

Memphis, Tennessee

February 15, 1981

Dear Fellow Addicts:

We have collected material from individuals and groups worldwide, sharing our experience of recovery. We have compiled the information in the form of a "review" copy, which is proposed as our definitive work on addiction and recovery.

This work is the product of the three World Literature Conferences which were held between October 1979 and February 1981 at Wichita, Kansas; Lincoln, Nebraska; and Memphis, Tennessee. In excess of 4,500 man-hours were expended at Memphis by more than seventy recovering addicts from thirteen states to produce the final work. In addition, the Memphis conference kept nine typewriters, two photocopiers, three cassette recorders, two telephones and a dicta-phone in almost continuous use, and used over 20,000 sheets of paper.

We are asking for your corrections or comments. It has been suggested that a group effort may be most effective.

Please return the attached review-input form promptly. The dead-line for input is April 15, 1981, received at Atlanta, or at Los Angeles before the World Literature Conference IV begins April 26, 1981.

Review-input forms will be processed at the World Literature Conference IV in Los Angeles during the last week of April 1981. Everybody is encouraged to attend this conference.

Our goal is to have the review copy approved, Fellowship-wide, and to present the finished manuscript to the World Service Conference in May 1981. Following this approval, the book will be ready for publication in hardback.

Let your H.P. be your guide. We remain your trusted servants.

In gratitude and loving service,

Tim T., Cathy T., Cordie A., Jeff B., Robyn C., Deb D., Richard D., Robert J., Jeff K., Gene L., Lee M., Kathy P., Mike P., Duane P., Mike P., Steven S., Gary S., Morris S., Randy S., Gina H., Kevin B., Cindy H., Danny J., Brenda M., Bill B., Jeanette, Nolan W., Richard, Carol B., Dwayne L., Donna B., Allen C., Hank F., Roland C., Page C., Tina E., Shorty H., Tom M., Bo S., George S., Mary L., Peggy V., Frank I., Laurie S., Mindy N., Mollie P., Linda M., Kirk D., Bob D., Tom L., Doug W., Dan K., Jeff L., Jim M., Terica W., George R., Ted S., Jane B., Beverly B., Terri C., Dennis E., Jack H., Cindy H., Kenny H., Linda L., Bill K., Jan K., Joseph P., Bob S., Roger T.

WORLD LITERATURE CONFERENCE III

WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE-LITERATURE COMMITTEE,
NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

Hardback in June:

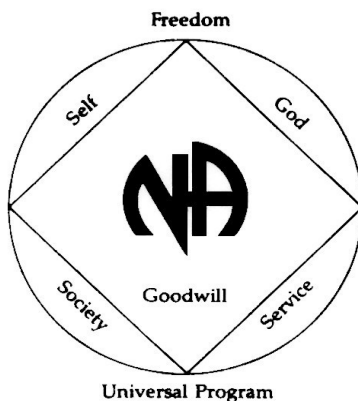
NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

Simplicity is the keynote of our symbol; it follows the simplicity of our fellowship. We could find all sorts of occult and esoteric connotations in the simple outlines, but foremost in our minds were easily understood meanings and relationships.

The outer circle denotes a universal and total program that has room within for all manifestations of the recovering and wholly recovered person.

The square, whose lines are defined, is easily seen and understood, but there are other unseen parts of the symbol. The square base denotes Goodwill, the ground of both the fellowship and the member of our society. Actually, it is the four pyramid sides which rise from this base in a three dimensional figure that are the Self, Society, Service and God. All rise to the point of Freedom.

All parts thus far are closely related to the needs and aims of the addict seeking recovery and the purpose of the fellowship seeking to make recovery available to all. The greater the base, as we grow in unity in numbers and in fellowship, the broader the sides and the higher the point of freedom. Probably the last to be lost to freedom will be the stigma of being an addict. Goodwill is best exemplified in service and proper service is “Doing the right thing for the right reason.” When this supports and motivates both the individual and the fellowship, we are fully whole and wholly free.



NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS



NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS
World Service Conference
Literature Committee

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N.A.W.S.C.-L.C.

Review Copy
Printed February 1981
Memphis, Tenn.

Printed in U.S.A.

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**** NOTE:** Great pains were taken to preserve the content and appearance of the original Grey Book, including spelling and formatting errors.

However, due to electronic formatting, the line numbers may vary slightly from the manually typed original.

In the original Approval Form (Grey Book / Memphis Form) a clerical error omitted the heading "Step Eleven" and associated text. The missing step and heading have been inserted in their proper location to avoid confusion.

Please note that page 58(a) was included to offset the page number changes due to the corrections to Step Eleven.

FORWARD

"The full fruit of a labor of love lives in the harvest, and that always comes in its right season..."

The material for this book was drawn from the personal experiences of recovering addicts within the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. The text is based on an outline derived from the pamphlet (our "white book"), "Narcotics Anonymous." The first eight chapters are based on the topic headings in the "white book" and carry the same title. We have included a ninth chapter, 'Just for Today,' and a tenth chapter, 'More Will Be Revealed.' The remainder of the text was comprised of personal stories and appendices.

Following is a brief history of the book:

Narcotics Anonymous was formed in July 1953 with the first meeting held in Southern California. The Fellowship grew erratically, but quickly spread to various parts of the United States. From the beginning while membership was still very small and the need was seen for a "book on recovery" to help strengthen the Fellowship. The pamphlet, "Narcotics Anonymous," was published in 1962.

However, the Fellowship still had little structure and the 1960's were a period of struggle. Membership grew rapidly for a time, and then began to decline. The need for more specific direction was readily apparent. N.A. demonstrated its maturity in 1972 when a World Service Office was opened in Los Angeles. The W.S.O. has brought the needed unity and sense of purpose to the Fellowship.

The opening of W.S.O. brought stability to the growth of the Fellowship. Today, there are many thousand recovering addicts in hundreds of meetings all across the United States and in many foreign countries. Today, the World Service Office truly serves a worldwide Fellowship.

Narcotics Anonymous has long recognized the need for a complete text on addiction - a book about addicts, by addicts and for addicts, which would serve us much like the A.A. "Big Book) has served that Fellowship.

This effort was strengthened shortly after the formation of W.S.O. with the publication of The N.A.

Tree, a pamphlet on service work. This pamphlet is the original “service manual” of the Fellowship. It has been followed by subsequent and more comprehensive volumes, and now the N.A. Service Manual.

The manual outlined a service structure which included a World Service Conference. The W.S.C., in turn, included a Literature Committee. With the encouragement of W.S.O., several members of the Board of Trustees and the Conference, work began.

As the cry for literature, particularly a comprehensive text, became more widespread, the W.S.C. Literature Committee developed. In October, 1979, the first World Literature Conference was held at Wichita, Kansas, followed by conferences at Lincoln, Nebraska and Memphis, Tennessee.

The W.S.C. Literature Committee, working in conference and as individuals, have collected hundreds of pages of material from members and groups throughout the Fellowship. This material has been laboriously catalogued, edited, rewritten, assembled, dismembered and reassembled. Dozens of area and regional representatives working with the Committee have dedicated weeks and thousands of man-hours to produce the work here presented. But more importantly, those members have conscientiously sought to insure a “group-conscious” text.

In keeping with the spirit of anonymity, we, the Literature Committee feel it appropriate to express our special gratitude and appreciation to the Fellowship as a whole, especially the many of you who contributed material for inclusion in the book. We feel that this book is a synthesis of the collective Group Conscience of the entire Fellowship and that every single idea submitted is included in the work, in some form or another.

This volume is intended as a textbook for every addict seeking recovery. As addicts, we know the pain of addiction, but we also know the joy of recovery we have found in the Fellowship and on the program of Narcotics Anonymous. We believe the time has come to share our recovery in written form with all who desire what we have found.

Appropriately, this book is devoted to informing every addict:
JUST FOR TODAY, YOU NEVER HAVE TO USE AGAIN!

Therefore,

"With gratitude in our cleanliness, we dedicate our N.A. book to the loving service of our Higher Power that through the development of conscious contact with God, no addict seeking recovery need die without having had a chance to find a better way of life."

We remain trusted servants.

In gratitude and loving service,

WORLD LITERATURE CONFERENCE-III
WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE-LITERATURE
COMMITTEE,
NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

At Memphis, Tennessee
February 8, 1981

INTRODUCTION

This book is the shared common and personal experience of the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. We welcome you to read this text, trusting that you will choose to share with us the new life we have found. We have by no means found a "cure" for addiction. We offer only a proven plan for daily recovery.

In N.A., we follow a program adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous. In the last forty-five years, more than one million people have recovered in A.A., most of them just as hopelessly addicted to alcohol as we were to drugs. We are grateful to the A.A. fellowship for showing us the way to a new life.

The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous, as adapted from A.A., are the basis of our recovery program. We have only broadened the perspective of addiction. We follow the same path with a single exception; our identification as addicts is all-inclusive in respect to any mood-changing, mind-altering substance. "Alcoholism" did not cover the total spectrum as comprehensively as does addiction. We believe that we have been guided by a Greater Consciousness as a Fellowship, and are grateful for the Direction that has enabled us to build upon an already-proven program of recovery.

We have come to Narcotics Anonymous by various means and believe that as our common denominator is that we failed to come to terms with our addictions, however varied. Because of the degree and variety of addictions found within our Fellowship, we have approached the solution contained within this book in general terms. We pray that we have been searching and thorough, so that every addict who reads this volume will find the hope we have found.

Based on our collective experience, we believe that every addict, including the "potential" addict, suffers from an incurable disease of body, mind and spirit. We were in the grip of a hopeless dilemma. The solution of which is spiritual in nature. Therefore, this book will deal in great part with spiritual matters.

We are not a religious organization. Our program is a set of spiritual principles through which we are recovering from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. Throughout the compiling of this work, the prevailing theme has been the conscious prayer and meditation:

"GOD, grant us knowledge that we may write according to Your Divine precepts; instill in us a sense of Your purpose, make us servants of Your will and grant us a bond of selflessness that this may truly be Your work, not ours, in order that no addict, anywhere, need die from the horrors of addiction."

Everything that occurs in the course of N.A. service must be motivated by the desire to more successfully carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. It was for this reason that we began this work. We must always remember that as individual members, groups, and service committees, we are not, and should never be, in competition with each other. We work separately and together to help the newcomer and for our common good. We have learned, painfully, that internal strife cripples our Fellowship; it prevents us from providing the services necessary for growth.

It is our hope that this book will help the suffering addict find the solution we have found. Our purpose is to remain clean, just for today, and to carry the message of recovery.

Thank you,

WORLD LITERATURE CONFERENCE III
WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE - LITERATURE
COMMITTEE, NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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CHAPTER ONE

WHO IS AN ADDICT?

Most of us do not have to think twice about this question. WE KNOW. Our whole life and thinking is centered in drugs in one form or another; the getting and using and finding ways and means to get more. We use to live and live to use. Very simply an addict is a man or woman whose life is controlled by drugs. We are people in the grip of a continuing and progressive illness whose ends are always the same Jails, institutions and death.

The user may be unaware that a problem exists until, for example, the drugs run out and they begin to feel the early stages of withdrawal. Or, they keep using but start to notice if they try to stop, that they are unable, or when using they have lost control over the amount. We admitted that we used drugs, but many of us did not think we had a problem.

As practicing addicts, we were keenly aware of the difference between right and wrong. Many of us were convinced that we were right and the world was wrong, and used this belief to justify our self-destructive behavior. Many of us developed a loser's point of view which enabled us to pursue our addiction without the restraints of concern about our well-being. Simply, the loser's point of view focuses on the negative in all things.

We realized that our record had not been good, but that was due to being in the wrong place at the wrong time, or so we thought. We were yet to realize that our "bad luck" was caused by situations we had placed ourselves in, through the direct result of our drug use.

As practicing addicts, we could really get down and if we experienced a periodic jolt of self-awareness, it seemed as if we were two people instead of one, like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. We became capable of depravity of betrayal to ourselves and to others. Temporarily clean, we ran around trying to get it all squared away before our next spree. Sometimes we could do this very well, but later it seemed less important, and at the same time, more impossible. After years of trying to make ourselves happy with cars, sex and dope, we were unhappy and less satisfied than when it all started.

Some of us first saw the effects of addiction in the people we were close to. We became very dependent on people to carry us emotionally through life. We were always left disappointed and hurt when they had other interests, other friends and loved ones. We regretted the past; we feared the future. We were constantly searching for "the answer"--searching for meaninglessness and purposelessness. While using, we lacked the ability to cope with day-today affairs. As our addiction caught up to us, we found ourselves in and out of hospitals, jails and institutions more and more. Because of these experiences, we began to realize how screwed up our lives really were. Drugs could no longer hide the pain. We just wanted an easy way out. Suicide was on many of our minds. Our suicide attempts were often feeble, and only helped to contribute to our feelings of worthlessness. Part of ourselves could see what was happening; another part would not accept it. We were caught in an illusion of "what if," "if only," and "just one more try."

We remember going through a lot of pain and despair before considering the possible connection between drugs and our misery. We had used all sorts of drugs over the years and experienced numerous living problems as the result of our using and yet did not consider ourselves addicted. The problem was that most of the information available to us, before coming to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, came to us from misinformed people or others who also used heavily but did not

consider themselves to be addicted. We did not see ourselves as being addicted, as long as we could periodically stop using for a day, a week, or even a month or more. We looked at the stopping, not the using. Of course, as our addiction progressed, we thought of stopping less and less. Many of us had reached the point where we saw ourselves hopelessly deteriorating; by that time we asked ourselves, "Could it be the drugs?"

Things did not get bad for some of us, at least on the outside. We never considered ourselves addicts, although some of us have used, misused and abused drugs for half of our lives or more. The term "drug addict" conjured up visions of street crime, fear of the law, and needles. Our belief was that the drug addict lived in a skid-row environment. We could not be addicts since we could not fit into that picture. We looked at our differences rather than our sameness. Yet the things we had in common put us all in the same dimension the dimension of addiction.

Did we want to stop using and could we do it alone? What did we use and how did we use it? Did we "con" doctors for prescriptions, telling ourselves that it was O.K to use these drugs because they were legal? Did we have more than one prescription being filled at the same time by different doctors? Did we need something to help us get going in the morning, or something to slow us down at night? Were we using illegal drugs and thinking there was nothing that could be done to kick the habit? Were we in trouble with friends, family, and/or the law because of drug-related incidents?

Something inside said, "No more." We had begun to have silent thoughts that maybe the dope was killing us. In a rare moment of clarity, we were able to look at the whole scene in all its insanity. We realized that drugs were enslaving us instead of setting us free. We were prisoners in our own mind, condemned to slow execution by our own sense of guilt. We had all but given up on ever getting help. Our previous attempts to stay clean had always failed causing us many years of pain and misery.

Our futures appeared hopeless until we found clean addicts who were willing to share. In the Fellowship of N.A., the desire to stop using was all that we needed in the beginning. Our recovery began with our first admission that needed help. Denial of our addiction is what kept us sick and honest admission of our addiction enabled us to stop using. We were able to open up and ask for help by attending meetings. We went to meetings and heard people sharing their feelings and realized that we had felt those feelings ourselves. We were no longer alone. People told us they were addicts and that they were recovering. If they could do it, so could we. We feel from our experience that each individual has to answer the question, "Am I an addict?"

We began to accept ourselves as addicts when we made the connection between our drug use and our problems. We see many differences between us, but more importantly, we see similarities. The differing definitions of addiction are based on our "research" and personal experience. It is not surprising that there are many areas of honest disagreement in defining addiction. Some definitions seem to fit the facts better than others. We know our own viewpoint, but need to listen to others in the hope that we might come to a better understanding of addiction and the addict.

Addiction is a contradiction to living. It is a state of mind which relies on convincing ourselves that drugs are necessary to maintain our sense of well-being. For us, an addict is a person who uses drugs, in any form, to the extent that the individual cannot live normally with or without them. On one hand we sought feelings of superiority, and on the other, we accepted the most intolerable existence on earth.

Some of the highs felt great, especially in the beginning, but the things we had to tolerate to support our habits reflected desperation. We sank to the depths of stealing, lying, prostituting ourselves, and cheating our friends. We manipulated people and conditions and tried to control all of their actions. We failed to realize that the need for control sprang from the fear of losing control. This fear, based in part

on past failures and disappointments, prevented us from making meaningful choices.

Our addiction involved more than drug use. It aggravated our character defects and reinforced personality disorders. Failure and fear of failure began to invade every area of our lives as our addiction progressed. We, in the grip of a compulsion, were often forced to survive in any way we could, at all costs.

All through our usage we kept telling ourselves, "I can handle it." Maybe this was true in the beginning, but not now. We avoided people and places that did not condone our using. We spent our money on drugs, and if there was nothing left, we simply did not eat. We assumed everyone else was crazy, and that we were the only sane ones. The thought of running out of drugs left us with a sense of impending doom. Peace of mind was non-existent. The only relief was a comparatively short-lived "high." We had a distinct desire to consume drugs beyond our capacity to control them. Our using defied all rules of common sense. We not only had an abnormal craving for drugs, but we yielded to it at the worst possible times. We did not have sense enough to know when not to begin. We went through stages of dark despair and we were sure that there was something wrong with US. Other times, we were under the illusion that we had things under control. We came to hate ourselves for wasting the talents with which we had been endowed and for the trouble we were causing our families and others. Frequently, we indulged in self-pity and proclaimed that nothing could help us. When loaded, we had no concern for the rest of the world.

The mental aspect of addiction comes with our inability to deal with life on its own terms. We tried drugs and combinations of drugs in an effort to cope with a seemingly hostile world. We dreamed of finding the right medication or fix, the magic elixir that would solve our ultimate problem ourselves. This reliance on drugs had harmed us emotion-ally. The fact is that we cannot successfully handle

any mind-changing or mood-altering substance. The addict who only smoked pot or did non-narcotic drugs is in as much danger as the "junkie" Our thrills turned out to be a habit which eventually turned on us, almost killing us. We no longer had an addiction; our addiction had us.

Drugs ceased to make us feel good. We could not get the euphoria we craved. When we did seek help, we sought the absence of pain.

If you think you might have a drug problem, you probably do. Few of us set out to become addicted, because when we used, we thought we were in our normal state. We sought euphoria, the highest state of pleasure, at the outset of our addiction. In the final stages of our disease, we used to keep from getting sick. We used in order to survive because it was the only way of life that we knew.

Many of us fall into the old pattern of thinking- remembering only our "good" drug experiences; the fact that drugs could make us feel great. Such selective thinking can destroy our lives and our capacity to live.

Modern drug technology and media attention have made a social anti-hero of the addict. Since many of us were street addicts, we dealt in illicit drugs and lived criminally. This could have something to do with our being different. Many of us have participated in sub-cultural or bizarre behaviors that, may have given us different experiences than those of the non-addict. The fact that those of us who have become addicted come from all levels of society is no guarantee that we will not end our addiction in jail or the graveyard. Miracles are performed everyday when the laws of nature are suspended. The most natural thing for an addict to do is to use. Everyday an addict does not use, a miracle happens. Yet an active addict's prognosis is poor.

Ironically, drugs can also drive addicts past normal human limits, often helping them to win great fame or recognition, until their obsession burns them out. The drug-induced state can allow a person to exclude normal background awareness and to focus on a single point. At first, this can be like a handy

magnifying glass used at will. Later, it can become a horrible sequence of all-consuming bits and pieces that rush up continually until we find ourselves powerless to control what is happening. Prescription addicts are usually slow to recognize that they have a problem. Legal doses of prescribed medication can addict a person because of unknown side effects, combinations with other drugs or an inborn susceptibility to addiction. We could get high to relieve the pain of living, through the use of prescriptions, at school or at work. We found it difficult to face life so we used drugs as a means of escape.

Addiction isolated us from people except for the getting, using, and finding ways and means to get more. Hostile, resentful, self-centered and self-seeking we cut off all outside interests from our lives. Anything not completely familiar became alien and dangerous. Our world shrank and isolation became our life.

Non-addicts have great trouble understanding our dilemma. It is often nearly impossible to make sense of our behavior and the consuming drive to use, even after repeated and prolonged efforts to stay clean. Identification can guide us in our recovery, since we can see a little of ourselves in every addict. We thought of our addiction as hopeless before finding the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

Addiction is a treatable disease as soon as we begin to "treat" our addiction by working the Twelve Steps that have worked repeatedly, we experience very positive results. When our addiction is treated as a crime or moral deficiency, we become rebellious and are driven deeper into our isolation.

Addicts who would otherwise waste away in institution very often respond to the love and fellowship offered in N.A. Ours is a proven program of recovery. We have no choice but to help one another, for the assurance and strength of our own recovery lies in the helping of other addicts.

The disease of addiction can also be seen in its social aspects. Addiction in its broadest sense is a disease of

our times. It embraces all our social ills. Drug manufacture and the innovation of new drugs in modern times have created an availability of potentially addictive drugs never before known in the history of man.

One of the ancient dreams of man seems to be coming true; the ability of modern drug technology to combat disease and alleviate human suffering. Hidden in this blessing, however, is a cruel reversal of effect which is our addiction. The innate susceptibility to our disease through genetic factors and complete knowledge of the sources of our behavioral inclinations is of no concern in our recovery through N.A. The "why" is not important; the "what to do" is our chief question.

We feel it is important to share our experience, strength and hope with others who may suffer from our disease, letting them know what they can do, if they desire to recover.

Although some of us have not been street addicts, many of us have, and we consider the street addict the most conspicuous and the most vulnerable to the more severe abuses resulting from the stigma with which addiction is branded. In many locations, street addicts are processed as habitual offenders when treatment of their disease could restore them to productive lives.

We continued to use time and time again, despite the symptoms of withdrawal. There are many different symptoms of withdrawal from drugs. We can't list them all. We have, however, been addicted to thousands of drugs and know firsthand how they feel and what the initial abstinence is like. In this, we can reassure each other and the newcomer that it will get better if they don't use. If we do use, in the face of withdrawal, the next time it will be worse.

Addiction is chronic, progressive and fatal. The cycle can be broken by not taking that first fix, pill, drink, or toke.

Like other incurable diseases, addiction can be arrested. We agree that there is nothing shameful about being an addict provided we accept our dilemma and honestly take action. We are willing to admit without reservation that we are "allergic" to drugs. Common sense tells us that it would be insane to go back to the source of our "allergy." We, as recovering addicts,

can tell you that medicine cannot "cure" our illness. We regained good physical health many times only to relapse. Our past records show that it is impossible for us, as addicts, to use with control, no matter how well we may appear to be in control of our feelings.

Social adjustments failed to bring about recovery. We thought a suitable job or social relationship could be the answer to our dilemma. Addiction, in its progression, causes us to flounder and fail, consuming us with anger and fear.

Higher mental and emotional functions, such as conscience and love, are sharply affected by our use of drugs. Our living skills may be reduced to the animal level, if we have suffered long enough. The person within is submerged and the capacity to be human is lost. This is an extreme state, but most of us have been there.

Learning to live without drugs is complicated by the fact that it is so hard for many of us to accept our disease. Again, susceptibility and availability have combined in the addict to form dependency. Many of the doctors among us came into the Fellowship with an attitude of denial. We have found in the progression of our addictions that we had been devastated by the disease to the point where denial was futile. Part of the risk run by society in keeping the lid on our addiction is the social stigma that keeps the addict who might seek help from seeking it because of a fear of never being able to live it down.

Addiction is the disease and Narcotics Anonymous is a proven path of on-going recovery. Our experience shows that those who keep coming to meetings regularly stay clean. We continue in our recovery until we die. In our addiction, we practiced dying. In our recovery, we practice living today! We can feel, care, love and be loved. We no longer have to be isolated, and in time, can feel free to go anywhere and do almost anything except use. We do not use because we do not want to. Today we have a choice.

Many of us sought answers but failed to find any we could use until we found each other. Most of us have become

very grateful in the course of our recovery. We have a disease that we can recover from. Our lives can return to being useful, in the course of our abstinence and through the working of the Twelve Steps of N.A., explained in this book. The use of any sort of medication may lead us back to active addiction. We must be careful when seeking treatment from any doctor not totally acquainted with our disease. We strongly suggest to one another that we break our anonymity to the doctor administering drugs to us and trust that our medical records will be kept confidential. One of the danger zones in our recovery is that when we get ill and are prescribed legitimate medication, it may lead us back to our drug of choice. We call this relapse.

All too many times, doctors who meant well, but did not know of our disease, enabled our addictions. We cannot recover overnight and we cannot expect sincere physicians to review their options or methods of treatment overnight. Our place is to help the addict who still suffers, particularly those who are seeking help.

All of the psychological and social commentary ever written on this subject has failed to answer this question thoroughly. Rather than enter the area of medical theory and legalities, we feel that it is more worthwhile to discuss the answers we have found. Instead of concentrating on the problem, let's look at the solution.

Narcotics Anonymous concerns itself with recovery. We all know how to use drugs. We know the effect they have had on us. The primary thing we are interested in is how to stay clean, how to cope with life without using, how to handle unpleasant feelings and emotions--in other words, how to get better. It was conceivable in our addictive thinking that something would work for us without any work on our part. That was how the drugs worked. How wrong we were. It has been our experience that the program works as long as we work it, just for today, to the best of our ability.

The mind begins to accept new ideas which lead to a new way of life as the grip of drugs and our past way of thinking and doing begins to relax. We find ourselves no longer pressed

between those who use and those who don't in this new way of life. Our world constantly expands to include new associations and eventually we become members of society. Problems that had no solutions became transparent and unreal in the light of our new understanding. Old grudges and resentments fade as we loosen our sick point of view. A warm feeling of belonging replaces the hole in our gut left by our addictions. It is no accident--it's the way the program works. A miracle takes place as the drugs are washed from our bodies by daily abstinence and our minds begin to clear from the effects of our using. We come to understand that our recovery is a gift from a power greater than ourselves. We are made aware of this gift in a thousand ways. This power wants only that we realize ourselves as much as possible. The longer we stay clean, the more we will want to clear away the shame and falseness of our lives. It is a great gift to be a human being.

What we have just been describing are some of the benefits involved in recovery. There is only one alternative to recovery and that is the progression of our disease. The progression of our addiction has been compared to an elevator that is always going down. We have found that we can get clean at any level we want. Unfortunately, the nature of our disease makes us abnormally susceptible to rationalizing our addiction instead of dealing with the fact. If you are an addict, you can find a new life through the program that would not otherwise be possible.

Many drugs require no extended period of use to trigger allergic reactions, although physical and mental tolerance can play a role. It is not how much we use that makes us addicts, but what it does to us. Certain things follow as usage continues. Setting aside the physical effects of addiction, as the regularity of usage increases, we become accustomed to the state of mind common to addicts; we forget what it was like before we started using. We forget the social graces; acquire weird habits and mannerisms, forget how to work, forget how to express ourselves and show con-

cern for others and we forget how to feel. We, as recovering addicts, have to relearn things forgotten and learn what we have missed.

We may lose jobs, get divorced, lose friends and find ourselves unable to account for these changes, as our disease progresses. Generally, our use of drugs increases with all these changes or during intervals between changes. We can continue in this condition indefinitely, or as our using increases, progress rapidly in our addiction. If at any point we make the basic connection between our use of drugs and the way things have been going for us, we can begin recovery by admitting our need for help.

We addicts value personal freedom highly; perhaps because we want it so much and experience it so seldom in the progression of our illness. Even in periods of abstinence, freedom is curtailed. We are never quite sure that our choice of action is based on a conscious desire for continued clean time or an unconscious wish is to return to using.

Our addiction developed in us an emotional instability. We became very sluggish or glum without drugs. Some of us felt we had to have drugs to deal with our feelings. We felt, as if our world was hollow, dull, and meaningless; that there was no purpose to life but to use and to find ways and means to get more. Some of us eventually landed in the mental hospitals, fearing for our sanity. What we learned behind the walls of the various institutions was that the most sincere and constructive efforts of medicine and psychiatry had few answers for us that we could use in achieving ongoing recovery. We, in the later stages, are usually the very last to recognize our need for help. The principle of one addict helping another pyramids and the solution to our dilemma has begun.

We have also learned that there are few alternatives for the addict. If we continue to use, the problem will become progressively worse; we are on the path that leads to skid row, hospitals, jails, institutions or to an early grave.

Incarceration and institutionalization sometimes led us to the realization that the drugs were letting us down. Where these

drugs once had given us the feeling that we could handle what-ever situation that might come down, we became aware that these same drugs were largely responsible for our having gotten into our very worst predicaments. Some of us hit many institutions and few or no jails. Some of us may spend the rest of our lives in jail for a drug-related crime or a crime committed under the influence.

Addiction is a disease which manifested at an indeterminable point in our lives. Some recovering addicts believe that the disease was present long before the first pill, fix, drink or toke. Some of us believe that the disease is hereditary, due to parents, grandparents or other relatives who are addicted. How we got the disease, however, is of no immediate importance to us. What concerns us at present is how we can continue our own recovery while helping the addict who still suffers.

We have found through our experiences that addiction has three major phases, the first of which is practicing addiction. We were using in a manner which seemed to be social or at least controllable with little indication of the disaster which the future held for us. This phase varies in duration from addict to addict. We have found that it is very difficult to help anyone in this phase.

At some point, our using became uncontrollable and definitely anti-social. This phase of uncontrollable using is suffering addiction and usually began when things were going well and we were in situations that allowed us to use as frequently as we wanted. It is marked by a decline and usually the end of good living as we knew it. We went from a state of drugged success and well-being to complete spiritual, mental and emotional bankruptcy. This state of decline varies in length. We can only say that for some it was a matter of months or even days and for others it was a matter of years. We who are recovering and thus alive today, tried to moderate, substitute or even stop using. Those of us that did that did not seek to change died from the disease, went to prison, or were committed to mental institutions as hope-

lessly insane. Some of us who sought out changes were graced by the life force of the universe and found the N.A. program.

It was when we were suffering that we were willing to stop using. It was much easier to help suffering addicts when we were in the latter part of the suffering stage for it was easier for us to see the destruction, disaster and delusion of our using. Many times when the problems caused by drug usage were staring us in the face we could not see it as a problem, until we reached our bottoms.

The third major phase is in our recovery. We, as recovering addicts in the N.A. Fellowship, practice living and enjoying life on a day to day basis by living the Twelve Steps. We realize that we are never cured and carry the disease within us to the grave. We addicts, recovering in N.A., are convinced that there is only one way for us to live, and that is the N.A. way. Due to our Fifth Tradition and Twelfth Step, our primary purpose in life is to stay clean by carrying the message to the addict who still suffers.

We can die from untreated addiction. But before we die, the disease takes from us our pride, our self-esteem, our families and loved ones. And finally, it takes our very will to live.

We of Narcotics Anonymous were raised from hell to find that the program is a way of life. We know that a new life is laid out for us every day if we want it and don't use. A new place awaits us in the society that, during our using, offered only misgivings. We come to know success. We have found all this through dependence on a Power greater than ourselves, a group of our fellow addicts, and spiritual principles.

CHAPTER TWO

WHAT IS THE NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS PROGRAM?

N.A. is a non-profit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovered 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 honest desire to stop using. There are no musts in N.A. but 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."

There are no strings attached to N.A. We are not affiliated with any other organizations, we have no leaders, no initiation fees or dues, no pledges to sign, no promises to make to anyone. We are not connected with any political, religious, or law enforcement groups, and are under no surveillance at any time. Anyone may join us regardless of age, race, color, creed, religion or lack of religion.

We are not interested in what or how much you used or who your connections were, what you have done in the past, how much or how little you have, but only in what you want to do about your problem and how we can help. The newcomer is the most important person at any meeting, because we can only keep what we have by giving it away. We have learned from our group experience that those who keep coming to our meetings regularly stay clean.

The structure of Narcotics Anonymous is quite unlike any health or welfare agency known to us. Although N.A. practices may vary from place to place, all N.A. services are performed voluntarily by the addicts themselves and without

cost. N.A. does not accept money for its service, is not funded by any public or private sources or agencies and accepts no outside contributions.

Addicts respond instinctively to honest sharing. The fact that the addict can feel the unconditional love and judge for themselves the "qualifications" revealed in the stories of recovering addicts awakens the notion that at last there might be hope. The newcomer loses his fear when he discovers that N.A. members give away the message of cleanliness in order to stay clean. We of Narcotics Anonymous are currently trying to bring about more communication, understanding, respect, and cooperation between N.A. and any professional person who works with addicts--so that more and more addicts may be able to recover. With local groups in many communities we are part of an international fellowship.

In the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous we make use of things that have worked for those who have gone before us: the Twelve Steps, the principles and the many positive tools that enable us to make recovery possible. We have one primary purpose to stay clean and to help others who may turn to us for help. We are united by our common problem, addiction. Meeting, talking with, and helping other addicts, we are somehow able to stay clean and to lose the compulsion to use, once a dominant force in our lives.

We are grateful also to see new people coming to meetings from the streets. There is nothing that compares to a new person freely talking about the pain and the endless hustle that goes on out there. As a result, Narcotics Anonymous has had more than twenty-five years of trial-and-error experience, face-to-face, with literally hundreds of thousands of addicts. This mass of intensive first hand experience with all kinds of problem drug users, in all phases of illness and recovery, is unparalleled in therapeutic value. Narcotics Anonymous is here to share freely with any addict who wants it.

Narcotics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women for whom drugs in one form or another had become a major problem.

We had become so physically, mentally and spiritually ill that we became crazed, depressed and terrified people. We were sick people. The growing fellowship of N.A. supports us in our efforts of recovery. It gives us new friends who understand where we have been.

Our message of recovery is based on our own experience. Before coming to the Fellowship, we exhausted ourselves trying to use successfully, or trying to find out what was wrong with us. After coming to the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship, we find ourselves among a very special group of people. Many were a great deal worse off than we were. Here we found hope. If the Narcotics Anonymous program worked for them, it might work for us. We began to ask questions and listened a little more closely to the suggestions. After all there's a chance we could get a little relief.

We do not think we are the only people who have alternatives to the problem of addiction, but we know that the N.A. program works for us. We have seen it work for every one who honestly and sincerely wanted to stop using. The main point is that we meet people, addicts like ourselves, yet they are clean for months or years. We watched and listened to them openly and realized that these people had found a way to live and be happy without drugs.

In all honesty the most we can do for the newcomer is to share our experience, strength and hope and be ready to help when asked. If we go beyond this we risk becoming enablers. Most of us can remember doing nothing as long as we could get someone else to take care of us. We don't want the help we can offer to rob the new person of that essential ingredient of living which setting their own house in order can bring. We addicts have no choice but to help one another. In helping others our own recovery is aided. We don't criticize them better we love them better. As several great men have pointed out, there is more to it than a simple love. We are really talking about survival in a world where we have ceased to be functioning

members of society. This program has given us a belief in a loving God that works through people. Never should we claim to have all the answers, but we can share our experience and the things that work for us. N.A. offers alternatives and suggestions that have worked for others.

We don't want to settle-for the limitations of the past. We want to examine and re-examine all our old ideas, and constantly improve on them or replace them with new ones.

We, in N.A., are men and women who have discovered and admitted that we are powerless over our addictions. We have learned that we must live without drugs if we are to avoid the disaster we created for ourselves and those close to us.

The consequences of our addictive using (and thinking) have also varied. Some of our members had literally become derelicts before turning to N.A. for help. We had lost families, possessions and self respect. We had committed many offenses against society, families, and employers. Others among us had never been jailed or hospitalized, nor had we lost jobs because of our using. Even those men and women finally came to the point where they realized that using was interfering with normal living. When they discovered that they could not live without drugs, they, too, sought to help themselves through N.A., rather than prolonging their pain. The program works a miracle in our hearts. We become new people. The Steps and abstinence give us daily reprieves from our self-imposed life sentences. We become free to move about without compulsion or guilt.

Communication is a very important part of our program. Without it we would not have the chance to share ideas and new aspects of the program with each other. What one group or area learns can and should be shared with other areas. This is how the Fellowship of N.A. has grown and spread over the past twenty-five years. We need each other.

Our meetings contain a certain atmosphere of empathetic and universal feelings, which all addicts have in common. In this atmosphere of recovery, we found we were very much at home and were able to start a new way of life with these people who

called themselves addicts. The unconditional love we find at meetings makes it possible to relax and review our assumptions about ourselves and reality. Working the Steps will give us a relationship with a Power greater than ourselves, correct old defects, right old wrongs, and lead us to help others. As we begin the process of change by honestly listening to the stories of people we meet in an N.A. meeting or in private fellowship, we will want to try out some of the solutions that have worked for others. Maybe their solution is part of our solution. Trying to be all things to all people, we have often forgotten what we really think and feel. As we begin to come out of our fog, the layers of phoniness will peel off like the skin of an onion. When the layers are gone, our real selves will remain.

As we attend meetings and hear the experience, strength, and hope of others, we will come to notice that we are not the only ones with problems. We will eventually hear someone who flat out makes us feel lucky by comparison. We will grow to know gratitude, to see where we came from and how far we have progressed. We have all tried many ways to overcome our addictions and sometimes temporary recovery was possible but always it was followed by an even deeper involvement with addiction than before.

Let new ideas flow into you. Ask questions. The principles of living incorporated in the Twelve Steps may seem strange to you, but they work. This program works for those willing to work it.

We have found that trying to help another addict is good for us whether the addict we try to help uses what we have to offer or not. For this reason, N.A. groups attempt to concentrate primarily on this person-to-person service, without getting involved in any outside enterprise no matter how worthwhile.

We feel loved. More and more we feel we would rather be with each other when we are thinking negatively than by ourselves. Good comes from being with others; loneliness and negativity fall by the wayside. Something memorable,

precious, and beneficial stems from clean togetherness. There is a security of being real; of having brothers and sisters on the road to recovery is a comforting feeling. We recover together.

The only requirement to be a member of Narcotics Anonymous is a desire to stop using. We don't have to be clean when we get here, but after the first meeting, we suggest that you keep coming back to the meetings and coming clean. We don't have to wait for an overdose, or jail sentence, to get help from N.A.; nor is addiction a hopeless condition from which there is no recovery. It is possible to arrest the need to use with the help of the Twelve Step program of N.A. and the Fellowship of recovering addicts in N.A. We want to reach out to whoever reads this and to lay our lives and our hearts on the line to show what this program and the spirit of N.A. has done for us. In other words, if you think you have a drug problem, it is likely that you do; and our program might have something special to offer.

We want desperately for the place where addicts recover to be a safe place, free from outside influences. We feel safe at our closed meetings. Everyone is an addict. We feel totally free to express ourselves because no law enforcement agencies are involved. No one judges, stereotypes, or moralizes us. We are not recruited and it doesn't cost anything. N.A. does not provide counseling or social services. The rooms are filled with men and women from all walks of life and persuasions. We do have one must in N.A.: **NO DRUGS OR PARAPHERNALIA BE ON YOUR PERSON AT MEETINGS.**

In a sense, the Program is a way for addicts to find the Higher Power that traditional religions have pointed to. The difficulty here is that we can quickly fall prey to the notion that we were not sick, but merely misinformed, if we stop doing the things that began our recovery. In the days before N.A. began to serve the needs of the growing numbers of addicts in our population, spontaneous recovery through religion was rare and quick to fade. Claim of a spiritual awakening is worthless

if the life of the individual is not changed for the better.

Upon entering the Fellowship, some notices a strong spiritual glow among members. Then we could see and feel that Higher Power was at work in N.A. After having a few months in the Fellowship, we see how the spiritual need for a Higher Power keeps us clean.

Our program is in fact a way of life. We learn the value of principles such as humility, surrender, and service. The idea that we have to do it alone is obsolete.

It helps things run more smoothly when we find sponsors to confide in and let them help us. We learn the art of helping others appropriately, without creating resentments.

We, of Narcotics Anonymous, do not promise to have all the answers, but we've found that our lives steadily improved if we didn't use and learned to maintain our spiritual condition. In time we met an addict seeking recovery and discovered ourselves really able to respond to their needs. We gave others what we found. The truth is that the more we give in this way, the more we have to offer. Our own needs are met when we learn to live for others. Through practicing our honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness to try, we develop humility, tolerance, and patience. We are able to love the unlovable and discover self-acceptance. We are not likely to create problems in our daily living. We finally realize we have a choice in the matter of our lives.

The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous, our new friends and our sponsors help us to deal with our feelings. In N.A. our joys are multiplied by sharing our good days with our fellows, and our sorrows are lessened when we share our bad days. For the first time in our lives, we don't have to experience anything alone. Not only do we have the group but hopefully, as time progresses, we will develop a relationship with a God of our own understanding that will always be with us.

We learn to experience feelings and realize that the feelings themselves can do us no harm, unless we act on them.

We learn to call someone if we have a feeling we cannot handle, and by sharing that feeling with a friend, we learn to work through it. Chances are that our friend has had a similar experience and can relate what worked for him. By close work with a sponsor, we can utilize the Twelve Steps of the program as a guide to dealing with situations we have not dealt with in the past. Sponsorship is a give and take partnership, with both gaining strength from the relationship. It was suggested that we look for a sponsor as soon as we became acquainted with members in our area. We look for someone who has been down a path similar to ours, understands where we are coming from, and has learned to cope with the same types of situations. We, who are recovering, must share with others. We have to in order to maintain our progress in the N.A. program and our ability to function without drugs. Being asked to sponsor a new member is a privilege, so don't hesitate to ask a person with whom you can identify. Sponsorship is a rewarding experience for both, and we are all here to help and to be helped. Get phone numbers and use them. Ask questions about the program and get acquainted with the people.

Many books have been written about the nature of addiction. This book primarily concerns itself with the nature of recovery. If you are an addict and have found this book, please give yourself a break and read it!

CHAPTER THREE

Why Are We Here?

Before coming to the fellowship of N.A., we could not manage our own lives, we could not live and enjoy life as other people do. We had to have something different and we thought we had found it in drugs. We placed their use ahead of the welfare of our families, our wives, husbands, and our children. We had to have drugs at all costs. We did many people great harm but most of all we harmed ourselves. Through our inability to accept personal responsibilities we were actually creating our own problems. We seemed to be incapable of facing life on its own terms.

Most of us realized, that in our addictions, we were slowly committing suicide, but such cunning enemies of life are narcotics and sedation that we had lost the power to do anything about it. Jail did not help us at all. Medicine, religion and psychiatry seemed to have no answers for us that we could use. All these methods having failed for us, in desperation, we sought help from each other in Narcotics Anonymous.

After coming to N.A. we realized we were sick people who suffered from a disease like Alcoholism, Diabetes or Tuberculosis. There is no known "Cure" for these all, however, can be arrested at some point and "recovery" is then possible.

In N.A. we follow a program borrowed from Alcoholics Anonymous. In the last forty years more than one million people have recovered in A.A., most of them just as hopelessly addicted to alcohol as we were to drugs. We are deeply grateful to the A.A. Fellowship for pointing the way for us to a new way of life.

Before coming to the fellowship of N.A., we were irresponsible with our lives. We used drugs to cover up our humiliation, guilt, inferiority and feelings of inadequacy.

Many of us woke up sick, unable to make it to work or went to work loaded. Many of us stole to support our habit. We hurt the ones we loved, whatever it took to get that fix, pill, drink or joint. We denied all these things and told ourselves we could handle it. We were looking for something new in life, possibly a way to be accepted. Eventually we started looking for a way out. We didn't face life on life's terms. In the beginning, using was fun. It became a habit and then it was necessary for survival. The progression of the disease was not apparent to us. We continued on the path of destruction, unaware of where it was leading us. We had the disease and did not know it. We avoided reality through the use of drugs. The pain and misery was postponed. When we came down, our problems came back, and were compounded with additional problems that had built up. We felt the need to use more often as our disease progressed.

We knew we needed help, but had nowhere to go. Most of us explored different alternatives. Doctors didn't understand our dilemma. Usually they helped our disease by giving us prescriptions. Our husbands, wives and loved ones gave us anything in hopes that we would stop using. We tried substituting one drug for another and this only created a vicious cycle. We tried limiting our usage to "social" amounts, but our success with this was short-lived or non-existent.

Some of us sought spiritual guidance through churches, different religions, meditation and cultism. Some of us sought cure by geographical change, blaming our surroundings and living situations for our problem. This attempt just gave us new people to take advantage of. Some of us sought approval through sexual activities and change of peers. This approval-seeking got us back where we started from, or worse. Some tried marriage, divorce and desertion of our families. Many tried psychiatrists and institutions. All these attempts at controlled usage or abstinence were futile.

We had reached a point in our lives where we had become a lost cause to society. Our worth to our jobs, families and

friends was little or none. Some of us became unemployed and unemployable. Success was scary and unfamiliar. We didn't know what to do about it. As the self-loathing grew, we had to use more and more to mask the feeling of hate. We were sick and tired of pain and trouble. We were frightened and ran from the fear, but no matter how far we ran, the fear followed us. We were hopeless, useless and lost. Feelings of worthlessness overcame us. Failure had become our way of life and self-esteem was non-existent. The peculiar inertia that keeps a person going the way they are, acted on us. To some of us, our appearance didn't matter. We had no pride in anything we did. We didn't care how we looked. For some, personal hygiene became a thing of the past. For others, it became an obsession. We tried to cover up our inner pain with outside appearances. Any hope of being anything different disappeared. Helplessness, emptiness and fear became a way of life. We were complete failures. Personality change was what we really needed. Change from a self-destructing to a self-affirming pattern of living was imperative. We started experiencing how powerless we really were. Nothing seemed to relieve the paranoia and fear. We hit bottom and became ready to ask for and accept help.

We were searching for an answer. We reached out and found the hand of Narcotics Anonymous. We came to our first N.A. meeting in utter defeat. We were searching for something, but we did not know what. After sitting in a meeting, we felt that people cared and were willing to be patient with us. Although our heads told us we would never make it, the people in the Fellowship gave us hope by insisting we could. We found that no matter what our thoughts or past actions were others had preceded us. Surrounded by fellow addicts, we realized that we were not alone. We were told that if we put things ahead of our clean time, the program would not work. Nothing happens in the room but recovery; everyone's life is at stake. We

learned old friends, places and ideas were threatening to our recovery. We had to change our playmates, playgrounds and playthings.

When we came to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, we faced many disturbing realizations. One: we were powerless over our addictions and our lives were unmanageable; two: we are not responsible for our disease but we are responsible for our recovery; three: we can no longer blame people, places and things for our addiction. We had to own up to our problems and our feelings.

In N.A., we learned that members concentrated on recovery and how they felt, not what they had done in the past. We found that the ultimate weapon for recovery was the recovering addict. Having realized that we were unable to maintain on our own, some of us immediately began experiencing depression, anxiety, hostility and resentment. We began to feel emotional pain that we had always been afraid to feel. We began to grow and open up into our new lives that we had found in N.A. Many of us felt that our lives, due to petty frustrations, minor setbacks and losses, were not getting any better. An honest look was often a grateful one. It was in those times that many of us found out who we were. It allowed us to make important discoveries like "it's O.K. to hurt and feel the pain."

Today we have feelings of love, joy, hope, excitement, sadness and friendship. Before we were either elated or depressed with very little in between. Our negative sense of self was replaced by a positive concern for others. Our own problems seemed to resolve themselves. It is a great gift to be a human being, and the opportunities we seek are determined by our own sense of self-worth. When we lie, cheat, or steal, we degrade ourselves in our own eyes. We have had enough of self-destruction. We want to learn to do the things that will transform us into self-affirming people.

The symptoms of addiction include mental states that aren't when we get clean, these strange habits of mind pass away and we start to learn to live again. Continued abstinence,

belief in a God of our understanding, and participation in the program will restore us to sanity.

What a change from how we used to be! That's how we know that the N.A. program works. It's the first thing that ever convinced us that we needed to change ourselves, instead of trying to change the people and situations that irritated us. It gave us a Twelve Step blueprint for doing just that. By working the Steps, we came to accept our Higher Power's will and this acceptance led us down the road of recovery. We lost our fear of the unknown through practice of the Twelve Steps. We were freed to live and enjoy life just for today without the old ghosts of our addiction haunting us in the morning of every new day.

We all have our personal stories of recovery, and every one has their own way of working this program. This is the way the program works. It is available to each addict seeking recovery. Our personal natures differ, so our experiences of recovery vary.

Recovery is a beautiful chance that many addicts thought had passed them by until they found the Fellowship of N.A. It's the chance to live again. Recovery from the disease of addiction encompasses many things: carrying the message to the suffering addict; being with people we really love and care about; spiritual principles; a Higher Power of our own understanding; a sincere desire for ongoing recovery; open-mindedness; loving service and, of course, the vital spiritual experience that results in and perpetuates the expansion of Narcotics Anonymous.

CHAPTER FOUR

HOW IT WORKS

If what you want what we have to offer, and are willing to make the effort to get it, then you are ready to take certain steps. These are suggested only, but they are the principles that made our recovering possible.

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

This sounds like a big order; and we can't do it all at once, we didn't become addicted in one day, so remember --EASY DOES IT.

There is one thing more than anything else that will defeat us in our recovery, this an attitude of indifference or intolerance toward spiritual principles. Although there are no musts in N.A., there are three things that seem indispensable. These are Honesty, Open mindedness and Willingness to try. With these we are well on our way.

We feel that our approach to the problem of addiction is completely realistic, for the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel. We feel that our way is practical, for one addict can best understand and help another addict. We believe that the sooner we face our problems within our society, in everyday living, just that much faster do we become acceptable responsible, and productive members of that society.

The only way to keep from getting or continuing a habit is not to take that first fix, pill or drink. If you are like us you know that one is too many and a thousand never enough.

We put great emphasis on this for we know that when we use drugs in any form, or substitute one for another; we release our addiction all over again or create a new one.

The substitution of alcohol has caused a great many addicts to form a new addiction pattern, which in its progression brings as many problems as before. We seem to forget that alcohol is one of the oldest known drugs. It would appear that we are people with addictive personalities who are strongly susceptible to alcoholic addiction.

Are we sure we want to stop using? Do we understand and believe that we have no real control over drugs? Do we recognize that in the long run, we don't use drugs--they use us? Do we fully accept the fact that our every attempt to stop using or control our using failed? Do we know that drugs have the power to change us into liars, thieves, and schemers? Do we know in our guts, that as successful drug users, we have failed? We admit to ourselves that every time we hurt someone, we were loaded, or trying to get loaded.

When we came to N.A., we were physically, mentally, and spiritually bankrupt. We hurt long enough and badly enough that we were willing to go to any lengths to stay clean. To live by the example of those who had faced our dilemma, and had found a way out, seemed to be our only hope.

When we first came into the Fellowship of N.A., we were often resentful at the suggestions some of the members made to us. Regardless of who we are, where we have come from, or what we have done, we are accepted in N.A. Our addiction gives us all a common ground for understanding one another.

When we were using, reality became so painful that oblivion was preferable. We had to keep other people from knowing about our pain. We isolated ourselves, and lived in prisons built out of our own loneliness. Through this desperation, we sought out Narcotics Anonymous.

After attending a few meetings, we began to feel like we finally belonged somewhere. It was in these meetings that we were first introduced to the Twelve Steps of N.A. We work them in the order they were written, and we use them on a daily basis. They are our-solutions. They have become our survival kit, for addiction is a deadly disease. Our Steps are suggested only, but they are the principles that make our recovering possible.

STEP ONE

We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.

The bottom line of Narcotics Anonymous is staying clean. We realize that we cannot use drugs and live. When we admit our powerlessness and inability to manage our own lives, we open the door to a power greater than ourselves.

We have an incurable, progressive, terminal disease called addiction. It doesn't matter whether we just take a few pills, fix eight times a day, suck on a pipe, drink bottles of cough remedy behind drug stores or have one tranquilizer with our first martini each day--we have certain things in common, no matter to what degree or what kind of addict we are.

When we hit bottom, we were searching for an answer—looking for a way out. We reached out and there was an answer. Until we took Step One, we were full of reservations. We felt

different. Upon working Step One, we affirmed our surrender to the principles of N.A., and only then did we overcome the alienation of being a drug addict. We became a part of society.

Where is help? How did we get it? What was it? We went to a meeting of Narcotics Anonymous. We are inclined to be skeptical. We needed proof. In that N.A. meeting was our proof. There we found people like ourselves with the same, or worse, patterns of drug dependency and failure, yet they were clean. They smiled. Their eyes were clear. They cared for each other. They introduced themselves to the newcomer and made them feel welcome. During the meeting, we heard a little bit about ourselves. We understood and believed that we had no real control over drugs. We accepted the fact that every attempt we had made to control our using had failed. We knew in our hearts that drugs have the power to change us into something we didn't want to be, and we of all people had surely had enough of self-destruction. We wanted first to learn, then to do the things that would help us become self-affirming people.

We had to take, Step One. We had to admit that we are powerless and we had to continue going to meetings to hear other addicts talk about this powerlessness. Do we understand and believe that we have no real, long term control over drugs? Do we fully accept the fact that every attempt on our part to taper off, or stop using, or to control our using had failed? Do we know in our hearts that drugs have the power to change us into something that we don't want to be: liars, thieves, schemers?

Step One means that we don't have to make excuses for the way we are, and that is a great freedom. Surrender means not having to fight anymore. It took a while, for some of us, to realize how unmanageable our lives had become; for others, this was about the only thing of which we could be sure. In a way, we were like gamblers, and we didn't like the odds against us. This is the way we recover when we

hit bottom; it's like the slide has stopped. With the admission of complete defeat, we stopped it right there.

After struggling through the daily burden with the monkey on our backs, we reached despair. When we were beaten, we became willing. The pain of working the program did not seem as great as the pain of addiction, so we surrendered. The hole in our gut was filled with a new understanding of our place in the world and love for others. As we got clean and worked this Step, we were released from our chains. We are now free people. None of the Steps work by magic. We do not just say the words of the Steps; we live them.

Some of us found getting clean a battle. The program is simple. No one ever said it was easy. Recovery is a contact process. We don't have to hug each other but it helps. We read this book and attend N.A. meetings. We see for ourselves if the Fellowship has something to offer us. It is not where we are that counts, but where we are going!

None of us stumbled into this Fellowship brimming with love, honesty or open-minded willingness. We have all reached the point where it seemed we could not longer continue because of intense pain: physical, mental and spiritual. However, life was not unbearable; it only seemed unbearable because of our old familiar ways and our thinking. We found that we had no choice but to change, or go back to using. All that was required was willingness. When we gave it our best go, it worked for us as it has worked for others. When we could stand our old ways no longer, we began to change. All that was required is that we try. Only under attack by severe and unyielding pain did the walls begin to crumble.

We began to see where we had rationalized the most errant sort of nonsense in order to justify the mess we had made of our lives. We could admit that we were truly powerless over our addiction and that our lives were unmanageable. We could admit complete defeat, and the help came.

This was a great paradox for us--we who were so proud of our self-sufficiency and will power. But life had brought us

little happiness. We had used our will power a lot. The more we exerted our will, the worse things got. Often, when things got really bad, we had said, "This time, I have got to get my act together." By Sheer will power we had gotten clean, temporarily. When we began to see that will power alone wasn't going to pull us through anymore, we tried countless other remedies, counselors, psychiatrists, hospitals, lovers, new towns, new jobs--everything we tried, failed. We quit for a day, a week or a month perhaps, but sooner or later we took that first pill, fix, drink or toke and we were gone again--worse than ever. None of our best efforts got us anywhere in the long run. Our unaided will was not enough.

We had nothing left to lose. We gave up--quit struggling--surrendered, completely and unconditionally. Then and only then did we begin to recover from the disease of addiction. Recovery begins with the first admission of powerlessness. From that point forward, we can see that every clean day is a successful day, and that any seeming failure is only a temporary setback.

We quit fighting. We accept our addiction and life the way it is. We became willing to do whatever was necessary to stay clean, even those things we didn't like doing. We had been beaten by our addictions, and left miserable and desperate. We were addicts. Drugs would no longer do for us what they had once done.

We had been beaten into a corner by our own actions, and we were in the grip of an overwhelming addiction. We had found hope. We began to see that the Steps of the program would be our source of strength and that the obsession for drugs will eventually disappear. We saw that we could learn to function in the world we live in, that we, too could find meaning and purpose in life, and that we could be rescued from insanity, depravity and death.

STEP TWO

We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

We have a disease: progressive, incurable and terminal. The most amazing single fact about the disease is that we went out and bought it on the time plan! That is insane. Think about that--you, me, everyone we meet in N.A.; the junkie snatching purses on the street, and the sweet ladies hitting two or three doctors for their perfectly legal prescriptions. All of us have this one thing in common--we buy the disease that kills us. And, one way or another, we usually pay for it, a bag at a time, a few pills at a time, or a bottle at a time until we die. That is at least part of the insanity of addiction. The price may seem higher for the girl who prostitutes herself for her fix than it is for the woman who merely lies to her doctor; but ultimately, both pay with their lives. Ask yourself this question: Do I believe it would be insane to walk up to someone and say, "Would you please sell me my own death--on the time plan?" or "May I please have a heart attack or a fatal accident?" If you can agree that this would be an insane thing comparable to giving yourself an injection of deadly poison, only slower, you should have no trouble with the Second Step.

The Second Step is the most important thing that must happen for us to achieve any sort of ongoing recovery. The First Step leaves us where we need to come to believe in something that can help us with our powerlessness and sense of helplessness. Belief became the most important thing for us to work on. We have some type of belief and unless we examine it and seek to improve it, it may be insufficient to give us recovery. Certainly our belief didn't help us with our active addiction. We now have a workable idea of a Higher Power.

You may be one of us who says, "I need help with my drug problem and I can see that N.A. has that alright, but the Second Step says this Power greater than ourselves will restore

us to sanity and I'm not crazy. I just can't handle drugs." Many of us started out with that attitude. Our first instinct is to say "no way."

But when we approach it with an open mind, and talk and listen to others, we begin to see evidence of some power that cannot be fully explained. Confronted with this, most of us will at least admit to the possibility of a greater power. Eventually, we will come to some kind of personal understanding we can use.

Belief is the beginning. It is helpful to stop at this point to review our thinking in this respect. We should not take the chance that our understanding of a Power greater than ourselves is sufficient. The Power can be the group itself or it can follow a religious tradition. The only thing we want to emphasize is that you should feel comfortable with your Higher Power and be able to make the statement that your Power cares about you. If you can accept the fact that a large number of addicts like yourself, have found a way, in the program of Narcotics Anonymous, to live clean, then you only have to believe what you see in order to experience Step Two.

N.A. has many members. This collective Spiritual Power is certainly greater than that of any individual member. What is impossible for one alone is often light work for many, because the many are a greater power than the one alone. You don't have to be religious to accept the idea of a power greater than yourself! Just look around with an open mind and you will see a positive Power all around N.A. You can call it love, or harmony, or peace, or cleanness, or good, or you can call it God. It doesn't matter, and by looking and listening as openly as you can, you find that N.A. has the Power to help addicts.

The Higher Power we use in N.A. is a lot like this: We begin by simply admitting to the possibility of a power greater than ourselves. From the very beginning, we discover that power in our lives and that Power lives in the Fellowship.

We had no trouble admitting that addiction had become a destructive power greater than ourselves. It logically follows that there can also be a constructive power greater than our-

selves. When drugs are washed from our bodies through daily abstinence and our minds begin to clear from the effects, a miracle takes place. Many fortunate things occur mysteriously, but there are no accidents. We come to understand that our recoveries are a gift from a Power greater than ourselves. There is a spirit that is gliding all living things. Call it Higher Power or whatever you like. If you choose, call it nothing at all, but find it, and learn to benefit from its power. You will gain a new life--free from drugs and the pain they have caused.

We have begun to see only recently how much a Higher Power has to offer. Clean living is only the beginning of a new life. Life without fear is a gift we receive for the price of acceptance.

We gradually begin to find some order in the universe, and accept that "some power" was supplying us with a conscience we had never had before, and was somehow giving us the power to overcome the compulsion to use. It certainly wasn't us, individually. Many of us have come to believe that the forces of life know what our real needs are and will take care of us when undisturbed by self-will.

We learn to keep a watchful eye on our daily H.A.L.T.S. maintenance: We eat when Hungry; we talk with a recovering addict when Angry or Lonely; we rest when Tired; and when we begin to take ourselves Seriously, we get to an N.A. meeting and share. Sanity is having our priorities in order. We don't use drugs; we go to meetings; and through the N.A. program, we learn to rely on God to provide what we need on a daily basis. We have been restored to sanity as far as the obsession to use is concerned.

The important thing to remember as the urge to use occurs is that just because the mind is asking for drugs, doesn't mean the body is. We are so into denial and over-controlling our emotions that the occasional thought of drugs may be the only way our mind knows to get our attention. The mind signals drugs when the body may actually be asking for vitamins, food, rest or

companionship. So, we need daily H.A.L.T.S. maintenance.

Most addicts have strong feelings about their Higher Power and vigorously defend their right to their own understanding of a Higher Power. The strength to move into action comes from our Higher Power.

Asking for help in specific terms usually precedes getting that help. By opening the gates of our hearts, we become ready to receive the help we need.

We need to accept this step to start our road to recovery. When our belief has grown to some point of comfort, we are ready for Step Three.

STEP THREE

We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.

As practicing addicts, our will and our lives we're controlled by drugs. Our choices were determined by drugs. We were trapped by our need for connections and cash. Then, when we got the drugs, the search was over for a few hours or maybe a few days. During that time our total being, the mind, body, the soul was dominated by the drug.

For a time it was pleasurable, at least in the early stages of addiction. Ultimately, the effect began to wear off and then the drug showed its ugly side. Often we found that the higher our drugs took us, the lower they brought us. When our nerves were jangling like a fire alarm, we faced two choices. Either we suffered withdrawal, or we took more drugs. For all addicts, the day comes when there is no longer a choice. We must have more drugs. Whether we are under the influence or not, our will, our lives and every single action is directly controlled by drugs.

Obviously, our way did not work. In utter desperation, we looked for another way. In Narcotics Anonymous, we are told that we can turn our will and our lives over to the care of a God of our own understanding. This is a giant step,

anyone can take it. We don't have to be religious. All that is required is a willingness to believe. We had to be willing to do anything to get that next fix. What have we got to lose?

We have only to believe what we see with our own eyes in the transformed lives of other N.A. members. That's all it takes--an open mind. If the word God bothers you, as it did many of us in the beginning, substitute Recovery, Good, Love, N.A., Peace or anything positive, just so you mean it.

None of these steps of N.A. work by magic. They work when they are lived. The Steps of N.A. are easier to live by than the law of the needle, bottle, pill or joint. If you want to stay clean and are willing to do a few simple things and are honest with yourself, we guarantee that you can recover.

We found that all we needed to do was try. When we gave our best effort to the program, it worked for us as it has worked for countless others. The Third Step does not say "We turned our will and our lives over to the care of God." It says, "We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him." We made the decision; it was not made for us by the drugs, our families, a probation officer, judge, therapist or doctor. We did. For the first time since that first high, we have made a decision for ourselves. If you understand God to be simply whatever keeps the rest of us clean, that's fine. Ask that Power to take care of you as it takes care of us--even if it makes you feel stupid! Go off by yourself and say silently, "God, I've made a mess of my life. I can't solve my problems and I ask you to take care of me and show me how to live."

When you honestly try, it will work. Many of us start our day with that prayer or a similar plea: "Thy will be done." The release by letting go and letting God helps us develop what works here and now. We can experience this release daily by using the N.A. program.

In the Third Step, we simply recognize that there is a force for good in the world and we cooperate with that force.

We let good things happen to us. Every action we took in regard to drugs was an effort to get comfortable. It did not work, or we wouldn't be where we are today. When we turn to the God of our own understanding for care and direction and guidance, we learn the real meaning of comfort.

If we have come this far in the N.A. program, we have already noticed some change in our lives. However, the change may not be as fast nor as dramatic as we wish. We turned to drugs because we are people who demand instant gratification and drugs gave us that instant satisfaction. We are impatient people. It is one of life's great problems for us. Just because we stop taking drugs, the problem doesn't immediately go away.

We find that we will continue to have living problems. There are bills to be paid. We still have to function in society. Most of us still have families. We still have many of the same fears, doubts and insecurities. In fact, because we are now facing life without anesthesia, these problems appear to be more difficult and painful than ever. Do not lose heart. At these times in our recovery, the Third Step is our greatest source of strength and courage. We are no longer bogged down by addiction. We have surrendered our will and our lives to the care of a power greater than ourselves. We are now a part of the Ultimate Reality which has brought Order out of Chaos. We are no longer fighting fear, anger, guilt, remorse, self-pity, anxiety, depression and a thousand other ills.

Day by day, we discover the magnitude of the Third Step. This is the Step where we come into contact with sanity we are promised in Step Two. Reliance on a spiritual way of life is now possible for us. Our addiction is no longer a roadblock to God consciousness. We are slowly beginning to lose those paralyzing feelings of hopelessness. We who have lived in darkness and horror for so long begin to walk freely in the sunlight of reality.

We find that our mood-swings are less dramatic. We have natural highs followed by occasional lows. We are beginning to gain balance and harmony. We have learned to stop fighting and are learning to live. The only price is to quit fighting, surrender quietly and let the God of our own understanding take care of us.

We have come to enjoy clean living and want more of the good things that the N.A. Fellowship holds for us. We know now that we cannot pause in our spiritual program; we want all we can get. We are now ready for our first honest self appraisal, and we begin with Step Four.

STEP FOUR

We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Step Four helps us see exactly what our problems are and shows us our strengths.

Let's face it, when we were using, we weren't very honest with ourselves. We are finally beginning to become honest when we admit our addiction has whipped us and that we need help. It took a long time to get where we could admit we were beaten. We are probably not going to recover--physically, mentally or emotionally--overnight. Step Four is going to help us toward recovery more than we can imagine. Most of us were surprised to find that we had many good points in our inventory. Ask anyone who has some time on the program and who has the kind of life you want for yourself, they will tell you that the Fourth Step was a turning point in their lives.

Some people make the mistake of approaching the Fourth Step as if it were a confession of how horrible they are--what a bad person they had been. This is not the purpose of the Fourth Step. We are trying to free ourselves of living in old, useless patterns. We take the Fourth Step to gain the necessary strength and insight to enable us to grow in this new way

of life. A binge of emotional sorrow over real or imagined wrongs will not help us. In fact, it can be quite harmful.

Our purpose is to be rid of guilt--not wallow in it! We must be done with the past, not cling to it. We want to look our past in the face and see it for what it was--and then to release it so that we can live today. The past, for most of us, has been a ghost in the closet. We have been afraid to open that closet for fear of what that ghost may do to us.

You don't have to do this alone. Your will and your life are now in the hands of the Source of all strength--tap into the Source! Writing a thorough and honest inventory looks impossible to most of us. It is--if we are operating under our own "power." Take a few quiet moments before writing and pray for "the power to carry it out."

Don't write the inventory with any particular person in mind. If you do that, you may wind up "slanting" what you write in order to please them. Only time will tell and the Fifth Step will take care of itself. Stay here in the Now--you are on Step Four. We cannot do Step Five until we have completed Step Four.

You may approach the Fourth Step in a number of ways. It is advisable that before you start, go over the first Three Steps with your sponsor. Be comfortable with your understanding of these steps. Allow yourself the privilege of feeling good about what you are doing. Don't be driven as you were so long driven by drugs. We have been trashing about for a long time and have gotten nowhere. Now, we are going to take it easy and not let things frighten us.

With pen and paper, we begin the moral inventory. If the word moral bothers us, we call it a positive/negative inventory, or a good/bad inventory. The way to write an inventory is to write it! Thinking about an inventory, talking about it, theorizing the inventory will not get it written. Sit down with a notebook, pray, pick up your pen and start writing! All we seek to do is find out which things about ourselves need changing. If we were grocers we would not hesitate to

separate the rotten fruit from the good and throw out the rotten fruit. The N.A. program has the Fourth Step with which we examine ourselves.

It is important to remember where we came from so that we don't return. We had to go through what we did to get to where we are now.

A basic rule of thumb is that we can write too little, but we never write too much. The inventory will fit the individual, we simply write until the brain is emptied. Anything we think about is possibly inventory material. We realize how little we have to lose and how much we have to gain. We plunge into this step without reservation.

We remove these thorns in the side by listing them on paper. As recovering addicts we sit down with paper and pen and pray for God's help in revealing the defects that are causing pain and suffering. We pray for the courage to be fearless and thorough so that this inventory may help us put our lives in order. When we pray and take action it always goes better for us. As using addicts, we lived under a regime of fear. In attaining our new life, we want it free of unreasonable fear. A lot of times we try to look good in front of other people, but deep down inside we are really afraid of who we are and where we came from.

We write down our fears, our resentments and our guilt. We examine in depth our relationships with people, places and situations asking ourselves what we have demanded of these relationships. Often the answers will show that we are placing unreasonable demands on reality. We find that we are demanding other people to stop being who they are.

Most of us have found that we were neither so terrible nor so wonderful as we supposed. Ultimately, we are just human with the same fears, longings and troubles as everyone else. One of the greatest benefits of the N.A. program is discovering that we need never be alone again. Others have felt as we feel. Others have failed where we failed. They are here now in the

strength of the Fellowship, ready and eager to help us.

This Fourth Step can be a wonderful adventure, reviewing our past performance and our present behavior to see what we want to keep and what we want to be rid of. This Step has the reputation of being difficult. In reality, it's quite simple.

As recovering addicts, we now have the right to reach for levels of greater comfort and we can reach them, when we get a handle on what we've been doing wrong. If we want to feel good, we have to stop doing the things that make us feel bad.

We are not going to be perfect. If we were perfect, we would not be human. The important thing is that we do our best. We use the tools available to us, and because we do not want to lose any of what we have gained, we will want to continue in the program. It is our experience that no matter how searching and thorough, no inventory is of any lasting effect, unless it is promptly followed by an equally thorough Step Five.

STEP FIVE

We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

After taking a thorough Fourth Step, we have to deal with what we have found in our inventory. We have decided what our defects are, but we still don't know how to deal with them. We are told that if we keep these defects inside us, they could lead us to using again. We have to beware of half-measures on this Step. Holding on to our own "garbage" would eventually sicken us and hold us back from really taking part in this new way of life. If we take a Fifth Step, but we really don't get honest, we will have the same negative results that dishonesty brought us in the past.

Our Higher Power will be with us when we do this, and will help to free the fear of facing ourselves and another human being. Many of us, before we take Step Five, fear that

God will turn away from us, when we reveal ourselves to Him. It seemed unnecessary to some of us to admit the exact nature of our wrongs to God. "God already knows all that stuff," we rationalized. True, God does already know all that stuff, but until we face God with it, we will never really believe that He does. The admission must come from our own lips to be truly effective for us.

For years, we have avoided seeing ourselves as we really are. We were ashamed of ourselves and felt isolated from the rest of the world. Now, we've got this shameful past trapped on paper. We can sweep it out of our lives, if we face it and admit it. It would be a tragic mistake to have it all written down and then just shove it into a drawer.

We have feared that if we ever revealed ourselves as we really were, we would surely be rejected. Maybe this was because we had already rejected ourselves. We were so self-centered that we didn't realize just how much we had in common with our fellow addicts. Before coming to Narcotics Anonymous, we had felt that no one could ever relate to us or understand the reasons behind the things we had done. We quickly realized that we had been unrealistic in feeling that way. N.A. people did understand us.

We must carefully choose the person who is to hear our Fifth Step. Although there is no hard rule about what kind of person we should choose, it is important that we trust that person. Only complete confidence in the Person's integrity and closed mouth can make us willing to be thorough in this Step.

Some of us take our Fifth Step with a total stranger, but most of us feel most comfortable choosing a fellow member of N.A. We know that a fellow addict would be less likely to judge us with malice. People often select clergymen, or members of the medical profession, because these people are accustomed to keeping confidences in their work. Whoever we select, we make certain that they know what we are attempting to do and why we are doing it. We are often amazed at how willing most people are to help us. We never knew that people

actually cared enough about us to want to help in our recovery.

Once we make up our minds and are actually alone with the person we have chosen to accept our confidence, we proceed with enthusiasm. We want to be very definite and thorough. We realize that this is a life and death matter.

There is a danger that we will exaggerate our wrongs, and an equal danger that we will minimize or rationalize away our part in situations. If we are anything like we were when we first entered the N.A. Fellowship, we will still tend to want to "sound good". This is a luxury we can't afford. This Step must cut into our character defects and expose our motives and our actions for what they really were. We have no right to expect these things to reveal themselves. It isn't easy, but it is simple. We want to tell the truth, cut and dry, as quickly as possible. We do not procrastinate.

We will never be able to name all of our past mistakes, so we need not expect our first spoken inventory to be perfect. If we choose, we will be continuing the process of self-assessment for the rest of our lives. For now, we will try to get most of the "garbage" out in the first session.

For many years, we have covered up our low self-esteem by hiding behind phony images that we hoped would fool people. Unfortunately, we ended up fooling ourselves more than anyone. Although we often appeared attractive and confident on the outside, we were really hiding a shaky, insecure person on the inside. "One thing you can't hide, is when you're crippled inside." The masks have to go.

Once we had taken this Step, we felt lightened and refreshed. We were finally free to be ourselves, because we were not trying to cover anything up. It was a great relief to be rid of all our secrets, to share the burden of our past guilt. Usually, as we share this Step, the listener will share some of his story too, and we will find out that the things about ourselves that we thought were so awful or different weren't all that unusual. We see, by the acceptance

in the eyes of our confident, that we can be forgiven, even loved, just the way we are. Even though our examination of ourselves usually reveals some thing about ourselves that we don't particularly like, facing these things and bringing them out in the open makes it possible for us to deal with them constructively. And, now that they are out of the closet ready to be faced and dealt with, we realize that these things about ourselves can be changed. We cannot make these changes alone. We need our Higher Power's help, and the help of the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship.

STEP SIX

We were entirely ready to have God remove these defects of character.

Let us go back to the First Step for a minute. Remember that we had to surrender completely to obtain relief. We had to admit we were whipped. In examining ourselves as honestly as possible it is probable that we have discovered some things about ourselves that we don't like. Perhaps we call them defects. Whatever we call them, we recognize that we must change if we are to grow. The Sixth Step is the same situation; we can't do it ourselves; but we know that God as we understand Him can do it for us.

Do we really want to be rid of our resentments, our angers, our fears? Do we really understand that they are a deadly poison in the heart of an addict? Many of us cling to our fears, doubts, and self loathing or hatred of others, because there is a certain distorted security in familiar pain. It seems safer to hold on to the old familiar pain than to let go of it for the unknown. Letting go of character defects should be done with love. Fear and hate cannot give us new lives. We should approach old defects with patience and understanding, for they have served us well in days past. They have kept us from situations we couldn't handle before we found the program and a source of power. We should be more grateful that our

defects are not more pronounced or of a more harmful nature. When we see how our defects exist in our lives and accept them, we can let go of them and get on with our new life.

We look to the Fellowship for the kind of life we want for ourselves. We ask our friends, "Did you let go?" Without exception the answer is, "Yes, to the best of our ability."

When we are working Step Six, it is important to remember that we are human and should not place great expectations on ourselves. We should be serious when we say "entirely ready to have all these defects removed." This is a step of willingness. That is the spiritual principle of Step Six. It is as if to say that we are now willing to move along spiritual lines toward a destination we couldn't imagine. Being human we will of course fall short.

We will still get mad and still feel hurt, especially if we are too hungry, angry, lonely, tired, or too serious (H.A.L.T.S.). We are trying to achieve adequacy, not perfection. Adequacy can be achieved, but perfection cannot. We can reach and awaken the force of life within ourselves; it can do anything, even give us a new life. The breakdown of old ideas and old ways seems to be beyond our conscious control. The only control of the situation we seem to have is a choice of acceptance. What areas we change in, how fast we change, and in what order all seem to be predetermined by our very nature. If we accept God's will, we will be able to follow the necessary path to a better life.

Willingness is what we strive for in Step Six. The tools we use to maintain our willingness are practice and prayer. How sincerely we work Step Six will be proportionate to our desire for change. We often feel that we will never be ready to have all our defects removed, but we should remember that the main point is that we are on a journey, and the destination isn't what matters. Willingness to serve God is what we strive for.

Without these defects, life is ever sensational and deeply wonderful. We learn that we are growing when we make new

mistakes instead of repeating old ones. Life with these defects may cause perpetual frustration, tension, and relapse.

We decide what our priorities are and envision life free from defects. We recognize our defects and surrender to the simple suggestions that the program offers us.

We feel that the Sixth Step is the honest willingness to let go of those shortcomings about ourselves. We become ready to part with the fears and doubts of that other life.

We continue to attempt to manage our lives and will need to go back to Step Six to renew or readiness to have our defects removed.

STEP SEVEN

We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

Having decided we want God, as we understood Him, to relieve us of the useless or destructive aspects of our personalities, we have arrived at the Seventh Step.

We have all spent much of our lives being anything but humble. We have been humiliated by many of the things that happened to us while using, but most of us avoided true humility until we worked the First Step. Then again, in the Third Step, we asked God to direct our will and our lives. Now, in the Seventh Step, we humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings.

The key to this Step is an understanding of the humility. Humility is a part of staying clean, as food and water are to staying alive. As we struggled along in our addiction, we devoted our energy towards satisfying our material needs. We always had to have a satisfaction of our basic desires, such as power and prestige. We never thought of spiritual growth or asking a Higher Power for direction. Drugs were our Higher Power.

We couldn't handle the trials and tribulations of life all by ourselves. It wasn't until we made a real mess of our lives that we realized that we couldn't do it alone. By admitting

that we achieved our first glimpse of humility.

If the defects we have discovered are real and we have a chance to be rid of them, we would surely experience a sense of well being when we rid ourselves of them. Some will want to get on their knees for this Step. Some will be very quiet or put forth a great mental effort to show intense willingness. The word humble applies because we approach this Power greater than ourselves to ask for the most wondrous gift of the program; the freedom to live without the limitations of our past ways. However we want to handle it, we go all the way. Think of what we have to lose! As soon as we feel ourselves willing, we should go ahead and ask God to remove our shortcomings.

When we were using, our spiritual and emotional growth came to a halt. We did not mature and grow like a normal person. Now that we are clean, there are many situations in our daily lives that are difficult to understand. By practicing the virtue of humility and asking for help, we can get through even the toughest times. "I can't, we can!" It is a sign of growth.

We have to realize that people can give us direction and that our way of thinking is not the only way. We must puncture our egos and realize that we have much more work to do. When someone points out a shortcoming, our first reaction is one of defensiveness. If we truly want to grow, we will take a good look at what is pointed out. We must realize we are not perfect and there are things we must change.

We have noticed that humility plays a big part in this program and our new way of life. We take our inventory; we become ready to let God remove our shortcomings. This is our road to spiritual growth, to change our character, day by day, to gradually, carefully and simply pull ourselves out of the isolation and loneliness of addiction into this mainstream of useful Fellowship. This comes not from wishing, but from action and prayer. The main objective of Step Seven is to

get out of ourselves and strive for achieving the will of our Higher Power. Our will didn't work.

If we are careless and fail to grasp the spiritual meaning of this Step, it will seem an unbearable chore, impossible to complete and unlikely to do anything but stir up old troubles. Like all the Steps, the point of this one is freedom. None of these Steps work by magic. They work when they are lived. We are trying to achieve adequacy, not perfection; for perfection is a divine quality.

STEP EIGHT

We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

The last five Steps of Narcotics Anonymous, the Eighth through the Twelfth, are the "get out and live" Steps. Just as the First, Second, and Third Steps give us the necessary tools to begin a clean life, and the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Steps complete the process of self-forgiveness and the beginning of new attitudes. The Eight Step starts the procedure of forgiving other people, being forgiven by them, and learning how to live in the world as a drug-free human being.

The point of the Eighth Step is willingness. Are we willing, if it is possible and practical, to make amends; once, and for all, clear away the shadows of fear that our past holds for us?

The preceding Seven Steps looked pretty rough until we took the plunge and go into them. This one is no different. It seems hard now, but once we've done it, we'll wonder why we didn't do it long ago.

The Eighth Step is not easy; it demands a new kind of honesty about our relations with other people. We had to feel better internally before we could even bear to think about whom we had harmed and how we had harmed them, and exactly what was the way we perceived ourselves.

This Step is a good test of our new found humility, we consult with our sponsors in this matter. Again, as in the Fourth Step, we do not want to become entangled in useless and dangerous self-loathing. Our purpose is to achieve freedom from the guilt we have carried so far, with so much pain, so that we can look the world in the eye with neither aggressiveness nor fear.

We admit we are at fault regardless of what the other person did to arouse our hostility. We admit that we hurt them, directly or indirectly, through some action, some lie, some broken promise, neglect or whatever.

It will not make better persons to judge the faults of another. The thing that will make us better is to clean up our lives by relieving ourselves of guilt. The Eighth Step is a mighty stride away from a lie dominated by guilt and remorse.

We need some real honesty before we can make an accurate list. In preparing to make the Eight Step list, it is helpful to define harm. One definition of harm is physical or mental damage. Another definition is inflicting pain, suffering or loss.

The damage may be caused by something that is said or done, and the harm resulting from these words or actions may be either intentional or unintentional on the part of the person who is inflicting the harm. The degrees of harm can run from making someone feel mentally uncomfortable to inflicting bodily injury or even death.

We make our list, or take it from our Fourth Step and add to it any more people we can think of and we face that list honestly and openly and examine our fault. Are we willing to make amends? In many cases we cannot do it, it is not possible nor practical in some instances. We may not know who it was we wronged. In other instances we might run the risk of involving a third person, some companions of our days of using who do not wish to be exposed. We do not have the right nor do we need, for any moral reason, to endanger that person.

Just about anyone that comes into contact with an active addict risks being harmed. Many members mention their parents, spouses, children, boyfriends, girlfriends, other addicts, casual acquaintances, co-workers, employers, teachers, landlords, and total strangers.

A problem many of us seem to have with the Eighth Step and the admission of the harm we did is the belief we were victims, not victimizers in our addiction. Avoiding this rationalization is crucial to the Eighth Step.

We had to think of disassociating what had been done to us and what we had done. We were forced to cut away all our justifications and all our ideas of being a victim.

The final difficulty in working the Eighth Step is separating it from the Ninth Step. Projecting about the Ninth Step can be a major obstacle both in making the list and in becoming willing. We do not even think about making amends, but just concentrate on exactly what the Eighth Step says which is to make a list and to become willing.

"We try and work this Step as if there were no Ninth Step." The Eighth Step is actually an action Step. And like all the action Steps it offers immediate benefits. "The main thing this Step does for us is to build awareness that, little by little, we are gaining new attitudes about ourselves, and how we deal with other people."

STEP NINE

We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or other.

We want to get free of our fear, but we don't wish to do so at a price to anyone. It is very important that we take guidance from our sponsors or spiritual advisors in this matter.

We recommend turning over our legal problem to lawyers. Professional help is available to help us with our financial and medical problems. Part of learning to live is not to take on problems and responsibilities that we are not equipped to handle.

In some cases we may be beyond our means. If it is, we can only proceed with direction.

Timing is an essential part of this Step. We should make amends when the opportunity presents itself, as long as to do so will not cause more harm. When it gets to the point that we cannot hold the hurt any longer, amends will be made.

In some old relationships an unresolved conflict exists. We enter the old conflict and resolve it by making our amends, and step back from future antagonisms and ongoing resentments. In many instances of past wrongs we will need to go somewhere and humbly ask forgiveness. These are the old tapes that would keep playing back as long as we live. Sometimes, this will be a joyous occasion when some old friend or relative proves very willing to let by-gones be by-gones and welcome us back to the land of the living. However, some people are not so willing to let go of their bitterness. We can only make our amends to the best of our ability and they can either accept it or deny it. We feel relieved, instead of feeling knocked down and drained in our lives. Our addiction put a negative attitude about us in others. Step Nine helps us with our guilt and others with their anger.

This Step should not be avoided. If we avoid this Step we are simply reserving a place in our program to get loaded. Pride, fear, and procrastination often seem an impossible barrier and stand in our way of progress and growth through the Ninth Step. The important thing is to take action and be ready to accept the reactions of those persons we have harmed. We have made amends as best we could.

There are some things we can make direct amends for; some we can only make partial amends for; and some that we remember nothing about.

We can make amends by our actions. They don't always have to be verbal. Staying clean is also an amend because we're no longer part of the problem. Now we're part of the solution.

When it came to making amends for all the things we did there was a lot to be done. In the progress of our recovery we were restored to sanity and part of sanity is effectively relating to others. We will less often view people as a threat to our security. Real security in our gut and in our recovery will replace the physical ache and mental confusion. We will want to address ourselves to these people with love and patience. Fear of relapse will make many of our most sincere well-wishers reluctant to accept our recovery as real. We must remember the pain they have known. In time, many seeming miracles will occur. Many of us that were separated from our children succeed in re-establishing deep emotional bonds. However, estranged mates can be dangerous to our recovery if they don't learn some of our program. If the relationship is real, it will survive. Re-acceptance into the family of our birth, is eventual for most. Clean time speaks for itself. Patience is the great method of the Fellowship. The unconditional love we experience will rejuvenate our will to live and each positive move on our part will be matched by an unexpected opportunity.

The benefit of this Step is to be able to face people we have harmed with a clear conscience. By discovering and admitting our faults, we experience a miracle.

STEP TEN

We continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

We as addicts, suffer from a problem deeper than the drugs we took. Because of this, we must live by spiritual principles. Step Ten and all the Steps are to be applied to every area of our lives.

There is no area of our lives that the disease does not affect. The truth is that fear is present in every area of our lives. So, in our experience, the program can and must be

worked continuously in every area of our lives. If this were not so, then the disease could not creep into an unrelated area of our lives and kill us.

Step Ten is a continuation of a fearless and searching look within ourselves in order to repair disorders that fear, pride, jealousy, and other ruinous defects can cause. It helps us avoid the occurrence of relapse due to other areas which we may be reluctant to look. If you take the drugs away from a drug-crazed maniac, you still have a maniac." Since our problems entail much more than using, we cannot recover until we recognize the need for taking a good look at our attitudes and motives.

Now that we are clean, we have recognized the advantage of getting our own house in order. We can recognize ourselves as the heart of the problem. Negativity has been our way for many years and we are not able to change into complete saints. Any thought that we are going to be perfect has to be smashed. We must remain teachable if we are going to stay clean in this program. The smart ones who argue a lot usually die. The open-minded ones get to live. We do not entertain the thought of ever achieving perfection. However, we must strive for stability in our lives so that we can live happily and be at peace with ourselves.

Step Ten helps us to do this. The process of inventory, the good and the bad about ourselves, is essential. As addicts, we are prone to fear, anger, vanity, complacency, and doing the wrong thing at the wrong time. Many forms of the disease manifested in self-centeredness, fear, resentment, and so on can drive us into a place that we feel we cannot get out of clean.

Are we doing our best? Are we staying honest? Are we still growing, or are we slipping back into the old fears and resentments? It is the purpose of the Tenth Step to answer these and similar questions. Those defects of character which we found in the Fourth Step are deeply ingrained in us. The thing we do is check for the surfacing of defects early on by working Step Ten daily.

How to take inventory that is effective will depend on the severity of the particular trouble we are having. We look at our actions during the day and we practice the art of looking at where we were wrong, considering what we could have done differently, and the amends we need to make. We find it helpful and humbling to admit to another human being where we were wrong.

These are practical applications and theory has no place here. We work it or we will die.

There is the inventory we can pause and make when we run into trouble during the course of the day. Stopping, thinking and remembering that by the grace of God we are clean is a basic. Often, when we get home, write out a resentment, explaining how we feel and how we became angry, and the part we played. We find out how to restrain ourselves later so we don't repeat that action.

We do, however, remember that God, not us, is responsible for our change. The line between where God does or does not help us is absolutely irrelevant. All glory to God as we understand Him is our attitude here. We find when we have practiced this, we benefit; for pride can creep in and we addicts cannot handle success very well. We usually fall into the mode of the hero, and when this happens, our self-centeredness eats us alive and we can die.

In Step Ten we strive for genuine humility. In this humility we can better interact with others. We are not readily angered, frightened, or maddened by greed or lust. We remember our part in the divine partnership with God and we are more tolerant and patient with other people.

Step Ten is worked while the day's ups and downs are fresh in our heads. We list wrongs we have done. We do not rationalize our actions. We honestly chalk up our achievements. Thus, we get our own house in order. We feel more room to grow. The mess is cleaned up. We know ourselves better and there is strength.

A warning about rationalization is that it has killed more of us than anything else. At times, our motives will be obscured by clouded thinking. We can pray for humility and use it as a light to examine our real motives. Did we act out of negative emotion? If so, then we can work the program on it.

If we want to share it at once with another person, we do. Others can help us see our clouded thinking for what it is. Love and pain will keep us in the middle of the road. We have defects, but a willingness to live as our Higher Power would have us is freedom. In life we will be tested in patience and tolerance. We must keep spiritually fit to act in a spirit of love and helpfulness. When we are willing to grow toward these ends, wonderful things are ahead.

Continuing to take personal inventory means that we form a habit of looking at ourselves, our actions, our attitudes, and our relationships on a regular basis. We try to come up with honest evaluations and to put out more or less energy in certain areas we are concerned with.

It is very important to keep sharing with other people so that when we come up with a rationalization for negative behavior, we can be told about it. This highlights the preventative part of the Tenth Step. You ask yourself as you go through the day, "Am I being drawn in by some old pattern of fear or resentment?", "Am I too tired?", "Am I too hungry?", "Is my thinking getting cloudy?" It's a vaccination against insanity on a continuing basis.

We have discussed the preventative side of the Tenth Step. The love was there all the time, waiting for us to accept it. Though we still face human pain, life finally begins to get meaningful. Clean living is possible when we rely on a Higher Power daily to provide us with spiritual progress, establishing us in useful living.

STEP ELEVEN

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.

In the Third Step we made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to God as we understand Him. We renew this effort daily in the Eleventh Step. Most of us rebelled against this in the beginning, as if on a self-willed trip. The first time we hear someone say, "Let go and let God," it sound idiotic. "No," we said, "If I let go I'll disappear or get taken advantage of." What happens instead is, the more we improve our conscious contact with God through prayer and meditation, the more often we pause when doubtful and say, "God, I don't know what to do. Please teach me." It's a fact. When we finally get our own selfish motives out of the way, we begin to find a peace un-matchable to a drug-induced high. We begin to experience awareness and an empathy with other people.

The Eleventh Step helps us, in the face of a problem, to be aware of God. The underlying principle of this Step is God-consciousness. We try to avoid asking for specific things. It's hard because we're so sure that we know what's right for us. We now know if we pray to do God's will, we will receive what's best for us. A person who has realized their powerlessness and seen the vision the Higher Power has for them will see why we pray only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry it out. Our deepest longings and recurring images of the kind of people we'd like to be are only glimpses of God's will for us. Our outlooks are so limited we can only see our immediate wants and needs through a loving God. It is our own real dreams that come true.

When we pray a remarkable thing happens; we find the means, the ways, and energies, to perform tasks far beyond

capabilities. By the surrender of our own power, we gain a far greater power that will see us through. It is important keep faith and renew it through daily prayer.

It is easy to slip back into our old ways. We have to learn to maintain our new lives on a spiritually sound basis to insure our continued growth and recovery. God will not force his goodness on us, but we will receive it if we ask. This is not cruelty. Enforced morality lacks the force that comes from our own choice.

Many times, our efforts have produced in us feelings of peace and serenity that we have never known before. We know that in doing God's will, our lives will be fulfilled.

STEP TWELVE

Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we sought to carry the message to addicts and to practice these principles in all of our affairs.

The idea of a spiritual awakening takes many different forms in the many different personalities we find the Fellowship. This awakening does have some things in common throughout the Fellowship. Life takes on a new meaning, a new joy, and a quality of being and feeling worthwhile. We become spiritually refreshed and are glad to be alive. Our suffering has cleansed us of some of our illusions. In time we have been guided to a new life and place in the world and in our hearts.

This great Step is to be preceded by the working of Steps One through Eleven. There are those of us who tried to stay clean without the benefit of "having had a spiritual awakening as a result of those steps," and they are no longer with us. The ones, who continue to practice these principles in all their affairs," tell us that this is the most wonderful thing one can know. The journey is a feeling of gratitude.

Usually, by the time we achieve this state of mind, no one has to tell us to share our new life with the still suffering addict; we are more than eager to help that person because by this time we recognize that by helping others giving away that which has been given to us--is our best possible insurance against relapse to the vague, torturous existence of a practicing addict. We call it "carrying the message" and we do it in a number of ways.

The first way in which we carry the message is by staying clean with the help of God and the Fellowship. Our new way of living speaks for itself better than our words ever could. People see us on the street and remember us as furtive, frightened loners. They notice the grayness and fear leaving our faces. They see us gradually come alive. A

spring comes into our step and a twinkle into our eyes. The message is meaningless unless we live it. If we do live it, we give it more meaning with our lives than any words can express.

Learning the art of helping others when it is appropriate, without creating resentments, is a marvelous benefit of the N.A. program. Remarkably, the Twelve Steps guide us from a state of humiliation and despair to a state wherein we are able to act as instruments of God's will. We receive the gift of being able to help fellow suffering addicts when no one else can. No greater change of personality is possible; it is God's love present in our lives. We see it happening among us every day. This miraculous one hundred and eighty degree change is evidence of spiritual awakening.

We attend N.A. meetings and make ourselves visible and available to serve the Fellowship. We give freely and gratefully of our time, our services and our experiences to our fellow addicts. We do not shirk when called upon to practice these principles. We know that the more eagerly we wade in and work to stay clean, the higher we're going to get and the richer our spiritual awakening will be! Helping others works. We do these things because they are the things that grant the new lives we are enjoying.

In the Twelfth Step, we practice the spiritual principle of giving away the N.A. message of recovery in order to keep it. This is like reaping what we sow. The old habit of using drugs is replaced by the new habit of not using, and helping others to get clean. Even a member with one week in the N.A Fellowship can turn to a newcomer and say, "Live one Day At A Time", or "An Addict Alone Is In Bad Company."

When we share with someone, we may say, "Lord make me an instrument of Thy Will. " We don't do it alone, and we don't have to. It is just a matter of getting another N.A. member to go with us on the Twelve Step call to carry the message to a suffering addict. We don't set ourselves up as God. That is why it is spiritual. We get to be an instrument of God's

grace in action. It's a privilege and an honor to go on such a call. Those of us who do service work are the luckiest people on God's earth! Those who have been in the pits of despair, now strive to help other people to find a new and better way to live.

We help newcomers, whether they are detoxing or just beginning to learn the principles of N.A. We do what we can to make them aware of what the program offers and try to make them feel at home. Experience shows the best way to accomplish these ends is to listen carefully to what they want to do about their problem. Next we can share our experience, strength, and hope and then accompany them to their first meeting.

The selfless service that comes from this work is the very principle of Step Twelve. It is clearly an awareness of God's grace working that provides so much of what the practicing addict needs. Just as the grace of a loving God was given to us, we now have the opportunity to share this gift with others. One Twelve Step call of this nature can make a life worthwhile. There are plenty of such calls for those of us in N.A.

The Twelfth Step also suggests that we practice these principles in all of our affairs. As long as we stay clean and live these Principles, we are doing Twelfth Step work. We are attracting people to us and the N.A. Fellowship by our example of being clean. We no longer wish to participate in the problem. We now serve God. In this manner of service, we renew our vow to turn our will and lives over to the care of God. Even if we have no such understanding, we will acquire it through seeing others recover. Fellow addicts show that God is loving and we will know a life free of drugs that we never dreamed possible. The Steps do not end here, they are a new beginning.

All will be well as long as we remain abstinent and trust in a Higher Power of our understanding. Living just for today relieves the burden of the past and alleviates fear of the future. Clean, we learned to take whatever actions were necess-

ary and to leave the results in our Higher Power's hands. We learned to trust God with our fate and to let Him help us do our best each day. The most important thing we can do is stay clean today, through reliance upon a Higher Power.

We want freedom. Clean, we see that the greatest freedom we can achieve is acceptance of God's will. But, we recognize that we are human and subject to mental and spiritual sickness. Each day, we ask our Higher Power to help us stay clean, for that day. Each night, we give thanks for the gift of recovery. Thus we begin to practice spirituality.

We are clean, but by no means perfect and our lives remain unmanageable. We become egotistical from time to time. It is hard for people in the Fellowship to reach us at these times, but not impossible. Our newly found friends usually call our bluff, and cut through the dishonesties. When things get rough, and spiritual contact is difficult, we learn that it won't last. If we do not use, and continue to maintain spiritual contact within the Fellowship, we can get through these trying times, and grow stronger.

Trusting others doesn't come naturally to us, but we must learn to trust because an addict alone is in bad company. The needed strength wasn't there until we found N.A., which showed us how to make faith work for us. We had a lot of energy, but we channeled it into self-destruction. Now, we can put the same energy that we had used to perpetuate our pain into strengthening our faith and becoming healthier, more loving people. We first learn to love our N.A. groups. Later, through service, we learn how to put our energy to work, and the more we serve, the better we get at channeling energy.

Remember, we didn't become addicted in one day. We can't possibly solve all our problems at once, no matter how much energy we have. Take it easy! The only way we recover is to apply what we learn from each other, on a daily basis. Our growth is a lifetime process. We never stop learning, and we never stop needing one another's guidance and support. So, we say, "Keep coming back; it works!"

Addiction is physical, mental, and spiritual. Therefore, we believe that we must develop faith in a Higher Power before we can hope to recover from its destruction. When we have a strong faith in a Power greater than ourselves, and use that faith in our daily lives, that Power will be able to reach us and supply us with the strength and guidance that we need to recover.

The N.A. program is a spiritual program. Our members who are living a spiritual program have learned enough of their spirit to develop and maintain a conscious contact with a Higher Power. We become more spiritual as we share ourselves with our fellow addicts. We gradually change from being dull and uncaring to feeling clean, and unclouded by earthly concerns. Most of us experience steady growth towards serenity and towards God, as we understand God. Some have profound spiritual experiences, dramatic and inspirational in nature. Regardless of which category we fit into, we all go through a profound change in our basic natures, which is much deeper than anything merely physical or mental. After a while it becomes obvious, even to outsiders, that a real and lasting change is taking place in us. The most obvious change is the simple fact that we are staying clean. When we rely on God to guide our thoughts, changes are inevitable in our feelings and actions.

As new members, the talk of God we hear in meetings scares many of us. We are suspicious and skeptical because of disappointments we have had with religion. We assume that someone will try to take away our freedom to believe as we choose.

That is not the case. Spiritual and religious freedom is one of our most basic principles. Each of us are free to work out our own concept of God, or reject the concept of a God. We each build our relationships with our Higher Power in our own way in our own time. Many of us come into N.A. as atheists or agnostics. Some of us come in as religious fanatics. Nobody is here to correct or change one another. We operate in an atmosphere of complete acceptance and respect for one

another's beliefs. We try to avoid the arrogance of self-righteousness, because it is one of the deadliest forms of self-deception. Even though we avoid pushing any ideas on anyone, we do suggest, strongly, that each person make an honest attempt to find a Power greater than themselves.

From our experience, we have found that addicts who stay clean, find and develop a relationship with a Higher Power. We are taught to "act as if" we believe in God, by applying spiritual principles and practices to our lives. Three "musts" are honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness to try. Agnostics and atheists generally start out by just talking to "Whatever's there."

There is a spirit or an energy that can be felt in the meetings, and it is sometimes the newcomer's first perception of God. This spirit, or whatever it is, relaxes and helps us to get honest with each other. We let go of our egos and learn from our fellow addicts. Honest sharing speeds our recovery and makes us believe that this Power is taking care of us, and working for our good. We no longer blame God and others for our problems, and see that our problems have been of our own making.

After we accept that we created our own hell and that there is a God that wants to help us, we begin to make progress in solving our problems. Through open-minded effort, we "act our way into right thinking", letting our Higher Power find us, rather than searching for God with only our minds. We come to rely on a growing daily relationship with a God of our understanding. One way to develop our conscious contact with God is to make up a "gratitude list", count our blessings and thank our Higher Power for them. Another way is to practice accepting conditions as they are, and trusting that they will improve if they're supposed to. We do these exercises several times a day, until they become a routine part of our lives. In this way, we begin to face life on God's terms, and that gives us the necessary sense of peace for us to live clean successfully.

We must re-evaluate our old ideas, so that we can become acquainted with the new ideas that lead to a new way of life. We cannot throw out old ideas without replacing them. We believe that the old self-destruction and self-centeredness can only be replaced with spiritual principles. The three basic spiritual principles are honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness to try. We say that they are the "HOW" of our program.

Rigorous honesty is the most important tool we have in learning to deal with the past and to live today. Although honesty is a difficult tool to practice, it is a most rewarding one. We practice honesty under all conditions because it is the antidote to our diseased thinking. We lose the fear of being cornered. Our lack of fear and our new found faith serves as a firm foundation for courage in the future.

Being honest is not a natural thing for us to do. We don't expect to practice total honesty in all things overnight. It is a gradual process in our daily living.

The situations that seem hardest to maintain our honesty have produced the most rewarding results. When we are honest in really difficult situations, the feelings of happiness and serenity are overwhelming.

We have never before experienced gut-level honesty because we covered up our feelings by using. We must learn to get to the bottom of each emotion we have, and face it, so we can be our true natures. Our lives become so much simpler, when we get to know ourselves.

"Cash register honesty", is a good beginning in developing self-esteem. Self-esteem is based on facing and living by the truth. When we honestly evaluate what we really have, we can learn to appreciate it. The gifts of recovery are things that we can carry with us everywhere.

Managing our own lives got us to the program of Narcotics Anonymous. What we knew about living when we got here had almost killed us. We came in sick people who knew very little about how to be happy and enjoy life. Complete open-minded-

ness is necessary for us to learn a new way of life.

Being open-minded allows us to hear something that might save our lives. It allows us to listen to opposing points of view, and come to conclusions of our own. Open-mindedness leads us to those very insights that have eluded us during our lives. It is this principle, open-mindedness, that allows us to participate in a discussion without jumping to conclusions or predetermining who is right and who is wrong. We no longer have to make fools of ourselves by standing up for some nonexistent values. We have learned that it is O.K. to be ignorant, for when we are ignorant we are teachable and can learn how to live our new life successfully.

However, open-mindedness without willingness, will get us nowhere. We must be willing to go to any lengths to get our recovery. We never know when the time will come when we must put forth all the effort and strength we have to stay clean. Honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness to try, work hand in hand. The lack of one of these principles in our programs can kill us. Living a personal program without these principles, will make recovery difficult and painful for us when it should be beautifully simple.

Remember too that H.O.W. are spiritual principles which mean that they can be relied on to get us out of trouble that dishonesty, closed-mindedness and unwillingness got us into.

If it were not for this program, we would be dead. This program is a vital part of our everyday living. We go to any lengths to help this Fellowship and it helps us.

If you come to Narcotics Anonymous to use people to help you continue your habit, then we cannot help you. We cannot play dishonest games anymore. A closed mind is a barrier against any change. On the other hand, a spirit of open-mindedness, coupled with an admission of powerlessness, seems to produce a positive change when asking for help. If you have a drug problem and are willing to try it our way, we will share with you how we stay clean.

In this Fellowship, the importance of togetherness is expressed by some sayings: "United we stand, divided we fall", and "I can't, we can!" These slogans tell us that if we don't stick together and help each other, then we will surely die.

We have a deadly disease, that before coming to the program we did not know about. We were in the depths of despair, degradation and lost in a destructive chaos. We came in puking, sweating and shaking. Some of us stayed. Was it through our own merit? We think not! Our way got us here. Recovery was done through the help of others, the tools they shared with us, and a Higher Power.

From the isolation of our addiction, we were thrust into a fellowship of people with a common bond: addiction, N.A. is like a lifeboat in a sea of isolation, unwillingness and chemicals. We share the good times and the bad, victories and failures, all without defeat as long as we don't pick up the first fix, pill, drink, or joint. We get all our faith, strength and hope from people sharing their recoveries.

We usually react angrily as recovering addicts if anyone tells us what to do. In N.A. meetings, we share what it was like in our practicing addiction, our suffering that brought us to the turning point and how we stay clean today. By telling our own story, someone else is bound to be suffering from a similar problem and our experience tells them how to deal with it--what works for one, might work for another. Most addicts are able to accept this type of sharing, even from the very beginning. In time, we have a new source of strength that will guide us in our recoveries.

By sharing in regularly scheduled meetings and one-on-one with recovering addicts, we learn that part of our approval-seeking behavior helps to keep us clean. Meetings are an important part of recovery. Those who attend meetings regularly and work the steps stay clean. We need the approval of people around us. Attending meetings encourages us to stay clean and reminds us what it was like to be a newcomer

and re-enforces how progressive the disease of addiction is. This force in the meetings isn't just the people there, but also something within the people. We return to these meetings, and use them like medicine in the form of unconditional love.

A meeting is like a fence around our clean time. It protects us during all of our recovery. At first, the members in the meetings helped us through our remorse and self-pity by accepting us just the way we were and showing us the necessary care and love to begin to live clean. By returning to meetings, we came to believe in a loving God as he expresses Himself in the group conscience, that continues to save us from our addiction and help us in our daily living.

Finally, throughout our lives, we surround ourselves with fellow members who continue to let us know we can count on them. One of the advantages of the N.A. program is that it places us in an intimate, regular contact with recovering addicts who can most understand and help us in our recovery.

Our experience is that those who begin sharing innermost feelings, emotions and thoughts with other recovering addicts, rather than giving a drug history, tend to make more rapid growth. When we tell our stories, whether one-on-one or in groups, we can get out of the superficial personalities we thought other people believed us to be. Only another addict can understand and accept us as we are. We recover through this process. The Steps guide and the meetings give us the opportunity to say and hear thoughts and feelings that would otherwise be held in.

On the outside world, a lot of the rules that apply will not work with our new life in the Fellowship. Expressing our need for help at the time of crisis seems like a logical thing to do, but we are sometimes illogical. To us, at first, it feels like insanity to give another person knowledge of our pain. As we become more closely involved with others we will learn to share our pain and it will lessen. Part of the horror of addiction is being cut off from this human experience. Our fears and guilt kept us from receiving the benefits afforded

to everyday people. Sharing enables us to return to the realm of human experience, increasing our capacity to feel the problems of another addict.

By sharing our experience of recovery with newcomers, both by sponsorship and at meetings, we help ourselves stay clean. We find ourselves being constantly reminded of things that help us want to stay clean. Being able to serve as an instrument of a loving God and participation in the recovery of others keeps a sense of wonder and gratitude in our lives. Giving comfort and encouragement to others encourages and comforts us. Today, we have people in our lives who stand by us when it's rough and help us do what we can do and not worry about what we can't. Getting out of ourselves gives us more perspective on life and makes it easier to live with reality. We no longer feel like we have to run from ourselves. This program has given us a sure way to explore ourselves, rooting out defects and learning to live.

If you want to change your life--risk sharing! It is by taking risks we have almost lost our lives, by asking for help in the same way, we can change.

If we find ourselves in a bad place or we sense a bad scene coming, we call someone or get to a meeting. We have learned to seek good counsel from qualified people before making difficult decisions. By reaching out and practicing the virtue of humility, and asking for help, we can get through even the toughest of times. I can't, we can! It is not a sign of weakness, it is a sign of growth. In this way, we as recovering addicts find the strength we need when we need it most. It is a way of life for the addicts who want to learn to live clean and have discovered one another. We share our mental and spiritual resources for the good of everyone.

Recovering addicts take great pleasure in helping other suffering addicts recover. Recovery as found in Narcotics Anonymous must come from within and no one can get clean for anyone else.

In the course of carrying the message, each of us comes to our own understanding and if we have difficulties we trust our groups and the Twelve Steps of the program to guide us. These things should be used to help others.

The Steps guide us into our place in society. We begin by straightening out our internal disorder and obtaining release from the defects that prevent us from being all we should be. We emerge as individuals re-conceived with a new awareness and the ability to take our place in the world. Our viewpoint changes from that of a loner to a participating member. We emphasize setting our own house in order and trying to do more than our part. We trust in our Higher Power to give us strength and to meet our needs. If we feel that we have more than our share of difficulty, we should share more with others and remember to be grateful for the good things we already have. If we're not grateful for the things we've got, we won't be grateful for the things we are yet to receive.

Responsibility is a key word here. There are certain situations that demand more than we have to give. We should avoid these or seek help if we find ourselves already in such a situation. We are no longer asked to do the impossible. Most of us are accustomed to getting bored and disinterested when we find ourselves without major problems. We want to change. Serenity not prayed for is likely to appear as boredom. In the past we have relied on desperation to give us the strength to periodically reorder our lives. There is another way.

When we accept that we are responsible for our problems, we realize that we can be equally responsible for our solutions. It simply takes clean time for us to realize who we are and what we want to do. What we can do is remember that we are addicts. Being clean is abnormal to us, and we must learn how to live in an on-going manner. A great magic is found when we help others. As clean addicts in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, we help ourselves by helping others.

Our attention focuses on the solutions, and our old ideas breakup and dissolve like icebergs in the tropics. When the compulsion to use is lifted from us, and we begin to think of others before ourselves, a true miracle begins. Working the steps, practicing the principles and using the tools, we begin to see ourselves in a new light. We find ourselves helping others and securing help for our own problems. We redefine ourselves. We become feeling people, capable of responding appropriately to our environment. We put spiritual living first and exercise patience, tolerance and humility in our daily lives. The further we get from the last pill, fix, drink, or toke, the more we see of our past and the more we realize the miracle of the release from our disease of addiction.

What we have today is the wonderful fact of our recovery and all that it means to us. Each day we live clean, awakens us to the freedom we had all along, but failed to realize. We succeed now where we had known only failure before. Many of our dreams, forgotten and obscured by our addiction, return and help us regain the sense of wonder and excitement at the miracle of living clean. The old compulsions fade and the habits of mind associated with addiction weaken and are broken. A great many things become possible for us. Since we live clean and grow, we are able to take our place in the world.

If we want to reap the benefits of staying clean, we find it necessary to take continual inventories of ourselves. Hidden fears and needs are still potential driving forces. Just because we don't recognize fear or anger doesn't mean that it isn't influencing our lives. We found it important to examine places where we grow angry or our beliefs were tested. The areas we didn't want to question were those that most needed to be looked at.

We also found it important to examine the other side of the coin, the so called "good" qualities like truth. Truth seems to be something that is impossible to understand until

it becomes obvious. Truth is something we never suspected until we knew it. There are no exceptions--only incomplete truths. Everything we know is subject to revision, especially what we know about truth.

Another desirable quality is love. We love the ambitious for they can inspire us; we love the failures for they can teach us; we love the kings for they are but human; we love the meek for they are divine. We love the poor for they are so many. We love the rich for they are lonely. We love the young for the faith they hold; we love the old for the wisdom they share. We love the beautiful for their eyes of sadness; we love the ugly for their souls of peace.

We think of love as a shield against the attacks of other people, and as a weapon to blast through walls of hate, and to open closed hearts and closed minds. We feel protected by our love, through adversity, discouragement, anger, and insecurity. We even feel uplifted by love, in the moments of despair that still sometimes come to haunt us. As our love is strengthened, we become stronger, and better able to meet life's trials.

In dealing with the other people in our lives, we develop a loving attitude. We forgive more easily, anger more slowly, expect less, and give more to our brothers and sisters. We come to see all people as our brothers and sisters. We have learned this kind of unconditional love from our fellow addicts in Narcotics Anonymous.

Through the love we have received in our Fellowship, we begin to feel lovable ourselves. From there, we can truly start to love and respect ourselves. This feeling of self love is totally-alien to the egotism that we used to bolster ourselves with, as practicing addicts. It is one of the things that brings a sense of calmness to us, a feeling of solidarity that comes from knowing the truth about ourselves, and accepting it. In the old days, we knew, deep down inside, that we were faking it whenever we indulged in our delusions of grandeur and self-importance. Now, because we are beginning to love

ourselves unashamedly, we can love other people more completely, because we no longer feel like we have anything to hide from anyone.

Our egos used to control us in all kinds of subtle ways. For one thing, it seemed important for us to compete with others in almost all of our endeavors. Some of us even refused to try something that we might not be the best at. We watched other people closely, not with any concern for their well being, but to check and see if we were measuring up to their standards. Some of us had no idea who we were, or who we wanted to be. We only knew we didn't want to be ourselves. Now, we realize that we were unwisely comparing our insides to others - outsides, which could only work to frustrate us in the long run.

The Twelve Steps to recovery, that N.A. outlines for us, hold the answer for all of our ego-trips and insecurities. They seem to hold the only answers for us that we can really use. In living these Steps, we first begin to let go of old egotism. We then open up to a Higher Power, so that we will lose all fear of facing ourselves and of facing other people. Eventually, when we sincerely use this program of action in our daily lives, we will be able to face our Higher Power, ourselves, our loved ones, and even the "cold, cruel world." We develop a solid base to work from, which assures us that we can go anywhere and do anything, with complete assurance that we can handle whatever we have at hand. With that kind of attitude, we have a real basis for living happily, and we are able to really be of help to the addict who is still suffering.

The Twelve Steps led us to a point of recovery that seemed to make the world change before our eyes, for the better. By practicing the N.A. principles in all our affairs, we attract other addicts to us, addicts we are now capable of helping.

Humility is a word that now loses its old negative connotations for us. In the days of our active addiction we were

humbled by the behavior patterns of getting and using. We learned to place ourselves last, and the addiction first. In a way, how we live now is similar to that. We place our recovery first and our own petty desires and egos last. We begin to actually want to do what is best for all concerned, especially in our N.A. groups. We have found that the best results in staying clean can come, only when we serve to unify our groups by attending meetings, and by serving N.A.

In our past, we were usually irresponsible. After we face ourselves in the inventory steps, and make amends to others in our amends steps, we can no longer allow other people to "pay our way" for us. We want to serve.

Earlier, we mentioned that it was important that we learn to trust each other in N.A. In our groups, we all need to open up; first, selfishly, for our own recovery, and later candidly, for the inspiration of the newer members. We need to maintain an atmosphere of confidence by not using opportunities to look down on our fellow members, or gossip about them. Speaking up at meetings and on a one-to-one basis with a sponsor are absolutely necessary for our survival, and a break of confidence could cost another addict their life.

Those of us who are consciously working and using the Twelve Steps to recovery in our lives are seldom bothered by gossip. Our lives are lived like "open books", and really don't feel like hiding anything, or judging anyone. We no longer feel a need to put up a front, because we are doing the best we can.

However far we are in our recovery programs, we each need to draw on the strength of the other people in the group. We bring that strength out with us, into our every-day lives. We apply what we learn in the meetings to all our affairs, using these teachings as a basis for living, but returning, again and again to our groups, both to help and to be helped in our recovery from addictions.

One of the simplest and most important parts of our whole recovery process is the concept of "live a day at a time". Often, we have to extend that idea to "live a moment at a time." In the course of our daily lives, we usually tend to forget to keep things simple, and we build our problems into unmovable mountains.

Patience is not exactly one of our strong points either. We are experts at making ourselves so frustrated that we lose perspective completely. That is why we need our slogans, and our N.A. friends to remind us to face what we can, as we can, and no sooner. We try to avoid setting goals for ourselves that are too high for us to reach. They set us up for defeat. We become willing to lower our goals, allowing ourselves to give our Higher Power credit for all things we accomplish, and to be grateful for them, even when we would rather accomplish more. Not only are many of us impatient with ourselves about what we expect to accomplish, but we are impatient about what we expect to have. During our active using, we often lived way beyond our means, out of necessity. Unfortunately, not all of us lose our extravagance and greed easily, even after we stop using.

It isn't easy, but, if we want to live happily, we have to learn to live ethically, and within our means, facing what we have and what we have not, with honest acceptance and gratitude.

In both, the case of accomplishing things and of acquiring things, we usually need to develop a habit of lowering our goals, to a more reasonable point, and reaching them in our own time. After a while, our ability to produce and to use what we have improves. As that happens, we gradually start raising the goals again, but only with the guidance of our Higher Power. As we do this, we insure our own success in meeting the goals we have set for ourselves, letting go of fear and impatience and raising our self-esteem.

We mentioned humility earlier, as a quality for us to shoot for, particularly in the confines of our Fellowship. For most of us, it is much more than that. It is an attitude

that must be developed, before we can ever expect to live happily in the world. Humility is an honest self-acceptance, which leads to further acceptance of the conditions around us. It goes hand in hand with the qualities of patience and tolerance. As we recognize our own humanity, we become much better able to recognize others, to let them make mistakes, and to be themselves. We bring this new humility with us everywhere we go, because each of us touches many lives.

One of our greatest enemies is resentment. It has the power to kill. The only way to be rid of resentment is to develop humility, in the form of forgiveness. We can't lose our resentments, by using our own will-power, no matter how hard we may try. Only through earnest prayer, and through dealing with our resentments up front, can we start to forgive the people we have hatred toward.

The benefits of forgiving our enemies are many. First, we are able to use our thinking time on more important subjects, instead of plotting our revenge, or writing little scenarios about what we "ought to say or should have said." So, having all this time, we are free to improve ourselves. We eventually start to see the very same defects that we had found so intolerable in the other people in ourselves. We can do little exercises in tolerance by making up our minds to let people be themselves, and not lifting a finger to change them. Sometimes, the best revenge we can have over a manipulative or unpleasant person is in not allowing them to "pull our strings" by making us react unkindly to them. If we really believe that a person is wrong, we have no business letting that person have control of our emotions. We are not responsible for another person's behavior, but we learn to take responsibility for our reactions. Remember, we can't change other people. We can, through the program of Narcotics Anonymous, change ourselves.

We have just been talking about the qualities of patience, tolerance, and humility. We also mentioned acceptance. Actually, all of the first qualities mentioned are mere

aspects of acceptance. Those are the main ways that we use acceptance in our lives. But, acceptance goes forward, to the new member that comes into our Fellowship.

Alienation and isolation are symptoms of the mental part of our disease. To the practicing addict, life is just a movement between connections and oblivion. Normal concerns are pushed to the side, as the disease progresses. Our behavior confounds our friends and relatives, so we seek the company of the only people who understand us: our fellow addicts. As the drugs consume our physical reserves, we pass into the desperate state where getting and using is our main activity.

CHAPTER FIVE

WHAT CAN I DO?

Begin your own program by taking Step One from the previous chapter "How It Works". When we fully concede to our innermost selves that we are powerless over our addiction, we have taken a big step in our recovery. Many of us have had some reservations at this point, so give yourself a break and be as thorough as possible at the start. Go to Step Two, and so forth and as you go on you will come to an understanding of the program for yourself. If you are in an institution of any kind, you have gone through complete withdrawal and have stopped using for the present. Now, with a clear mind, try this way of life.

Upon release, continue your daily program and contact a member of N.A. Do this by mail, by phone, or in person. Better yet come to our meetings. Here you will find the answers to some of the things that may be disturbing you now.

If you are not in an institution, the same holds true. Stop using for today. Most of us can do for eight or twelve hours what seems impossible for a longer period of time. If the obsession or compulsion becomes too great, put yourself on a five minute basis of not using. Minutes will grow to hours and hours to days and so you will break the habit and gain some peace of mind. The real miracle happens when you realize that the need for drugs has in some way been lifted from you.

You have stopped using and have started to live.

It all begins with that first admission and surrender. From that point, each addict is reminded that a day clean is a day won. At first we can do little more than attend meetings. Probably we cannot remember even a single name, word or thought from our first meeting. What we do remember is the

feeling we got. That no matter what we have done or what course our addiction had taken, we can relax and enjoy the love that fills the room at every meeting which follows the Twelve Tradition. Meetings strengthened our grip on recovery.

Having begun attending meetings regularly, we were introduced to the Twelve Steps. Working the Steps got us out of our old attitudes. When we admitted that our lives had become unmanageable, we didn't have to argue our point of view. We didn't have to be right all of the time. We could relax and allow others to be wrong. We found a new source of energy to put the wreckage of our lives back in working order. Things that we have done to hide our illness no longer seemed worth it; and we were free to open our minds to new ideas. Destructive behavior could be corrected as soon as we loosened our grip on our old ways. We found that the fear of change was replaced by a sense of wonder and adventure. Freedom to change seems to come mainly after our acceptance of ourselves.

Freedom from our destructiveness covering up the wreckage of the past has been the main stumbling block in relating to others. By recognizing the defects in our characters, and letting go of them spiritually, we were ready to have sanity restored to us. In applying these spiritual principles to our lives, we should keep an open mind. Patience, humility and tolerance are well worth any price that we must pay for them. It would seem that the path to spiritual recovery involves spiritual principles'. Spiritual indifference will surely lead to relapse.

As we went to meetings regularly, we also learned the basic value of talking to other addicts who shared our problems and goals. As we became responsible for our own recovery, we became responsible for our fellow addicts. We found this responsibility was two-edged. As recovering addicts we must share what we have found with other addicts, because we know how important it is for one addict to talk with

another. If sharing the pain we have been through helps but one person, it will have been worth the suffering. The other edge is our own need to preserve our recovery. We found from experience that our own recovery is strengthened when we share it with others, who ask for help. If we keep what we have to share, we lose the meaning. Words mean nothing until we put them into action.

We often miss what we are looking for because it isn't hidden. Most addicts have great insights and abilities that offset their weaknesses. Gratitude for our assets shouldn't keep us from growing in areas where we are weak. Being grateful begins when we realize that something other than ourselves blessed us with what we have.

Facing problems is a necessary ability to stay clean. If we have had problems in the past, it is unlikely that simple abstinence will eliminate the defense mechanisms and emotional walls that enabled us to live in past day. In searching for the end we often miss the journey.

These old ways have to go if we are to find new lives. We will successfully face the days to come if we take advantage of the help the program of Narcotics Anonymous has to offer. Help from one addict to another; help that says, "I had something like that happen to me and I tried so and so". Not preaching or judging but sharing the experience, strength, and hope that comes to anyone who accepts our way of life. The willingness to try new ideas and possible solutions will help open the door to our recovery. One discovery leads to another, and soon we are established in a new way of life where people, places and things are kept in proper perspective. The old "all or nothing" point of view will no longer seem a useful idea.

Now we have learned that we can, and must, go to our higher Power for help in solving problems. Fortunately, many problems can wait. The program doesn't work when we

adapt it to our life, we have to adapt our life to the program.

When you can feel the program beginning to work, don't freak out. Personality change is a natural progression set in motion by our surrender to the program. The slogans are the sayings that seemed to help us most when we first came to the Fellowship. They apply to the little, dangerous daily situations that seemed so heavy at first. Things go smoother if the newcomer finds a sponsor to confide in, someone whose judgement he can trust. We do not think it weak to put a little faith and trust in a person with more experience on the program.

We may still, however, feel that we cannot have a happy life without drugs. We may suffer from the fear of insanity and feel we have no escape from using other than an insane and depressed existence. We may fear the rejection of all our friends if we go cleaning up our act, this is common. We could be suffering from an overly sensitive ego and many of those things within us that we used drugs to escape from.

Obsession is the fixed idea that takes us back to a particular drug, trying to regain the ease and comfort we once knew. We know that the comfort we once experienced from using can no longer be obtained. When we accepted that we were addicts, we realized that never again could we use successfully. Try not to think about drugs, old friends or old hang outs. But when the obsession hits us, we improve our conscious contact with our Higher Power through fellowship in N.A.

Just as we went to any length to get drugs, so must we go to any lengths to learn to get clean. This involves the honesty to admit our need for the help of others, who have been where we have been, and have learned to live with -out chemicals. The essence of addiction is that it is

easier to change our perception of reality than the reality we perceive.

Cash register honesty, honesty in giving a "fair day's work for a fair day's pay", can help us begin. As the benefits of basic honesty in the world begin to roll in, we are ready to consider honesty at a deeper level. Self-honesty is being in touch with the way we really feel and the way we spend our time.

As we began to learn how to change our perception of reality, we, as newcomers, were encouraged to avoid making any major decisions on our own. The ego of the addict must be busted for him to have a chance at recovery. "Terminal hipness" and "fatal cool" are symptoms of the addictive personality. We should be very intent and watchful. Old ideas and street practices won't help us stay clean.

After establishing our new desire to live clean in the Fellowship and acquainting ourselves with the tools which have helped other suffering addicts to recover, we can then proceed with the business of living.

At least one meeting a day for ninety days seems to be a good guide for those who are going to any lengths. There is a special calm that settles over a person with our disease when they find out there are many others who share their difficulties, past and present. We should begin to work the Steps in earnest, going over each Step word by word. Reading our literature and talking over the implication of each Step with our new friends and our sponsors and asking God's help improves our understanding of the program. A meeting a day, getting and using phone numbers, and reading literature each day are good forms of insurance for cleanliness. It has been said that no one who has asked their Higher Power for help in the morning and worked the steps has ever gotten

loaded that day.

Guilt and worry keep us from living in the here and now. The denial of our disease, or reservations, keep us sick. We lack humility, clinging to old ways. Not from preaching nor from judgement, but from sharing our experience, strength and hope do we recover. Our willingness to try new ideas and possible solutions to problems will help open the doors to recovery.

Let us apply our efforts to the obtainable and let the rest go. As we do the job at hand the balance changes and new opportunities for improvement present themselves. Opportunities now in sight did not even exist until we got the ball rolling. Life then becomes for us what we always wished it to be--a constant state of awakening. As soon as we became acquainted with the Fellowship and the basic ideas of the program. We began to put these ideas into action. A good tool to remember is to counter our natural tendency to saddle ourselves with concerns that go beyond the twenty-four hours of each day.

Living clean each day at a time will reveal to us the things that truly come from within and give us better understanding over things that would interrupt our flow.

Recovery will provide for our re-entry into society. We can always find people who have had difficulties similar to our own and do succeed. It is difficult to get rid of the notion that we must be great or do great to be O.K. As we recover we will often find ourselves saying and doing things that suddenly make no sense to us, even if we've been doing them for years. We literally see our mistakes. This is necessary for our recovery. Self condemnation has little place here. When we see our errors, we should simply correct them.

As we go about the task of changing our lives, we are

confronted with our character defects. Letting go of character defects should be done with love. It is important we think, to be gentle with ourselves when putting our ego to rest.

In our addiction, we feared change because we had lost control of our lives and most changes were for the worst. Clean, we had to learn to face another enemy - boredom. If we allow ourselves to stagnate and cling to our old ways of desperation and fear, our chances of a real and lasting recovery decrease. We had to reach out and to accept the love and understanding the Fellowship had to offer. Clean, we face the world together. No longer do we feel backed into a corner and at the mercy of events and circumstances. We can expect to succeed in many areas of our lives where we have known only failure and despair. Our new friends and the tools for living in the program of Narcotics Anonymous will enable us to experience these changes. Working the Steps will broaden our horizons and practicing the principles will reduce our commitments to some manageable level. Our new friends and awakened spirits will help us. Our common effort is recovery.

Being clean we will eventually have to learn to cope with success. Success scares us because in the past it preceded failure. We could not afford to feel good because we remembered the pain of disappointment. It was better, we concluded, to keep moving on and holding back. Actually this made a great deal of sense when we were using. Now, it makes no sense at all.

In time we may become a trusted servant. We can participate in Twelfth Step work, and try to share the message of recovery, with the addict who still suffers. It has been our experience that personal problems will be resolved

when we are willing to accept responsibility for them. It is good form to allow others in the group to help us with them from time to time.

Service will get us out of ourselves, and our concern for others will be reflected in our own ability to accept concern from others. When we find ourselves opening up and facing difficulties that used to have us on the run, we will experience periodic surges of good feeling that can give us the strength to begin seeking God's will for us.

Well before we surrender, we have ceased to feel as if we are participating in the human race. Our tenuous grasp on reality is invaded by fears and self-hatred, which leads to paranoia, and away from the rest of humanity as a whole.

When we finally became desperate enough to seek help, we, once again, sought out the company of our fellow addicts. But, this time, the addicts were clean. The acceptance we found in the Fellowship was amazing to us, since we had known only loneliness. N.A. reawakened old memories of what it felt like to be a member of this human family. Slowly, we opened up, reached out, warmed up, and let ourselves love and be loved. The original desire to be clean leads us to a desire to help others. Touching, sharing, and loving are actual tools of recovery for us.

The only way we keep from continuing a habit is not to take that first fix, pill, drink or toke. People like us know that one is too many and a thousand are never enough. We put great emphasis on this for we know that when we use drugs in any form, we release our addiction all over again or create a new one.

Abstinence is the basis of our program. Any mood or mind-altering chemical, prescription or not, is poison to our bodies. Those who relapse and live to make it back,

keep us well informed of the fact that there is nothing so bad that a relapse can't make it a whole lot worse.

If we clean our bodies by daily abstinence we should clean our minds of preconceptions based on past experiences. It is those who stay clean when it seems like it isn't worth it who make it. It means remembering that we are just one fix, pill, drink or toke away from total disaster. It's amazing the power that total abstinence has in changing our life. The bottom line of Narcotics Anonymous is staying clean. When we realize that we can't use drugs in any form and live, we are ready to admit our powerlessness. It takes some of us a while to realize how unmanageable we were and are still. For others this is the only thing that which we can be sure. We as adults are allergic to all drugs, although individual tolerance can play a valuable role. Generally the effects of any amount of usage are immediate and devastating.

Some of the most common excuses for using are loneliness, self-pity, and closed-mindedness. Past thinking patterns, known as "stinkin' thinkin'", have proven lethal. Our experience shows that we do recover from these old games. We simply live each day at a time without drugs. We believe the solution for the problem of having drug-fogged minds, sick bodies and tormented emotions is in a spiritual way of life. This is why the Twelve Steps are used as a program of recovery and ultimately a method of trusting in a Higher Power that we can have faith in.

CHAPTER SIX

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

We keep what we have only with vigilance and just as freedom for the individual comes from the Twelve Steps so freedom for the groups springs from our Traditions. As long as the ties that bind us at bind us together are stronger than those that would tear us apart, all will be well.

- 1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.*
- 2. For our Group purpose there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God as He may express Himself in our Group conscience, our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.*
- 3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.*
- 4. Each Group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other Groups, or N.A., as a whole.*
- 5. Each Group has but one primary purpose--to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.*
- 6. An N.A. Group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.*
- 7. Every N.A. Group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.*
- 8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our Service Centers may employ special workers.*

9. N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. N.A. has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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

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

We're taught that we can only keep what we have by giving it away. So we seek out and give our hand to other addicts who have problems like ours and want help. Usually one of the first things we try to do when we're working with a newcomer is to get them to a meeting. After all, that's what worked for us.

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

For most of us, understanding of these Traditions comes slowly over a period of time. We pick up a little information here and there as we talk to members and visit various groups. It usually isn't until we get involved with service that someone points out that "personal recovery depends on N.A. unity", and that unity depends on how well we follow our traditions. Because we hear about "suggested steps" and of no must" so often, some of us make a mistake and assume that this applies to our groups the way it applies to the individual. The Twelve Traditions of N.A. are not suggested, and they are not negotiable. These are the rules that keep our fellowship alive and free.

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

Many of our problems are much like those our predecessors had to face. Their hard won experience gave birth to

the Traditions; and our own experiences have shown that these principles are just as valid today as they were yesterday. Our Traditions are what protect us from the internal and external forces which could destroy us. They are truly the ties that bind us together, but they don't work automatically. It is only through understanding and application that they have power.

TRADITION ONE

Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.

It makes sense that our First Tradition concerns unity and our common welfare. One of the most important parts of our new way of life is being a part of a group of addicts also seeking recovery. Our survival is directly related to the survival of our groups and of our fellowship.

Before coming to N.A., most of us tried to clean up or stay clean on our own. Many of us sought treatment or professional help. These effort were unsuccessful for us; it wasn't until we came to Narcotics Anonymous that recovery seemed possible. This program can do for us what we could not do for ourselves. We came and saw this program work in the lives of other addicts. Their recovery gave us hope for ourselves. We became part of a group and found that we could make it, too. We also learned that those who did not continue being an active part of the Fellowship faced a rough road and often relapsed. Most of us agree that without N.A. we would be in real trouble. We know we can't do it alone, and nothing else ever worked for us. For our own good we try to do what is best for the group.

This isn't to say that the group is shoved down the individual's throat. Most of us had never experienced the kind

of attention and personal care that we found in the program. We are accepted and loved for what we are; instead of "in-spite" of what we are. The individual is precious to the group, and the group is precious to the individual. No one can revoke our membership or punish us, or make us do anything that we don't choose to do. We are taught this way of life by example rather than direction. We share our experiences and learn from each other. In our addiction we consistently placed our personal welfare before anything else. Here we found that in the long run what's best for the group was usually good for us. We chose to conform to the common good because that's what worked for us.

Our personal experiences while using differed from member to member. However, as a group we found many common themes in our addiction. One of these shared symptoms was our need to prove self-sufficiency. We convinced our selves that we could make it alone and proceeded to live life on that basis. The results were disastrous, and, in the end, each of us had to admit that our self-sufficiency was a lie. We found that we could no longer control our using, nor could we manage our own lives. This surrender was the starting point of our recovery, and is a primary point of unity for the Fellowship.

Not only are these common themes in our addiction, but we find that in recovery we also have much in common. We share a common desire to stay clean. Each of us has learned to depend upon a Power greater than ourselves, which is our source of strength. Our purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. We have our Traditions, the rules that protect us from ourselves. We share many things, and each is a point of unity for us.

Unity is a reality in Narcotics Anonymous. This isn't to say that we don't have our disagreements and conflicts; we do. Whenever people get together there are differences

of opinion and impressions. However, when the chips are down we pull together. Time and time again we've seen this; in times of crisis or trouble we set aside our differences and worked for the common good. How often have we seen two members who usually don't get along very well working together with the newcomers? How often have we seen a group doing menial tasks to pay the rent for their meeting hall? How often have we seen members drive hundreds of miles to help support a new group? These activities and many others are commonplace in our fellowship. They must be, because without these things N.A. could not have survived. Without N.A. few of us would have survived, and fewer still would have found recovery.

TRADITION TWO

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.

In N.A. we have a great concern in protecting ourselves from ourselves. Our Second Tradition is another example of this. By nature we seem to be strong-willed, self-centered people, seeking self-gratification in the realms of money, power, and sex. An important part of our recovery is learning how to live with these drives; how to realign our misguided instincts, how to stop acting out our insanities, how to disarm our self-destruct mechanisms, and how to re-channel our energies toward constructive ends. In other words, we have to replace our "dying program" with a "living program". Early in our recovery we learned that we did a pretty poor job with our lives. One of our sayings is "Our best ideas got us here". This seems apt, as we look back and see how many times our schemes and plans got us into

trouble despite their original intent. We were powerless over our addictions and could not manage our own lives. Now we find ourselves thrust together in N.A., mismanager all, not one of us capable of making consistently good decisions. When we realized this had related to our new group oriented way of life we often experienced a sort of gut-level panicky feeling.

At this point our old timers usually come forward to reassure us. "Don't worry. God takes care of fools and addicts. This is a spiritual program and He won't let us screw it up" they say. They go on to explain that in N.A. we rely on a loving God as he expresses Himself in our Group conscience rather than on personal opinion or ego. In working the Steps we need to come to depend on a Power greater than ourselves. We continue this relationship and utilize it for our Group purposes. If we each turned our will and our lives over to His care and seek to do his will, he will express Himself on a group level. When a decision needs to be made for a group, each of the members should take the time to meditate on what is most beneficial to our common welfare. If we do this, then the results will truly be an expression of the spiritual concept of our Group.

We know that this is a fact for our Fellowship, but sometimes we are confused when it seems our decisions don't work out very well. We forget that we are not perfect, and that we are only experiencing spiritual progress. When personalities and self will creep into our efforts then the results suffer. We must be constantly on guard that our decisions are truly an expression of God's will. There is often a vast difference between Group conscience and Group opinion, powerful personalities, or popularity. Some of our most painful growing pains have come as a result of decisions made in the name of "group conscience". Our experience has

shown that there had been nothing spiritual about some of our decisions.

"We took a Group conscience and decided that..."Wait a minute! We don't take Group conscience, we take votes. One group decided that members must be graduates of a specific treatment program, another felt that only heroin addicts should attend, another accepted only Christians. Another decided that residents of a halfway house could attend if they promised not to talk. Another let others sit in on their group only if they would contribute to the collection. Another, decided to pay its officers wages. One group promised that anyone who attended their meetings would be able to get a job at a local counseling center and so on and so on. We've made a lot of bad decisions and pawned them off as Group conscience. This worries many of US. How can we really tell if our decisions are really Group conscience or not, and how do we prevent painful mistakes?

There is one truth which helps guide us. True spiritual principles are never in conflict; they always complement each other. The true spiritual conscience of a group will never contradict any of our other spiritual principles. Whenever we are faced with a group decision, we first try to eliminate personalities, prejudices, and self-centeredness. Then we review our decisions to make sure they are not in violation of any of our Twelve Traditions. If we take another look at our decision and try to resolve it. This approach isn't foolproof, but it has helped to prevent problems many times.

The Second Tradition also concerns the nature of leadership in N.A. We have seen that we try to rest authority in the spiritual conscience of the group. In keeping with this, we make a special point of trying to prevent authoritarian leadership. We have learned that for our Fellowship

leadership by example and by selfless service works, and that direction and manipulation fails. The way we designate our trusted servants insures this. We choose not to have presidents, masters, chairmen or directors. Instead we have secretaries, treasurers, and representatives. These titles in themselves imply service rather than control. Our experience shows that if a group becomes an extension of the personality of a leader or a certain member, then it loses its effectiveness. Newcomers don't stay, and members stop coming. The group must then change or die. This is sometimes a difficult and agonizing process. Those who stay grow through the experience; but what happens to those who leave? An atmosphere of recovery in our groups is one of our most precious assets; and we must guard it carefully lest we lose it to politics and personalities.

Those of us who have been involved in service for a long time or in getting a group started and keeping the doors open through the hard early days sometimes have a hard time letting go of the reins. Sometimes our egos get in the way, sometimes ungrounded fears get in the way, and sometimes the group gets in the way. Most of us come with a poor self-image and low self-worth. With time and some successes we begin to recover somewhat and develop healthier egos. We enjoy these feelings for they are healthy for us. We like recognition and attention and we often deserve them. However this sometimes gets out of hand. We begin to pursue these things as ends in themselves and find ourselves in trouble. With more time and maturity we grow in humility and learn to deal with these new feelings in a more realistic and spiritual way. Another situation which often cause us problems is fear. We sometimes fear that there is no one else who can serve the group as well as we. We are

afraid that if we turn over the responsibility to new members, something terrible is going to happen. We may even have tried to get others involved before without success. It doesn't matter whenever we are unwilling to take a chance to let the group grow on its own, or when we become afraid of change, we are playing God. Our friends may tell us to let go and work the Third Step, but sometimes we are deaf to their love. In these cases it is ourselves who must go and grow. But again, what about those we lose in the process? Still another situation which causes leadership problems is when senior members are thrust into positions of power. Sometimes a group or part of a group will be afraid to let their leaders step down gracefully. The members time and time again draft the same leaders; demanding that they perform, demanding that they rule the roost. In these cases change is especially hard because it seems that only a crisis will do the job. Usually, the leader himself must refuse to serve. This goes against the grain because we've been told never to refuse an N.A. request, and this has been a valuable part of our program. To refuse to lead because it's not what's best for the group requires a lot of maturity and humility.

Most of those involved with service sooner or later have to deal with these problems. At first they are unaware. They run on good feelings, the notoriety, and the attention. After a while, they may begin having mixed feelings. Part of them revels in the spotlight, while another part is very uncomfortable because they know they are just another member. This period is often followed by a period in which they deny their leadership and value to the group. Eventually and gratefully they find a degree of humility which allows them to accept themselves and their places in the Fellowship. They accept that they are truly just a part of a greater

whole, that they in themselves are not indispensable or dispensable. Along with this they also accept that they do have special and valuable experiences which can benefit the group. They become a resource for the group; seeking neither to control the group-not to set themselves apart. It is at this time that their long service truly contributes the most. They encourage us, inspire us, and teach us by example. Even though their services are less dramatic than when their group was struggling to survive, they provide a foundation of stability, strength, and experience upon which our Fellowship can grow.

TRADITION THREE

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.

This Tradition is very important for both the individual and the group. It relates directly to many of the basic ideas of our program. Desire is the key word in this Tradition and desire is the basis of our recovery. In our story and in our experience of trying to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers, one painful fact of life has emerged again and again. An addict who does not want to stop using will not stop using. They can be analyzed, counseled, reasoned with, prayed over, threatened, beaten, locked up or whatever; but they won't stop using until they want to. The only thing we ask of our members is that they have this desire. Without it, they are doomed, but with it miracles have happened.

This is our only requirement, and rightfully so. Addiction does not discriminate, why should recovery? Our disease does not recognize race, religion, sex, age, occupation, economics, or any of the other lines people draw to separate themselves. "An addict is a man or woman whose life is controlled by drugs." The newcomer is the lifeblood of N.A. and

when one comes to us seeking help we welcome them with open arms. We don't care who or what they are or even what they used. As long as they want to stop using there's a place for them in N.A., and this Tradition guarantees them that place. Every clean member of N.A. could have been rejected by some kind of membership requirement or another. Many of us would not be alive today if we hadn't found a program which accepted us when we wanted help. We originally came to this program for many reasons, but those of us who have stayed have done so for the same reason--the desire to stop using. Many of us didn't even know that addiction was a problem. Many of us could not visualize a life without drugs, let alone want it. Many of us had reached the point in our addiction where we felt there was no hope for us, we only wanted a little relief. It wasn't until after we came to N.A. that we found out that we had a disease and that recovery was possible for us. Membership in N.A. isn't automatic when someone walks in the door; it isn't every automatic when the newcomer has a desire to stop using. The decision to become a part of our fellowship rests with the individual. Any addict who has a desire to stop using can become a member of N.A.

We are Narcotics Anonymous and our problem is addiction, other fellowships deal with other problems. Most newcomers are led to the fellowship which best suits their needs. Individuals come with problems that express themselves in various ways. They don't clearly fit into our fellowship. Many of these people become valuable and active members of several fellowships while others single out the fellowship with which they are the most comfortable. Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers; where they find recovery is not our basic concern. We know of members with a history of drug abuse who have found recovery in other fellowships. We support these members

and rejoice in their recovery, and addict who has found freedom and recovery anywhere is a friend of ours. Although we would welcome them in our groups, we do not seek them out or force them to join N.A. This would not be in keeping with our spiritual aims.

The twelve step fellowships do not compete. We are mutually supportive and cooperate for the common good. For us recovery is more important than membership. However, some newcomers seem to have trouble finding a fellowship or fellowships in which they fit. We encourage them to shop around, to attend various meetings and find out where they most fully identify. They might ask themselves: "Where do I hear about problems most like my problems? Where are there members who are living the kind of life I would like to live? and "Where am I most comfortable?" We have also met members who are uncertain about where they really belong. We suggest that they ask themselves three questions:

1. What message do you carry? (What is the nature of your recovery and what have you recovered from?)
2. Who are you trying to carry this message to?
3. Where are you trying to carry this message?

We suggest that the answers to these three questions should not be in conflict; we cannot give away anything we haven't got. We cannot carry any message that is not our own.

The choice of membership rests with the individual. We feel the ideal state for our fellowship exists when an addict can openly and freely come to an N.A. meeting; wherever and whenever they choose and leave just as freely if they want to. We realize that there is nothing we can do to make an addict stop using. However, we have learned that recovery is a reality and that life without drugs is better than we ever imagined. We open our doors to addicts hoping that they can find what we have found; but knowing that only those who have a desire to stop using and want what we have to offer will join us in our new way of life.

TRADITION FOUR

Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups, or N.A. as a whole.

The autonomy of our groups is one of our most precious possessions. This sounds great but what does it mean? What is it to be autonomous? Webster's defines autonomous as "having the right or power of self government", "undertaken or carried on without outside control", "existing or capable of existing independently", "responding, reacting or developing independently of the whole". Autonomy is all these things to us and more. Our groups are truly self-governing and are not subject to outside control. Each group can exist on it's own if it must. Each group has had to grow on its own and stand on its own two feet. One might ask: Is this really true, are we truly autonomous, what about our service committees, our offices, our activities, our hotlines, and all the other things that go on in N.A.? The answer, of course, is that these things are not N.A. They are services that we can utilize to help us in our recovery and to further the primary purpose of our groups. Narcotics Anonymous is a Fellowship of men and women, addicts, meeting together in groups, and using a given set of spiritual principles to find freedom from addiction and a new way to live. All else is not N.A. Those other things we mentioned are the result of members caring enough to reach out and offer their help and experience so that our road may be easier. Whether or not we choose to utilize these services for the benefit of a group is up to us, they are not thrust down our throats. Some have taken offense to this, they say that when they started out they were told they had to register their group. This may be true, but many groups exist that have never registered. We ask groups to register because we can't recognize them unless we know that they exist. Once a group registers

they are sent a starter kit. This contains many suggestions and is one of the ways we share our experience to help the group. Whether or not they take our suggestion is their decision. In this starter kit it says that we must abide by the Twelve Traditions in order to call ourselves Narcotics Anonymous. This is also true, but these Traditions are part of the set of spiritual principles that are N.A. Without the Traditions, N.A. does not exist. It really is up to the group, in the end they must choose for themselves. They are autonomous.

But we said that for N.A. autonomy was more than this, and it is. For us in Narcotics Anonymous autonomy is also creative freedom. It gives our groups the freedom to act on their own to establish their atmosphere of recovery, to serve their members, and to fulfill their primary purpose. It is this aspect of autonomy that makes it one of our most precious principles. It is for this reason that we guard our autonomy so carefully.

We are autonomous; and from what we have said it would seem that we, in our groups, can do whatever we decide to do, regardless of what anybody says. Well, yes and no. Each group does have complete freedom except when their actions become a threat to other groups and the rest of N.A. This is the other half of Tradition Four and the way we use our autonomy is just as important as autonomy itself. Like group conscience, autonomy can be a two-edged sword. In the past group autonomy has been used to justify the violation of other Traditions. This should never be allowed to happen because as we have said spiritual principles are never in conflict with other spiritual principles. If a conflict or contradiction does exist that means that somewhere along the line we have somehow slipped away from the true principles.

When we use our autonomy for the good of our group we

must be careful that our actions do not hurt other groups or N.A. as a whole. Again we are given a simple rule of thumb. If we check to make sure that our actions are clearly within the bounds of our Traditions, if we don't represent anyone but ourselves, if we don't dictate to other groups or force anything upon them, and if we take the time to consider the consequences of our actions ahead of time, then all will be well.

TRADITION FIVE

Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

"You mean to say that our primary purpose is to carry the message? I thought we were here to clean up? I thought our primary purpose was to recover from drug addiction?" For the individual this is certainly true, our members are here to find freedom from addiction, and a new way of life. However, groups aren't addicted and don't recover. All our groups can do is plant the seed for recovery and bring addicts together so that the magic of empathy, honesty, caring, sharing, and service can do its thing. The purpose of this Tradition is to insure that this atmosphere of recovery is maintained. This can only be achieved by keeping our groups newcomer and service oriented. The fact that we require each and every group to focus on carrying the message provides consistency. An addict can count on us if they want help. Unity of action and unity of purpose make possible what seemed impossible for us--recovery.

The Twelfth Step of our personal program also says that we should carry the message to the addict who still suffers. This is no coincidence. Working with others is one of our most powerful tools. "The therapeutic value of one addict helping another is unparalleled." For the newcomer this is how they find out about N.A. and how they stay clean; and for

the members this reaffirms and clarifies what they have learned. The group is the most perfect vehicle we have for carrying the message to the addict who still suffers. When a member carries the message, he is somewhat bound by his interpretation and personality. The problem with literature is language; the feelings, the intensity, and the strengths are sometimes lost. In our groups, with all personalities, the message is a recurring theme; an underlying reality.

What would happen if our groups had other primary purposes? We feel our message would be diluted and then lost. If we concentrated on making money many might get rich. If we were a social club we'd find many friends and lovers. If we specialized in education we'd end up with many smart addicts. If our specialty was medical help many would get healthy. If our group purpose was anything other than carrying the message, many would die and few would find recovery.

What is our message? We hear this question answered many ways. In our groups we share our experience, strength and hope and this is our message that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs; lose the desire to use again; and find a new way to live. Their message is hope and the promise of freedom. When it's all said and done, our primary group purpose can only be to carry this message to the addict who still suffers because this is all we have to give.

TRADITION SIX

An N.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

Our Fifth Tradition defines our primary purpose and our Sixth Tradition tells us some of the things we must do to preserve and protect this spiritual aim. This Tradition tells

us that we ought never endorse, finance or lend the N.A. name to any outside enterprise. And then we are warned exactly what can happen if we ignore this advice. This Tradition is the basis for our policy of non-affiliation and is extremely important to the continuation and growth of N.A. Unfortunately, this Tradition has also been a point of controversy within our Fellowship.

Let's take a closer look at what this Tradition really says. First thing a group ought never to endorse. To endorse is to sanction, approve, or recommend. Endorsements can either be direct or implied. We see direct endorsements everyday in T.V. commercials. Direct endorsements can also be in writing and often appear in proposals and promotional sales material. A direct endorsement is often used to try and persuade someone to do something. An implied endorsement is one that is not stated. Although we don't usually recognize it as such, implied endorsements occur in our stories. We say, "The big kids used it and if they used it, it had to be good." The next thing we ought never do is finance. This is more obvious; to finance means to supply funds or to help support financially. The third thing warned against is lending the N.A. name. This means letting someone use the name, Narcotics Anonymous, for something that is not Narcotics Anonymous. It also means letting an outsider mention or utilize our name for their own purposes. Several times other programs have tried to use Narcotics Anonymous as part of their "services offered" to help justify a funding proposal. Had we allowed this, we would have been letting them use our name. These are the "ought never's" in the Sixth Tradition.

This tradition also tells us "who". A related facility is any other facility or place that involves N.A. members. It might be a halfway house, a detox center, a counseling center, a clubhouse, or anyone of a number of such places.

Often times, people are easily confused by what is N.A. and what are the related facilities. Recovery houses which have been started or staffed by N.A. members have to take special care that the differentiation is clear. Perhaps the most confusion exists when it involves a clubhouse situation. Newcomers and even older members often identify the clubhouse with N.A. and N.A. with the clubhouse. We should make a special effort to let these people know that there is a difference. The second "who" outside enterprises. An outside enterprise is any agency, any business venture, any religion, any society, any organization, any unrelated activity, or any fellowship. Most of these are pretty straight forward, except for other fellowships. Most of us would not confuse N.A. with something like a specific religious fellowship, but when it comes to other twelve-step fellowships, we sometimes have problems. Let's face it; Narcotics Anonymous is not Alcoholics Anonymous, Overeaters' Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Emotional Health Anonymous, Smokers Anonymous, Parents Anonymous or any other anonymous. Narcotics Anonymous is a separate and distinct fellowship in its own right. Our problem is addiction, the other twelve-step fellowships specialize in other problems, and our relationship with them is one of "cooperation not affiliation". The use of the literature of another fellowship in our meetings constitutes an implied endorsement of an outside enterprise.

The Sixth Tradition goes on to warn-us what may happen if we do what we ought never do: "...lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose". If you say this quickly it almost sounds like "money, power and sex;" our old enemies. If you say it real quickly, it might sound like "people, places and things;" our old resentments and fantasies. Even if you don't say it quickly, they have much in common. The often become obsessions and shut us off from our spiritual aim. They are the sort of

things we get involved with and run with until we are consumed. For the individual, this type of abuse can be devastating, but for the group, even the slightest touch can be disastrous. When we as a group waver from our primary purpose, addicts die who might have found recovery.

The Sixth Tradition has been one of those just sort of read and let it go at that. It's hard to understand. But when we really take a look, when we really try to understand, it's simplicity amazes us. We can see the danger of endorsement, financial support and letting others use our name; we can see how easily things can lead to abuse of money, property and prestige; and we can for see the results of this abuse and the heartache it can bring.

TRADITION SEVEN

Every N.A. Group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

Being self-supporting is an important part of our new way of life. For the individual, this is usually quite a change. In our addictions, we were dependent on people, places and things. We looked to them to support us and to supply the things we found lacking in ourselves. As recovering addicts, we find that we are still dependent, but our dependence has shifted from the things around us to a loving God and the inner strength we get in our relationship with Him. We who were unable to function as human beings now find anything is possible for us. Those dreams we gave up long ago can now become realities with God's help. Addicts as a group have been and still are, millstones around society's neck. In N.A., our groups of addicts not only try to stand on their own two feet, but demand the right to do so.

Money has always been a problem for us. We could never find enough to support ourselves our habits and our self-gratification. We worked, stole, conned, begged and sold

ourselves; there was never enough money to fill the emptiness inside. In our recovery, money is often still a problem; we stopped trying to support our habits; we got to work and often find unexpected success. We clean up the wreckage of our past and things seem to be going our way for a change. However, financial security can still seem to run like water through our fingers. We've got a lot of growing up to do and this takes time. Common sense and responsibility are things most of us usually have to learn from scratch. Learning how to live can hurt a lot, but for most of us it's a great adventure.

N.A. needs money to run the group; there is rent to pay, supplies to buy and literature to pay for. We pass the hat to cover these expenses and whatever is left over goes to support our services and to further our primary purpose. Unfortunately, there's usually pitifully little left over after a group pays its way. Sometimes members who can afford it kick a little extra in to help. Sometimes a few get together and put on some activity to help raise funds. These efforts help a lot and without them, much that we have been given to do would have had to be left undone. N.A. remains a shoe-string operation, and even though it's sometimes frustrating, we really wouldn't have it any other way; we know the price would be too high to bear.

Our poverty enables us to be much closer to our Fellowship. We all have to pull together, and in pulling together we learn that we really are a part of something greater than ourselves.

Our policy concerning money is clearly stated: We decline outside contributions, our Fellowship is completely self-supporting. We accept no funding, no endowments, no loans, no gifts, and no handouts because we know that there's no such thing as a free ride. Everything has its price, regardless of intent. Whether the price is money, promises,

concessions, special recognition, endorsement, favors or anything else; it's just too high for us. Even if those who would help us could guarantee no strings, we still would not accept their aid. The price would still be too high. Nor will we charge for our services for to do so would distract from our spiritual purpose. We cannot even afford to let our members contribute more than their fair share. Because for us the price is paid within our groups: disunity, controversy, insanity and death. We will not put our freedom on the line again; not for "an easier, softer way", not for anything; never again!

TRADITION EIGHT

Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our Service Centers may employ special workers.

Some have described N.A. as a fellowship made up of the failures from other programs. To a great extent this is true; many of our members have unsuccessfully sought recovery in many other programs, in many other ways. "Jail did not help us at all. Medicine, religion and psychiatry seemed to have no answers for us that we could use." We ourselves have said, "Give us the ones you can't do anything with; give us your hardest cases. We'll welcome them with open arms." Somehow N.A. works when other programs and methods have failed. What is it about us that makes this so? We don't have any secret or special methods. We don't have any cure-all remedies. We don't really have many of the things that others offer addicts. What is it about N.A. that makes us the most widespread and successful program for addicts in the world? Perhaps it's something simple. Perhaps it's because we don't have these things, that it is possible for us to succeed where others have failed. What do we have? We have our steps; we have mobility; we understand and care; and we are motivated; we have each other.

The basis of our program is the Twelve Steps. We got these Steps from Alcoholics Anonymous, who thought enough of them to give them freely. A.A. got the Steps from various sources. The Steps are based on spiritual principles that have been known and followed for centuries. Most religious or spiritual orders utilize these same principles in some way. These principles are certainly not unique to us, but they are spiritual principles and that makes them special. Spiritual principles are basic truths that do not change with time or place; they simply work in all cases.

This program has been called a "hip pocket program". We don't require any equipment or special facilities. It doesn't take special training to make this program work. We carry this program with us wherever we go. We carry our message to the addict wherever he is and whenever he's ready. This program fits every addict because the addict learns to apply our Steps to his life in his own way. Our ability to reach addicts anytime, anywhere has certainly been a great advantage for us.

Perhaps our greatest asset is empathy, our ability to understand and identify with the newcomer. We know what it's really like to kick the habit; we've been there. We know what it's like to face life without drugs, each of us has had to do this. We know the prices of addiction; we've all had to pay them. We can't look down on the addict who comes to us; we've all been newcomers. We can't con each other; we've played all the games. We understand the addict and addiction perhaps better than anyone else can, after all, this is the life we lived. We care for and love the addict as if he were ourselves, because the addict really is ourself.

Our motivation is simple; this program was given freely to us by addicts who cared. We only do the same. We have

learned that "we can only keep what we have by giving it away". We know that recovery is a matter of life and death for the newcomer and for ourselves.

These are the things we are and how our program works. They are a reality for us. We have our Steps; we have mobility; we really understand and care; and we are motivated by survival. All these things are a contradiction to traditional recovery approaches and to professionalism. The professional has no place in our Fellowship; our very nature prohibits this. Professionalism as such is not the problem. We recognize and admire the professional and his sphere. Many of our members in the endeavors outside the Fellowship have become professionals in their own right. It's just that there's no place for professionalism in N.A.; for our purpose we have learned the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is truly without parallel.

Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. We do the best we can and sometimes we need a little help. Volunteer work is the backbone of our service, but volunteers work only to the best of their abilities, only at their convenience. Some of our services require skills or abilities we are unable to supply as volunteers. Most of us do not have the training necessary or the extra time required to fulfill these functions. Our Eighth Tradition also recognizes this and tells us that we may employ special workers in our service centers. Without their help, we might be unable to respond to many of those who reach out to us for help.

TRADITION NINE

N.A., as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

This Tradition defines the way we run our Fellowship. A lot of confusion has occurred because of misinterpretations of our Ninth Tradition. Our members are addicts who have the desire to stop using, who want what we have to offer, and who have chosen to join us. Our meetings are a gathering of members' for the purpose of staying clean. Our principles are the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions.

Another point of confusion is the term organized, which has several meanings. Our Steps and Traditions are uniform and set in a specific order. They are numbered; they are not random and unstructured. Certainly they are organized, but this is not the organization of our Ninth Tradition. For the purpose of this Tradition, organized means having an administrative structure, and this implies management and control. On this basis, the meaning of Tradition Nine is clear. N.A. should never be run by bureaucracy or management nor controlled by individuals within an administrative structure. If we were to allow this, N.A. would surely lose the best it has to offer and choke to death on our insanities. Even without this Tradition, organization such as this would be in opposition to our spiritual principles. A loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience would find no place within an administrative structure. How could a trusted servant manage and control? Service and management are contradictory. Government implies control, but our leaders do not govern. How could autonomy exist in an administrative structure? Specialization and professionalism are the basis of any management scheme. Any administrative structure, by its very nature, eliminated the possibility of autonomy. An organized N.A. is a contradiction in terms and any attempt to force organization on us would destroy us.

The Ninth Tradition goes on to define the nature of the

things that we can do, outside N.A., to help N.A. It says that we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve. This is the basis of our service structure, but keep in mind that although these entities are created to serve our Fellowship they are not, in fact, a part of Narcotics Anonymous. Our service structure consists of our groups and their business sense: our area service committees, regional service committees, World Service Conference, World Service Board of Trustees, and World Service Office. Each of these is directly responsible through the service structure, to the members of N.A. and to be loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.

TRADITION TEN

N.A. has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

In order to achieve our spiritual aim, Narcotics Anonymous must be known and respected. Nowhere is this more obvious than in our history. N.A. was founded in 1953. For twenty years our Fellowship remained small and obscure. In the 1970's, society realized that addiction had become a worldwide condition and began to look for answers. Along with this came a change in the way people conceived the addict. This change allowed addicts to seek help more openly. N.A. groups sprang up in many places where we were never tolerated before. Recovering addicts-pave the way for more groups and more recoveries. Today, N.A. is a worldwide Fellowship; we are known and respected everywhere.

If an addict has never heard of us, he cannot seek us out. If those who work with addicts are unaware of our existence, they cannot refer them to us. One of the most important things we can do to help in our primary purpose is to let people know who, what and where we are. If we do

this, and if our reputation is good, we will surely grow. We were led to addicts so we could give to them what others gave us.

Our recovery speaks for itself. Our Traditions protect us. Our Tenth Tradition specifically helps protect our reputation. This Tradition says that N.A. has no opinion on outside issues. We don't take sides. We don't endorse any causes. We don't have any recommendations. N.A., as a fellowship, does not participate in the politics of society. To do so would be to invite controversy; it would jeopardize our reputation. Those who agree with our opinions might commend us for taking a stand, but some would always disagree. This would effect the way they see us.

With a price this high, is it any wonder that we choose not to take sides in society's problems? For our own survival we have no opinion on outside issues; we keep ourselves apart so that we will never forget why we are here, and so that others will not mistake our purpose.

TRADITION ELEVEN

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.

This Tradition also deals with our relationship to those outside the Fellowship. It tells us how we should relate to the addict who still suffers, and it tells us how to conduct our effort at the public level. This has meaning for dealing with both potential members and the general public. We have learned the value of teaching by example rather than direction. This has worked for us and we utilize this principle when we work with other addicts. Our message is most obvious in our lives. In this sense we are the message. When working with a newcomer, we try to tell them where

we came from and what has happened to us. If they can identify with us and if they want what we have to offer them, they may join us. This is attraction. We never promise anything other than a chance to stop using if they want to. This is all we really have to offer and to make any other promise would be to distract from our primary purpose.

We should never misrepresent what we offer even if by doing so we might be able to get a few more addicts to attend our meetings. It is easy to make promises. We can tell an addict that we offer all kinds of things other than recovery. Addicts would flock to our doors; they would come for a free meal, or housing, or money, or a job, or a lover, or any kind of free ride. But how many would have a desire to stop using, and how many would leave as soon as they found out we wouldn't keep our promise? How many would never come back? How many would die without ever having a chance to find recovery? Promotion is representing ourselves as something we are not. In order to accomplish something we want, we don't use promotion to encourage addicts to come to us and we don't use promotions to make ourselves more acceptable. Our successes speak for themselves.

Our Eleventh Tradition also tells us we need also maintain anonymity at the level of press, radio and films. Most of us interpret this to mean that we don't give our names or show our faces publicly as members of N.A. What would happen if a member publicly declared that he was a member of Narcotics Anonymous and let everyone know the wonderful things that N.A. can do for addicts, and later he was found dead of an overdose? What would people who had heard his declaration and also knew about his death think about the value of N.A.?

Personal anonymity is really much more. It is a point of freedom, and personal recovery. No member of N.A. should ever place themselves in a position where they have to make

a statement for N.A. as a whole. No one member is N.A. and no one member can speak for us. We have no elite class nor special members. Each of us has our story, and our own recovery. Individually, we are powerless but as a Fellowship we can achieve great things.

TRADITION TWELVE

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous are even more inter-related than our Steps. They compliment each other and are bound together by the principle of anonymity. We've heard "Principles before personalities" so often it has become a cliché like "Take it Easy" or "First Things First". But what does it mean? What is the principle of anonymity?

Anonymity is the whole basis of the program; it is truly the foundation. In order to survive, we must set aside the differences we live by and become a part of a greater whole. The awakening of anonymity in each of us occurs when we finally give up trying to manage our lives and begin to depend on a power greater than ourselves.

Let us examine anonymity. It is the spiritual foundation of our Traditions. The First Tradition talks about common welfare and N.A. unity. The placing of common welfare before personal welfare in the group setting is a direct application of anonymity. The "I wants, I wills and I shoulds" are replaced by "we" oriented thinking for the common good; the result is unity. Unity is the direct result of the application of the principle of anonymity within the group and the fellowship.

The Second Tradition talks about having but one ultimate

authority. No single person (no personality) has authority. This is vested in a loving God to whom we have turned over our will and lives. The anonymity of the servant should be typical of our leaders. They themselves are not important; it is only the service which counts.

The Third Tradition is a statement of anonymity. We do not define our members. We only insist that they have a desire to stop using. Nothing else should matter. This desire is the one crucial must of our program. We must either come with it or develop it before this program will work for us.

Anonymity makes possible the autonomy of our Fourth Tradition. Without the principle of anonymity, each group would set itself up as some thing different from the rest--something special. Our groups would begin competing with each other for members and for recognition. The resulting loss of unity would eventually destroy N.A.

Our Fifth Tradition says that each group has but one primary purpose. This unity of purpose is the tie that binds our groups together. Our groups are not truly different; each has the same spiritual aim and orientation. This anonymity, and the anonymity of the groups, make it possible for an addict to depend on us for help.

Tradition Six tells us that we ought never finance, endorse or lend the N.A. name to any facility or outside enterprise. To violate this rule would be to lose our anonymity. With anonymity gone, personalities would take over and problems of money, property and prestige would surely divert us from our primary purpose.

Our Seventh Tradition guarantees each member the right and privilege to share in the financial support of Narcotics Anonymous. Each of us is given the equal opportunity to help anonymously. We uniformly reject outside contributions

regardless of their source. We also do not allow a member to contribute more than his fair share; to do so would be to encourage the loss of their anonymity.

In regards to our Eighth Tradition, we do not single out our members as "professionals"; we try to maintain their chance to experience personal recovery and grow. Not forcing power and status on our members is yet another form of anonymity.

The service board and committees of our Ninth Tradition are directly responsible to a loving God as expressed in a group conscience. They are not responsible to any particular personality or set of personalities.

In our Tenth Tradition, we strive to limit the growth of powerful personalities and safeguard anonymity by having no opinion on outside issues. When controversy exists, people take sides, personalities, come forward, and as this happens anonymity fades. Here again we find consistency of action, and in its own way this is also anonymity.

In our Eleventh Tradition, we find that the way we relate to the outside world is in fact using personal anonymity. None of us are singled out, no one of us represents N.A.; to do so would be to place our personalities ahead of others and this would be a violation of our anonymity. In attraction rather than promotion, we give the addict the right to join in our anonymity and find recovery.

Anonymity is everywhere in our Traditions and in our Fellowship. It is one of the basics of recovery. The principle of anonymity protects us from our defects of personality and character. Where anonymity exists, personalities and differences have no power. Anonymity in action makes it impossible for personalities to come before principles.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RECOVERY AND RELAPSE

Many consider continuous abstinence and recovery as note worthy and therefore synonymous, while relapsers are sort of pushed aside or worse yet, used as statistics that in no way give a true picture of the entire addiction pattern. We in the recovery program of Narcotics Anonymous have noted with some satisfaction that many of the relapsers, when again active in their prime or substitute addiction, have dropped many of the parallel behaviors that characterized them in the past. This change alone is significant to us. Honesty of a kind has penetrated their character. Yet there are others completely abstinent, whose dishonesties and self-deceits still prevent them from enjoying complete recovery and acceptance within society. Complete and continuous abstinence, however, is still the best ground for growth. In close association and identification with others in N.A. groups, our chances for recovery and complete freedom in a changing and creative form are enhanced a hundred fold.

Although all addicts are basically the same in kind, we do, as individuals, differ in degree of sickness and rate of recovery. There may be times when a relapse lays the ground work for complete freedom. At other times only by grim and obstinate willfulness to hang on to abstinence come hell or high water until a crisis passes, can that freedom be a achieved. An addict, who by any means can lose even for a time the need or desire to use, and has free choice over impulsive thinking and compulsive action, has reached a turning point that may be the decisive factor in his recovery. The feeling of true independence and freedom hangs here at times in the balance. To step out alone and run our own lives again draws us, yet we seem to know that what we have has come from dependence on a Power greater than ourselves

and the giving and receiving of help from others in acts of empathy. Many times in our recovery the old bugaboos will haunt us. Life may again become meaningless, monotonous and boring. We may tire mentally in repeating our new ideas and tire physically in our new activities, yet we know that if we fail to repeat them we will surely take up our old practices. We suspect that if we do not use what we have, we will lose what we have. These times are often the periods of our greatest growth. Our minds and bodies seem tired of it all, yet the dynamic forces of change or true conversion, deep within, may be working to give us the answers that alter our inner motivations and change our lives.

Quality and not quantity is the most important aspect of abstinence. Emotional sobriety in reality is our goal, not mere physical abstinence. To improve ourselves takes effort and since there is no way in the world to graft a new idea on a closed mind, an opening must be made somehow. Since we can do this only for ourselves, we need to recognize two of our seemingly inherent enemies, apathy and procrastination. Our resistance to change seems built in and only a nuclear blast of some kind will bring about any alteration or initiate another course of action. A relapse may prove the charge for the demolition process. A relapse can do the job of awakening us to the necessity for vigorous personal action.

For us, to use is to die. We have seen addicts come to our Fellowship, try our program, stay clean for a period of time, only to drift gradually away. They lose contact with other recovering addicts and eventually return to active addiction. We have learned that to try is not enough; we must live the program. Although we know nothing about prevention of addiction, we have seen that through the determination to stay clean, working the Twelve Steps, reading this book and attending meetings on a regular basis, we can and will prevent relapse thus promoting recovery.

Many of us would have nowhere else to go if we could not trust our N.A. groups and members. We were no longer afraid to ask for help. How then did we lose our fear? At first we were both captivated and intimidated by the Fellowship. No longer comfortable with our using friends, we were not yet

at home in meetings. Basically, we lost our fear through the experience of sharing. We share our fears with other addicts. The more we do this, the more our fear slips away. We accustom ourselves to sharing our problems no matter how angry, scared or hopeless we feel. It surprises us how often another addict has had a similar experience. Helping each other is a two-way street.

An important part of our recovery is the development of self-esteem. We had turned our lives and wills over to so many Powers greater than ourselves that it was hard to see how one more time would help anything. Many of us did not come to our Fellowship with a sincere desire to stay clean. That came after the fog had lifted and after we realized that staying clean was possible. The first thing in recovery for which we felt gratitude was this clear state-of-mind. We encourage members to tell the truth to the best of their ability and recollection. We have been told that our primary aim should be to tell the truth about our recoveries. Then, no matter what, we cannot be disputed. Our recovery began when we accepted the truth another recovering addict shared with us. Even if we did not like it, we could trust it.

Trusting our feelings and trusting our fellow addicts in recovery are learning to live processes. It is worth the effort when many people-haters who come here can tell us that they now see the point in being nice to someone, of showing compassion for someone other than themselves. When we found out that we all hurt at times we became aware that it is O.K. to hurt and to make mistakes while clean. We become trusting of people with whom we are only mildly acquainted if we sense their sincere desire not to use--a desire found in N.A. Fellowship.

Addicts must patiently re-learn things forgotten and learn how to live. This is what Narcotics Anonymous is about. It is about people who can care about a desperate, dying addict and who can, in time, teach him how to care and love also. It is beautiful!

In recovery it is perfectly all right for us to get in touch with our emotions. We will not flip out or make our fellow N.A.'s mad at us. We eventually make a one hundred eighty degree turn in growth and in dealing with our emotions. Addiction is a feeling disease.

Recovery is more than just staying clean. Living by spiritual principles outlined in the Steps, many clean addicts become useful and productive citizens. At meetings we are repeatedly convinced that recovering addicts are among the most sensitive, responsive and loving people in society. On going recovery demands more. We must change radically. If we are to continue abstinence we must be responsible and productive, not necessarily in terms of normal definitions, but in terms of spiritual principles. We must grow. Most of us recover physically, reasonably soon. We feel better, look better and act better. Time required for mental recovery varies. Some of us have done extensive damage to ourselves. Others procrastinate on the Fourth through Ninth Steps which help us change our thinking and personalities. Many have found that our sick mental processes change very slowly through repeated practice of new unfamiliar principles. Some of us seem to return to nearly normal mental activity soon after adopting a Twelve Step program of daily living. Spiritual growth is more difficult for most of us. Just the fact that we of all people strive for it so radical a change that many call it miraculous. Spirituality as a way of life for an addict seems a total contradiction. Many feel that they have found what they were searching for in drugs through spirituality. By working the Steps we are relieved of our obsession to use and many gratefully serve the Fellowship for this reason.

Growth means change and we feel we must live on a spiritual basis in order to change. Spiritual maintenance usually means ongoing recovery. Spirituality is to isolation as recovery is to addiction.

From self-centered, angry, frightened isolated people, we become loving, sharing, self-assured spiritual parts of a

greater whole. We changed from hopelessly helpless to hopefully helping. From liars, thieves and wards of the state to responsible productive members of society; these are the themes of character changes that take place in Narcotics Anonymous.

We remain honest to free ourselves from guilt. As we begin to function in society, our creative freedom helps us sort out priorities and do the most basic things first. Daily practice of the Twelve Step program enables us to change from what we were to what our Higher Power would have us become. Gradually, we learn to trust and depend on our Higher Power, however we understand it, and get to meetings so that other clean addicts can give us spiritual guidance. At first, we are overwhelmed by the miracles around us. We cry easily and find it safe to cry and express love and share all our emotions in the atmosphere of recovery found at N.A. meetings. The steps become our framework of daily change. Continuous abstinence requires spiritual growth which leads to emotional recovery in our lives.

Each day we stay clean by practicing the Steps in our lives, our chances of relapse decrease. Each of us is only one drug away from a painful active addiction, but living our program through regular honest sharing in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous increases our chances for uninterrupted clean time. Eventually, we become grateful for problems as well as rewards. Learning to live through changes by practicing the principles of the program helps insure our ongoing recovery. Often we find that when the pain of growing is the strongest, we must give ourselves time and remember that it, won't last. Complacency is the enemy of members with substantial clean time. We never fully recover. Guilt, remorse, fear, lust and pride may all become unbearable if we fail to invest ourselves totally in the program, no matter how much clean time we have. Many of us get clean in a protected atmosphere such as a rehabilitation center or recovery house. When re-entering the outside world we feel lost, confused and vulnerable. Going to meetings daily, or more often if possible, will reduce the

shock of change. Meetings provide a safe place to share with others during this time. Many members whose recoveries have blessed them tell us that they continue to attend meetings on a daily basis even after several years of clean time.

Living clean for a period of time provides valuable experience working the program through many life changes. What we do repeatedly we find easier to do in times of stress. We respond and react differently to situations after a period of time in the program. It is suggested to us not to make any unnecessary major decisions in the early part of our recovery.

When we work the program, we are living the Steps daily. This gives us experience in applying spiritual principles. The experience gained with time insures our ongoing recovery. We must use what we learn or we will lose it and probably relapse, no matter how long we have been clean.

We seek solutions rather than dilemmas. Productive means being clean, creative and loving today.

We wanted to be accepted and loved. As a newcomer, some of us traveled the same desperate road of loneliness and lack of recognition, and of hope. We understand newcomers talk about drugs and the things that brought them to the Fellowship, because we have been there. Most addicts are able to accept this type of sharing even in the beginning. In time we have a new sense of strength that will give us the guidance we need in our own recoveries. The group we choose to be our home group will be like a spiritual savings account. The more we can invest in it through our care and sharing, the greater the dividends it will pay.

All of us who find the Fellowship and at least begin to work the Steps develop some kind of relationship with others. As we grow, we learn to overcome our tendency to run and hide our feelings. Learning to be totally honest about our feelings helps other people take us seriously. We find that when we come across honestly it seems to reach others better. Honesty takes practice and none of us profess to be perfect in this area. Whenever we feel trapped or pressured, it takes great

spiritual and emotional strength to be honest. Sharing our lives with others seems to keep us from feeling lonely. The Steps lead to the kind of honesty that can help us let others know and accept us.

We seek creativity through the spirit. The spirit dwells within all of us. We need to understand that the spirit within each individual is the same. The action being that we the available resources of the spirit within ourselves. Some have tapped more than others. We need to create more soul searching within one another. This process is the creative action of the spirit. We listen to ourselves and others in order to recover and to stay on that path.

Lack of spiritual quality within our lives leads us down the path to relapse. This part of our recovery is the essence of the program. Spiritual maintenance is indispensable if recovery is what we are after. Diverting from the spirit in ourselves we utilize the negative consciousness that comes from within. Our life is the constant efforts of progressing in our spiritual consciousness. Stagnation or just plain old character defects which we re-cultivate rather than let go of sends us back to where these defects were conceived. The illness began sending us down for the last count. Unless spirituality is reunited with action in our lives, relapse is inevitable. Recovery may not again be possible, as this time we may die, many have. We must continue our spiritual maintenance or die.

In our daily lives, we are subject to emotional, mental environmental, intellectual, and spiritual relapses, causing us to become defenseless against the physical relapse of addiction.

As a disease, addiction is subject to relapse. Reverting to using is a physical relapse. Physical relapse is only a symptom. We are never forced into relapse. We are given a choice. Relapse is never an accident. Our knowledge of addiction is not enough to stop us from using.

When we were told in meetings we were flirting with relapse, we had to make a decision. We had reservations about anything which did not describe us to a tee and built these up until we thought we could use again.

Relapse is a sign we have had reservations in our program. We slighted our program and left loopholes in our daily lives. Aware of the pitfalls ahead, we trod blindly on in the belief we could make it on our own. If we continue to fall back into the illusion that drugs would make life easier. We must not be ready yet. We believed that drugs would change us and forgot the changes would be fatal. Unless the illusion is shattered that we, in any way, can stop using on our own, we will use again.

We took the opportunity to avoid several of our responsibilities, missing meetings, skipping work, neglecting Twelve Step work, and most important, we stopped asking for help. Growth in the program stopped. We could sense a change coming over us. Our ability to remain slightly open-minded was gone. We became angry and resentful toward anyone and everyone. We began to reject those who were close to us. We became genuinely sick of ourselves in a short time.

When a resentment or any other emotional relapse occurs, failure to practice the Steps can result in physical-relapse. Many of our newcomers have difficulty coming into the Fellowship because they do not understand we have a disease called "addiction". We are deemed to see our past behavior as part of ourselves and not part of our disease.

As long as we preserve our clean time we enjoy the greatest possible advantage over our disease. For this we are grateful. The first thing to do is get clean. This makes the other stages of recovery possible. Learn that addiction is a disease. Try to forgive past behavior and realize it was caused by our disease. Go to meetings and study the program for your own personal growth.

Obsessiveness is really common to all the addicts we have met or heard of. Our ego tells us we can do it on our own, then

loneliness and paranoia return. We find out we cannot do it on our own and things get worse. We really take the First Step, this time internally. There will be times, however, when we really feel like getting off. We want to run, we feel lousy, we need to be reminded of where we came from and that it will be worse this time. That is when we need the Fellowship most. We must then call our sponsor or make a meeting. Through such support we will find hope. Others have felt the way we do and every drug addict is a prisoner in his or her own mind, condemned to slow execution by their own sense of guilt.

We hate to be wrong. It is hard to believe that now in our recovery somehow self-will leads us to make decisions based on manipulation, ego, lust or false pride but it happens . . . often. Remember we don't recover overnight. When we realize that we have made a bad decision or bad judgment, we make an attempt to rationalize it. We become extreme in our self-righteous attempts to cover our tracks. We see all the places others go wrong and think that they caused the problem. As we prolong our admission of being wrong, we feel increasingly guilty. Living with guilt makes us more self-willed. We get sicker progressively. Eventually, we are shown that we must get honest or we will use again. By this time, it is hard to know why we feel bad. We make a list of feelings and people and events--an inventory. Maybe we can see what's gone wrong in our recovery. We share this list with our sponsor or a spiritual advisor or an addict whose recovery we respect. We are counseled through shared experiences. We pray for willingness and humility and finally get honest about our mistaken judgment or bad decision. We tell those who were hurt that we were to blame, ask them to forgive us and make whatever amends necessary. Now we are in the solution again. We are working the program. It comes easier to work the program now. We think that the Tenth Step helps prevent relapse.

There is something in our self-destructive personalities that cries for failure. It permeates our total being--"You do not deserve to succeed." We have all experienced this and

without the knowledge that we finally have earned the right to be responsible, respectable members of society. The manner in which we returned to our addiction is not important what is essential to each of us is that we have the choice not to continue. In fact the knowledge that we learn in N.A. plagues us as we try to continue in our self annihilation. God has been gracious to many of us who have relapsed by allowing us to return to the program and the people who truly love us as we are.

Those of us who have relapsed found the true progression of the disease that plagues us. To know and come to understand that there is a Power greater than ourselves desiring to have a relationship with us, in spite of our faults, comforts us all. We all have one common factor, the disease of addiction. When we look at this concept closely, we can see that using was just a symptom of our disease.

In N.A. spiritual principles, along with the Twelve Step blueprint of our program, and sharing with recovering addicts, first check our disease and with practice, develop our virtues. The disease will go with us to our graves, we are never cured.

Some of us reach a point of complacency in recovery. If we stay at this level for long, the recovery process ceases and we begin to backslide. Clean time in the program acts as insurance. If complacency is not acted upon the disease begins to manifest apparent symptoms in us. Denial returns along with obsession and compulsion. Soon we reach a point where we stand on the border line. Denial and the First Step conflict in our minds. If we let the obsession of using overcome us we are doomed to relapse. Only complete and total acceptance of the First Step can save us.

One of our biggest stumbling blocks in N.A. is unrealized expectations of ourselves and others. Relationships are a terribly painful area. We tend to fantasize and project images of what should happen. We pick ourselves apart and decide we are to blame if our fantasies are not fulfilled.

It seems the farthest thing from our minds is that we are powerless over other people. The old thinking and feelings of loneliness, despair, and helplessness and self pity creep in.

Thoughts of sponsors, meetings, literature and all other positive input then leave the consciousness. We can stay clean by going to a meeting when we feel we do not want one or need one. Meetings are a healing source. Writing about what we want, what we are asking for and what we get and sharing this with our sponsor or another trusted person helps to work through those feelings, and letting others share with us about their experience gives us hope that it does get better. It seems that being powerless is a huge stumbling block. Whenever a situation arises for us to admit our powerlessness, we first look for ways to exert power against it. Exhausting these ways, we begin sharing with others and find hope. Attending meetings daily, living a day at a time, and reading the literature seems to send our mental attitude toward the positive. Willingness to try what has worked for others is vital.

Another stumbling block we should safeguard against is comparing ourselves to others who seem to have gone farther down the road of addiction. For example, one member found himself locked behind the doors of a state mental institution. His earlier comparison to the other addicts was a failure on his part to see the progressive nature of his illness. Forms of this example and countless others support the fact that no matter how long we stay clean, whether it be one month or one year, once we begin to use again our illness picks up exactly as if we had never stopped. We are thrown right back into the old pattern of addiction.

Progression of recovery is a continuous journey uphill with loving effort. Without love or effort we start the downhill run. The progression of the disease is an ongoing process, even during abstinence, no matter how long.

When we forget this or the effort and tenacity it took us to get a period of time in our lives when we experienced freedom from within; ungratefulness sinks in and self-destructive

behavior begins again. Unless recognition and action is taken immediately that fall will encompass our existence and then we are along for the ride. Our life needs an immediate upswing. Spirituality and sharing is the essence of our recovery. Keeping our illusion of reality rather than using the tools of the program and the people in the Fellowship will return us to isolation. This loneliness will kill us inside and the drugs which always come next may do the job completely. The symptoms and the feelings at the end of our using come back three fold. This impact is sure to drown us if we don't surrender ourselves to the program. Relapse can be the destructive force that kills us or leads us to the realization of who and what we are. The eventual misery of using is not worth the escape it might give us. To live is to use the necessities to attain life. To use is to die often in more ways than one. We have found this program at the right time or we would not have found it at all. N.A. and its principles are here to help us achieve quality in our lives. If we were worthless we wouldn't be alive.

Failure to accept the N.A. program and the full implications of our powerlessness has proven for many of us to be a fatal stumbling block in our recovery. Left with a shadow of doubt, the mind of a newcomer and even the old timer can prove to be the spark needed to set off the return of insanity and that first pill, fix, drink or toke. To safeguard against this fatal stumbling block we should develop a good understanding of the basic principles set down in the Steps of our recovery and apply them in our daily lives.

A young man picked up a white chip. Eager to learn of this new life, he very quickly became willing to do anything he could. He went to meetings, emptied ashtrays, made coffee, talked to people, all the things that help us to recover.

Afraid, unable to let go of old ideas, still working to "run the show" he found no answer to what he saw as his problem. Blinded by what he saw as important, unwilling to let go of the old familiar ways, he used again. He took with him

some of what he had learned and seen. The seed of recovery had been planted in him.

Although using for the next three years, he continued to stay in touch with a member, though not on a regular basis. This contact was enough to see that the member was leading a happy and contented life. As he looked at the member's life, then his own, he found his own life lacking what the member's had: peace, serenity, joy and love; all of the things that he thought would make a truly happy, enjoyable life.

After seven more years of misery, the young man came back. Six months in the program he leads a happy, enjoyable life. He has some of all the things that, to him, make a good life.

Life's flow takes place in this manner; we come here powerless and the power we seek comes to us through other people in the Fellowship if we can only reach out for it. Now in the Fellowship with clean time, we will want to keep ourselves surrounded by Fellow members who know us well and who we can count on in a pinch. N.A. is a fellowship of survival and one of the advantages of the Fellowship is that it places us in intimate regular contact with the very people who can most understand and help us in our quest for recovery. All the good ideas and intentions will not help us at all if we fail to put them into action. Reaching out is the beginning of the struggle that will make us free. It will break down the walls that imprison us. Our disease is one of isolation and honest sharing will free us to recover. Maybe there was a time when our defense mechanisms actually helped us survive, but who needs a raincoat when the sun has come out?

Slow down and live life. A cynic is someone who has been very disappointed. He does not hear until the heart decides to listen, then he can accept help. It is not shameful relapse. The real shame is in not coming back. Being thus humbled, we must express our need to those who are able to help.

We are grateful to have stayed clean long enough for the message of total abstinence to take hold. We are grateful that we were made so welcome at meetings that we felt comfortable going to one meeting a day for ninety days. Without staying clean and coming to all those meetings, we would surely have had a rougher time working the Steps. Just one fix, pill, drink or toke would have interrupted the process of recovery and cut us off from the Fellowship.

When someone returns to the Fellowship after a relapse we stress the importance of living just for today. The past is past. We can not change what has happened. What is important is to stay clean today. As long as we live today to the best of our ability and pursue adequacy not perfection, we can take pride in ourselves. We are doing the best we can for today and not living in the past. We can begin to live at peace with ourselves. We can stop being so hard on ourselves. This we have found to be the case; that we have been our own worst enemy, and fault for our failures was not in the stars but in ourselves.

We all find that the feeling we get from helping others motivates us to do better in our own lives. If we are hurting, and most of us do from time to time, we learn to ask for help. We find that pain shared is pain lessened. Members of the Fellowship take great pleasure in helping a relapser recover and have great insight and many useful suggestions to offer when asked. Recovery found in Narcotics Anonymous must come from within and no one gets clean for anyone but themselves.

CHAPTER EIGHT

WE DO RECOVER

Although "Politics makes strange makes us one of a kind. Our personal stories bedfellows", as the old saying goes, addiction may vary in individual pattern but in the end we all have the same thing in common. This common illness or disorder is addiction. We know well the two things that makeup true addiction. Obsession and compulsion.

Obsession--that fixed idea that takes us back time and time again to our particular drug or some substitute, to recapture the ease and comfort we once knew.

Compulsion--that once having started the process with one "fix", one pill, or one drink, we cannot stop through our own power of will. Because of our physical sensitivity to drugs we are completely in the grip of a destructive power stronger than ourselves.

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

When my addictions brought me to the point of complete powerlessness, uselessness, and surrender some twenty-six years ago, there was no N.A. I found A.A and in that Fellowship met addicts who had also found the program to be the answer to their problem. However, we knew that many were still going down the road to disillusion, degradation and death, because they were unable to identify with the alcoholic in A.A. Their identification was at the level of apparent

symptoms and not at the deeper level of emotions or feelings, where empathy becomes a healing therapy for all addicted people. With several other addicts and some members of A.A. who had great faith in us and the program, we formed, in July of 1953, what we now know as Narcotics Anonymous. We felt that now the addict would find from the start as much identification as each needed to convince himself that he could stay clean, by the example of others who had recovered for many years.

That this was what was principally needed, has proved itself in these passing years. That wordless language of recognition, belief and faith, which we call empathy, created the atmosphere in which we could feel time, touch reality and recognize spiritual values long lost to many of us. In our program of recovery we are growing in numbers and in strength. Never before have so many clean addicts, of their own choice and in free society, been able to meet where they please, to maintain their recovery in complete creative freedom.

Even addicts said it couldn't be done the way we had it planned. We believed in openly scheduled meetings, no more hiding as other groups had tried before by those who advocated long withdrawal from society. We felt that the sooner the addict could face his problem of everyday living, just that much faster would he become a real productive citizen. We eventually have to stand on our own feet and face life on its own terms, so why not from the start. Because of this, of course, many stayed and some came back after their setback. The brighter part, is the fact that those who are now our members, many have long terms of complete abstinence and are better able to help the newcomer. Their attitude, based on the spiritual values of our Steps, and Traditions, is the dynamic force that is bringing increase and unity to our program. Now we know that the time has come when the tired old lie, "Once an addict, always an addict", will no longer be tolerated by either society or the addict himself. We do recover!

As long as there have been people, addiction has existed. Addiction is the obsession and to use compulsion. Modern technology has made available not only the drugs

themselves, but also the stresses and demands that bring out the potential for addiction. In the past, there was no hope for an addict. Clean today, we come to see life in a new light. We confess to an addictive nature and we are no longer set apart by marked obsession, compulsion, and physical discomfort.

In sharing our past with others it seems that we all reached a point when we said to ourselves, "I'm lost, I just don't know what to do". We have all experienced that terrifying overwhelming urge, that need for something outside ourselves. In addiction we share a bond of fear, anxiety, and anger that we are unable to control.

What we have in common is what we have all felt: the loneliness, the self-centeredness, the misery, the despair, the pain within and the empty numbness that sets us apart from others. We all felt that we were unique, different, better than, or worse than, but always separate. We felt alone. Our pain surrounded us We could not fill the empty place inside.

Earlier patterns are what got us into trouble. However anything that "works" to help us make it through a new day clean is considered a new pattern. Complete abstinence is the foundation for our new way of life. Vigilance, integrity, honesty, open-mindedness and willingness to try, are all associated with strange new patterns to the newcomer and to clean addicts as well.

It all begins with that first surrender and admission. From that point forward, each addict is reminded that a day clean is a day won, and any failure is only a temporary set-back rather than a link in an unbreakable chain. Every addict is a prisoner in their own mind, condemned to slow execution by their own sense of guilt. This compels a person to act against their true inner

nature and keep doing things they don't really want to do.

We weren't focused on the fulfillment of life, but on the emptiness and worthlessness of it all. We could not deal with success, so failure became a way of life. The fear of loss of control had set in and we were afraid to try anything different.

In Narcotics Anonymous, we are more concerned with recovery than the mysteries of addiction. We seek to change our personalities and our lives for the better. We realize that we are a part of the universe. In recovery, we change our reactions, thoughts, and attitudes. We begin to understand and accept who we are. This gives us a sense of security. We become less compulsive in our thoughts and actions.

The dishonesty in our actions has led to a large amount of guilt inside all of us. This guilt could drive us to use, and the using could keep us from going back and making amends. All these things together would cause misery. Being clean, we are able to take our inventories honestly. We can admit our faults and are able to ask for help.

We realize that an addict is going to resist recovery. Things we have shared with them interfere with their using. We put our trust in the group. If a person tells us that they can smoke pot and suffer no ill side effects, there are two ways we can look at it. The first possibility is that they are not an addict. The other is that the disease hasn't become apparent to them.

We always try to be careful because we don't want to say or do anything that might prevent them from seeking help when drugs turn on them.

We have found from our group experience that honesty is essential for the new member to surrender completely to the

program. We have also found that complete surrender is the only way to recover. No addict has ever failed to recover who has surrendered completely to our program. This has proven itself time and time again by the phenomenal growth of Narcotics Anonymous throughout the world.

We have noticed as our program has grown that newcomers seem to come in with a false impression that needs to be corrected. In the instances that we are talking about, they seem to believe that they can barter non-usage for group acceptance. When the group fails to behave in accordance with the newcomer's expectations, they seem to feel it's O.K. to use. The sad thing about this is that it may take them a while to get the real message of our program. If they happen to be addicts, they can die never realizing that recovery is possible.

Some of us had thought of ourselves as outgoing, happy-go-lucky people, but we were wrong, and after years of depending on drugs and other people to make our decisions, we lost almost all ability to socialize and be comfortable with ourselves.

At the end of our using we were consumed with terror and despair. We knew for sure that we were dying and many of our friends were already dead. No one can explain the incredible fact that addicts, hopeless in their addiction, can reach for and receive help in Narcotics Anonymous.

Over a period of years, old habit patterns become familiar, and many times the comfortable mode of existence. Our egos were blown out of proportion. We became uncomfortable due to the obsessive, nature of our disease. The old comfort associated with using was lost. Life was addiction, a lonely, miserable prison.

The way we understand insanity is poisoning one's self for no apparent reason. Compulsion or obsession drives

addicts to the point that there were few things we would not do to obtain our drug. Insanity for us seems to occur in tragic cycles, much like Russian roulette. We are forced to play because we have tried and can't stop.

We know that we are powerless over an illness which is chronic, progressive and fatal. We cannot deal with the obsession and compulsion that comes with the disease. The only alternative is to stop using. When we are willing to follow this course and take advantage of the help available to us, a whole new life opens up.

Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual, not a religious, program. The spiritual basis of the program is strong enough to support a person with the disease. As we re-enter society, the Twelve Steps are the road map to a successful recovery. Every addict who is clean and without a compulsion to use is a miracle. To keep that miracle alive is an ongoing process of awareness. It is important for us to remember that not using is an abnormal state for us. We have to learn to live clean. We need to be honest with ourselves and think of both the negative and positive sides of things. Decision making is a little rough at first. Sticking to and seeing that you have made the decision is the reward. Before we got clean, all our actions were guided by impulse. We seldom thought constructively, and even if we did, we would say, "the hell with it" and carry through with the negative anyway. It is better for us with practice and the help of our sponsors and N.A. friends.

We realize that we are responsible for the way we feel. We are no longer able to shift the blame, and we are aware that we create the world in which we live. We are products of our own thoughts.

We have found it essential to accept reality. Since that time we have not found it necessary to use.

Reality, as it is, is just fine with us. Without drugs we can function like normal human beings, which means accepting ourselves and the world around us exactly as it is. We learn that conflicts are a part of reality and learn to be grateful for them. We learn new ways to resolve conflicts instead of running from them. We begin to simplify them and we actually look upon them with gratitude as opportunities for progress. They are a part of the real world. We learn to handle problems, not to solve them. Everyone has situations; we have tended to make them problems, like making a mountain out of a mole hill. We really don't have any brilliant answers or solutions, but we can honestly say that this program works! We can stay clean and even enjoy life, remembering, "just for today" and not picking up that first fix, pill, drink, or joint.

The rewards of staying clean are endless. We used to think life would be boring without drugs. We were really screwed up in our addictions and our concept of what life was really all about. Now that everything is changing and getting better, we give thanks to God and the N.A. program. One member shares that reality is the biggest trip of all.

We become aware that many of our feelings were immature and based upon pride and ego. As we become more comfortable with ourselves, we appreciate more fully the meaning of living just for today. We get over the guilt of the past and the worries of the future. We enjoy the now: we learn to endure both pain and pleasure. We endure frustration for we know that it will pass. We rid ourselves of absolutes, such as success or failure,

and begin to enjoy doing things for the fun of it, rather than shying away because we are not perfect.

Interpersonal relationships improve and we become less sensitive and suspicious. Understanding the meaning of love, recognizing that we are growing from an immature need for love" to a mature "giving of love", allows us to care about others.

We are not responsible for our disease. We are responsible for our recovery. We can seek help from others who are enjoying lives free from having to use. In time, we find that more is possible in recovery than we could conceive. Our teach-ability hinges on our ability to admit our need for help. This surrender is the beginning of the basic learning experience that gives us information on our disease and recovery. Life is a learning experience. As we begin to apply what we have learned, our lives begin to change for the better.

No one completely understands this process, but thank God we do not have to understand it for it to work. We learn not to question the ways of God. Instead we look into our actions. Writing down our belief has always helped many of us examine our feelings. If we have trouble expressing our belief or writing it down, it is helpful to make sure we have worked Step One. The ego deflation of Step One generally opens minds. Faith is the key. It takes a firm belief in a loving God before we can possibly begin to turn our wills and lives over to His care.

In Narcotics Anonymous, we have found that a spiritual experience is necessary to arrest our addiction. This occurs as we rely on God as we understand Him. The Twelve Steps chart the course to individual recovery; from the hazy days of initial surrender to the various levels of spiritual awakening.

We get relief through the Twelve Steps, and sharing with trusted friends. We love them and believe in the promise and hope that they offer. Following the Steps, living just for today, we can maintain an attitude that is essential for us to grow. We move forward in the program, and we are comforted by the Steps. They are suggested only, but they are the principles that made our recovery possible. All of the Twelve Steps are essential to the recovery process, simply because they help us to participate in our own recovery. By the grace of God, our actual participation in recovery provides the health we need to respond to life and to arrest the disease of addiction. We are grateful that God provided the steps and that they have been proven as a means to arrest our disease.

If we find ourselves in trouble with our recovery after some time clean, we usually have stopped doing one or more of the things that helped us in the earlier stages of our recovery. This can show up as an unexplainable depression or disorientation. It is really related to a poor spiritual condition and can be remedied by an ongoing application of the Twelve Steps of recovery.

From "day one", the Twelve Steps started becoming a part of our lives. At first, we were filled with negativity, and we only allowed the First Step to take hold. Today, we have less fear of going insane or using, than we once did. We realize that those old feelings and fears were a product of our disease, and that real freedom is possible for us now. In time, we lost most of the fear that had us completely within its grasp and we learned to let go of guilt.

Our old ways were so self-destructive and egocentric, we hurt ourselves and those we loved. Learning a new way

of living is a blessing from our Higher Power, giving us the ability to explore and discover through feelings. We thank our Higher Power for the love that we receive. We find the road sometimes long and weary, but we keep on finding miracles as we go.

The program recommends that we lower the demands on ourselves so that we can achieve our daily goals. It is also recommended that we don't go overboard and swamp ourselves with a bunch of new responsibilities just because we succeeded in handling a few basics. That way, we experience success at a basic and acceptable level.

Now that we are in N.A. we have a new outlook on being clean. We enjoy a feeling of release and freedom from the desire to use. We find that everyone we meet has something to offer. We are free to receive as well as to give. Opening these doors and entering them becomes a new adventure in living. Letting go of old ideas and entertaining the new ones brings us to this new way of life. We will know happiness, joy, and freedom. Life is not just a glum lot.

An attitude of gratitude permeates us. With gratitude, clean time is happy and joyous. We remain grateful for all the beautiful things this program has revealed to us.

Our experience revealed that the things we are not grateful for could be taken from us. As long as we didn't have something, it would seem wonderful and we would often think if we just had so and so we would be happy. Occasionally, we would have our prayers answered only to find the rich feelings of satisfaction and comfort beyond our grasp. We can see today that in reality we were taking a lot for granted by failing to be consciously thankful for that which God and life had already provided for us.

There exists no model of the recovered addict. When the drugs go and the addict works the program, wonderful things happen. Lost dreams awaken and new possibilities spring.

How many times have we heard something over and over again, until it finally takes root and blossoms. With each meeting we attend, seeds planted in earlier meetings are watered until we can see them grow to harvest. This harvest is a form of spiritual growth. Through listening to the experiences of others and putting the program into action, life becomes beautiful, pleasant, and very exciting! Laughter is a common part of our day. Smiling doesn't hurt anymore, and we can finally look others in the eye and be grateful who we are.

Being willing to grow spiritually is the direction that keeps us buoyant today. When we take the action indicated in the steps, the result is a healing of our distorted personalities. It is the action that is important, not the result. We leave all results to God. God presents the opportunity that heals our disease spiritually. After clearing up the superficial wreckage, it is necessary to continue applying the principles in order to get to the roots of our disorder.

CHAPTER NINE

JUST FOR TODAY

Tell yourself-

- JUST FOR TODAY* *My thoughts will be on my recovery living and enjoying life without the use of drugs.*
- JUST FOR TODAY* *I will have faith in someone in N.A. who believes in me and wants to help me in my recovery.*
- JUST FOR TODAY* *I have a program. I will try to follow it to the best of my ability.*
- JUST FOR TODAY* *Through N.A. I will try to get a better perspective on my life.*
- JUST FOR TODAY* *I will be unafraid, my thoughts will be on my new associations people who are not using and who have found a new way of life, So long as I follow that way, I have nothing to fear.*

We knew our lives had become unmanageable, but some of us had a problem admitting the powerlessness over our addiction. When we came to our first meeting it was as though a big weight was lifted from our shoulders, guilt feelings rolled off and a feeling of peace came over us, as we realized that with our surrender to our Higher Power, would come the help we so desperately needed. We also felt the great feeling of warmth and love that came from the group. For the first time in many months, we were able to relax when we heard that we couldn't control our addictions.

The principles of surrender, admission of responsibilities, improving faith, and prayer and meditation, guide

us into a way of life in which all our resources center in God, become available to us.

A great many addicts have a hard time with acceptance in recovery. For so long, we have wanted and demanded that things go our way. When we came into the program of Narcotics Anonymous we were asked to learn to be patient and accepting. This is a critical point in our recovery. Not learning to accept is to continue to manage and control. We know from our past experiences that our way of doing things did not work. When we refuse to practice acceptance we are, in effect, denying our faith in a Higher Power. This can lead to many problems and failures.

Any addict clean, without the compulsion to use, is a miracle. We keep this miracle alive in ongoing recovery with positive attitudes and awareness involving personal growth. If after a period of time we find ourselves in trouble with our recovery, we have probably stopped doing one or more of the things which helped us in the earlier stages of recovery.

This lack of daily maintenance can show up in many ways. As our lives become more comfortable, many of us lapse into spiritual complacency, and we find ourselves in the same horror and loss of purpose from which we came. We forget we are given only a daily reprieve. We must ask for help each morning and remember to thank God at night. If we do not maintain our spiritual condition daily, some of us find the resulting pain and confusion lead to a return to drugs and our old way of life. Some have made it back from relapses ... many have not.

What are you going to do when you have to face your first crisis? When the time comes we hope you will be well equipped with the tools and the principles of the program of Narcotics Anonymous. The enemy we have to fight is our

own self-destructiveness. When we begin to work the program, we will like ourselves better. Much of the loneliness and fear will have been replaced by the love of the Fellowship and the security of being a part of a new way of life. It is important for us to remember to take it easy.

We have found through experience that you can not be too dumb for this program, but you can be too smart for it-too smart to allow it to work for you in your life. Surrender is brought about by suffering. Having been beaten by drugs we are powerless, not powerful. As powerless people, we should realize that we cannot stay clean on our own resources. Have we not tried before? We need to tap into the group's resources and surrender our way to their way.

As a result of working the Twelve Steps, regularly attending meetings, and practicing these principles in all our affairs, a spiritual awakening happens in our lives. God consciousness fills the empty place inside that nothing ever could before. We know a true peace. Circumstances which used to baffle us no longer do. We come to dwell in the fullness and abundance of life as a direct result of having worked the Steps and maintaining our spiritual condition. We find it necessary to continue to do so on a daily basis.

These are guidelines and suggestions. We have found they work for us. This is how we maintain our spiritual condition. We never have to be lonely again. Our Higher Power is accessible to us at all times. In the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous we have more friends than we ever believed possible. Finally, we are fulfilled and have come to know a real peace and a true sense of self-worth.

We have stressed that going to meetings, working the Twelve Steps, practicing these principles in all our affairs

and remembering to ask God for help in the morning and to thank Him at night, only worked for one day. On those days that we don't continue our daily maintenance we don't have a good day. Sometimes, after a few days of neglecting spiritual maintenance things begin to really get out of hand in our lives. This is, hopefully, when our pain motivates us to renew our daily spiritual maintenance.

We need to be aware that although the spiritual life is the answer to all our problems, we live in today's world. If our spirituality cannot help us today, then we need to re-evaluate what we term spiritual. We need not immobilize ourselves with constant concern over our spiritual pride in this manner and it keeps us humble. We believe that if it's not practical, it's not spiritual.

We believe, that as recovering addicts, we have a lot to be grateful for. When things don't work for us, it is a direct result of our own self will.

Our new found way of life may have its problems. When we ask for help, the road ahead won't be so rocky. Sometimes, after turning over our will and life to our Higher Power, we choose to take it back and begin managing our lives again. The principle of surrender, is admission of responsibility when we are at fault, and practicing faith.

Even though, by the grace of God, we have been given an answer to our problems, we often take things back into our hands. Again and again, we must ask God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. How many times had we looked at a job well done, and said, "See what a good job I've done?"forgetting where the ability really came from.

We begin to see how only our Higher Power can restore us to sanity when the obsession to use surfaces and self-will runs riot. We gradually turn our will and life over

to the care of God as we understand Him. We no longer feel alone; we have found a partner in our Higher Power, who is with us all the time. We cease trying to control, and surrender. Gradually, as we become more and more God centered than self centered, our despair turns to hope. Self-pity and resentments are replaced by tolerance and faith.

If our surrender to our disease is complete, the rest of our recovery is dependent upon our belief in a loving God of our own understanding. Remember, as recovering addicts, our fellow members love us and will not fail to respond to our sincere desire for help. We believe God works the same way.

We find that we receive guidance when we ask for knowledge of God's will for us. This is the emotional stability we so badly need. We are given the freedom, serenity, and happiness we had so desperately sought. Before going to sleep, we take a few moments out of our routine to thank God for keeping us clean that day and for helping us with our living problems.

With our Higher Power guiding us, we may never again have to deal with using, but we will always have to deal with staying clean.

A lot happens in one day, both negative and positive, and if we don't take the time to appreciate both, chances are we will miss something that will help us grow. As we begin to live in the present, burdens of the past and the anxieties of the future slip away. We are granted the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, and thus lose our quickness to anger and sensitivity to criticism.

Normal living is possible. The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous are a progressive recovery process established in our normal living. Our recovery is dependent on our belief in a loving God who cares for us, and will

do for us whatever we found impossible to do ourselves.

Resentments are one of the biggest road blocks to recovery. They deaden our spiritual growth. Resentments are a direct result of our self will acting out its most extreme nature--violence. We must let go, with love, and ask God to relieve us of the burden of self will. Anger and fear will fall by the wayside.

Change involves the unknown, the great source of fear. The same Power that has helped us deal with our obsession will be the guide and source of courage when we ask for it. The wisdom to know the difference involves growth in the program. Regular attendance at meetings is our best barometer in this respect.

The Fellowship, after a meeting, is a good opportunity to share things we didn't get to discuss at the meeting. It is also a good time to talk one-on-one with our sponsors. When we talk about our questions and answers, many parts of the message surface for the first time and become clearer to us. These initial ventures into the realm of sharing freely are the beginnings of honesty, open mindedness, and willingness as a way of life.

These principles for living will guide us in recovery when we learn how to use them. We succeed in life each time we practice them. We no longer need to make excuses for who we are. New ideas are available to us.

Honesty, the search for the truth, is our most difficult and yet most challenging objective. We may not be able to maintain rigorous honesty, but we must always strive for it. Honesty must start at home. If we are not first honest with ourselves, we can't be honest with others. The best way to practice honesty is by taking a daily inventory.

Our life is a diary wherein we mean to write one story and quite often write another. It is when we compare the two that we have our most humble hour.

It is important while doing our daily inventory that we remember to look at our assets as well as our defects. So often, we get caught up in striving for growth and eliminating our defects, that we forget about our assets. We have found when we focus on our assets our defects will also change. Our inventory allows us to realize our daily growth.

Rigorously practicing the few simple guidelines for living in this chapter, we succeed daily. Although daily inventory may have a fair share of red ink, these guidelines, when practiced, give us sufficient black ink to balance the day's ledger.

JUST FOR TODAY, WE WILL LIVE!!

CHAPTER TEN

MORE WILL BE REVEALED

As our recoveries progressed, we became increasingly more aware of ourselves and our world. Our needs and wants our assets and liabilities were revealed to us. We came to realize that we had no power to change the outside world; we could only change ourselves. As recovering addicts, we found that without our drugs, we hurt. The program of Narcotics Anonymous provided an opportunity for us to relieve our pain by applying spiritual principles.

The N.A. program provides a healthy environment for growth. As a Fellowship, we love and cherish one another, supporting our new way of life together. We do this because of our common desire to stay clean.

We are encouraged to work the Twelve Steps, practice the Twelve Traditions, go to meetings, get a sponsor, find a home group and ask for help. We place principles before personalities. We work our own program and we do it for ourselves. The Steps are there for us to work and the people are there to help us. We use the tools of the program to shape our inner being. The slogans: Just For Today; An Addict Alone Is In Bad Company; If It Works, Don't Fix It; The Lie Is Dead; Clean and Serene; are simple reminders we use to help keep us on the right track.

While using, we didn't know who we were, or where we were going. We were constantly being deceitful, lying to others

and ourselves, and closing people off. We came in knowing only what we didn't want. By coming to our first meeting, we admitted our ways of dealing with life didn't work. Chemicals always had the last word. In other words, we were unable to deal with life on its own terms. Through working the program, we are rebuilding our disordered and fractured personalities.

Any addict is welcome regardless of their drug of choice. We cannot afford the luxury of arrogance in any form. Within the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, there is no caste system relating to drug of choice. We believe that chemical dependency in any form is addiction and we encourage the addict to seek whatever recovery works best for them.

We found that forming sweeping opinions and generalizations with limited insight was dangerous. We found our own place in the world and took it. The ability to accept our place and be grateful for it is very special. Many of us have had great opportunities in our lives but were faced with a baffling inability to accept them or make the most of them. We have found a safe and certain usefulness in our new way of life. The old rules no longer apply and we can live in peace and harmony.

Often it means simply listening to those hunches and intuitive feelings that we think would benefit others or ourselves and acting on them spontaneously. We are then able to make decisions based on principles that have real value to ourselves.

In N.A. we begin new lives, and we discovered a need for balance. Where we were excessive, we learned moderation; where we were weak, we grew strong. Balance comes to us gradually in ways we can accept. Sometimes these ways appear to be coincidental and we recognize them as the grace of God only in time. Coincidences are miracles in which God

chooses to remain anonymous.

When we pray for something, we have spiritually prepared ourselves for the realization of our prayers.

Knowledge of God's will for us guides us to make wise choices when we pray. If our Higher Power forced his goodness on us, we could never learn to distinguish good from bad, and enjoy the happiness of being a spiritual person.

As we grow, we become more aware of the key to willingness. Willingness lets us relax and do what we can, just for today, to improve our lives in any area. When we are unwilling, we have to fight and constantly deny the need for improvement. This attitude leads to ever greater problems. Today we have learned with God's help, to face each problem as it arises. God never gives us too much to handle in any twenty-four hour period.

We are grateful for open-mindedness. Open-mindedness opens the door for new ideas, from all areas in our lives. Through active listening we can hear things that will stay with us for the future. This ability is God-given and grows with us. Life takes on new meaning when we leave ourselves open to experience this gift. To be able to receive we must give and more importantly we have to receive in order to have something to give. Open-mindedness becomes an admirable quality for which we strive.

In recovery, we strive for an attitude of gratitude. We feel grateful for ongoing God-consciousness. Whenever we confront a difficulty that we do not think we can handle, we have learned to pray that God will do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

Remember, we are all in this together. None of us are too good or too bad to improve. We are not here to get good; we are here to recover. Help is there only if we reach for it. We had only to get clean, open our minds and hearts to be free to live. Humility is a fact of ongoing recovery.

Watching others grow in recovery increases our capacity for tolerance towards members who seem to need growth in many areas. We learn that the principle of personality change will transform them from caterpillars to butterflies or allow us to see that they were butterflies all along. We have seen many areas of personal and seemingly permanent difficulties yield to the ongoing practice of doing what we can. When we do what we can, God takes care of the rest.

Surrender to the program of Narcotics Anonymous is an ongoing thing. In a sense the newcomer surrenders to the wisdom of those who have gone before and those with time clean surrender to the spirit and vitality of the new.

The opportunity to witness recovery of a suffering addict is one of the greatest experiences this life has to offer us. We are always willing to help. We are willing to go anywhere at anytime to help the suffering addict. Having been down the road, we understand the problems of a recovering addict. As we look back, we are grateful for the events in our lives that have brought us here.

We want constantly to remind the newcomer and ourselves that there are plenty of people ready and able to help. What recovering addicts want most is to feel good about themselves. If we become self-destructive, we die. Today we have real feelings of love, joy, hope, excitement sadness and friendship--not the old drug induced feelings. We heard a man say, "Every time he lost faith in another human being, he died a little bit". The program is giving us so much belief that we want to live again. We have to surrender at each stage of recovery in this program. The only way to win a losing battle is to surrender.

For most of us, N.A. was our last hope. We were so afraid of being rejected here that we were reluctant to open up. We were all shocked to hear others speak openly

of things we had done in our own past that were shameful, embarrassing and humiliating. In the beginning, we were all frightened to speak freely about ourselves. There is nothing between us but that first pill, fix, drink or toke. At one time we were not willing to seek help and were so close minded. Living in a world of insanity is difficult to understand for those who haven't experienced it. The old ideas and our addiction kept us from obtaining a new way of life and kept us deep in our addiction.

In time, we may find ourselves with old ideas on the program. Our roots of recovery are important, but in ongoing recovery we need to constantly review our feelings and thinking if we are to stay fresh and in touch with the growth of N.A. as a whole. This freshness may well be the key to ongoing recovery. We are each others eyes and ears; when we do something wrong, our fellow recovering addicts help us help ourselves by showing us what we cannot see.

When a newcomer admits his powerlessness, he opens himself up to the Fellowship. We are responsible for making him feel loved and supported. We all remember the painful feelings of guilt, remorse, shame and self-loathing. We can share our experience that these feelings were gradually removed by working the program.

We realize that we cannot do it alone. We begin to look at our brothers and sisters and become willing to do whatever is in our power to give them what we have. We have hope for we know that a better day is coming and we have love. Our Fellowship grows and keeps on growing like our belief in our Higher Power, we cherish this experience.

Life has many brick walls for us even though we are clean. If we can see these dead-end paths, we won't feel the need to pursue them. Some of our hopes and dreams made us self-destructive. We fell short of our goals. We figured we were bad people if bad things happened to us.

Other roadblocks in our path included our reluctance to pray, our laziness, and unworked Steps.

There were a lot of people we did not see eye to eye with, especially when our character defects and personality differences got in the way. Some of us used this rationalization to stay away from the Fellowship and use. We were dying and could not stand being around people we thought were full of hypocrisy. The people in the Fellowship were staying clean and had a chance to change and grow. What chance did we have? How could we grow if we couldn't even stay clean? Some of these roadblocks led some of our fellow addicts to relapse. Unfortunately, some of them never returned. They were destined to die using.

In N.A. we have feelings we never dreamed of having. We are able to entertain ourselves today. We do things beyond our wildest imagining. Some of us take on new hobbies, join sports teams, become adventurous and do things we always wanted to do but couldn't because of drugs. Free from drugs, we can have good clean fun.

When we came into the Fellowship, one of our biggest reservations or fears was the thought of how boring life would be without drugs. Our fears were short-lived. We soon found that living clean was not only fun, but that it was excitingly simple.

Talking and sharing experiences with our fellow addicts was a pleasurable experience. The simple games and pleasures that life offers, which had been lost in our using days were rediscovered. Playing ball, going to parks, hiking, things we just didn't have time for when we were using. Being clean is anything but dull and boring.

By living clean we are giving up using. We are giving up the right to be close-minded, selfish, dishonest, hateful and generally unhappy. And what are we giving up all these precious things for? Simple, unconditional happiness.

Having fun and being happy doesn't have to be searched for; it surrounds us. It is all there. So just do it. Be clean, have fun and be happy.

In N.A. we do not mope around crying because we're addicts. As a matter of fact, it is seldom that we mope because there is always a friend around to lift our spirits. God has restored us to sanity but that does not mean we are boring or prudish. We are a group of life lovers and we used to try too hard to have fun. We exhausted ourselves trying to figure out what to do. Now it's very natural and spontaneous. We used to be afraid of going insane--now we enjoy ourselves. This is a big change from the wild parties we used to attend while we were using and the "fun" we used to have. It is important for us to have fun in our recovery without the dying. Many of us would not have continued in Narcotics Anonymous had we not been able to enjoy it.

Many newcomers are amazed by their first dance or party to find members laughing and dancing like high school kids. It helps break the ice of isolation. Many newcomers have the problem of their faces hurting from the unaccustomed smiling. A sense of renewal pervades conventions and get togethers which draw together members and old friends from different areas.

Complacency does not go with recovery. The deadly and insidious nature of our disease can disguise itself as boredom or superiority and generate the old "apart from" feelings. Separation from the atmosphere of recovery and the spirit of service to others slows our spiritual growth and can threaten relapse. This book is not the final answer to addiction. The Spirit of our Fellowship is constantly leading us into new awareness. Recovery is a journey, not a goal. This is a life time school; our graduates get loaded. We have attempted to record a way of

life which includes many addicts from many areas. Our program could not encompass so many types of addicts from differing backgrounds if not for the spiritual nature of our groups. The spiritual truths at the heart of our program do not change but the edges are constantly growing. On the practical level, adjustment occurs because what is appropriate to one phase of our growth may not fit another. Vigilance is required to maintain the atmosphere of recovery. As a small group grows in size from three members at the weekly meeting to three hundred. Concern and attention on the part of trusted servants is required at every meeting, group and service committee. Spiritual vigilance is required to apply our Twelve Traditions and to bring up at times the ties which bind us together. Complacency has no place in all this; openness, freedom, and spirit are the marks of recovery. It is this spirit which will guide our ongoing process as members and as a Fellowship. Ours is a message of the Spirit, not of words. Words can describe the process but not explain it completely. Experience alone can make it real to us. Surrender to the disease begins our recovery, surrender to the basic mystery of recovery sustains it. No one we know understands the program totally and the program has defied reduction to formula by the most determined efforts of some of the most skilled rationalizers in the world. No sooner we make a breakthrough in terms of personal growth than we realize how much more we need to grow so that we may remain clean.

Our conceptions of fun have changed drastically since we surrendered to N.A. as a whole. We can enjoy simple things in life, like fellowship with other addicts, whereas we once isolated ourselves. This was especially true after we received help through N.A. and fellow addicts.

We enjoy sharing experiences, strength, and hope for we know that we can't keep what we have unless we give it

away. Through N.A. and the Twelve Steps, we are able to grasp a new understanding of fun. We realize we don't have to create fun--we just live it. It happens to us as a result of complete abstinence from all drugs. As we look back, we are grateful to enjoy life, because it's so unlike the events in our lives that brought us here. When we used, we thought we had fun and straight people were deprived of it. God helps us to live to the fullest, without forgetting who we are, and what our purpose is. We have learned how to love ourselves and others and not to be so afraid. We find that God usually grants us the ability to see the obvious. Since we've been clean, we have found joy doesn't come from material things but is within ourselves if sought. We find when we lose self-will we lead richer, happier and much more fun lives. When there are no longer conditions put on our lives, everything that we need is given to us in order to live today. We do not forget to live each day to its fullest, as a gift from our Higher Power, and just share, care, love, and live the N.A. way.

A day at a time we have no way of knowing what will happen to us. This is why we live in today. However, it has been very funny how things have worked out for us! We find that if we would have written a list of things that we wanted upon entering the program we would have been cheating ourselves.

It has been our experience that by clean living and working the Steps, our dreams have come true. We do not mean we became great leaders, champion race drivers or rock stars, though some of us may have.

What we mean it that our deep inner dreams come true for us in recovery.

Things that we had given up hope on a long time ago come true. Like being happy most of the time or seeing ourselves succeed in some areas where we had failed miserably

before.

In our experience, the Twelve Steps give us a way of life which does more than keep us off drugs. Not only is this way of life superior to the old using life, it is superior to any life that we can conceive. So, when we say that clean in the program is our dreams come true, we can speak from our experience. Before 1953, addicts did not recover except in special cases. They did not dream that recovery was even possible. We died, went insane and were locked up. Unfortunately, too many of us are being locked up still, and being killed by a disease. Our small population today numbers twenty thousand.

We have a much loved member who says to newcomers with a twinkle in his eye, "Just stick around and watch the miracles happen". And they will.

Deepening ties are even now being forged so that no addict need ever die seeking help. To us this is truly exciting. The possibility of being used as an instrument to save lives is exhilarating to us.

When times are hard for us in the Fellowship, we can ask our Higher Power, as we understand Him, to guide us as to what to do. He reveals Himself to us a little at a time.

In our recoveries we have witnessed God's healing powers take a dying addict and turn them into a new person with a new, totally different life.

Things we never dreamed of become true. We find ourselves daring to care and love and with love, all things are possible. We find ourselves advancing as human beings along spiritual lines and doing a great service.

We get the very finest friends. These are some things many of us could not conceive of. Before, we thought in terms of self-centered materialism that could not possibly bring us happiness. Now we live with a new outlook, that of caring and sharing the N.A. way.

We are surrounded by like-minded addicts, who once were at the depths of misery and despair, and now serious about their own recovery and helping the suffering addict.

We are living and enjoying life without drugs. At times we look in the mirror and find it all so hard to believe. The great fact is that it's O.K. It does get better and we never have to be alone again.

We have, in recovery, experienced difficult times when we could not decide our next move. The truth has been revealed to us. In meditation we may concentrate on a dream of service for our fellow man and find that the rest is just willingness and foot work. More will be revealed. It takes work to uncover it but it is, we believe, the one thing worth working for--Twelve Steps of recovery.

Today we are free from the obsession to use compulsively even when we are beaten. We are free to live as we see fit without drugs. The ability to accept God's will and feeling serene inside is freedom for us. Faith has replaced our fear and has given us a freedom from ourselves. Today we have the freedom of choice.

The program of N.A. is truly a program of freedom. N.A. has given us back the freedom that we lost when we turned to drugs in our search for freedom. We had believed that drugs were the answer. When we were under the control of our addictions we had given up all of our freedom to choose--the only choice left to us were jails, institutions or death. At last, with the help of the Fellowship and our Higher Power, we have regained our freedom.

When we first came to the program, many of us felt defeated, beaten and ashamed. As a newcomer it is sometimes hard to see that through our defeat and surrender we had regained some control of our lives once more. Through our freedom we begin taking responsibility for our lives again. In our freedom we have found that our dreams

come true, if we choose to make them happen.

Through the freedom in our lives we are finally able to see the special qualities that we possess individuals--qualities that we used to envy in others--never realizing the potential within ourselves.

*We cannot change the nature of the Addict or
Addiction . . . We can help to change the old
lie “Once an addict, always an addict,” by
striving to make recovery more available.
God, help us to remember this difference*

