

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:

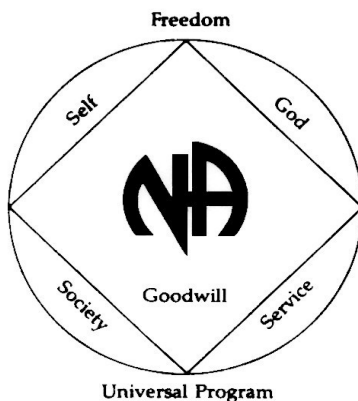
NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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.

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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.

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

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

28 We remember going through a lot of pain and despair before
29 considering the possible connection between drugs and our
30 misery. We had used all sorts of drugs over the years and
31 experienced numerous living problems as the result of our using
32 and yet did not consider ourselves addicted. The problem was
33 that most of the information available to us, before coming to the
34 Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, came to us from
35 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.

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

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

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

29 Some of the highs felt great, especially in the begin-
30 ning, but the things we had to tolerate to support our habits
31 reflected desperation. We sank to the depths of stealing,
32 lying, prostituting ourselves, and cheating our friends. We
33 manipulated people and conditions and tried to control all of
34 their actions. We failed to realize that the need for control
35 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

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

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

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

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

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

32 Ironically, drugs can also drive addicts past normal human
33 limits, often helping them to win great fame or recognition, until
34 their obsession burns them out. The drug-induced state can allow
35 a person to exclude normal background awareness and to
36 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

can tell you that medicine cannot "cure" our illness. We regained 1
good physical health many times only to relapse. Our past records 2
show that it is impossible for us, as addicts, to use with control, no 3
matter how well we may appear to be in control of our feelings. 4

Social adjustments failed to bring about recovery. We thought 5
a suitable job or social relationship could be the answer to our 6
dilemma. Addiction, in its progression, causes us to flounder and 7
fail, consuming us with anger and fear. 8

Higher mental and emotional functions, such as conscience 9
and love, are sharply affected by our use of drugs. Our living skills 10
may be reduced to the animal level, if we have suffered long 11
enough. The person within is submerged and the capacity to be 12
human is lost. This is an extreme state, but most of us have been 13
there. 14

Learning to live without drugs is complicated by the fact that 15
it is so hard for many of us to accept our disease. Again, 16
susceptibility and availability have combined in the addict to form 17
dependency. Many of the doctors among us came into the 18
Fellowship with an attitude of denial. We have found in the 19
progression of our addictions that we had been devastated by the 20
disease to the point where denial was futile. Part of the risk run by 21
society in keeping the lid on our addiction is the social stigma that 22
keeps the addict who might seek help from seeking it because of a 23
fear of never being able to live it down. 24

Addiction is the disease and Narcotics Anonymous is a proven 25
path of on-going recovery. Our experience shows that those who 26
keep coming to meetings regularly stay clean. We continue in our 27
recovery until we die. In our addiction, we practiced dying. In our 28
recovery, we practice living today! We can feel, care, love and be 29
loved. We no longer have to be isolated, and in time, can feel free 30
to go anywhere and do almost anything except use. We do not use 31
because we do not want to. Today we have a choice. 32

Many of us sought answers but failed to find any we could 33
use until we found each other. Most of us have become 34

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

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

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

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

33 The mind begins to accept new ideas which lead to a new
34 way of life as the grip of drugs and our past way of thinking
35 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 1
life. Our world constantly expands to include new associations and 2
eventually we become members of society. Problems that had no 3
solutions became transparent and unreal in the light of our new 4
understanding. Old grudges and resentments fade as we loosen our 5
sick point of view. A warm feeling of belonging replaces the hole 6
in our gut left by our addictions. It is no accident--it's the way the 7
program works. A miracle takes place as the drugs are washed 8
from our bodies by daily abstinence and our minds begin to clear 9
from the effects of our using. We come to understand that our 10
recovery is a gift from a power greater than ourselves. We are 11
made aware of this gift in a thousand ways. This power wants only 12
that we realize ourselves as much as possible. The longer we stay 13
clean, the more we will want to clear away the shame and 14
falseness of our lives. It is a great gift to be a human being. 15

What we have just been describing are some of the benefits 16
involved in recovery. There is only one alternative to recovery and 17
that is the progression of our disease. The progression of our 18
addiction has been compared to an elevator that is always going 19
down. We have found that we can get clean at any level we want. 20
Unfortunately, the nature of our disease makes us abnormally 21
susceptible to rationalizing our addiction instead of dealing with 22
the fact. If you are an addict, you can find a new life through the 23
program that would not otherwise be possible. 24

Many drugs require no extended period of use to trigger allergic 25
reactions, although physical and mental tolerance can play a role. It 26
is not how much we use that makes us addicts, but what it does to 27
us. Certain things follow as usage continues. Setting aside the 28
physical effects of addiction, as the regularity of usage increases, we 29
become accustomed to the state of mind common to addicts; 30
we forget what it was like before we started using. We forget 31
the social graces; acquire weird habits and mannerisms, forget 32
how to work, forget how to express ourselves and show con- 33

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

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

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

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

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

34 Incarceration and institutionalization sometimes led us to the
35 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-

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

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

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

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

21 We of Narcotics Anonymous were raised from hell to find that
22 the program is a way of life. We know that a new life is laid out
23 for us every day if we want it and don't use. A new place awaits us
24 in the society that, during our using, offered only misgivings. We
25 come to know success. We have found all this through dependence
26 on a Power greater than ourselves, a group of our fellow addicts,
27 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

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

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

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

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

34 Narcotics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women for
35 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

called themselves addicts. The unconditional love we find at 1
meetings makes it possible to relax and review our assumptions 2
about ourselves and reality. Working the Steps will give us a 3
relationship with a Power greater than ourselves, correct old 4
defects, right old wrongs, and lead us to help others. As we begin 5
the process of change by honestly listening to the stories of people 6
we meet in an N.A. meeting or in private fellowship, we will want 7
to try out some of the solutions that have worked for others. 8
Maybe their solution is part of our solution. Trying to be all things 9
to all people, we have often forgotten what we really think and 10
feel. As we begin to come out of our fog, the layers of phoniness 11
will peel off like the skin of an onion. When the layers are gone, 12
our real selves will remain. 13

As we attend meetings and hear the experience, strength, and 14
hope of others, we will come to notice that we are not the only 15
ones with problems. We will eventually hear someone who flat out 16
makes us feel lucky by comparison. We will grow to know 17
gratitude, to see where we came from and how far we have 18
progressed. We have all tried many ways to overcome our 19
addictions and sometimes temporary recovery was possible but 20
always it was followed by an even deeper involvement with 21
addiction than before. 22

Let new ideas flow into you. Ask questions. The principles of 23
living incorporated in the Twelve Steps may seem strange to you, 24
but they work. This program works for those willing to work it. 25

We have found that trying to help another addict is good for us 26
whether the addict we try to help uses what we have to offer or 27
not. For this reason, N.A. groups attempt to concentrate primarily 28
on this person-to-person service, without getting involved in any 29
outside enterprise no matter how worthwhile. 30

We feel loved. More and more we feel we would rather be 31
with each other when we are thinking negatively than by 32
ourselves. Good comes from being with others; loneliness 33
and negativity fall by the wayside. Something memorable, 34

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

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

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

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

if the life of the individual is not changed for the better. 1

Upon entering the Fellowship, some notices a strong spiritual 2
glow among members. Then we could see and feel that Higher 3
Power was at work in N.A. After having a few months in the 4
Fellowship, we see how the spiritual need for a Higher Power 5
keeps us clean. 6

Our program is in fact a way of life. We learn the value of 7
principles such as humility, surrender, and service. The idea that 8
we have to do it alone is obsolete. 9

It helps things run more smoothly when we find sponsors to 10
confide in and let them help us. We learn the art of helping others 11
appropriately, without creating resentments. 12

We, of Narcotics Anonymous, do not promise to have all the 13
answers, but we've found that our lives steadily improved if we 14
didn't use and learned to maintain our spiritual condition. In time 15
we met an addict seeking recovery and discovered ourselves really 16
able to respond to their needs. We gave others what we found. The 17
truth is that the more we give in this way, the more we have to 18
offer. Our own needs are met when we learn to live for others. 19
Through practicing our honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness 20
to try, we develop humility, tolerance, and patience. We are able to 21
love the unlovable and discover self-acceptance. We are not likely 22
to create problems in our daily living. We finally realize we have a 23
choice in the matter of our lives. 24

The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous, our new friends 25
and our sponsors help us to deal with our feelings. In N.A. our 26
joys are multiplied by sharing our good days with our fellows, and 27
our sorrows are lessened when we share our bad days. For the first 28
time in our lives, we don't have to experience anything alone. Not 29
only do we have the group but hopefully, as time progresses, we 30
will develop a relationship with a God of our own understanding 31
that will always be with us. 32

We learn to experience feelings and realize that the 33
feelings themselves can do us no harm, unless we act on them. 34

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

20 Many books have been written about the nature of addiction.
21 This book primarily concerns itself with the nature of recovery. If
22 you are an addict and have found this book, please give yourself a
23 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 1
irresponsible with our lives. We used drugs to cover up our 2
humiliation, guilt, inferiority and feelings of inadequacy. 3

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

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

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

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

friends was little or none. Some of us became unemployed and 1
unemployable. Success was scary and unfamiliar. We didn't know 2
what to do about it. As the self-loathing grew, we had to use more 3
and more to mask the feeling of hate. We were sick and tired of 4
pain and trouble. We were frightened and ran from the fear, but no 5
matter how far we ran, the fear followed us. We were hopeless, 6
useless and lost. Feelings of worthlessness overcame us. Failure 7
had become our way of life and self-esteem was non-existent. The 8
peculiar inertia that keeps a person going the way they are, acted 9
on us. To some of us, our appearance didn't matter. We had no 10
pride in anything we did. We didn't care how we looked. For some, 11
personal hygiene became a thing of the past. For others, it became 12
an obsession. We tried to cover up our inner pain with outside 13
appearances. Any hope of being anything different disappeared. 14
Helplessness, emptiness and fear became a way of life. We were 15
complete failures. Personality change was what we really needed. 16
Change from a self-destructing to a self-affirming pattern of living 17
was imperative. We started experiencing how powerless we really 18
were. Nothing seemed to relieve the paranoia and fear. We hit 19
bottom and became ready to ask for and accept help. 20

We were searching for an answer. We reached out and found 21
the hand of Narcotics Anonymous. We came to our first N.A. 22
meeting in utter defeat. We were searching for something, but 23
we did not know what. After sitting in a meeting, we felt that 24
people cared and were willing to be patient with us. Although our 25
heads told us we would never make it, the people in the 26
Fellowship gave us hope by insisting we could. We found that no 27
matter what our thoughts or past actions were others had 28
preceded us. Surrounded by fellow addicts, we realized that 29
we were not alone. We were told that if we put things ahead 30
of our clean time, the program would not work. Nothing happens 31
in the room but recovery; everyone's life is at stake. We 32

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

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

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

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

31 The symptoms of addiction include mental states that aren't
32 when we get clean, these strange habits of mind pass away
33 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. 1
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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. 3
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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. 13
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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. 17
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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.

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

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

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

STEP ONE

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

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

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

28 When we hit bottom, we were searching for an answer—
29 looking for a way out. We reached out and there was an answer.
30 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

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

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

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

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

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

33 This was a great paradox for us--we who were so proud of
34 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.

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

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

28 You may be one of us who says, "I need help with my
29 drug problem and I can see that N.A. has that alright, but the
30 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-

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

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

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

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

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

companionship. So, we need daily H.A.L.T.S. maintenance. 1

Most addicts have strong feelings about their Higher Power 2
and vigorously defend their right to their own understanding of a 3
Higher Power. The strength to move into action comes from our 4
Higher Power. 5

Asking for help in specific terms usually precedes getting that 6
help. By opening the gates of our hearts, we become ready to 7
receive the help we need. 8

We need to accept this step to start our road to recovery. When 9
our belief has grown to some point of comfort, we are ready for 10
Step Three. 11

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 12
by drugs. Our choices were determined by drugs. We were trapped 13
by our need for connections and cash. Then, when we got the 14
drugs, the search was over for a few hours or maybe a few days. 15
During that time our total being, the mind, body, the soul was 16
dominated by the drug. 17

For a time it was pleasurable, at least in the early stages of 18
addiction. Ultimately, the effect began to wear off and then the 19
drug showed its ugly side. Often we found that the higher our 20
drugs took us, the lower they brought us. When our nerves were 21
jangling like a fire alarm, we faced two choices. Either we suffered 22
withdrawal, or we took more drugs. For all addicts, the day comes 23
when there is no longer a choice. We must have more drugs. 24
Whether we are under the influence or not, our will, our lives and 25
every single action is directly controlled by drugs. 26

Obviously, our way did not work. In utter desperation, we 27
looked for another way. In Narcotics Anonymous, we are 28
told that we can turn our will and our lives over to the care 29
of a God of our own understanding. This is a giant step, 30

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

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

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

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

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

33 In the Third Step, we simply recognize that there is a force
34 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.

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

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

STEP FOUR

We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

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

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

24 Some people make the mistake of approaching the Fourth
25 Step as if it were a confession of how horrible they are--what
26 a bad person they had been. This is not the purpose of the
27 Fourth Step. We are trying to free ourselves of living in old,
28 useless patterns. We take the Fourth Step to gain the necessary
29 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

strength of the Fellowship, ready and eager to help us. 1

This Fourth Step can be a wonderful adventure, reviewing our 2
past performance and our present behavior to see what we want to 3
keep and what we want to be rid of. This Step has the reputation of 4
being difficult. In reality, it's quite simple. 5

As recovering addicts, we now have the right to reach for 6
levels of greater comfort and we can reach them, when we get a 7
handle on what we've been doing wrong. If we want to feel good, 8
we have to stop doing the things that make us feel bad. 9

We are not going to be perfect. If we were perfect, we would 10
not be human. The important thing is that we do our best. We use 11
the tools available to us, and because we do not want to lose any 12
of what we have gained, we will want to continue in the program. 13
It is our experience that no matter how searching and thorough, no 14
inventory is of any lasting effect, unless it is promptly followed by 15
an equally thorough Step Five. 16

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 17
what we have found in our inventory. We have decided what our 18
defects are, but we still don't know how to deal with them. We are 19
told that if we keep these defects inside us, they could lead us to 20
using again. We have to beware of half-measures on this Step. 21
Holding on to our own "garbage" would eventually sicken us and 22
hold us back from really taking part in this new way of life. If we 23
take a Fifth Step, but we really don't get honest, we will have the 24
same negative results that dishonesty brought us in the past. 25

Our Higher Power will be with us when we do this, and 26
will help to free the fear of facing ourselves and another 27
human being. Many of us, before we take Step Five, fear that 28

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

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

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

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

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

actually cared enough about us to want to help in our recovery. 1

Once we make up our minds and are actually alone with the 2
person we have chosen to accept our confidence, we proceed with 3
enthusiasm. We want to be very definite and thorough. We realize 4
that this is a life and death matter. 5

There is a danger that we will exaggerate our wrongs, and an 6
equal danger that we will minimize or rationalize away our part in 7
situations. If we are anything like we were when we first entered 8
the N.A. Fellowship, we will still tend to want to "sound good". 9
This is a luxury we can't afford. This Step must cut into our 10
character defects and expose our motives and our actions for what 11
they really were. We have no right to expect these things to reveal 12
themselves. It isn't easy, but it is simple. We want to tell the truth, 13
cut and dry, as quickly as possible. We do not procrastinate. 14

We will never be able to name all of our past mistakes, so we 15
need not expect our first spoken inventory to be perfect. If we 16
choose, we will be continuing the process of self-assessment for 17
the rest of our lives. For now, we will try to get most of the 18
"garbage" out in the first session. 19

For many years, we have covered up our low self-esteem by 20
hiding behind phony images that we hoped would fool people. 21
Unfortunately, we ended up fooling ourselves more than anyone. 22
Although we often appeared attractive and confident on the 23
outside, we were really hiding a shaky, insecure person on the 24
inside. "One thing you can't hide, is when you're crippled inside." 25
The masks have to go. 26

Once we had taken this Step, we felt lightened and refreshed. 27
We were finally free to be ourselves, because we were not trying to 28
cover anything up. It was a great relief to be rid of all our secrets, to 29
share the burden of our past guilt. Usually, as we share this Step, the 30
listener will share some of his story too, and we will find out that 31
the things about ourselves that we thought were so awful or 32
different weren't all that unusual. We see, by the acceptance 33

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

STEP SIX

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

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

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

defects are not more pronounced or of a more harmful nature. 1
When we see how our defects exist in our lives and accept them, 2
we can let go of them and get on with our new life. 3

We look to the Fellowship for the kind of life we want for 4
ourselves. We ask our friends, "Did you let go?" Without 5
exception the answer is, "Yes, to the best of our ability." 6

When we are working Step Six, it is important to remember 7
that we are human and should not place great expectations on 8
ourselves. We should be serious when we say "entirely ready to 9
have all these defects removed." This is a step of willingness. That 10
is the spiritual principle of Step Six. It is as if to say that we are 11
now willing to move along spiritual lines toward a destination we 12
couldn't imagine. Being human we will of course fall short. 13

We will still get mad and still feel hurt, especially if we are too 14
hungry, angry, lonely, tired, or too serious (H.A.L.T.S.). We are 15
trying to achieve adequacy, not perfection. Adequacy can be 16
achieved, but perfection cannot. We can reach and awaken the 17
force of life within ourselves; it can do anything, even give us a 18
new life. The breakdown of old ideas and old ways seems to be 19
beyond our conscious control. The only control of the situation we 20
seem to have is a choice of acceptance. What areas we change in, 21
how fast we change, and in what order all seem to be 22
predetermined by our very nature. If we accept God's will, we will 23
be able to follow the necessary path to a better life. 24

Willingness is what we strive for in Step Six. The tools we use 25
to maintain our willingness are practice and prayer. How sincerely 26
we work Step Six will be proportionate to our desire for change. 27
We often feel that we will never be ready to have all our defects 28
removed, but we should remember that the main point is that we 29
are on a journey, and the destination isn't what matters. 30
Willingness to serve God is what we strive for. 31

Without these defects, life is ever sensational and deeply 32
wonderful. We learn that we are growing when we make new 33

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

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

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

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

STEP SEVEN

We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

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

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

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

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

that we achieved our first glimpse of humility. 1

If the defects we have discovered are real and we have a 2
chance to be rid of them, we would surely experience a sense of 3
well being when we rid ourselves of them. Some will want to get 4
on their knees for this Step. Some will be very quite or put forth a 5
great mental effort to show intense willingness. The word humble 6
applies because we approach this Power greater than ourselves to 7
ask for the most wondrous gift of the program; the freedom to live 8
without the limitations of our past ways. However we want to 9
handle it, we go all the way. Think of what we have to lose! As 10
soon as we feel ourselves willing, we should go ahead and ask 11
God to remove our shortcomings. 12

When we were using, our spiritual and emotional growth came 13
to a halt. We did not mature and grow like a normal person. Now 14
that we are clean, there are many situations in our daily lives that 15
are difficult to understand. By practicing the virtue of humility and 16
asking for help, we can get through even the toughest times. "I 17
can't, we can!" It is a sign of growth. 18

We have to realize that people can give us direction and that 19
our way of thinking is not the only way. We must puncture our 20
egos and realize that we have much more work to do. When 21
someone points out a shortcoming, our first reaction is one of 22
defensiveness. If we truly want to grow, we will take a good look 23
at what is pointed out. We must realize we are not perfect and 24
there are things we must change. 25

We have noticed that humility plays a big part in this 26
program and our new way of life. We take our inventory; we 27
become ready to let God remove our shortcomings. This is our 28
road to spiritual growth, to change our character, day by day, 29
to gradually, carefully and simply pull ourselves out of the 30
isolation and loneliness of addiction into this mainstream of 31
useful Fellowship. This comes not from wishing, but from 32
action and prayer. The main objective of Step Seven is to 33

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

3 If we are careless and fail to grasp the spiritual meaning of this
4 Step, it will seem an unbearable chore, impossible to complete and
5 unlikely to do anything but stir up old troubles. Like all the Steps,
6 the point of this one is freedom. None of these Steps work by
7 magic. They work when they are lived. We are trying to achieve
8 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.**

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

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

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

24 The Eighth Step is not easy; it demands a new kind of honesty
25 about our relations with other people. We had to feel better
26 internally before we could even bear to think about whom we had
27 harmed and how we had harmed them, and exactly what was the
28 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.

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

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

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

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

19 "We try and work this Step as if there were no Ninth Step."
20 The Eighth Step is actually an action Step. And like all the action
21 Steps it offers immediate benefits. "The main thing this Step does
22 for us is to build awareness that, little by little, we are gaining new
23 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.

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

27 We recommend turning over our legal problem to lawyers.
28 Professional help is available to help us with our financial
29 and medical problems. Part of learning to live is not to take on
30 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. 1
2

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. 3
4
5
6

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. 7
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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. 21
22
23
24
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27

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. 28
29
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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. 31
32
33

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

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

STEP TEN

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

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

27 There is no area of our lives that the disease does not
28 affect. The truth is that fear is present in every area of our
29 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.

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

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

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

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

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

28 Step Ten is worked while the day's ups and downs are fresh in
29 our heads. We list wrongs we have done. We do not rationalize our
30 actions. We honestly chalk up our achievements. Thus, we get our
31 own house in order. We feel more room to grow. The mess is
32 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.

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

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

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

capabilities. By the surrender of our own power, we gain a far 1
greater power that will see us through. It is important keep 2
faith and renew it through daily prayer. 3

It is easy to slip back into our old ways. We have to learn 4
to maintain our new lives on a spiritually sound basis to 5
insure our continued growth and recovery. God will not force 6
his goodness on us, but we will receive it if we ask. This is 7
not cruelty. Enforced morality lacks the force that comes 8
from our own choice. 9

Many times, our efforts have produced in us feelings of 10
peace and serenity that we have never known before. We 11
know that in doing God's will, our lives will be fulfilled. 12

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 1
in the many different personalities we find the Fellowship 2
ship. This awakening does have some things in common 3
throughout the Fellowship. Life takes on a new meaning, a new 4
joy, and a quality of being and feeling worthwhile. We become 5
spiritually refreshed and are glad to be alive. Our suffering has 6
cleansed us of some of our illusions. In time we have been guided 7
to a new life and place in the world and in our hearts. 8

This great Step is to be preceded by the working of Steps 9
One through Eleven. There are those of us who tried to stay clean 10
without the benefit of "having had a spiritual awakening as a result 11
of those steps," and they are no longer with us. The ones, who 12
continue to practice these principles in all their affairs," tell us that 13
this is the most wonderful thing one can know. The journey is a 14
feeling of gratitude. 15

Usually, by the time we achieve this state of mind, no one has 16
to tell us to share our new life with the still suffering addict; we 17
are more than eager to help that person because by this time we 18
recognize that by helping others giving away that which has been 19
given to us--is our best possible insurance against relapse to the 20
vague, torturous existence of a practicing addict. We call it 21
"carrying the message" and we do it in a number of ways. 22

The first way in which we carry the message is by stay- 23
ing clean with the help of God and the Fellowship. Our new 24
way of living speaks for itself better than our words ever 25
could. People see us on the street and remember us as fur- 26
tive, frightened loners. They notice the grayness and fear 27
leaving our faces. They see us gradually come alive. A 28

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

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

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

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

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

1 grace in action. It's a privilege and an honor to go on such a call. 1
2 Those of us who do service work are the luckiest people on God's 2
3 earth! Those who have been in the pits of despair, now strive to 3
4 help other people to find a new and better way to live. 4

5 We help newcomers, whether they are detoxing or just 5
6 beginning to learn the principles of N.A. We do what we can to 6
7 make them aware of what the program offers and try to make them 7
8 feel at home. Experience shows the best way to accomplish these 8
9 ends is to listen carefully to what they want to do about their 9
10 problem. Next we can share our experience, strength, and hope 10
11 and then accompany them to their first meeting. 11

12 The selfless service that comes from this work is the very 12
13 principle of Step Twelve. It is clearly an awareness of God's grace 13
14 working that provides so much of what the practicing addict 14
15 needs. Just as the grace of a loving God was given to us, we now 15
16 have the opportunity to share this gift with others. One Twelve 16
17 Step call of this nature can make a life worthwhile. There are 17
18 plenty of such calls for those of us in N.A. 18

19 The Twelfth Step also suggests that we practice these 19
20 principles in all of our affairs. As long as we stay clean and live 20
21 these Principles, we are doing Twelfth Step work. We are 21
22 attracting people to us and the N.A. Fellowship by our example of 22
23 being clean. We no longer wish to participate in the problem. We 23
24 now serve God. In this manner of service, we renew our vow to 24
25 turn our will and lives over to the care of God. Even if we have no 25
26 such understanding, we will acquire it through seeing others 26
27 recover. Fellow addicts show that God is loving and we will know 27
28 a life free of drugs that we never dreamed possible. The Steps do 28
29 not end here, they are a new beginning. 29

30 All will be well as long as we remain abstinent and trust in 30
31 a Higher Power of our understanding. Living just for today 31
32 relieves the burden of the past and alleviates fear of the future. 32
33 Clean, we learned to take whatever actions were necess- 33

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

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

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

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

29 Remember, we didn't become addicted in one day. We can't
30 possibly solve all our problems at once, no matter how much
31 energy we have. Take it easy! The only way we recover is to apply
32 what we learn from each other, on a daily basis. Our growth is a
33 lifetime process. We never stop learning, and we never stop
34 needing one another's guidance and support. So, we say, "Keep
35 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

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

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

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

20 After we accept that we created our own hell and that there is a
21 God that wants to help us, we begin to make progress in solving
22 our problems. Through open-minded effort, we "act our way into
23 right thinking", letting our Higher Power find us, rather than
24 searching for God with only our minds. We come to rely on a
25 growing daily relationship with a God of our understanding. One
26 way to develop our conscious contact with God is to make up a
27 "gratitude list", count our blessings and thank our Higher Power
28 for them. Another way is to practice accepting conditions as they
29 are, and trusting that they will improve if they're supposed to. We
30 do these exercises several times a day, until they become a routine
31 part of our lives. In this way, we begin to face life on God's terms,
32 and that gives us the necessary sense of peace for us to live clean
33 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-

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

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

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

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

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

26 If you come to Narcotics Anonymous to use people to help
27 you continue your habit, then we cannot help you. We cannot play
28 dishonest games anymore. A closed mind is a barrier against any
29 change. On the other hand, a spirit of open- mindedness, coupled
30 with an admission of powerlessness, seems to produce a positive
31 change when asking for help. If you have a drug problem and are
32 willing to try it our way, we will share with you how we stay
33 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

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

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

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

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

27 On the outside world, a lot of the rules that apply will not
28 work with our new life in the Fellowship. Expressing our need
29 for help at the time of crisis seems like a logical thing to do,
30 but we are sometimes illogical. To us, at first, it feels like
31 insanity to give another person knowledge of our pain. As we
32 become more closely involved with others we will learn to
33 share our pain and it will lessen. Part of the horror of
34 addiction is being cut off from this human experience. Our
35 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.

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

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

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

26 When we accept that we are responsible for our problems, we
27 realize that we can be equally responsible for our solutions. It
28 simply takes clean time for us to realize who we are and what we
29 want to do. What we can do is remember that we are addicts.
30 Being clean is abnormal to us, and we must learn how to live in an
31 on-going manner. A great magic is found when we help others. As
32 clean addicts in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, we help
33 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

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

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

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

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

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

ourselves unashamedly, we can love other people more 1
completely, because we no longer feel like we have anything to 2
hide from anyone. 3

Our egos used to control us in all kinds of subtle ways. For 4
one thing, it seemed important for us to compete with others in 5
almost all of our endeavors. Some of us even refused to try 6
something that we might not be the best at. We watched other 7
people closely, not with any concern for their well being, but to 8
check and see if we were measuring up to their standards. Some of 9
us had no idea who we were, or who we wanted to be. We only 10
knew we didn't want to be ourselves. Now, we realize that we were 11
unwisely comparing our insides to others - outsides, which could 12
only work to frustrate us in the long run. 13

The Twelve Steps to recovery, that N.A. outlines for us, hold 14
the answer for all of our ego-trips and insecurities. They seem to 15
hold the only answers for us that we can really use. In living these 16
Steps, we first begin to let go of old egotism. We then open up to a 17
Higher Power, so that we will lose all fear of facing ourselves and 18
of facing other people. Eventually, when we sincerely use this 19
program of action in our daily lives, we will be able to face our 20
Higher Power, ourselves, our loved ones, and even the "cold, cruel 21
world." We develop a solid base to work from, which assures us 22
that we can go anywhere and do anything, with complete 23
assurance that we can handle whatever we have at hand. With that 24
kind of attitude, we have a real basis for living happily, and we are 25
able to really be of help to the addict who is still suffering. 26

The Twelve Steps led us to a point of recovery that seemed to 27
make the world change before our eyes, for the better. By 28
practicing the N.A. principles in all our affairs, we attract other 29
addicts to us, addicts we are now capable of helping. 30

Humility is a word that now loses its old negative 31
connotations for us. In the days of our active addiction we were 32

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

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

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

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

27 However far we are in our recovery programs, we each need to
28 draw on the strength of the other people in the group. We bring
29 that strength out with us, into our every-day lives. We apply what
30 we learn in the meetings to all our affairs, using these teachings as
31 a basis for living, but returning, again and again to our groups,
32 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

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

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

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

31 We have just been talking about the qualities of patience,
32 tolerance, and humility. We also mentioned acceptance.
33 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.

1 It all begins with that first admission and surrender. From
2 that point, each addict is reminded that a day clean is a day
3 won. At first we can do little more than attend meetings.
4 Probably we cannot remember even a single name, word or
5 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

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

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

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

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

30 Now we have learned that we can, and must, go to our
31 higher Power for help in solving problems. Fortunately,
32 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. 1

When you can feel the program beginning to work, don't freak 2
out. Personality change is a natural progression set in motion by 3
our surrender to the program. The slogans are the sayings that 4
seemed to help us most when we first came to the Fellowship. 5
They apply to the little, dangerous daily situations that seemed so 6
heavy at first. Things go smoother if the newcomer finds a sponsor 7
to confide in, someone whose judgement he can trust. We do not 8
think it weak to put a little faith and trust in a person with more 9
experience on the program. 10

We may still, however, feel that we cannot have a happy life 11
without drugs. We may suffer from the fear of insanity and feel we 12
have no escape from using other than an insane and depressed 13
existence. We may fear the rejection of all our friends if we go 14
cleaning up our act, this is common. We could be suffering from 15
an overly sensitive ego and many of those things within us that we 16
used drugs to escape from. 17

Obsession is the fixed idea that takes us back to a particular 18
drug, trying to regain the ease and comfort we once knew. We 19
know that the comfort we once experienced from using can no 20
longer be obtained. When we accepted that we were addicts, we 21
realized that never again could we use successfully. Try not to 22
think about drugs, old friends or old hang outs. But when the 23
obsession hits us, we improve our conscious contact with our 24
Higher Power through fellowship in N.A. 25

Just as we went to any length to get drugs, so must we go 26
to any lengths to learn to get clean. This involves the 27
honesty to admit our need for the help of others, who have 28
been where we have been, and have learned to live with 29
-out chemicals. The essence of addiction is that it is 30

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

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

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

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

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

loaded that day. 1

Guilt and worry keep us from living in the here and now. The 2
denial of our disease, or reservations, keep us sick. We lack 3
humility, clinging to old ways. Not from preaching nor from 4
judgement, but from sharing our experience, strength and hope 5
do we recover. Our willingness to try new ideas and possible 6
solutions to problems will help open the doors to recovery. 7

Let us apply our efforts to the obtainable and let the rest go. As 8
we do the job at hand the balance changes and new opportunities 9
for improvement present themselves. Opportunities now in sight 10
did not even exist until we got the ball rolling. Life then becomes 11
for us what we always wished it to be--a constant state of 12
awakening. As soon as we became acquainted with the Fellowship 13
and the basic ideas of the program. We began to put these ideas 14
into action. A good tool to remember is to counter our natural 15
tendency to saddle ourselves with concerns that go beyond the 16
twenty-four hours of each day. 17

Living clean each day at a time will reveal to us the things that 18
truly come from within and give us better understanding over 19
things that would interrupt our flow. 20

Recovery will provide for our re-entry into society. We can 21
always find people who have had difficulties similar to our own 22
and do succeed. It is difficult to get rid of the notion that we must 23
be great or do great to be O.K. As we recover we will often find 24
ourselves saying and doing things that suddenly make no sense to 25
us, even if we've been doing them for years. We literally see our 26
mistakes. This is necessary for our recovery. Self condemnation 27
has little place here. When we see our errors, we should simply 28
correct them. 29

As we go about the task of changing our lives, we are 30

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

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

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

25 In time we may become a trusted servant. We can
26 participate in Twelfth Step work, and try to share the message
27 of recovery, with the addict who still suffers. It has been
28 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,

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

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

16 Some of the most common excuses for using are loneliness,
17 self-pity, and closed-mindedness. Past thinking patterns, known as
18 "stinkin' thinkin'", have proven lethal. Our experience shows that
19 we do recover from these old games. We simply live each day at a
20 time without drugs. We believe the solution for the problem of
21 having drug-fogged minds, sick bodies and tormented emotions is
22 in a spiritual way of life. This is why the Twelve Steps are used as
23 a program of recovery and ultimately a method of trusting in a
24 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.

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

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

16 We're taught that we can only keep what we have by giving it
17 away. So we seek out and give our hand to other addicts who have
18 problems like ours and want help. Usually one of the first things
19 we try to do when we're working with a newcomer is to get them
20 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? 1
Usually, about all we can say is that there is a feeling there, a 2
feeling of strength and hope and love; an atmosphere of recovery. 3
Our meetings are very special to most of us. They're a place where 4
we feel safe; a place where we fit in. But what keeps it that way? 5
One would think that any time people like us get together the 6
results would be chaos. Groups of self-centered, self-willed, 7
isolated individuals just can't meet together peacefully and safely; 8
but we do. The reason that we can is that we have Twelve 9
Traditions that help to keep our groups "safe" and free. 10

For most of us, understanding of these Traditions comes 11
slowly over a period of time. We pick up a little information here 12
and there as we talk to members and visit various groups. It 13
usually isn't until we get involved with service that someone 14
points out that "personal recovery depends on N.A. unity", and 15
that unity depends on how well we follow our traditions. Because 16
we hear about "suggested steps"and of no must" so often, some of 17
us make a mistake and assume that this applies to our groups the 18
way it applies to the individual. The Twelve Traditions of N.A. are 19
not suggested, and they are not negotiable. These are the rules that 20
keep our fellowship alive and free. 21

By following these principles in our dealings with others in 22
N.A. and society at large, we avoid many problems. That isn't to 23
say that our Traditions eliminate all problems. We still have to face 24
difficulties as they arise: communication problems, differences of 25
opinion, internal controversies, problems with individuals, groups 26
outside the fellowship. However, when we apply these principles 27
we avoid some of the pitfalls. 28

Many of our problems are much like those our predeces- 29
sors had to face. Their hard won experience gave birth to 30

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

TRADITION ONE

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

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

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

25 This isn't to say that the group is shoved down the indi-
26 vidual'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

1 of opinion and impressions. However, when the chips are down
2 we pull together. Time and time again we've seen this; in times of
3 crisis or trouble we set aside our differences and worked for the
4 common good. How often have we seen two members who
5 usually don't get along very well working together with the
6 newcomers? How often have we seen a group doing menial tasks
7 to pay the rent for their meeting hall? How often have we seen
8 members drive hundreds of miles to help support a new group?
9 These activities and many others are commonplace in our
10 fellowship. They must be, because without these things N.A. could
11 not have survived. Without N.A. few of us would have survived,
12 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.**

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

trouble despite their original intent. We were powerless over our 1
addictions and could not manage our own lives. Now we find 2
ourselves thrust together in N.A., mismanager all, not one of us 3
capable of making consistently good decisions. When we realized 4
this had related to our new group oriented way of life we often 5
experienced a sort of gut-level panicky feeling. 6

At this point our old timers usually come forward to reassure 7
us. "Don't worry. God takes care of fools and addicts. This is a 8
spiritual program and He won't let us screw it up" they say. They 9
go on to explain that in N.A. we rely on a loving God as he 10
expresses Himself in our Group conscience rather than on personal 11
opinion or ego. In working the Steps we need to come to depend 12
on a Power greater than ourselves. We continue this relationship 13
and utilize it for our Group purposes. If we each turned our will 14
and our lives over to His care and seek to do his will, he will 15
express Himself on a group level. When a decision needs to be 16
made for a group, each of the members should take the time to 17
meditate on what is most beneficial to our common welfare. If we 18
do this, then the results will truly be an expression of the spiritual 19
concept of our Group. 20

We know that this is a fact for our Fellowship, but 21
sometimes we are confused when it seems our decisions don't 22
work out very well. We forget that we are not perfect, and that 23
we are only experiencing spiritual progress. When 24
personalities and self will creep into our efforts then the 25
results suffer. We must be constantly on guard that our 26
decisions are truly an expression of God's will. There is often 27
a vast difference between Group conscience and Group 28
opinion, powerful personalities, or popularity. Some of our 29
most painful growing pains have come as a result of decisions 30
made in the name of "group conscience". Our experience has 31

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

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

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

27 The Second Tradition also concerns the nature of leader-
28 ship in N.A. We have seen that we try to rest authority in
29 the spiritual conscience of the group. In keeping with this,
30 we make a special point of trying to prevent authori-
31 tarian leadership. We have learned that for our Fellowship

leadership by example and by selfless service works, and that 1
direction and manipulation fails. The way we designate our trusted 2
servants insures this. We choose not to have presidents, masters, 3
chairmen or directors. Instead we have secretaries, treasurers, and 4
representatives. These titles in themselves imply service rather 5
than control. Our experience shows that if a group becomes an 6
extension of the personality of a leader or a certain member, then it 7
loses its effectiveness. Newcomers don't stay, and members stop 8
coming. The group must then change or die. This is sometimes a 9
difficult and agonizing process. Those who stay grow through the 10
experience; but what happens to those who leave? An atmosphere 11
of recovery in our groups is one of our most precious assets; and 12
we must guard it carefully lest we lose it to politics and 13
personalities. 14

Those of us who have been involved in service for a long 15
time or in getting a group started and keeping the doors open 16
through the hard early days sometimes have a hard time letting 17
go of the reins. Sometimes our egos get in the way, sometimes 18
ungrounded fears get in the way, and sometimes the group gets 19
in the way. Most of us come with a poor self-image and low 20
self-worth. With time and some successes we begin to recover 21
somewhat and develop healthier egos. We enjoy these feelings 22
for they are healthy for us. We like recognition and attention 23
and we often deserve them. However this sometimes gets out 24
of hand. We begin to pursue these things as ends in themselves 25
and find ourselves in trouble. With more time and maturity we 26
grow in humility and learn to deal with these new feelings in a 27
more realistic and spiritual way. Another situation which often 28
cause us problems is fear. We sometimes fear that there is no 29
one else who can serve the group as well as we. We are 30

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

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

whole, that they in themselves are not indispensable or 1
dispensable. Along with this they also accept that they do have 2
special and valuable experiences which can benefit the group. 3
They become a resource for the group; seeking neither to control 4
the group-not to set themselves apart. It is at this time that their 5
long service truly contributes the most. They encourage us, inspire 6
us, and teach us by example. Even though their services are less 7
dramatic than when their group was struggling to survive, they 8
provide a foundation of stability, strength, and experience upon 9
which our Fellowship can grow. 10

TRADITION THREE

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

This Tradition is very important for both the individual and the 11
group. It relates directly to many of the basic ideas of our program. 12
Desire is the key word in this Tradition and desire is the basis of 13
our recovery. In our story and in our experience of trying to carry 14
the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers, one painful 15
fact of life has emerged again and again. An addict who does not 16
want to stop using will not stop using. They can be analyzed, 17
counseled, reasoned with, prayed over, threatened, beaten, locked 18
up or whatever; but they won't stop. using until they want to. The 19
only thing we ask of our members is that they have this desire. 20
Without it, they are doomed, but with it miracles have happened. 21

This is our only requirement, and rightfully so. Addiction 22
does not discriminate, why should recovery? Our disease 23
does not recognize race, religion, sex, age, occupation, 24
economics, or any of the other lines people draw to separate 25
themselves. "An addict is a man or woman whose life is 26
controlled by drugs." The newcomer is the lifeblood of N.A. and 27

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

21 We are Narcotics Anonymous and our problem is addiction,
22 other fellowships deal with other problems. Most newcomers are
23 led to the fellowship which best suits their needs. Individuals come
24 with problems that express themselves in various ways. They don't
25 clearly fit into our fellowship. Many of these people become
26 valuable and active members of several fellowships while others
27 single out the fellowship with which they are the most comfortable.
28 Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who
29 still suffers; where they find recovery is not our basic concern.
30 We know of members with a history of drug abuse who have
31 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.

1 The autonomy of our groups is one of our most precious
2 possessions. This sounds great but what does it mean? What is it to
3 be autonomous? Webster's defines autonomous as "having the right
4 or power of self government", "undertaken or carried on without
5 outside control", "existing or capable of existing independently",
6 "responding, reacting or developing independently of the whole".
7 Autonomy is all these things to us and more. Our groups are truly
8 self-governing and are not subject to outside control. Each group
9 can exist on it's own if it must. Each group has had to grow on its
10 own and stand on its own two feet. One might ask: Is this really
11 true, are we truly autonomous, what about our service committees,
12 our offices, our activities, our hotlines, and all the other things that
13 go on in N.A.? The answer, of course, is that these things are not
14 N.A. They are services that we can utilize to help us in our recovery
15 and to further the primary purpose of our groups. Narcotics
16 Anonymous is a Fellowship of men and women, addicts, meeting
17 together in groups, and using a given set of spiritual principles to
18 find freedom from addiction and a new way to live. All else is not
19 N.A. Those other things we mentioned are the result of members
20 caring enough to reach out and offer their help and experience so
21 that our road may be easier. Whether or not we choose to utilize
22 these services for the benefit of a group is up to us, they are not
23 thrust down our throats. Some have taken offense to this, they say
24 that when they started out they were told they had to register their
25 group. This may be true, but many groups exist that have never
26 registered. We ask groups to register because we can't recognize
27 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

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

TRADITION FIVE

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

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

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

the members this reaffirms and clarifies what they have learned. 1
The group is the most perfect vehicle we have for carrying the 2
message to the addict who still suffers. When a member carries the 3
message, he is somewhat bound by his interpretation and 4
personality. The problem with literature is language; the feelings, 5
the intensity, and the strengths are sometimes lost. In our groups, 6
with all personalities, the message is a recurring theme; an 7
underlying reality. 8

What would happen if our groups had other primary purposes? 9
We feel our message would be diluted and then lost. If we 10
concentrated on making money many might get rich. If we were a 11
social club we'd find many friends and lovers. If we specialized in 12
education we'd end up with many smart addicts. If our specialty 13
was medical help many would get healthy. If our group purpose 14
was anything other than carrying the message, many would die 15
and few would find recovery. 16

What is our message? We hear this question answered many 17
ways. In our groups we share our experience, strength and hope 18
and this is our message that an addict, any addict, can stop using 19
drugs; lose the desire to use again; and find a new way to live. 20
Their message is hope and the promise of freedom. When it's all 21
said and done, our primary group purpose can only be to carry this 22
message to the addict who still suffers because this is all we have 23
to give. 24

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 25
Sixth Tradition tells us some of the things we must do to 26
preserve and protect this spiritual aim. This Tradition tells 27

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

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

28 This tradition also tells us "who". A related facility is
29 any other facility or place that involves N.A. members. It
30 might be a halfway house, a detox center, a counseling
31 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

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

6 The Sixth Tradition has been one of those just sort of read and
7 let it go at that. It's hard to understand. But when we really take a
8 look, when we really try to understand, it's simplicity amazes us.
9 We can see the danger of endorsement, financial support and
10 letting others use our name; we can see how easily things can lead
11 to abuse of money, property and prestige; and we can for see the
12 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.**

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

26 Money has always been a problem for us. We could
27 never find enough to support ourselves our habits and our
28 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,

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

TRADITION EIGHT

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

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

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

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

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

16 Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who
17 still suffers. We do the best we can and sometimes we need a little
18 help. Volunteer work is the backbone of our service, but volunteers
19 work only to the best of their abilities, only at their convenience.
20 Some of our services require skills or abilities we are unable to
21 supply as volunteers. Most of us do not have the training necessary
22 or the extra time required to fulfill these functions. Our Eighth
23 Tradition also recognizes this and tells us that we may employ
24 special workers in our service centers. Without their help, we
25 might be unable to respond to many of those who reach out to us
26 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

1 things that we can do, outside N.A., to help N.A. It says that we
2 may create service boards or committees directly responsible to
3 those they serve. This is the basis of our service structure, but keep
4 in mind that although these entities are created to serve our
5 Fellowship they are not, in fact, a part of Narcotics Anonymous.
6 Our service structure consists of our groups and their business
7 sense: our area service committees, regional service committees,
8 World Service Conference, World Service Board of Trustees, and
9 World Service Office. Each of these is directly responsible through
10 the service structure, to the members of N.A. and to be loving God
11 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.**

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

23 If an addict has never heard of us, he cannot seek us out. If
24 those who work with addicts are unaware of our existence,
25 they cannot refer them to us. One of the most important
26 things we can do to help in our primary purpose is to
27 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

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

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

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

30 Personal anonymity is really much more. It is a point of
31 freedom, and personal recovery. No member of N.A should ever
32 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

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

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

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

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

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

28 Our Seventh Tradition guarantees each member the right
29 and privilege to share in the financial support of Narcotics
30 Anonymous. Each of us is given the equal opportunity to help
31 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

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

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

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

29 Addicts must patiently re-learn things forgotten and learn how
30 to live. This is what Narcotics Anonymous is about. It is about
31 people who can care about a desperate, dying addict and who can,
32 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

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

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

18 Each day we stay clean by practicing the Steps in our lives, our
19 chances of relapse decrease. Each of us is only one drug away from
20 a painful active addiction, but living our program through regular
21 honest sharing in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous increases
22 our chances for uninterrupted clean time. Eventually, we become
23 grateful for problems as well as rewards. Learning to live through
24 changes by practicing the principles of the program helps insure our
25 ongoing recovery. Often we find that when the pain of growing is
26 the strongest, we must give ourselves time and remember that it,
27 won't last. Complacency is the enemy of members with substantial
28 clean time. We never fully recover. Guilt, remorse, fear, lust and
29 pride may all become unbearable if we fail to invest ourselves
30 totally in the program, no matter how much clean time we have.
31 Many of us get clean in a protected atmosphere such as a
32 rehabilitation center or recovery house. When re-entering the
33 outside world we feel lost, confused and vulnerable. Going to
34 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

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

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

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

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

26 As a disease, addiction is subject to relapse. Reverting to using
27 is a physical relapse. Physical relapse is only a symptom. We are
28 never forced into relapse. We are given a choice. Relapse is never
29 an accident. Our knowledge of addiction is not enough to stop us
30 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

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

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

31 There is something in our self-destructive person-
32 alities that cries for failure. It permeates our total being--"You
33 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.

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

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

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

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

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

behavior begins again. Unless recognition and action is taken 1
immediately that fall will encompass our existence and then we are 2
along for the ride. Our life needs an immediate upswing. Spirituality 3
and sharing is the essence of our recovery. Keeping our illusion of 4
reality rather than using the tools of the program and the people in 5
the Fellowship will return us to isolation. This loneliness will kill us 6
inside and the drugs which always come next may do the job 7
completely. The symptoms and the feelings at the end of our using 8
come back three fold. This impact is sure to drown us if we don't 9
surrender ourselves to the program. Relapse can be the destructive 10
force that kills us or leads us to the realization of who and what we 11
are. The eventual misery of using is not worth the escape it might 12
give us. To live is to use the necessities to attain life. To use is to die 13
often in more ways than one. We have found this program at the 14
right time or we would not have found it at all. N.A. and its 15
principles are here to help us achieve quality in our lives. If we were 16
worthless we wouldn't be alive. 17

Failure to accept the N.A. program and the full implications of 18
our powerlessness has proven for many of us to be a fatal stumbling 19
block in our recovery. Left with a shadow of doubt, the mind of a 20
newcomer and even the old timer can prove to be the spark needed 21
to set off the return of insanity and that first pill, fix, drink or toke. 22
To safeguard against this fatal stumbling block we should develop a 23
good understanding of the basic principles set down in the Steps of 24
our recovery and apply them in our daily lives. 25

A young man picked up a white chip. Eager to learn of this new 26
life, he very quickly became willing to do anything he could. He 27
went to meetings, emptied ashtrays, made coffee, talked to people, 28
all the things that help us to recover. 29

Afraid, unable to let go of old ideas, still working to 30
"run the show" he found no answer to what he saw as his 31
problem. Blinded by what he saw as important, unwilling to let 32
go of the old familiar ways, he used again. He took with him 33

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

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

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

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

28 Slow down and live life. A cynic is someone who has been very
29 disappointed. He does not hear until the heart decides to listen, then
30 he can accept help. It is not shameful relapse. The real shame is in
31 not coming back. Being thus humbled, we must express our need to
32 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 1
existed. Addiction is the obsession and to use compulsion. 2
Modern technology has made available not only the drugs 3

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

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

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

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

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

nature and keep doing things they don't really want to do. 1

We weren't focused on the fulfillment of life, but on the 2
emptiness and worthlessness of it all. We could not deal with 3
success, so failure became a way of life. The fear of loss of control 4
had set in and we were afraid to try anything different. 5

In Narcotics Anonymous, we are more concerned with 6
recovery than the mysteries of addiction. We seek to change our 7
personalities and our lives for the better. We realize that we are a 8
part of the universe. In recovery, we change our reactions, 9
thoughts, and attitudes. We begin to understand and accept who 10
we are. This gives us a sense of security. We become less 11
compulsive in our thoughts and actions. 12

The dishonesty in our actions has led to a large amount of guilt 13
inside all of us. This guilt could drive us to use, and the using 14
could keep us from going back and making amends. All these 15
things together would cause misery. Being clean, we are able to 16
take our inventories honestly. We can admit our faults and are able 17
to ask for help. 18

We realize that an addict is going to resist recovery. Things 19
we have shared with them interfere with their using. We put our 20
trust in the group. If a person tells us that they can smoke pot and 21
suffer no ill side effects, there are two ways we can look at it. The 22
first possibility is that they are not an addict. The other is that the 23
disease hasn't become apparent to them. 24

We always try to be careful because we don't want to say or do 25
anything that might prevent them from seeking help when drugs 26
turn on them. 27

We have found from our group experience that honesty is 28
essential for the new member to surrender completely to the 29

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

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

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

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

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

30 The way we understand insanity is poisoning one's
31 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.

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

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

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

23 We become aware that many of our feelings were immature
24 and based upon pride and ego. As we become more comfortable
25 with ourselves, we appreciate more fully the meaning of living
26 just for today. We get over the guilt of the past and the worries
27 of the future. We enjoy the now: we learn to endure both pain
28 and pleasure. We endure frustration for we know that it will
29 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.

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

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

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

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

of living is a blessing from our Higher Power, giving us the ability 1
to explore and discover through feelings. We thank our Higher 2
Power for the love that we receive. We find the road sometimes 3
long and weary, but we keep on finding miracles as we go. 4

The program recommends that we lower the demands on 5
ourselves so that we can achieve our daily goals. It is also 6
recommended that we don't go overboard and swamp ourselves 7
with a bunch of new responsibilities just because we succeeded in 8
handling a few basics. That way, we experience success at a basic 9
and acceptable level. 10

Now that we are in N.A. we have a new outlook on being 11
clean. We enjoy a feeling of release and freedom from the desire to 12
use. We find that everyone we meet has something to offer. We are 13
free to receive as well as to give. Opening these doors and entering 14
them becomes a new adventure in living. Letting go of old ideas 15
and entertaining the new ones brings us to this new way of life. 16
We will know happiness, joy, and freedom. Life is not just a glum 17
lot. 18

An attitude of gratitude permeates us. With gratitude, clean 19
time is happy and joyous. We remain grateful for all the beautiful 20
things this program has revealed to us. 21

Our experience revealed that the things we are not grateful for 22
could be taken from us. As long as we didn't have something, it 23
would seem wonderful and we would often think if we just had so 24
and so we would be happy. Occasionally, we would have our 25
prayers answered only to find the rich feelings of satisfaction and 26
comfort beyond our grasp. We can see today that in reality we 27
were taking a lot for granted by failing to be consciously thankful 28
for that which God and life had already provided for us. 29

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

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

13 Being willing to grow spiritually is the direction that keeps us
14 buoyant today. When we take the action indicated in the steps, the
15 result is a healing of our distorted personalities. It is the action that
16 is important, not the result. We leave all results to God. God
17 presents the opportunity that heals our disease spiritually. After
18 clearing up the superficial wreckage, it is necessary to continue
19 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

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

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

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

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

27 What are you going to do when you have to face your first
28 crisis? When the time comes we hope you will be well a
29 equipped with the tools and the principles of the program of
30 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

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

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

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

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

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

29 We begin to see how only our Higher Power can restore
30 us to sanity when the obsession to use surfaces and self-
31 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; 1
we have found a partner in our Higher Power, who is with us all 2
the time. We cease trying to control, and surrender. Gradually, as 3
we become more and more God centered than self centered, our 4
despair turns to hope. Self-pity and resentments are replaced by 5
tolerance and faith. 6

If our surrender to our disease is complete, the rest of our 7
recovery is dependent upon our belief in a loving God of our own 8
understanding. Remember, as recovering addicts, our fellow 9
members love us and will not fail to respond to our sincere desire 10
for help. We believe God works the same way. 11

We find that we receive guidance when we ask for knowledge 12
of God's will for us. This is the emotional stability we so badly 13
need. We are given the freedom, serenity, and happiness we had so 14
desperately sought. Before going to sleep, we take a few moments 15
out of our routine to thank God for keeping us clean that day and 16
for helping us with our living problems. 17

With our Higher Power guiding us, we may never again have 18
to deal with using, but we will always have to deal with staying 19
clean. 20

A lot happens in one day, both negative and positive, and if we 21
don't take the time to appreciate both, chances are we will miss 22
something that will help us grow. As we begin to live in the 23
present, burdens of the past and the anxieties of the future slip 24
away. We are granted the serenity to accept the things we cannot 25
change, and thus lose our quickness to anger and sensitivity to 26
criticism. 27

Normal living is possible. The Twelve Steps of 28
Narcotics Anonymous are a progressive recovery process 29
established in our normal living. Our recovery is dependent 30
on our belief in a loving God who cares for us, and will 31

1 do for us whatever we found impossible to do ourselves.

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

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

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

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

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

29 Our life is a diary wherein we mean to write one story and
30 quite often write another. It is when we compare the two that we
31 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

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

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

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

22 While using, we didn't know who we were, or where we were
23 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

1 chooses to remain anonymous.

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

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

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

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

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

27 Remember, we are all in this together. None of us are
28 to good or too bad to improve. We are not here to get good;
29 we are here to recover. Help is there only if we reach for
30 it. We had only to get clean, open our minds and hearts to
31 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

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

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

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

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

29 Life has many brick walls for us even though we are clean. If we can
30 see these dead-end paths, we won't feel the need to pursue them. Some of
31 our hopes and dreams made us self-destructive. We fell short of our
32 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. 1
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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. 3
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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. 13
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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. 19
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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. 23
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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. 29
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1 Having fun and being happy doesn't have to be searched for; it
2 surrounds us. It is all there. So just do it. Be clean, have fun and be
3 happy.

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

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

22 Complacency does not go with recovery. The deadly and
23 insidious nature of our disease can disguise itself as boredom or
24 superiority and generate the old "apart from" feelings. Separation
25 from the atmosphere of recovery and the spirit of service to
26 others slows our spiritual growth and can threaten relapse. This
27 book is not the final answer to addiction. The Spirit of our
28 Fellowship is constantly leading us into new awareness.
29 Recovery is a journey, not a goal. This is a life time school; our
30 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

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

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

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

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

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

before. 1

In our experience, the Twelve Steps give us a way of life 2
which does more than keep us off drugs. Not only is this way of 3
life superior to the old using life, it is superior to any life that we 4
can conceive. So, when we say that clean in the program is our 5
dreams come true, we can speak from our experience. Before 6
1953, addicts did not recover except in special cases. They did not 7
dream that recovery was even possible. We died, went insane and 8
were locked up. Unfortunately, too many of us are being locked up 9
still, and being killed by a disease. Our small population today 10
numbers twenty thousand. 11

We have a much loved member who says to newcomers with a 12
twinkle in his eye, "Just stick around and watch the miracles 13
happen". And they will. 14

Deepening ties are even now being forged so that no addict 15
need ever die seeking help. To us this is truly exciting. The 16
possibility of being used as an instrument to save lives is 17
exhilarating to us. 18

When times are hard for us in the Fellowship, we can ask our 19
Higher Power, as we understand Him, to guide us as to what to do. 20
He reveals Himself to us a little at a time. 21

In our recoveries we have witnessed God's healing powers 22
take a dying addict and turn them into a new person with a new, 23
totally different life. 24

Things we never dreamed of become true. We find ourselves 25
daring to care and love and with love, all things are possible. We 26
find ourselves advancing as human beings along spiritual lines and 27
doing a great service. 28

We get the very finest friends. These are some things many of 29
us could not conceive of. Before, we thought in terms of 30
self-centered materialism that could not possibly bring us 31
happiness. Now we live with a new outlook, that of caring and 32
sharing the N.A. way. 33

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

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

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

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

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

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

come true, if we choose to make them happen. 1
Through the freedom in our lives we are finally able to see the 2
special qualities that we possess individuals--qualities that we used 3
to envy in others--never realizing the potential within ourselves. 4

*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*

