

Our Way of ^{*}Life

ADDICTS ANONYMOUS
Men's and Women's Groups
U.S. Public Health Service Hospital
Box 2000, Lexington, Kentucky.

OUR WAY OF LIFE

(Prepared by ADDICTS ANONYMOUS, P. O. Box 2000, Lexington, Kentucky, with the guidance and suggestions of the Frankfort, Ky., group of ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS, from a working basis of the material contained in the AA pamphlet A WAY OF LIFE.)

Addiction to alcohol, sedatives (phenobarbital, seconal, nembutal, luminal, chloral hydrate, amytal--the barbituric acid derivatives) and addiction to narcotics (morphine, codeine, demerol, heroin--any and all poppy derivatives or synthetics) indicates that the victim has been unable or unwilling to adjust properly his personality in terms of the problems of living in a comfortable state of mind.

Before addiction the individual was in a state of continuous anxiety and pain--an anxiety and pain he did not understand. The use of alcohol, sedatives or other drugs--all of them narcotics--SEEMS to remove these discomforts and give the sufferer some enjoyment of life.

After withdrawal of either we have found the program of Alcoholics Anonymous to be helpful to the eventual solution of the addict's basic problems.

We of Addicts Anonymous have rewritten the pamphlet A WAY OF LIFE, which is published by Alcoholics Anonymous, in order to make it more helpful, we hope, to those addicted to narcotics other than alcohol.

* * * * *

Addicts Anonymous is an informal society of former addicts who aim to help fellow problem users recover their health.

The purpose of this booklet is to show how many of us, who were once helpless addicts, have recovered from our malady. We have found a way of life which no longer compels us to use drugs. Addicts Anonymous is the great reality which has expelled our obsession.

Banded together in groups, or sometimes working alone, we aim to help fellow users recover their health. Not being reformers, we offer our experience only to those who want it. There are no fees--AA is an avocation. Each member squares his debt of gratitude by helping other addicts to recover. In so doing he maintains his own freedom from the habit.

Alcoholics Anonymous--our "parent body"-- is growing rapidly since founding in 1934 with the recovery of the first member. There are now between 80,000 and 100,000 members to be found in the 2,500 groups located in the United States and six possessions. Twenty-three foreign countries have AA groups at work. And the AA way of life has penetrated the walls of 55 prisons, 48 hospitals and sanitariums, where active, recognized groups are functioning; how many more groups are a-borning as this is written we know not. AA believes that two-thirds of its members have laid a permanent foundation for recovery as more than half of their present numbers have suffered no relapse at all despite the fact that many had been considered incurable.

This approach to addiction is based upon our own experience, upon what we have learned from medicine and psychiatry, and upon spiritual principles common to all creeds. By combining these resources, the recovery rate among alcoholics who want to end their addiction has been phenomenal. We see no reason why a similar program would not be effective in drug addiction.

We think of addiction as an illness: An obsession of the mind coupled with a physical dependency. It is a shattering sickness--physical, emotional and spiritual. How to expel the obsession that compels us to use narcotics against our will is the problem of every addict.

The only requirement for AA membership is an honest desire to stay off "opiates" sedatives and alcohol. Experience has taught us that a return to alcohol or sedatives after withdrawal has been accomplished will be followed just as surely as night follows day by a return to habit-forming drugs. We feel that each member's religious views, if any, are his own affair. While every shade of opinion is found among us, we take no position as a group upon controversial questions. No particular point of view is required of any member save his desire to stay free of narcotics. Our sole aim, then, is to show sick addicts who want to get well how they may do so.

These are really groups and not organizations. They have no constitution, no by-laws, no officers, no dues or assessments. The groups are not chartered for profit or otherwise.

This treatment is primarily a DIRECTED way of life that many have profited by, and they devote much of their spare time to passing their idea of recovery on to others.

MEMBERSHIP

Members of these groups are all former drug addicts, men and women of good talent whose self-administration of drugs has brought them to disaster and despair.

These men and women are convinced from their own experience that their reaction to drugs, sedatives and alcohol is not normal and that any indulgence for them constitutes a totally undesirable and impossible way of life.

They are completely sincere in their desire to stay free of opiates, alcohol and sedatives for once and for all.

They recognize that the use of narcotics, alcohol or sedatives is a real problem for them; not merely a problem of dissipation, but a reaction to a dangerous and progressive illness.

They clearly understand that once a person has passed from normal to abnormal use of alcohol, sedatives or narcotics they can never learn to control the use thereof again.

They have come to believe that they have been trying to substitute their addiction phantasy for real achievements in life, and that their effort has been hopeless and absurd.

They have progressed so far that at all times and under all conditions drugs produce for them not happiness but unhappiness.

They agree with medical science that they are in the grip of a progressive illness. They have lost the power of choice in drugs. They have lost control. Their will power with regard to drugs is practically non-existent. They have reached the state where the most powerful desire to stop using drugs is of absolutely no avail alone.

They were and, in many cases, still are people to whom stark reality and life as it actually is, are unacceptable. To face life comfortably they require relief of their chronic emotional tension, and this relief was found in drugs. However, they have come to realize the futility, the danger and the destruction of this method. They understand that they must find another way properly to adjust themselves to life if they are to survive.

There is a symptom common to all who suffer from addiction to habit-forming drugs: They cannot start self-administration of drugs without developing physical dependence and a phenomenal craving; and once they take any habit-forming drug into their systems, something happens, both in the bodily and mental sense, which makes it virtually impossible for them to stop.

They, more than most people, lead a double life. A marked personality change takes place when they take alcohol or drugs into their systems. They adopt characteristics and do things that, when they sober up, revolt them. They vaguely remember certain episodes, are remorseful and, as fast as they can, push these memories far inside themselves in the faint hope they never will see the light of day. This inconsistency provides the fear and strain that makes easy the alibi for another "toot".

They understand that their real goal is a contented, efficient and useful life. Abstinence then will almost automatically follow.

They realize that many persons with addiction problems are above the average in intellectual endowment, and that while indulging means failure for them, abstinence is likely to mean success--that missing success over which they are prone to brood themselves into another bout.

They recognize that giving up alcohol, sedatives or narcotic drugs is their own personal problem which **PRIMARILY CONCERNS THEMSELVES ALONE.**

In giving up addiction they do not regard themselves as heroes or martyrs entitled to make unreasonable demands on their families and friends.

They appreciate the seriousness of their new way of life and regard it as the most important thing in their lives.

They carefully follow a daily, self-imposed schedule which, conscientiously carried through, aids in organizing a disciplined personality by developing new habits for old and bringing out a new rhythm of living.

They have learned to rid themselves of fears, resentments, false prides, jealousies and emotional disturbances that have formerly been their enemies.

They have learned to be tolerant; they are beginning to live honestly and truthfully.

They believe that EASY DOES IT.

They believe in LIVE AND LET LIVE.

They feel that they are living on borrowed time—24 hours a day, one day at a time; but that, by means of this program, they may continue happily to do so.

They know that they have returned from a region where, each year, thousands of people go through suffering, torment and death. Others, in the prime of life, commit suicide, knowing of no other way out.

They are not reformers, for they laugh at legalizing morals or cravings; they are not crusaders; they believe in Divine aid, yet they are not a religious group.

Theirs is A WAY OF LIFE; they have had a spiritual experience, yet they are by no means sanctimonious.

Many of these ex-addicts had tried the treatments of medicine and psychiatry but were not cured of the disease.

They had been prayed over by their ministers, priests, families, loved ones and friends, yet they continued to use drugs.

Many of them had been jailed innumerable times, but were soon out of hand again.

Many had been warned by their employers, had been threatened, had been fired from job after job—yet they did not part company with John Junk.

Many had gone or had been sent to institution after institution, with the hope that at each new trial the cure would take place.

Many had been to so many institutions and had completed so many "cures" without any change for the better that they had finally been considered incurable and hopeless cases.

YET

That was not clearly understood was that these people were in the grip of an underlying illness that expresses itself in distorted thinking and drug addiction.

That before they could recover they must experience a PERSONALITY CHANGE: One that will give them a new outlook on life, will enable them to meet the demands of each day, and to adjust themselves to each situation as it arises.

One in which they experience NO FEELING OF SELF PITY, NO RESENTMENT, NO REMORSE.

To attain and to maintain this personality is the goal and also the experience of many members of ADDICTS ANONYMOUS.

They are convinced that this marked personality change is possible only through a spiritual experience, usually brought about by the belief and faith in A HIGHER POWER.

TO RECOVERY

The first and most essential step is HONESTY. (Personal honesty, intellectual honesty.)

When the addict gets to the place where he is ready to honestly admit that he is powerless to control his drug habits, he has taken one of the hardest yet one of the longest steps toward his recovery.

Many are reluctant to make this admission, feeling that it is the acknowledgment of a personal weakness. They attempt to substitute alcoholic beverages for their addiction, or they change to some compensatory occupation, feeling that their former jobs might have induced addiction, or they change their environment. They never get through trying other and old ways that all lead to the same place.

Most do not like to admit that they are emotionally and mentally different from any of their fellows. Therefore, it is not surprising that their careers have been characterized by countless vain attempts to prove that they could administer drugs to themselves without becoming addicted. The idea that somehow, some day, should they do this or that, they will be able to control and enjoy their drug-taking is the great obsession of many addicts. (Alcoholics Anonymous calls this "thinking wet"; Addicts Anonymous calls it "needling ourselves".)

The persistence of this delusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into and through the gates of insanity and death.

There is no known hope of recovery until the person is willing to concede to his innermost self that he is powerless in the face of habit-forming drugs.

This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed.

They must realize that they are in the grip of a progressive EMOTIONAL illness which, unless active treatment such as is afforded by the AA program is undertaken, steadily grows worse, never better.

They must realize that it is not the fourth or the tenth shot that gets them down, but THE FIRST, or the "joy pop".

It is of the utmost importance that they KNOW that the "joy pop"-the FIRST SHOT, CAPSULE or TABLET is the one to be avoided if they wish to follow the path of abstinence.

Having achieved this state of intellectual humility, they are ready for the next step to recovery; they come to believe in a power greater than themselves, or keep an open mind on the subject while they go on with the rest of the program. Any concept of this higher power is acceptable. Those labeled as skeptics and agnostics may choose to think of their inner selves; others will have different conceptions. Whatever form is visualized, they must rely on it and, in their own way, pray to that power for strength.

The core of the technique by which ADDICTS ANONYMOUS has worked what often seems a miracle in the lives of men and women is spiritual.

We repeat: It is not religious, but spiritual.

Not mental, not psychological--though it is all three of these as well--but spiritual.

The membership embraces agnostic, Jew and Gentile, Protestant and Catholic; all creeds, all denominations, all faiths. They all make spiritual progress by translating this universal and central truth of their release from drugs into their own faith.

It is universal because it depends for its effectiveness--and depends absolutely--upon the recognition of a power higher than man; the Creator, the Creative Spirit over all.

After the acknowledgment of a belief in a Power higher than man, the next step is the making of a decision to relate themselves personally to this Power.

They made a decision to turn their will and their lives over to the care of God as they understood Him. When this was sincerely done, and the further suggested steps carried out, they underwent a profound mental and emotional change common to religious experience.

Having had a spiritual experience as the result of these steps, they try to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all their affairs.

They believe that faith without works is dead.

They believe that their permanent abstinence depends on their willingness to remain spiritually alive.

They believe that sincere prayer and meditation, mighty channels of spiritual vitality, lead us to the next great step, which is effective living.

They believe that spirituality itself is the reflection of Godliness into channels of human living.

None of the members claims perfect adherence to these principles. They are not saints. These principles are guides to progress and the members claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

Following are the "Twelve Steps" we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery:

