminate the need for help in working our steps; it's only made it plain just how much I need to. I am trying to find my way out of the darkness and now I have a guide to throw some light on the path.

Anonymous

Deeper desires

I will have ten years of clean time this July, and today feels like a great day to inventory what's happened as a result of my "desire to stop using." As a using addict, I lived from minute to minute. I believed that I was here on earth by mistake. I was not an active participant in my own life. I was simply existing, working, and trying to keep everyone around me happy and off my back.

I lost my career as a musician as a result of my addiction. I often felt something bad would happen, and, as a result, my expectations were usually fulfilled. All of my actions, behaviors, and feelings were just a reaction to some crisis. Even during the periods when I was abstinent from drugs I could successfully avoid my life and feelings by maintaining this crisis orientation.

I could always get clean for someone else—to make a relationship work, to attract a woman, to get or maintain employment, or to try and "look" better. And, of course, for a while it became chic to be recovering. All kinds of celebrities were getting straight and my non-addicted acquaintances were always telling me

that it was cool that I was saying no to drugs.

Unfortunately, my will-powered recovery programs never kept me clean for very long. If I did manage to stay abstinent from drugs for a while, I would find myself acting out on some other symptom of my active addiction such as gambling, working eighty-five to one hundred hours per week, exercising three or four hours after an already full day, or some other compulsive habit. Through these times it was also easy to discount the two to four packs of cigarettes per day that I needed to keep my feelings stuffed down.

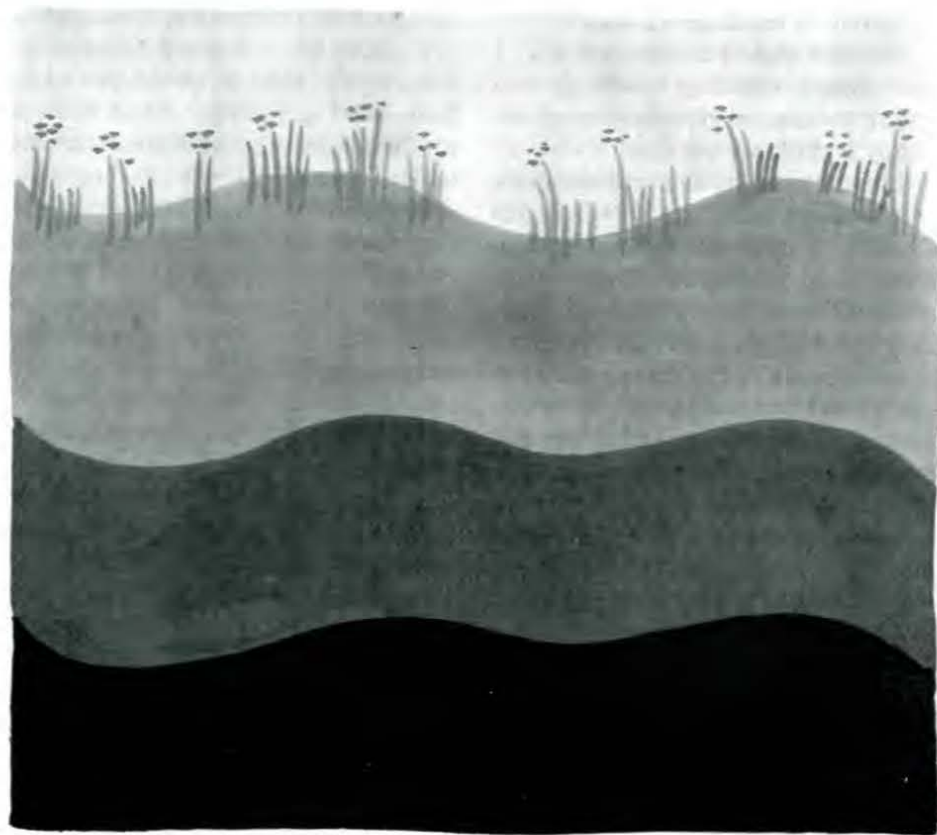
At some point I really wanted to change. I don't think that I wanted to quit using, but I wanted a change so desperately that I would probably have tried anything. I had been a confirmed atheist, believing that intelligence and logic were the best possible solutions to any problem. The only family tie that seemed to make any difference in my life at all was to my six-year-old son. This was the connection that always stopped my suicidal planning. I had one "friend" left, and he was forced into treatment by his employer. Now I was even more alone.

I thought that maybe I could solve my problem by only using alcohol and by only drinking in social situations (I suspect that I had already tried this solution more than once in my twenty years of active addiction). I was able to define "social drinking" as drinking straight shots of liquor by myself on a barstool as long as I made an effort to engage the bartender in some small talk.

This is where HP showed up. An addict friend who I had not seen in thirteen years came into the bar with six or seven other recovering addicts to hear the band. She calmly walked over to my barstool, shared her story, and told me that I didn't have to live the way I was living any longer. She mentioned the benefit of meetings. Although I had been to one meeting a year earlier and had not been impressed, what she said was strangely comforting to me. It sounded—possible. Above all else, it frightened me. As an atheist, I had a tough time appreciating the irony of being twelve-stepped in a bar.

Because of my fear, I didn't make it to a meeting for three weeks. However, I have never had to use again since the moment of that conversation in the bar. I went to lots and lots of meetings. I felt safe. I felt that the other members really did want me to "keep coming back." People took me by the hand and taught me to love myself and others. They taught me by example how to deal with my resentments, my anger, my guilt, and my shame by working the steps.

One night I went to a treatment center to tell my story at an NA meeting. I ran into a friend there who was in treatment for the thirteenth time.



After the meeting he talked to me about his newest discovery, the importance of the Third Tradition. He explained to me that recovery is possible with desire—not need or want, but *desire*. I heard these words differently than I had ever heard them before. I understood "desire" for the first time. Since that day I've discovered that my desires are a gift from HP. I'm not talking about a desire for more money or a new car. I mean the desire to live life clean, to live life with meaning, to utilize my God-given talents and abilities.

The man who carried this message to me died of his addiction. As far as I know, I was his last sponsor. Since then the message and the question it always inspires have become even more important to me. On page 78 of our Basic Text it is written, "Writing about what we want, what we are asking for and what we get, and sharing this with our sponsor or other trusted person helps us to work through negative feelings." What is my desire? What do I really want? I always know the answer. The change is to apply the principles of willingness and self-honesty in order to accept these gifts.

Our text talks about the importance of being a "responsible member of society." I used to believe that this meant working, supporting our families, voting, and those types of activities. Although these may be important, something more is required for me today. I must constantly answer the question, "What is my desire?" Then I must choose to follow this desire. If these desires are given to me by HP, this is the way that I can stay

in alignment with HP's will. If they turn out not to be my true desires, I will know very quickly. There is some risk involved, but nothing is gained without risk. We each took a risk when we walked through the door of our first meeting.

Sixteen months ago I resigned from my corporate management job of thirteen years. I surrendered my company car, the benefits, and all of the things that had kept me "handcuffed" to a job that did not fulfill my desire. In spite of the fact that I will turn forty-five this month, I've just completed three semesters as a full-time music student. After being away from music for twenty years, I'm playing, singing, composing, and earning excellent grades. Last week I was recognized at the school's annual awards ceremony for outstanding academic accomplishments in my field and I was given another scholarship. Most importantly, I'm enjoying some serenity, some joy, and an understanding for the first time in my life that I am on Earth with a purpose. I know that I'm not alone any longer.

I don't pretend to know what HP has in store for me. I do believe that this process will continue to work a recovery program one day at a time and keep answering the question, "What do you desire?"

JT, Indiana

God doesn't have any grandchildren

Both my wife and I (not to mention my father, mother, uncle, and sister) are recovering addicts who have been clean for a number of years. Before the birth of our daughter, I had some fear of having children because of the risk of passing on a genetic load of predisposition toward addiction. Although NA has no opinion about whether or not addiction is genetic, daddies worry. Every time I met recovering addicts with teenage children, I would ask them to take notes. My prayers were full of requests for wisdom in dealing with addiction in someone I care about. It has been over a decade since I have had to look into a polluted family member's eyes.

As my daughter grew, I would look for early signs of addiction. It was, "Omigod, she likes spinning around until she's dizzy!" Or, "I was rebellious like that at her age." Or, "She seems to fiend on sugar and paraphernalia from the latest children's feature film." I was making myself a wreck.

Several things have helped me with my worries. The first was people

reminding me that my daughter, who is now only four years old, is not using drugs. The second was being reminded that I had enough of my own stuff to work on without worrying about what might or might not happen to someone else.

Still another piece of information I got was confusing. People would tell me that God doesn't have any grandchildren. Although it made me feel better, I didn't understand what they meant. But recently I learned. I noticed that my daughter was getting up in the morning and going outside and singing a song and doing a little dance. After a couple of days, I went outside and asked her about it. She said, "Go away, Daddy. I am singing a song to God."

Neither my wife nor I sing songs to our Higher Powers, nor does our daughter participate in any organized religion where singing is an element. I finally got it. My job is to be a recovering addict; my daughter has her own Higher Power who does not need a worried daddy to be an intermediary.

You in NA have told me the truth about how to live, and the longer I stay clean, the more my own experiences validate that truth. Thank you.

Anonymous

Frightening gifts

With each succeeding year in recovery, I am able to do more and more in my life. I have been given wonderful gifts. This past year brought a variety of blessings, and each has raised fears along with the joy.

So much is new to me. This past year I got my master's degree, got married, moved to a new city, and started a new career. Exciting stuff, but scary, too.

When I got my degree, I was afraid that I wouldn't be able to succeed in my chosen field. When I got the first job, I was afraid that I was inadequate and might do the wrong thing. I was grateful for the opportunity to begin again after so many years of active addiction, but I was afraid of failure.

Marriage was similar. I had been married years ago in my active addiction, but was too self-centered to really explore the meaning of commitment to another person. This time I am awake and committed, but this brings fears of loss or future difficulties.

The move to a new city set off a bunch of fears, especially the fear of not feeling at home in the local NA Fellowship. I am fortunate that Narcotics Anonymous is found virtually everywhere, but I felt like a newcomer in this strange city. I faced that fear,

and after four months of working to become a part of the group, I now feel at home. I am glad to see the folks I see at the meetings, to hear them share, and to receive their hugs.

Many gifts bring personal responsibilities that I am taking care of for the first time in my life. Certainly my job and marriage did. Some bring personal responsibilities that I am more familiar with—like becoming active in the local fellowship—but that I really didn't want to have to work through again.

Many of the blessings that I have received in Narcotics Anonymous have come only on the condition that I become willing to face my fears. I wouldn't have a job if I hadn't been willing to face my fear of failure. I wouldn't have a wife if I hadn't faced my fear of loss. I wouldn't be a part of the NA Fellowship in my new hometown if I hadn't faced my fear of rejection.

All of these new opportunities were challenging. I have struggled with these and other gifts, and all have confronted me with the need to grow and change.

These gifts don't come on a silver platter. I have to work to receive them, and that work can be painful. Facing my fears and committing to work through them allows me to receive these gifts. The process of coming to believe is a restoration to sanity, but the process continues and fears do leap out. With the help of NA, I have walked through my fear. From the support of the fellowship, I get courage. And that is perhaps the greatest gift of all.

Anonymous

Unexpected gifts

I decided a few months ago that I wanted to share with others my gratitude for NA, the Twelve Steps, and the God of my understanding. Without all of the above, I would never have made it through the past 365 days. They say, "No major changes in the first year." Well, I listened to that. It was after the first year that things got crazy.

In August 1995, I found out that I was pregnant. I had twenty months clean, and the man I had been dating for eight months had six-and-a-half years clean. My pregnancy came as a big surprise to both of us, considering that I was told in 1989 that I probably couldn't get pregnant or have children.

I didn't know whether to feel scared, happy, angry, or what. I talked with other addicts. I cried to my sponsor. I laughed. Most importantly, I prayed for God's will to happen in my life. I worked the first three steps. It felt like a spiritual awakening.

About a month after that, my boyfriend asked me to marry him. This was another big surprise. We had agreed not to get married, but to live together and raise our child. I think

that we were both afraid of marriage. He had been married before, and I had just had a lot of disastrous relationships. We loved each other, but we were afraid of failing. After talking to our sponsors, friends, and the God of our understanding, we decided to go ahead and get married. To make things even more hectic, we decided to get married on New Year's Eve. That meant that we had only three months to pull it all together. During all of this, I celebrated two years clean. Amazing how this program works, isn't it?

I thought that we would begin our life together with peace and serenity. Wrong! On New Year's Day, when we tried to board the plane for our honeymoon, we weren't allowed to. We knew the night before that we wouldn't be able to board, but I allowed my husband to talk me into trying to get away with it. I was so angry that I wanted to strangle him, and I was angry at myself for agreeing to this stupid stunt. After I called for a ride home from the airport, I called my sponsor. We talked about my feelings, and she tried to walk me through the pain and anger. It helped a lot. But I was still upset. We were able to book another flight for the next day; that helped, too.

So we returned home after our honeymoon. I expected things to calm down. Wrong again! We were trying to adjust to living together, things were going along fine, and then *it* happened. We got a phone call in the middle of the night from my mother. My dad was in jail for spousal abuse. He had been drinking again. This time it was really bad. My new hus-

band and I had to take my mom to the hospital for stitches.

At that point I knew my father needed help. When he was released the next day, I asked him if he was ready to go in for treatment. He said he was. I figured this was another of his "tail between the legs" maneuvers, but decided to go on with it anyway. After trying to find a treatment facility that would accept his insurance, talking to the insurance company and my family, and making about fifty phone calls, I took my father to the treatment center. If I hadn't learned about twelve-step calls, H&I, and PI in NA, I wouldn't have known what to do. It has been hard for me to accept that my father is recovering in another fellowship, but it is working for him. He just celebrated six months.

Three months after my dad went to treatment, I received the biggest

blessing ever: a healthy baby girl. My sponsor and my husband were in the birthing room with me. Since they are both a huge part of my life, I felt it appropriate to share the moment with both of them. Who would have thought that two addicts could produce this little miracle? She is truly a gift from God.

I never dreamed that God would be so good to me. I have a wonderful husband, a father in recovery, a beautiful daughter, a house, a job, a car, the best sponsor in the world, two great sponsees, a supportive home group, a God of my understanding, and, most important, I have myself back. I never dreamed things could be so good. Not that I don't have struggles, but I manage. I call my sponsor, go to meetings, and work my program. For everything in my life, I am grateful.

JD, Pennsylvania



Conventional wisdom

An irreverent (but loving) look at gatherings of the fellowship

NA conventions are the highlights of our recovery, the places we go to just relax and enjoy the fruits of all our hard work: sweating over Fourth Steps, the prayer and meditation, reading NA literature late into the night, calling our sponsors, and working with newcomers. But, as our experienced members know, returning home means returning to more of the same hard work just to detox from the effects of the convention.

At the kick-off meeting, the chairperson looks at her watch (set to Addict Standard Time), and races to the edge of the platform to have a hurried conference with the convention chair, hotel security people, and NA's own security people (who are vaguely reminiscent of the Stones' security forces at Altamont).

She rushes back to the microphone, which emits a squeal until it is properly subdued, and then asks everyone to take their seats because the meeting is about to begin. After about twenty minutes of repeating this announcement, the chair realizes that no one is paying attention to her. Mumbling the short version of the serenity prayer, she starts the

MERCHANDISE



meeting by saying, "Welcome to the 27th Annual Overcomeitall Convention. My name is Kimberly, and I'm an addict."

A huge cheer erupts from the crowd, and everyone immediately takes their seats, getting so quiet you can hear the speaker sweat.

And so begins another gathering of the fellowship. From the time it begins (late) to the time it ends (even later), it is a unique and wonderful NA experience. The following are some basic rules for such meetings.

The out-of-town speaker

Enthusiasm for the speaker is in direct proportion to the distance he had to travel. If he's from a different

WELCOME TO THE
200TH ANNUAL CON



country, people will roll in the aisles in ecstasy. Don't make the mistake of inviting Bob A from your own region to be a main speaker at your convention. Everyone has heard him at umpteen local events, and people would stampede the greeters rushing for the exit when he's introduced. Actually, the banquet room would probably be empty except for a few newcomers, who haven't yet become links in the convention programming gossip chain, and maybe a hotel employee who thinks she might have a drug problem. (On reflection, having a local speaker might be an idea whose time has come.)



The introducer

Because our vague ideas about anonymity and humility usually result in a strong discomfort with saying anything nice about anybody in public, we don't take any great pains with introductions. We usually have the meeting chairperson do it, but anybody who has never met the speaker before and knows nothing about her will do. Make sure the introducer is a nervous type who will fumble the speaker's name and region or insert embarrassing information about the speaker or region. (I'd like to introduce Hancy from the Snow-Me Region. Please welcome the former treasurer of the Ripoff Region.)

SOMEONE'S GOTTA MOVE



Watch the logistics

In NA, anonymity is synonymous with equality—if you ask one of our spiritual giants. Of course, you're likely to get other platitudes about spiritual foundations, points of freedom, humble by-products, etc., so be specific when asking. Anyway, efforts to practice "anonymity" at our functions have often resulted in everyone at the banquet being seated on a three-tiered dais so that we can demonstrate the importance of every member.

These days only a few convention centers can handle our world convention and some of the larger regional events. They are usually miles from any restaurants, which leaves convention-goers at the mercy of the hotel restaurants. Hotel restaurants come in four varieties:

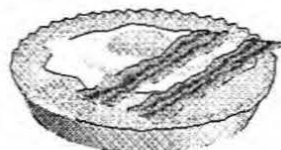
Restaurant
Helpline...
Please hold





Yuppie presentation food: A mix of overgarnished rare mushrooms, imported lettuce, and sautéed endangered species, all beautifully presented on chic white bone-china plates on a black tablecloth. Meals come accompanied by nutritional information. Very expensive.

Trailer trough: Down-home, fat-laden red meat or pork, accompanied by sour cream and butter mixed with potatoes, several loaves of white bread, and slaw. Meals come on four or five Melmac plates. Moderately priced.



Glorified coffee shop: A variety of omelets, sandwiches, salads, dinner entrees, and deserts that differ only in appearance. If blindfolded, the diner would be unable to distinguish the Denver omelet from the apple pie. Overpriced.

The snack bar: Normal food that everyone wants to eat. Located in the most central place in the hotel. Average two-hour wait to be seated. One food server to handle forty-five tables. Never sit in groups of more than two, because two people will always get their food an hour before everyone else. If you're planning on skipping the banquet before the main meeting and having your dinner here, get in line at 6:00 a.m. Inexpensive.



The Sunday morning spiritual meeting

The purpose of this meeting is to make you cry, as you are overcome with waves of empathy for the still-suffering-addict-on-the-street. The speaker has been selected because he sings, or because one of his loved ones died recently, or because the rich timbre of his voice imparts deep meaning to anything he says, no matter how inane. It helps that most convention-goers haven't slept more than two or three minutes since the convention started and would begin weeping at the sight of a Kleenex.

Therapeutic values

NA has its own version of family values. Getting back to therapeutic values means turning into a duty-bound drudge. In other words, why didn't you volunteer to be on the convention committee? Don't you think you owe NA something after all it's done for you? Did you give a newcomer donation on your registration form? Omigod, you didn't register! Tar and feather this person, please! Of course, most of us have learned to avoid the people who talk about therapeutic values. They usually need therapy.

If you have any sense at all, you'll also avoid like the plague any convention your newcomer sponsees are going to. If you don't, you'll find yourself relaxing by the pool, listening to some nice bluesy music on your headphones, and all of a sudden you'll be dripped on by a wet sponsee who has just had a feeling in the pool and needs to talk right now.

Any place that addicts come together for recovery is sure to provide opportunities for growth. You wanted fun and relaxation?!? Sorry, NA has only one promise. . . .

BG, California

Home Group





Newsletters

The art of action

From *The Clean Times*, the Tampa, Florida, Funcoast area newsletter

Webster defines "gratitude" as "the state of being grateful; appreciation of favors received; thankfulness." "Gratify," on the other hand, is defined as "to afford pleasure; to indulge." I got these two words confused when I first came into the program. I was very familiar with gratify, because that is what I had done my entire life. My main goal in life was to gratify myself using people, places, or things.

Coming to NA was an attempt to gratify someone else. I didn't come here for myself; in fact, the first few times I tried this way of life, I thought it wasn't for me. My attempts at recovery in NA were always to gratify another person. I needed this program long before I wanted it. In December 1993, I had

had enough of living the lie. I was thoroughly beaten and so was able to work Step One.

I have a lot of gratitude for this program. NA has given me a life and hope today. Sometimes I don't want it, but I realize today that this is the only way to live. This hasn't been an easy road to follow, and getting in the way of myself hasn't made it any easier for me. I have discovered lately that it is much easier for me to tell someone else how to get into the solution than it is for me to get into it myself.

I haven't been very grateful for the last few months; in fact, I've been downright miserable. I couldn't focus on the solution because all I could see was the problem. I needed to fix it and it wasn't even broken. I have constantly been concentrating on the things I don't have, and haven't even given a thought to all I do have thanks to the program of Narcotics Anonymous.

I've heard at meetings that the two things that can "take you out" are "finances and romances." I am having a problem with both right now. Lately I haven't been doing the things that I did in the beginning such as praying, calling other addicts, or sharing what's going on with me at meetings or with anyone

else. I've also been avoiding my sponsor because he will remind me that the solution is in the steps, and I just don't want to hear that now. I, like most addicts I know, tend to wait until the pain is unbearable to work the steps.

My gratitude for the NA program is that it has given me steps, principles, traditions, and concepts that I can use in my life today. If I choose not to use them, it's my choice, but I must be willing to pay the price.

I am also grateful for the people Narcotics Anonymous has brought into my life today—people, both men and women, who truly care about me and are willing to help me if I ask. NA has allowed me to do things I never dreamed I would be able to do. I am in a relationship today—although I haven't been working too hard at it lately—with a person I love, admire, and respect greatly. I still tend to take these things for granted, but I remember not too long ago when I didn't have anything at all. I didn't have peace of mind, a place to live, food to eat, clean clothes to wear, or a car to get me to meetings, work, and NA functions. I didn't have friends, a sponsor, or a loving wife.

Recently I haven't wanted to live up to my service commitments because I believed that I didn't have anything to offer anyone. But someone reminded me that I have more to offer than I am aware of. If I keep an attitude of gratitude, it will be a great day.

MA

Aging gracefully

From *Inside Connection*, the American River, California, area newsletter

Mowing my lawn takes exactly seven hours and ten minutes. I spend the first six hours observing the actual height of the grass, and if I can still see my dog's neon tennis ball peeking up above the grass blades, then I wait one more hour for the grass to finish growing. The final ten minutes is spent rushing the mower through a maze of chewed-up bones and little hidden piles of doggie dookie. When I'm done, I usually sit quietly for ten or twenty minutes before returning to bed. I'm getting old.

I basically spent my younger years listening to older people griping about the aches and pains of aging. Of course, being an addict, it never occurred to me that I'd live long enough to experience gray hair, arthritis, and senility.

Uh, where was I? Oh yeah, I was mowing the lawn.

Recently I've noticed more young people in meetings. As a matter of fact, everyone seems to be getting much younger. There were a couple of kids at a meeting a while back who

had orange/green hair cut in sideways mohawks. They both had about twenty earrings in various parts of their bodies and they spoke in a strangely familiar foreign language. I wondered if Joe Cocker had any kids.

Fortunately, at the same meeting there was someone who could translate their language to me. This other young person stood between us and converted their mumblings into words I nearly understood. The one with the greenest hair said, "NA's so totally rad man!" My young friend turned to me and said, "He said he thinks Narcotics Anonymous is really cool, ya know, like far out." I heard in the background a Jimi Hendrix tune, experienced what seemed to be a flashback, and found myself suddenly in need of a nice rocking chair.

When I think about getting older, it's often a short, confusing thought. My mind tends to reject the physical reality of aging. There are, however, days when my body tells my brain to shut up, and I find myself oozing into a state of elderly bliss. Yes, I've fallen and I don't want to get up.

An old addict. What a concept, huh? Who woulda thunk it? To be with the addicts I used to use with, I'd have to go sit solemnly in the graveyard, or spend my days in the visiting rooms of several state pens. Addicts who have "happy endings" only exist in one place: Narcotics Anonymous. Yes, I've met other members who comb their hair with a washcloth and keep their teeth in a Mason jar. We're few and far between, but we're a cantankerous lot.

So anyway, I was thinking about those youngsters with the multicolored

hair and the dangling metal. If my understanding was correct, they were sitting in a meeting because NA has become a very cool place to be. It's true, we do wear an inordinate amount of black clothing, and some of us even have tattoos, but hey!, the chairs are usually hard and people don't talk loud enough. Hell's bells, man! The bathrooms all use that five-gauge toilet paper—ouch! Us old folks have to wonder if hemorrhoidal suppositories would make us relapse. I called the rest home to ask my sponsor, but they were giving him a bath and he couldn't tell me. Dilemmas!

Well, I guess I'll look out the window and see if the lawn needs mowing. Maybe while I'm waiting, I'll dye my hair purple. Heck, I might even get a nipple ring. It'll give me a place to hang my pacemaker.

GW



Viewpoint



Who are we?

The two articles in this month's "Viewpoint" ask us (the NA Fellowship) to do some collective soul-searching about our identity, our most fundamental principles, the way we live those principles, and what we are offering newcomers.

These are good questions, the kind that an organization like ours really needs to ask itself if we are to continue reaching the people who need us and build a bridge to our future. We're grateful to the authors of these articles, and very pleased to feature them in this month's issue. —Ed.

We in the fellowship know we don't represent Narcotics Anonymous as a whole. Yet, the facilities in which we have our meetings and the surrounding communities look upon us as exactly that—representatives of NA. The impression we leave, good or bad, represents NA as a whole and influences, as much as any public service announcement or praise from a community leader, the community's view of NA.

Each recovering addict has a responsibility to present the best possible image to the facility and the community. If the facility and community see the addict misusing or destroying the facility or community, right away, unfair or not, the observer views NA members as irresponsible and destructive.

Not everyone recovers at the same rate. We cannot promise to the facility or community that NA is going to crank out a production line of upstanding citizens from what once was the dregs of society. Yet, our communities expect something from us. They expect that we will act better than we did when we were using drugs. They expect us to follow rules. They expect—in short—that we will be acceptable, responsible, productive members of society.

What is an atmosphere of recovery?

An atmosphere of recovery is born in the relationships and interaction between the meeting facility and the group, between the community and the group, and among the addicts themselves, inside and outside the meeting place.

The rules we must follow will vary depending on where we're meeting. A public facility such as a school or government building may require us to furnish proof of insurance. A church may not let us smoke cigarettes on its grounds. A synagogue may not allow us to bring in food. A hospital or recovery house may not allow anyone to be on their premises while under the influence of drugs.

Regardless of what we agree or disagree on amongst ourselves about smoking, newcomers who aren't clean at meetings, fiscal responsibility, etc.; we must follow the rules of the facilities in which we meet. If the rules don't fit with what we need for our meeting place, we need to find another facility, not flout the rules.

In my area, there was a meeting at an outpatient clinic near a hospital. The people in charge of this facility did not want anyone smoking on the grounds. Some smokers ignored this request and discarded their cigarette butts on the grounds of the clinic. The facility was patient at first, and contacted the group's trusted servants, asking that they remind the group of the rules.

The behavior continued, and it has forced other, more responsible, members of the group to run around picking up cigarette butts from the grounds before leaving the meeting facility. Because some thoughtless smokers disregarded a simple request, the meeting place is now in jeopardy. Even worse, NA's reputation is in jeopardy.

Damages to facilities at conventions have occurred repeatedly, as though it were a "tradition." Conven-

tions are meant to be gatherings of recovering addicts; events at which we can celebrate, communicate, identify, and experience recovery on a grand, yet intimate, scale. If we keep getting thrown out of major hotel chains, and asked not to keep coming back, where will we hold our conventions? We can repair the physical damage to convention facilities by paying for it to be repaired. But can we ever repair the damage we have done to our reputation?

Amongst ourselves, maintaining an atmosphere of recovery is a matter of life and death. Our meetings must be safe havens for the still-suffering addict.

At meetings, distractions take the focus off recovery and place it on the annoyance, be it an unsupervised child, two addicts whispering together (possibly about a third addict!), or the "monitors" who "shhh" self-righteously in response.

A recovering addict who abuses his or her right to participate in the meeting by going on and on and on and on detracts from the atmosphere of recovery and tries the patience of everyone else. One time in my area, the chairperson asked someone who was doing this to please wrap it up. The person who had been "oversharing" acted outraged, as though rambling on at length to a captive audience were a spiritual principle. I'm sure the chair felt very uncomfortable breaking in. It's not right for a member to have to be in that position.

One solution is to stress during the secretary's announcements, that part of sharing is sharing the available time with the other members and

that no one should be offended if asked to finish their sharing. One home group has a timer that is set for five minutes when a member begins sharing.

I think an addict bringing food to a meeting and eating it there is disruptive. If you're bringing food, you should at least bring enough for everyone (just kidding). People argue that the addict may be pressed for time, so why shouldn't he or she kill two birds with one stone? Still, meetings are usually quiet, and if someone walks in and sets up a burger, fries, and a drink, shoving NA literature aside to make room, it's obnoxious. The noisier the food is (e.g., potato chips), the worse it gets.

Children are one of the greatest gifts our Higher Power can give us. And we were once children ourselves. Still, loving children and recognizing them as a gift doesn't mean it's okay to let them run around a meeting screaming and knocking things over. Once again, it puts the meeting chair or secretary in an awkward position to have to tell another member to keep his children quiet.

There's probably never been an NA meeting without cursing. Though some formats ask participants to refrain from using obscene or vulgar language, it's usually no more than five minutes before someone lets loose with a whole string of "adult language."

No meeting is ever going to be perfect, nor is any addict. What's important is that we all try, as best we can, to promote an atmosphere of recovery in our meetings. When we do this successfully, we can feel a serenity

and spiritual presence as soon as we walk into the room. And we who are seeking recovery need this spiritual nourishment as much as we need food, air, and water.

SJ, New Jersey

The above article was submitted as input in response to a survey conducted by the New Jersey Regional Literature Review Committee in February of 1996.—Ed.

Is more better?

I have been feeling a great deal of frustration over the last few years about the direction the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous has been going in. In my opinion, we have become so obsessed with the quantity of our membership that the quality of our program is diminishing.

In the mad rush to be all things for all people we have lost a clear and strong sense of purpose. From the watering down of our message in meetings so we don't scare anyone away to the discussions about changing our steps and traditions, we are entering a trend of being more interested in getting people to join our fellowship than in directing the people who want what we have to offer toward a new way of life.

I was listening to a speaker recently and he summed it all up by stating that our newcomers are not fragile. If somebody is ready, truly ready, for the message of Narcotics Anonymous, a swear word or the word "God" will not scare him or her away. When I got clean I heard things like "work the steps or die" (often followed with an exclamatory use of profanity), "take the cotton out of your ears and put it in your mouth," and "if you want what we have, then you'll do what we did," etc.

Too often our Second Tradition is misunderstood. I can't tell you how many times I've heard someone say, "We have no leaders in Narcotics Anonymous." Where, oh where, in the Second Tradition does it say that?!? It doesn't! But people still persist in acting as though we were just a large conglomeration of opinions and individuals wandering through the corridors of fate. When I read the Second Tradition I see much more. The Second Tradition tells me that we do have leaders in NA, and that true leadership is highly valued and a crucial part of the recovery process. What the Second Tradition says is that these leaders do not govern; they serve a Higher Power's will, and generally do this by example or as part of a group conscience.

A leader is somebody who is willing to risk telling me that if I just hang out and go to meetings, my life isn't going to change very much. A leader is somebody who tells me to quit whining about my disease and take responsibility for my recovery. A leader is somebody who motivates me to live a more spiritual lifestyle by modeling the benefits of a conscious

contact. A leader is more interested in the responsibility of carrying a strong message of recovery than in worrying about trying to get everyone to like him or her. If our leaders are too busy playing God and trying to carry only the portion of the message that they think won't scare people away, they are no longer carrying a message at all.

We are too afraid to be teachers. As a member of this fellowship with some time in recovery, it is my responsibility to be a teacher to the newcomer. It seems like we equate placing any value on what we have learned and accomplished in this program with ego or lack of humility. The simple fact is that with over six years clean in this program, I have a lot to teach. The humility is not in denying what we have to offer, but in realizing that what we have was given to us by God through other members, and that we have a responsibility to give that back. Yet, it is usually viewed as more spiritual when someone says, "I have six years clean, but I don't know a thing."

This is a program of one addict helping another and of a message being carried and passed down from old-timers to newcomers. The newcomer is the most important person in a meeting because without the newcomer we wouldn't be able to keep what we have; we wouldn't be able to give it away. There's nothing in this reasoning that says it's a good idea to have a newcomer leading a meeting or being a trusted servant. What I learn from a newcomer is not recovery; I learn from him or her that the drugs still don't work, that active addiction still brings us to a point of desperation and insanity.

The "older" members of a group are responsible for carrying a strong message of recovery. "Whatever the type of format a group uses for its meetings, the function of a group is always the same: to provide a suitable and reliable environment for personal recovery and to promote such recovery" (Basic Text, pages 63-64).

A meeting format that has a chairperson calling on people throughout most or all of the meeting scares most of us. Oh my God, we might not give a newcomer a chance to share, or someone might *need* to share and not get the opportunity. We see our meetings as places where people are supposed to come dump their problems. There is a vast difference between dumping my problems in a meeting and sharing about how I am working the steps to help me through a problem that I am having. Needing to dump my problems is why the fellowship extends beyond our meetings. That is why we have friends, sponsors, and telephone numbers. As a member of NA it is my responsibility to carry the message, not the mess, into a meeting. As home group members it is our responsibility to have a format for the meeting that focuses the meeting on recovery.

A meeting with a lot of newcomers might need the chairperson to call on people with a strong and clear NA message for most of the meeting and then open it up toward the end for others who want to share. If someone turns the tone of a meeting away from recovery, a home group member could share to re-focus the meeting on recovery. When we have a topic, we should encourage people, primarily

through example, to speak on the topic. It is very important for the meeting secretary to spend a few minutes making sure the meeting leader/chairperson understands and can follow the meeting format. I believe that our meeting formats are established by our ultimate authority, God, as He expresses Himself in our group's conscience. Secretaries should not ask people to lead who are not willing to respect the group conscience.

If someone disagrees with the format, he or she can join the group and try to change it, go to a different meeting, or try to convince the members of the group why it should be changed, but no one member has the right to put his or her personal opinion above the group conscience. If I have been asked to chair a meeting, then I have been selected to serve the group and I am bound by the format and rules that the group's conscience has established.

People who are ready for this program are beaten. They hit bottom, and they are willing to go to any length to stop the cycle of addiction. "We came to our first NA meeting in defeat and didn't know what to expect" (Basic Text, page 15). In many ways, we've become so obsessed with trying to make sure *everyone* gets this program that we end up going through pain and futility trying to give the message to people who may not be ready. This only weakens our message.

When we sugar-coat our message, we establish unrealistic expectations. A newcomer needs to hear that addiction is a life-threatening disease, that we are not responsible for our disease

but we are responsible for our recovery. Newcomers need to be taught that it is their responsibility to take the initiative and go after recovery with a passion.

To listen to people talk in meetings, I would think that NA was a fantasy world of peace, love, and people whom I can trust without exception. The reality is that our fellowship is full of sick people who are doing the best they can to recover. There are people in this program who are clean and who practice behaviors no different from what we did out there. There are perverts, thieves, back-stabbers, rapists, liars, and cheaters in our fellowship; all practicing these behaviors while clean. Is it pretty? No. Does it represent what this program is about? No. But is it reality? Yes, these things are realities of life, and to pretend that they aren't causes our members to place unrealistic expectations on what life in recovery is.

That is not to say that wonderful acts of kindness, friendship, and good will do not take place in this program. They do, and on some level it is an absolute miracle that these types of things ever happen in a fellowship filled with people like us. These wonderful things do happen, and they are exactly the kinds of behaviors and ideals that we are supposed to be striving for in our recovery. The difficulty is in striking a balance between portraying reality as it is and focusing on ideals that we should be striving toward.

I would rather see NA's membership total a thousand recovering addicts changing their lives and work-

ing the steps than a million abstinent addicts who don't really truly want to be clean, who just want to exploit the kind and generous or complain about the alleged inherent sexism, elitism, or other "isms" in our steps that are keeping them from finding recovery.

It all boils down to a question of quantity versus quality. Our parent fellowship (to whom we are eternally grateful for showing us the way), Alcoholics Anonymous, learned through these types of growing pains that it was crucial to focus on one strong message of recovery from alcoholism. They learned that if someone is not ready to do what it takes to recover, that person needs to experience more pain until he or she hits bottom and becomes willing. It is not pretty. People die. I wish NA could wave a magic wand and make every addict in the world ready, but we can't.

We can only be what we are: a program of Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions that offers recovery to addicts who want recovery. Our program works so well because it does stand for certain principles such as faith in a God of our understanding, requiring only a desire to stop using for membership, and total abstinence. We stand for something deeper and more important than our members' comfort. We stand for our members' lives, and even more importantly, for the quality of those lives.

MA, Oregon

From our readers



Protecting newcomers: part of carrying the message

I want to write about the so-called Thirteenth Step. There is no such thing. It's actually exploiting, conning, and manipulating these precious gifts and miracles that walk through our doors daily.

Our readings tell us that the newcomer is the most important person at any meeting because we can only keep what we have by giving it away. What are we giving them? Are we giving them spiritual principles or reasons not to feel good about themselves? It's both men and women who prey on the newcomer. You see them circling like vultures, waiting to feast on a dying animal.

I was that dying animal when I got here. What I needed was nurturing and unconditional love and the space to grow. In our Basic Text, it says that NA is made up of a very special group of people. I was like a child when I got here. I was scared and angry, and my disease was looking for any excuse to exclude me from recovery. I heard the message of recovery, that there was hope, that things would change, and that the rooms were full of love. I heard the message that I didn't have to live that way anymore.

I'm grateful that I found people who helped me, not hurt me. It drives

me nuts to see newcomers being taken advantage of. I know we all have a choice, but in my early recovery I knew only one way: the ways and thinking of active addiction. I knew nothing about change or self-respect.

To me, part of carrying the message to the newcomer is looking out for newcomer's well-being so that they can make a decision to stay here and find what many of us have found.

JB, New York

Hope you'll keep being there

When I first came to NA I was a hopeless drug addict who had nowhere left to turn. I'd been in jails, I was then in an institution, and I didn't like the sound of the remaining "end."

So I went to meetings. It was about all I could do to sit still for an hour-and-a-half. Two things really got to me from those first meetings: I wasn't asked to leave even though I looked like hell, and at the end of the meeting I was told to keep coming back. I didn't know why, but I kept coming.

After attending a few meetings, the mental cobwebs began to clear and I started hearing about the tools of recovery and suggestions about how to use them. I heard things like: get to a meeting a day and share or just listen; get a sponsor and stay in contact

daily; get a Basic Text and read it; get phone numbers and use them. You get the idea. The most important thing I heard was: don't use no matter what.

By following the suggestions of my support group and by working the steps of this program, I have been given more than five years of clean time. I state my time this way because I could not have done it alone. I needed the help of others (still do) to learn how to handle life's problems.

My main problem today is that I find myself in jail (clearing up some past wreckage), unable to attend meetings or call members of my support group regularly because of the cost. After I asked what I could do to stay centered in my recovery, it was suggested that I write letters to various members of my support group (many of whom are writing back). It was also suggested that I subscribe to *The NA Way Magazine*.

Imagine my joy at receiving my first issue. Then imagine my disappointment at learning it might be discontinued. I never thought of *The NA Way* as a recovery tool before I got to jail and didn't have access to the other tools of my program. Which brings me to the point of this letter.

My experience (and that of others) shows that drugs don't work and the NA program, utilizing all available tools, does. My strength comes from my Higher Power, my support group, the rest of the fellowship, and all the tools in my recovering addict repair kit. My hope is that no addict seeking recovery need ever die.

Part of our "traditions reading" states that we keep what we have only with vigilance. Let's not throw away a valuable tool like *The NA Way*, which reminds me that there are other addicts out there to help me do what I couldn't do alone.

Thank you, NA, for being there when I needed you in early recovery. Thank you for being there when I need you now. I hope you will be there in the future for others like me.

DT, Oregon

Editor's note: Please see "From the Editor" on page 2.

Comin'up

| Calendar | | | | | | |
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AUSTRALIA

Western Australia: 14-16 Mar. 1997; Western Australia Area Convention; Royal Commonwealth Society Hall, Subiaco, Perth; info: 61/9/2724508 or 61/9/3353197 or 61/9/2278361; Convention Committee, PO Box 668, Subiaco, Western Australia 6008

CANADA

Manitoba: 13-15 June 1997; Winnipeg Area Convention; Broadway Community Center; Winnipeg; info: (204) 774-2440 or (204) 775-9241; WACNA, PO Box 25173, 1650 Main Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R2V 4C8

INDIA

West Bengal: 10-12 Jan. 1997; 2nd Calcutta Area Convention; Kishore Bharati Krirangen, Jadavpur, Santoshpur, Calcutta; info: please address fax to Sunil J. 91/33/2454748; CACNA-2, PO Box 9146, Park Street, Calcutta 700 016, India

Maharashtra: 24-26 Jan. 1997; Bombay Area Convention; info: 91/22/4461709 or 91/22/6425235 or 91/22/2619195; BACNA, PO Box 1953, GPO Mumbai, 400 001, India

Manipur: 1-3 Mar. 1997; 1st Imphal Area Convention; Khumanlampak State Youth Center, Imphal; other hotels: Anand Continental: 91/385/223422, Hotel Excellency: 91/385/225401, Hotel Prince: 91/385/224010, Hotel Imphal Ashok: 91/385/220459; info: 91/385/221615 or 91/385/222967 or 91/385/310803; NACIA, Marwri Dharamsala R No.19, PO Box 93, Imphal 795001, Manipur, India

PERU

La Libertad: 14-16 Feb 1997; 3rd Peru Regional Convention; info: 51/9957841; NA Oficina Nacional, Casilla Postal 18-0523, Lima 18, Peru

PHILIPPINES

Metro Manila: 17-19 Jan. 1997; 2nd Philippine Regional Convention; Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park, Makati; e-mail: tat@epic.net; fax: 63/2/8100279 or 63/2/5210592; Convention, PO Box 8535, Dasmarias Village, Makati, Metro Manila, Philippines

SWEDEN

Stockholm: 31 Jan. - 2 Feb. 1997; 10 Years in Sweden Celebration; info: 46/8/7407054; NA Sweden, Kammakarg 41, 111 24 Stockholm, Sweden

SWITZERLAND

Vaud: 21-23 Mar. 1997; 3rd Swiss Convention; Leysin; info: 41/21/6486968; CSNA3, PO Box 181, CH-1000, Lausanne 9, Switzerland

UNITED KINGDOM

England: 28-30 Mar. 1997; London Convention; info: LCNA-8 c/o UKSO, PO Box 1980, London N19 3LS, England

UNITED STATES

Alabama: 14-17 Feb. 1997; North Alabama Area Convention; Holiday Inn, Decatur; info: (205) 351-2986; NAACNA, PO Box 2776, Decatur, AL 35602

California: 31 Jan. - 2 Feb. 1997; 2nd San Fernando Valley Area Convention; Burbank Hilton; rsvns. (800) HILTONS; info: (818) 831-7084; web site: www.pacificnet.net/~richmcc/na/sfv.html

2) 7-9 Feb. 1996; Central California Regional Convention; Red Lion Hotel, Bakersfield; rsvns: (800) 733-5466 or (805) 323-7111; info: (805) 486-3373 or (805) 569-9807; CCRCNA, PO Box 3908, Simi Valley, CA 93063

3) 7-9 Mar. 1997; Southern California Regional Assembly Weekend; info: (310) 396-4812; Let Your Voice Be Heard, 1935 S. Myrtle Ave., Monrovia, CA 91016

4) 28-30 Mar. 1997; Southern California Region Spring Gathering; Doubletree LAX Hotel; rsvns: (310) 216-5858; info: (714) 638-8898 or (714) 639-1022; Spring Gathering, PO Box 7825, Torrance, CA 90504

5) 3-6 Apr. 1997; Northern California Regional Convention; Bill Graham Convention Center, San Francisco; Quality Hotel, rsvns: (415) 776-8200; Holiday Inn, rsvns: (415) 441-4000; info: (707) 453-0868 or (707) 447-5641; NCCNA, Box 840, Fairfield, CA 94533

6) 30 May - 1 June 1997; In Pursuit of Unity Campout; Marysville Riverfront Park, Marysville; info: (916) 742-5167; e-mail: mleahy@syix.com

Connecticut: 4-6 Apr. 1997; United Shoreline Area Convention; Best Western, Mystic; rsvns: (800) 363-1622 or (860) 536-4281; info: (860) 886-7512 or (860) 437-7229; USANA, PO Box 323, Norwich, CT 06360

Florida: 28-30 Mar. 1997; Florida Spring Service Break; Radisson Adventure Beach Resort; North Miami Beach; rsvns: (305) 932-2233; info: (305) 270-0030; FSSBNA, 7812 SW 103rd Place, Miami, FL 33173

2) 3-5 Oct. 1997; Uncoast Area Convention; Holiday Inn Sunspree, Daytona Beach; rsvns: (800) 767-4471; info: (904) 462-0799 or (352) 338-7929 or (352) 371-7918; UCACNA, PO Box 12151, Gainesville, FL 32604

Georgia: 10-12 Jan. 1997; Central Savannah River Area Convention; Sheraton Augusta; rsvns: (800) 325-3535; info: (706) 733-2383; Peace in Recovery 9, Box 15863, Augusta, GA 30919

2) 13-15 Feb. 1997; Georgia Regional Convention; Jekyll Island Convention Center; Days Inn: (912) 635-3319; Ramada Inn: (800) 835-2110; info: (912) 953-7906 or (770) 229-8963; GRCNA, PO Box 2478, Decatur, GA 30031

Idaho: 28-30 Mar. 1997; Southern Idaho Regional Convention; Weston Plaza, Twin Falls; rsvns: (208) 733-0650; info: (208) 733-7031; SIRC, 616 Blue Lakes Blvd. North, Box 177, Twin Falls, ID 83301

Illinois: 14-16 Feb. 1997; 9th Chicagoland Regional Convention; Sheraton-Chicago; info: 9-5 CST (708) 848-2211; CRC, c/o CSO, 212 S Marion St. #27, Oak Park, IL 60302

2) 4-6 Apr. 1997; Rock River Area Convention; Holiday Inn, Rock Falls; rsvns: (815) 626-5500; info: (815) 964-5467; RRCNA-6, PO Box 1891, Rockford, IL 61110

Indiana: 14-17 Mar. 1997; Indiana State Convention; Radisson Hotel at Star Plaza; Merrillville; rsvns: (800) 333-3333; info: ISNAC, Box M-609, Gary, IN 46401

Iowa: 4-6 July 1997; Iowa Regional Convention; Best Western, Clearlake; rsvns: (515) 357-5253; info: (515) 424-5042 or (515) 423-6107; IRCNA, PO Box 53, Mason City, IA 50402

Kansas: 4-7 Apr. 1997; Mid-America Regional Convention; Dodge House, Dodge City; rsvns: (316) 225-9900; info: (913) 825-8163 or (316) 662-7491 or (316) 623-2054; MARCNA, PO Box 2341, Hutchinson, KS 67504

2) 18-20 Apr. 1997; MoKan Area Convention; Mount Convention Center, Atchison; info: (913) 367-3610; e-mail: Mhansen272@aol.com; MKACNA, 714 N 3rd Street, Atchison, KS 66002

Kentucky: 16-18 Jan. 1997; Louisville Area Convention; info: (812) 280-0523

2) 28-30 Mar. 1997; Kentuckiana Regional Convention; Owensboro; info: KRCNA, Box 126, Robards, KY 42452

Louisiana: 15-17 Nov. 1996; New Orleans Area Convention; Radisson Hotel, Canal Street, New Orleans; rsvns: (800) 824-3359; info: (504) 243-0885 or (504) 246-6594; NOACNA, PO Box 871090, New Orleans, LA 70128

Maryland: 4-6 Apr. 1997; Chesapeake/Potomac Regional Convention; info: (202) 362-4525; CPACNA, PO Box 8006, Silver Spring, MD 20910

Massachusetts: 7-9 Mar. 1997; New England Regional Convention; Westin, Waltham; rsvns: (800) 228-3000 or (617) 290-5600; info: (508) 975-3057; e-mail: JDEdmo@aol.com or rahvan@aol.com; NERC-7, 733 Turnpike Street, Box 145, North Andover, MA 01845

2) 18-20 July 1997; 5th Western Massachusetts Area Convention; Springfield Marriott; rsvns: (800) 228-9290; info: (413) 267-5099 or (413) 783-3644; e-mail: Nonney@ix.netcom.com; WMACNA, PO Box 5914, Springfield, MA 01101

Michigan: 27-29 Mar. 1997; Detroit Area Convention; Westin Hotel, Detroit; rsvns: (800) 228-3000 or (313) 568-8200; info: (313) 527-8684 or (313) 925-4613 or (810) 543-7200; DACNA, PO Box 241221, Detroit, MI 48224

2) 3-6 July 1997; Michigan Regional Convention; Valley Plaza Resort, Midland; rsvns: (800) 825-2700, mention Group #G5275; info: (517) 548-4043 or (810) 694-3546; please send speaker tapes before 19 Jan to.; Program Committee, Box 7116, Novi, MI 48376

Minnesota: 25-27 Apr. 1997; Minnesota Regional Convention; Best Western Kelly Inn, St. Cloud; rsvns: (320) 253-0606; info: (320) 240-0487 or (612) 263-1595; web site: www.cyberx.com/mnnevents.html; MNAC, Box 171, St. Cloud, MN 56301

Missouri: 14-16 Feb 1997; Cabin Fever Prevention Convention; Lodge of Four Seasons, Lake of the Ozarks; info: (573) 446-6800

2) 6-8 June 1997; 12th Show-Me Regional Convention; Hilton Airport Hotel, Kansas City; rsvns: (816) 891-8900; info: (913) 384-0772 or (816) 363-5368; e-mail: woodyp@sound.net

Nevada: 27-30 Mar. 1997; Las Vegas Convention; Monte Carlo Hotel; rsvns: (800) 822-8652; info: (702) 658-0003 or (702) 252-4657; SNCC, 4542 E. Tropicana, Suite 101, Las Vegas, NV 89121

New Jersey: 23-25 May 1997; New Jersey Regional Convention; Cherry Hill Hilton; rsvns: (609) 665-6666; info: (908) 826-2148; NJRCNA, PO Box 605, Englishtown, NJ 07726

New York: 7-9 Mar. 1997; Rochester Area Convention; Radisson Hotel, Rochester; rsvns: (716) 546-3741; info: (716) 787-3290 or (716) 288-1842; RACNA, PO Box 485, Rochester, NY 14605

North Carolina: 3-5 Jan. 1997; Western North Carolina Area Convention; Holiday Inn West Holidome, Asheville; info: (704) 298-9562

Ohio: 3-5 Jan. 1997; Central Ohio Area Convention; Radisson Hotel Columbus North; rsvns: (800) 333-3333 or (614) 846-0300; info: (614) 794-3357 or (614) 252-1700 or (614) 231-0831; COACNA-8, PO Box 44344, Columbus, OH 43204

2) 28 Feb. - 2 Mar. 1997; Toledo Area Convention; Radisson Hotel, Toledo; rsvns: (419) 241-3000; info: (419) 474-2714 or (419) 534-2142; TACNA, PO Box 20018, Toledo, OH 43610-0018

3) 1-3 Aug. 1997; Tri-Area Gateway to Freedom Convention; Sheraton City Center, Cleveland; rsvns: (216) 771-5129; info: (216) 663-2118 or (216) 295-2239 or (216) 341-4842 or (216) 651-2936; Tri-Area 3, PO Box 999, Shaker Heights, OH 44122

Oklahoma: 21-23 Mar. 1997; 11th Oklahoma Regional Convention; Fountainhead Hotel and Resort, Eufaula; rsvns: (800) 345-6343 or (918) 689-9173; info: (918) 343-9807 or (405) 842-8114; OKRCNA, PO Box 12621, 39th Street Station, Oklahoma City, OK 73157-2621

Oregon: 10-12 Jan. 1997; Mid-Willamette Valley Area Convention; Shilo Inn, Newport; info: (503) 390-5872 or (503) 463-6350; MWVACNA, PO Box 13232, Salem, OR 97309-1232

2) 14-16 Mar. 1997; Western States Literature Conference; Holiday Inn Portland Airport; rsvns: (503) 256-5000; info: (503) 224-8345; Lit Conference, PO Box 90415, Portland, OR 97290-0415

Pennsylvania: 14-17 Feb. 1997; Mid-Atlantic Regional Service Conference; Holiday Inn, Lancaster; rsvns: (717) 299-5500; info: (717) 786-7015; MARCNA, PO Box 2574, Lancaster, PA 17608

Texas: 7-9 Mar. 1997; Rio Grande Regional Convention; El Paso Hilton; rsvns: (800) 445-8667 or (915) 778-4241; info: (915) 833-0012 or (915) 562-4654 or (915) 594-0417; RGRCA, PO Box 31563, El Paso, TX 79931

2) 28-30 Mar. 1997; Lone Star Regional Convention; Harvey Hotel D/FW, Irving; rsvns: (972) 929-4500; info: (972) 245-8972 or (800) 747-8972; Lone Star RSO, 1510 Randolph #205, Carrollton, TX 75006

Utah: 18-20 July 1997; 14th Utah Regional Campvention; Whittings Campground, Mapleton; info: (801) 476-7330 or (801) 491-9460 or (801) 489-8326; Campvention, PO Box 994, Springville, UT 84663

Virginia: 3-5 Jan. 1997; 15th Annual Virginia Convention; The Cavalier, Virginia Beach; rsvns: (800) 446-8199; info: (804) 436-5776; (804) 467-4714; AVCNA, PO Box 64918, Virginia Beach, VA 23467-4918

Wisconsin: 10-12 Jan. 1997; Greater Milwaukee Unity Convention; Ramada Inn Airport, Milwaukee; info: (414) 672-4191

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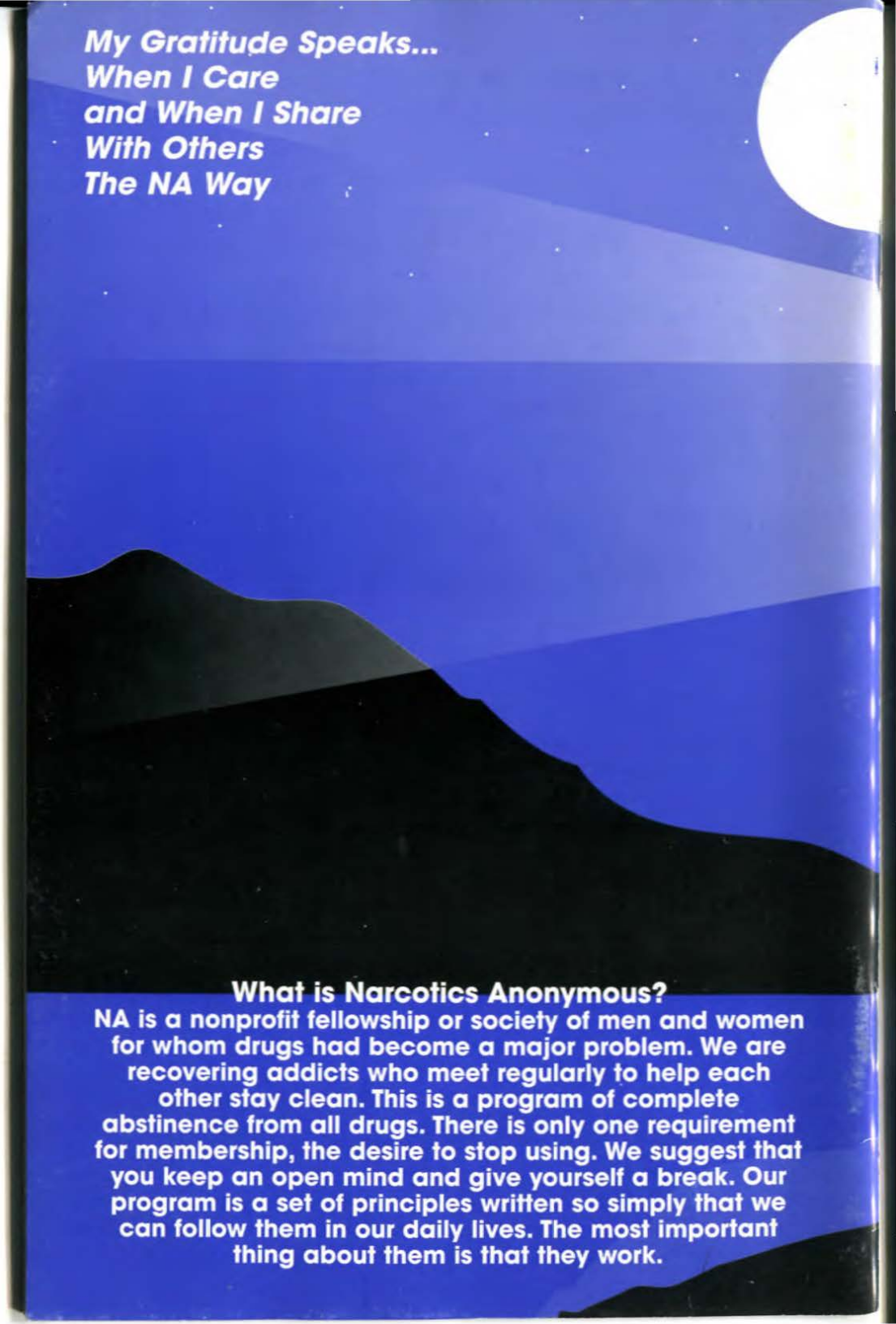
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The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous

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

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.