

Proposed Review Form

**CLEAN AND SERENE
12-Step Guide**

October 23, 1983

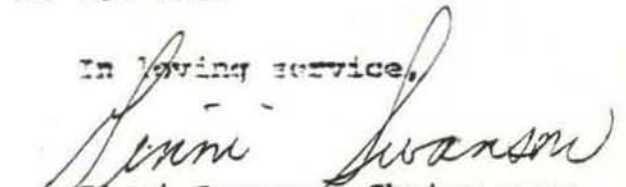
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In loving service,


Ginni Swanson, Chairperson
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CLEAN AND SERENE, ORANGE COUNTY AND VICINITY
AREA SERVICE COMMITTEE'S 12-STEP GUIDELINES.

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N.A. IS A NONPROFIT FELLOWSHIP.

Narcotics Anonymous (N.A.) is a Fellowship of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem.

We meet regularly in order to stay clean, celebrate our cleanliness with other addicts and enjoy our common welfare. We encourage a recovery atmosphere where the principles of this 12-Step program can be carried into all our living situations one day at a time.

There are many tools in our recovery. We have the therapeutic value of one clean addict talking to another in person or by telephone. We have N.A. meetings to attend where the message of cleanliness can be carried to the addict who still suffers. And we have the 12-Steps.

The 12-Steps of N.A. enable us to live clean and have comfortable cleanliness.

Based on our group experience, we have seen addicts who through various ways have been introduced to this program, identified with the clean addicts here and stayed clean. They have been able to identify similar drug related experiences in themselves and are ready to apply the 12-Steps to their lives. Addicts have also come to N.A. and after a period of relapse and recovery are finally willing to admit powerlessness over drug addiction, and that their lives have become unmanageable. This admitting of powerlessness and unmanageability because of drug abuse is the First Step in our recovery. There are addicts among us who have had all the drug related experiences necessary to make them take the First Step immediately and have been clean from their first meeting. Some addicts have had to be desperate enough to attend meetings. They had no place else to go because drugs didn't work anymore. The point is we are here and through N.A. we now have a way to live clean.

Basically, we are addicts who have gradually or swiftly been given the desire to stop using drugs and to stay clean. We have begun to apply the 12-Steps and rely in a Higher Power because we have found no other way to maintain cleanliness that works for us.

Our selfwill coupled with drugs eventually got us into unmanageable situations. When selfwill tried to manage these unmanageable situations it soon drained us of energy until we were as powerless to control drugs as a dead battery or a disconnected live wire. At this stage, powerlessness made a lot of us willing to admit we no longer have control over drugs--drugs control us. We'd lost the power to choose whether or not to use drugs. We were unable to start a run or stop a run. We were either loaded or not--depending upon what we're doing when someone met us. We were no longer using drugs--drugs were using us.

Every attempt to taper off, stop using completely or control our drugs failed. We could no longer guarantee our actions once we took drugs. Drugs have the power to change us into something we don't want to be--liars, cheats, schemers and thieves. When we hurt ourselves or others we found our troubles to be drug related, happening either loaded or trying to get dirty. Finally, we can no longer deny to ourselves that we're having a problem with drugs.

Arrived at this point in our addiction, it doesn't matter what type or how much drugs we used; what we did or didn't know. What really counts is what we want to do about it.

Here we get help from each other in N.A. The encouragement of addicts like ourselves gives us the group support essential to let go of our false pride and really look at the life we've been living because of drugs. Only a power greater than our addiction can keep us clean. The N.A. group and the 12-Steps are a support system enabling us to grasp and develop a conscious contact with a Higher Power of each addict's personal understanding.

Past all the lies and fantasies, we can now see how much trouble drugs give us. When we can admit this to ourselves--then we're at Step One:

"WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS OVER OUR ADDICTION, THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE."

We have a chance when we can cut through all the things we've been telling ourselves to make us feel good, and admit we are powerless over our addiction and that through drugs are making a mess of our lives. Strange as it seems, the only help for addicts like us comes when we can admit complete defeat and stop struggling to control drugs. None of our efforts to stop got us anywhere in the long run. We have to give up completely and surrender unconditionally--then, and only then, can we be helped to recover from the disease of drug addiction.

We stop taking the first fix, pill, drink, snort, smoke or suppository; and we start using the N.A. program. We use meetings like we used drugs. If we used drugs regularly to get loaded; we now use meetings regularly to stay clean.

Going to meetings, we can look at other addicts and identify people with the same or worse patterns of drug dependency and failure who are now clean. We find proof in their cleanliness that addicts like us can recover. We see clean addicts who can smile and laugh with clear eyes and peace of mind. And we see people here who really care for each other. We find the love and the acceptance of one addict for another that is essential to cleanliness.

As other addicts introduce themselves and make us feel welcome, we begin to learn to listen and listen to learn how each addict is able to stay clean. We hear things other addicts have done that we can identify and learn we aren't alone. Many of us have gone into the same drug related experiences and found we can and do recover. Learning what we have in common helps us attend meetings with an open mind and give ourselves the opportunity to begin getting well. We've now found hope with people like us who were drug dependent and now have been clean on a daily basis for months and years. When we can watch and listen openly to these clean addicts and realize these people as crazy and confused as we were before getting to N.A. have a way to live and be happy without drugs, then we've made a beginning.

This process of recognizing our addiction brings us to Step Two: "WE CAME TO BELIEVE THAT A POWER GREATER THAN OURSELVES COULD RESTORE US TO SANITY."

Accepting the fact a large number of drug dependent people were unable to control their lives and now have a way to live safe and clean through N.A., we have only to believe what we see in others cleanliness can also happen in us. If they can stay clean, we can because we don't have to do it alone. We don't ever have to be alone again. We have the full support of N.A. as a whole. We're all in this Fellowship together.

N.A. has many members and their collective power is greater than any one member. When an automobile gets stuck in the mud and the driver can't get it out alone, help arrives in the form of many hands or a large machine. What is impossible for one is often light work for many. The group is a greater power of support in staying clean and getting out of the mud than a member alone. We can do what I can't. This is especially true with those of us who are rut orientated. When something happens to bring us to the brink of a rut we jump in and furnish it. It takes the support of the group to lift us out of our rut.

We don't have to be religious to accept the idea of a power greater than us. We have a loving God as may be expressed in the group conscious of a meeting--some of us call it love, harmony, unity, N.A., peace, clean addicts, "Good-orderly-direction" or simply cleanliness.

We have often gone to a meeting without really knowing what's bothering us and had someone say exactly what we needed to hear or through our sharing were able to air something we didn't know was surfacing. The safety of the meeting gave us the opportunity to face something in ourselves and survive. What matters is we want to get well and be happy. By being as open as we can, we find N.A. has the power in our common welfare to aid us in our personal recovery.

Those of us who can see N.A. working in the lives of other addicts and who need help with our drug problem sometimes balk at the idea of being restored to sanity when we feel we're not crazy--we just can't handle drugs.

The Second Step deals mainly with being restored to sanity as far as the compulsion to use drugs is concerned. Sanity for us is like having our priorities in order. Our number one priority is not to use drugs. Sanity is restored as far as drugs are concerned when an addict whose first priority is not using drugs can stay clean here and now. Some of our priorities are not using drugs, regular attendance of meetings, daily contact with another clean addict, practicing the 12-Steps and applying them to our lives one day at a time. We can also include in this list giving thanks to a Higher Power for getting us through the day clean. As addicts, getting through 24-hours without using drugs is a successful day.

Looking back at our drug careers, no matter what drugs or how

each we took; we have certain things in common. We have an incurable, progressive and terminal disease we call drug addiction.

First, our addiction is incurable. Once we become oversensitized to drugs we can't go back to using drugs the way non-addicts do. Literally, billions of dollars have been spent by researchers in science and industry to find a cure. So far, none has been found. Nobody has come up with a cure besides complete abstinence from mind-changing or mood-altering drugs.

Second, drug addiction is progressive. Over the long run, using drugs leads to abusing drugs. This turns into drug addiction where we have to have drugs at any cost. As the body's tolerance and adaptability to drugs begin to fail, we cross over the invisible line into becoming allergic to drugs when no matter how much we use they no longer work for us. Instead, they disable us; we can't function with or without them. This disease gets worse not better.

Third, our addiction is terminal. Long term drug abuse will kill us. Even short term abuse can kill. There are cases where addicts didn't live long enough for the disease to progress physically to the point of discovering the actual need for help and the trouble drugs were causing them. Violent death overcame them before they realized the true extent of the damage drugs cause.

Addicts mistreat drugs and die in the toxic reaction of combining different drugs at once or overdose by using more drugs than their system can handle. They die behind the wheel of a vehicle or someone runs into them. Death can catch up to them as the result of drug related arguments or waits to gun them down while trying to secure the means to score or during actions that happen because of drugs. Homicide or suicide by accident or by purpose is terminal. The more a person abuses drugs, the more likely these are to happen before the addict sees where the problem really lies.

In fact, the problem itself lies to us and denies we have it. Drug related emotions and stinking-thinking are trying to trick the unsuspecting addict who feels if we had to live with the same feelings and emotions as the drug abuser--we'd use, too. As clean members of N.A., we do have the same emotions and thoughts as the drug abuser because we are fellow addicts who feel the same way. We have a way to live and be happy without drugs that really works.

Addicts also die of other diseases because they fail to get the right kinds of food to maintain a healthy body's resistance to illness. Malnutrition is a major cause of insanity among addicts. We neglect to eat and even when we do the drugs in our system make it impossible for the body to properly digest and use the food. Our brains can't get the necessary vitamins and nutrients to function normally.

The drugs themselves can cause insanity by the different ways we find of getting them into the body. The effect to the mind and body can be disastrous. Some drugs are just plain dangerous anyway they are used. When able to compare drug abuse to taking a deadly poison we have no trouble identifying with insanity and ceasing to believe in the Second Step.

What's amazing is buying into it on the installment plan. We sought drugs and more drugs. A disease like drug addiction eventually kills. One way or another, we and the people around us pay for it with blood, sweat and tears until we die or it's arrested and we clean up.

There are times an addict may think about drugs when actually the need is food, a meeting or rest. It's a demand system.

A baby cries when uncomfortable or needy; it's the infant's way of getting attention. An addict's mind may use the demand for drugs to get attention.

Demanding drugs when actually hungry, angry, lonely, tired and serious (HALTS) is a habit that took years to build. An addict may think drugs when HALTS is really the matter. The mind thinks drugs because that's what it's used in the past as a demand to get attention. When this happens it doesn't necessarily mean the addict's body is demanding drugs. The body may be asking for a meal, companionship or sleep. When HALTS occurs, we don't need drugs. We need food to ease the hunger; a meeting to ease the anger, loneliness or seriousness; and rest to ease the tiredness. In cleanliness, the body and mind begin giving the proper signals. We think it through and stay clean.

The addict's stinking-thinking or emotional bender may be an emergency call to take care of HALTS. An addict in an N.A. meeting, having had food and getting enough rest, can usually be comfortable whatever is happening. Take away the meeting, the food and the rest--it's an entirely different situation. Instead of hugs and kisses, it's almost like "Don't get on the same planet."

The structure of the program brings sanity to those who use it. N.A. gives us a way to live clean long enough for the insanity of our addiction to pass and leave us the opportunity to face daily living. Mental anguish has a lot to do with our rejection of reality. The willingness to accept and face even a life with unresolved situations has brought a lot of us peace of mind.

It's a matter of participating in recovery by showing up and applying the program. This program develops enough patience, understanding and tolerance in us to get through anything clean. The practice of the HALTS maintenance along with the 12-Steps and relying in a Higher Power can make recovery easier.

Relying in a Higher Power brings us to Step Three:

"WE MADE A DECISION TO TURN OUR WILL AND OUR LIVES OVER TO THE CARE OF GOD AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM."

Our old ways of doing things no longer work. Nobody could tell us anything. We couldn't think of anyone greater than self. And it almost killed us. We can't mess around with drugs anymore. We have to use the 12-Steps. With selfwill, we weren't going to make it. We have to have God's help. So, we are going to let go and let God; letting go of things that have served their purpose and letting God develop what works here and now.

Drugs served to show us that a life run on selfwill leads to powerlessness. When we ran to drugs in order to get comfortable it gradually began to fail us. Once we can accept that drugs no longer work nor serve the purpose they did, we begin to let God help us develop the program and practice these principles in life. True comfort depends upon spiritual fitness.

We can identify God with words like good, love, N.A., help, hope, recovery, acceptance, forgiveness, peace, group conscience, faith, clean, gratitude, service, Higher Power or with a gradual pace and manner of understanding--the God we finally find within us. Clean and serene.

Making a decision in Step Three is based on faith. The faith to live clean in the here and now. We have only to believe the miracle seen working in the lives of clean N.A. members can happen to anyone with the desire to get well. The process of staying clean in N.A. and applying this program for living to our daily affairs will eventually turn the practice of these principles into reality. What we recognize afterward is that God is actually directing us through the course of our spiritual journey.

God's grace gives us the gift of cleanliness, the design of N.A. and the dynamics of the 12-Steps with which we can contact the love and guidance of a Higher Power within us. We are given the willingness through our drug related unmanageability to accept the gift of cleanliness and use the tools of the program. The tools of N.A. aren't to beat us down; they're to lift us up.

This step is a decision we made. Drugs didn't. Other people didn't. We made the decision for ourselves to turn it all over to God's loving care.

Anyone can do it. God's ready. With daily practice, turning it over to God is easier. We simply realize there's a force for spiritual progress and we cooperate with this force. We live clean and let the spiritual progress happen to us by applying the program.

The program offers us a way to change. We learn to be clean. We live in the here and now. We get into the 12-Steps. Some addicts do this by saying, "Thy will, not mine, be done." Others do it by understanding God to be whatever keeps us clean. Being willing to do the few simple things necessary to get well can work for us as it has for others.

At times, the only turning it over we can do is to remain clean, continue to go to meetings and make a decision to go on with the rest of the 12-Steps, starting with an inventory. One of the important tools in our change of lifestyles is Step Four:

"WE MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL INVENTORY OF OURSELVES."

We list useless, destructive patterns blocking our serenity and we list useful, constructive habits with which we can cope with our emotions. This way we can measure our weaknesses and strengths. One item can note that going to a party where drugs may be used can be destructive while going to an N.A. meeting or function where no drugs are used can be constructive.

When we are strong in a destructive area we use the program to stay clean long enough to have it lifted from us. When we are weak in a constructive area we use the program to stay clean long enough to have it developed in us.

Steps One, Two and Three are the preparation necessary to help us have the faith and courage to write a fearless inventory. We simply put it on paper to the best of our present ability, and let it flow.

In Step Four, we begin to stop judging things by outward appearances and start facing life by being in touch with ourselves. Some of us didn't like what the program seemed to offer because we're looking at the outsides of other people instead of our insides. No one is forcing us to give up our misery. We have the opportunity to give it up when we do the actions preparing us to have it lifted from us.

Looking at all the dishonesty, shame, guilt, remorse, selfpity, pain, resentment, anger, depression, frustration, confusion, loneliness, anxiety, betrayal, hopelessness, failure, fear and denial we have through drug abuse--good grief, let's get on with an inventory.

We write on paper what's bothering us here and now. We have a tendency to think negatively, so putting all of it on paper gives us a chance to look more positively at what's happening. Nobody has to read it. We can let it be read. We can read it to someone like our sponsor. A sponsor can help us every step of the way when we allow. Like jumping into a swimming pool, it helps to have someone nearby who knows how to swim.

We can write alone or near other people. Whatever's more comfortable to the writer is fine. We can write however long or short we like. The important thing is to write it.

All of our living situations aren't going to disappear because we're clean. There are bills to pay and amends to make. We live and let live with people. We face fears and other feelings through acceptance and the program.

Perhaps this seems difficult or painful to do clean. It may appear impossible. We may fear that being in touch with our feelings may cause an overwhelming chain reaction of pain, panic and self-harm. We may think we have two chances slim and none. We may feel like avoiding an inventory because of a fear of failure.

When we ignore our feelings the tension becomes too much for us. The fear of impending doom is so great it overrides our fear of failure. An inventory becomes a relief to do because the pain of doing it is less than the pain of not doing it. So, we learn pain can be a motivating factor in recovery.

Sometimes, we can be so afraid to face what we're feeling that we block things from surfacing. We don't think about it because we fear what the reaction to it may be in us and others. Blocking it, however, drains energy we could be using to enjoy the here and now. Some of us are the last ones to know there's something the matter because we refuse to face it. We keep it locked up inside.

The only time we'll think about it is when we're simply given a way to deal with it by God's grace. Thus, facing it becomes unavoidable. It's like being put in a position where people are saying, "We just took an inventory," and every topic or step study meeting we attend seems to be on the Fourth Step or doing a daily inventory. We're surrounded by inventory energy. We're placed in an environment where doing an inventory is okay because we're in the most available situation to give us the support and success of doing it.

After so many meetings, it may finally dawn on us, "Hey, maybe, we are addicts. Maybe, the insanity was drug related. Maybe, we can get priorities in order so we can be clean and enjoy life."

God is already placing us in the position to care for our needs, so we find it's safe to think about how we're feeling and use the program to do something about it like write an inventory. Besides, there's really no wrong or right way to do it. It's made to order and suits the individual's recovery pattern. An inventory shows us what we need to be rid of to stay clean and what we need to develop to enjoy cleanliness.

Gradually, we know how it feels to be clean. We feel what it's like to be in N.A. meetings and amongst our fellows. We talk or listen as we feel like it. We feel what it's like to write inventory; to read out loud or silently what we wrote; and to discover the feelings of sharing it with someone. Soon we are in touch with a wide range of our feelings. Slowly and surely, we develop the ability to survive our emotions.

It's such a relief to write and have something we can do about releasing energy and letting things surface that a wave of emotions, feelings and thoughts can come up all at once. This can be confusing. Writing all of it, one thought or feeling at a time until all of it's inventoried, gets the confusion out of the head and onto the paper where we can deal with it without as much of the intensity that may have been distressing to us.

Once we have it all on paper, we can pick one item to inventory. We can follow up an idea with some footwork like talking to another person about one of our feelings. We can turn it over to God. We can do the next action being clean indicates.

Since the mind may distort what's happening, the inventory's a here and now action that gives us a grace period to let what's surfacing pass on it's way while at the same time we generally have more vitality because the energy we've been using to hold things down can be released here and concentrated now on our living situations. As the inventory is being written, the energy is free to apply to any need we have. It can be used on the task at hand or even on the tolerance and patience we're beginning to develop. With all this release of energy, meetings seem better, people seem better, everything seems better--even we seem better. And we are.

We have more free energy to survive all the little things that can build up during the day. The more we apply the program, the more God positions us to have things surface to let go and release

energy to develop the more clean and serene us. Most of us have serenity by practicing cleanliness until there's nothing left to bother us, we're used to the process.

Gratitude is another way to get peace of mind. We make gratitude lists. When bothered by a feeling like shame, guilt or resentment; finding an item of gratitude can get us off the heat of the moment and into a calmer reflection of the situation. We can be grateful to get through the insanity of the moment without having to use drugs. We can be grateful because it gave us an opportunity to look for an item of gratitude. Gratitude works, especially when we're grateful for having survived something--like our drug addiction. We're grateful to be clean.

We begin enjoying cleanliness because we have a way to resolve the shame, guilt or resentment. We are also able to survive back to back days of happiness.

We begin to be rid of the stress trapped inside. Writing can get the lid off the pressure cooker to see whether we want to serve it up; put the lid back on it; or throw it out. We no longer have to stew in it.

After an inventory, we're usually more pleased than disappointed. It can simply be a relief to participate in our recovery this way. Some addicts feel they did the wrong things for the wrong reasons; some the wrong things for the right reasons; some the right things for the wrong reasons; and some even feel they did the right things for the right reasons. Others feel the inventory didn't help. The miracle is that by doing the actions N.A. suggests, we've been concentrating on our cleanliness and are clean today.

Now we can shake hands instead of throats. Instead of grabbing for drugs, we can reach for the phone and call a clean addict. Instead of worrying about the problem, we can concern ourselves with applying the program. We can run to the program instead of the problem. Rather than the stinking-thinking that goes on in the head, writing it on paper brings a measure of relief.

We're beginning to learn appropriate actions because they're more comfortable than inappropriate actions; and in most cases, the appropriate actions are less painful. After awhile they become easier to do. Some of the things once appropriate aren't anymore. So, self and honesty are relative. We can only be as honest as we're capable of being here and now. As addicts, appropriate actions may simply be having priorities in order like not using drugs; going to meetings; applying the 12-Steps and giving thanks whenever possible.

Some addicts feel being clean is not enough. They need to enjoy being comfortable in cleanliness. To feel this cheerfulness, they're willing to go all the way through the 12-Steps. After writing the inventory, the next suggestion is Step Five:

"WE ADMITTED TO GOD, TO OURSELVES, AND TO ANOTHER HUMAN BEING THE EXACT NATURE OF OUR WRONGS."

Whatever feelings we may be having, just as the inventory gets the lid off what's bothering us, so the Fifth Step exposes it to the sunlight of the spirit; and the troubles begin to evaporate.

Of course, it may take a while. Some of our troubles seem as big as the Great Lakes and may need a lot of sunlight in order to evaporate. Meanwhile, we remember to easy do it.

Being as honest as possible with someone else is important because we need to break through denial. We've fed so much energy into hiding our feelings that denial may be so strong we're not aware of it. We don't even know that we're refusing to face what's happening inside us. We may even be putting on a mask of emotional disguises by acting the opposite of our real feelings whatever they may be. We'll never know who we really are until we can break through denial.

For years, we've avoided seeing ourselves as we are because of drug related actions and outbursts we're unable to escape. We are ashamed of ourselves. Denial gave us a way to hide our shame from ourselves and the rest of the outside world. Now that we've trapped this past on the paper of the inventory, we can sweep it out of our lives by admitting it. It's less helpful to write it all down and then shove it in a drawer because then we're still wasting energy on denial. Acceptance frees us from having to spend energy on denial and admitting it to someone releases energy we can use anywhere like surviving mood swings until they balance.

Now we may begin to feel relief. There are addicts, however, who finally feel the benefit of their Fifth Step days, months and even years later.

The point is that we disclose all we do remember. All that we have written. As we do this, most of us feel our burden lighten. The more we do this, remembering things that weren't on our first inventory attempts and telling them to another person, the lighter our denial, shame and guilt conflicts become. No longer having to put energy into the conflicts, we have naturally higher spirits. And no more in the pits, we gradually rise to the heights.

We share the load of all those secrets. We let them go.

A crucial factor in this step is finding an understanding person to tell. This isn't a guilt trip though some of us may feel guilty and will readily admit it. It's a cleaning up of everything we've been putting ourselves through in our addiction. We can get the most benefit with a person who's familiar with drug addiction or spiritual principles. Many of us have done this step with a helping professional such as a therapist or counselor. Some have taken it with religious personnel. However, addicts have also taken it with a close friend or sponsor. Others have told it to a relative or spouse. Some take care to find a proper stranger, then share it.

The important thing is to choose someone with whom we can be as open and honest as possible. Someone we feel safe to do this step with where it won't injure us or be at another person's expense. We're cleaning house so we can be clean and free of the conflicts haunting us.

We're often amazed how willing most people are to help. It's one of the great benefits of this program that we are able to let people back into our lives again. We're staying clean together instead of falling apart.

One way to do this step is with another N.A. member who from similar drug related experience can best help and understand us.

Those of us who have shared the responsibility of hearing a fellow addict's Fifth Step find unjudging acceptance essential. It offers the low risk atmosphere of recovery where a person can be open and honest. We listen with tender, loving care. Compassionately, we support each other by sharing experience, strength and program once the first part of the talk is done. Discussing ways we've found to be good to ourselves and others is helpful. It's okay to be us. We have value as people. We're a vision of hope to the addict who still suffers.

While it's necessary to be as thorough as possible, sometimes the fear . . . denial is so great there are parts of our stories we are unable to face, yet. In this case, we complete the remainder of the steps and are willing to deal with it when more is revealed.

Often things we've been blocking become very clear to us when talking with a fellow addict. It seems like God has designed some of the story to be told to the person who'll most benefit from hearing it. Like seeing an addict whose difficulty in maintaining cleanliness is the shame, guilt or remorse of a past event; suddenly it dawns on us that here's an area we've completely overlooked. So, the opportunity is God given to share Fifth Step material and we do it to the betterment of both. We're not alone with it anymore. We do have a lot in common and we learn that God is doing the things necessary to help us participate in our recovery.

Some of us are finally able to admit, "The exact nature of our wrongs may have also been our inability to rely in a Higher Power, and completely turn our will and lives over to the care of God."

By examining our wrongs as honestly as possible and admitting it to someone, there may surface feelings we don't like. Perhaps we call these distasteful things character defects or emotional immaturity. We know they must go for us to grow. Yet, we can't, of ourselves, change them. We know God's ready when we are.

It's a matter of being in tune with what we need. We need to get to a place where we can resolve conflicts. We need to move onward in cleanliness. When we get what we need we discover it's what we wanted all along. This brings us to Step Six:

"WE WERE ENTIRELY READY TO HAVE GOD REMOVE ALL THESE DEFECTS OF CHARACTER."

One character defect was the inability to turn our will and lives over to the care of God. We seemed unable to live life on life's terms. Through N.A., we're learning to live life on God's terms. We use the 12-Steps as a guide.

Honesty, openmindedness and willingness (HOW) to try help us

face living in the present. NOW this works can be seen in our honesty to accept and admit where we are today. NOW this works can be felt in the openmindedness we have to break through denial by looking at what we have in common, identifying with other clean addicts the feelings and thoughts we're having ourselves. NOW this works can be enjoyed in our willingness to grow along spiritual lines by living the program.

We're usually ready to be rid of resentment, anger, fear and the rest only when we really understand them as deadly poisons to the heart of an addict. We haven't completely accepted these are defects when we want to keep them. A distorted security in familiar pain causes us to cling to fears about ourselves and others. It seems safer to hold onto the old pain than to let go of it for the unknown.

Only God knows the total picture. We have faith in God and work the program. God doesn't make any mistakes. N.A. is no gamble; it's a sure thing. It's a design for living clean that works.

Admitting powerlessness helps those times we find just because we know better doesn't mean we'll do better. We stay clean by God's grace. Cleanliness is the first sure act we have to becoming entirely ready to have shortcomings removed. The longer we're clean, the more readily we see and admit what's bothering us. After we're clean awhile, we're no longer willing to pay the price these defects cost us. It's like our drug addiction--once drugs become a problem, they need to be removed or else they remove us.

We get the support we need to do something about it by going to meetings. We begin to know we're on schedule. Working the program into our daily routine, it becomes routine to suddenly realize some things have been lifted almost without our noticing.

In a large part, the spiritual shortcoming of being unable to forgive ourselves and other people is dealt with through the Fourth and Fifth Steps by relieving us of the shame and guilt. We're not alone in having such feelings. They don't make us less or more human than anyone. We're like all the rest of us and it's okay.

Let's look at some of the feelings. We need to talk about what's bothering us as soon as possible or we may never get to it. We share as much as we can here and now. We find a suitable rate of grasping and developing the program to supply our individual need. Talking with sponsors is an effective way to express our feelings.

Telling someone about the situations producing anger and resentment, lets us express it so we don't take it out on an innocent third party. We accept these feelings as okay. We talk about them because they give us an opportunity to say what's being frustrated in our lives.

We're obviously exasperated toward people and things when they don't meet our expectations or seem to be stopping us short of a goal. One thing to do is set easier goals. We can also accept mistakes and pace ourselves more realistically.

Sometimes, we don't know how depressed frustrations make us. A depression is often said to be anger turned inward.

It's natural to be depressed occasionally. We need to learn what areas we have limitations. We can now admit a lot of the problem comes from trying to control or manipulate others. We look for new ways to change from our chronic complaining. We need to stop putting judgments on everything as if we should be better than this.

The only way to stop blaming other people, places and things for everything is to find acceptable channels through which we can more effectively communicate feelings.

With anger and resentment, we learn to communicate in a manner the other person can handle comfortably. Gentle words rather than throwing chairs are more acceptable by people.

Hobbies and finding things we like to do can ease depression, however, cleanliness is our highest priority as addicts. Regardless of the kind of day we're having, we must stay clean.

Prayer and meditation help us focus on God's will rather than the frustrations of our will. Listening can often be more relaxing than having to be the center of attention.

When we take what's bothering us to a meeting and relate how we're applying the program to it in order to stay clean, usually, the big deal passes. We're comfortable again. Being with clean addicts and enjoying the new found friends within the N.A. family, we begin to leave loneliness behind and follow God's will for us as recovering addicts--to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. This in itself can make us feel that we're living worthwhile lives. Cleanliness and helping others recover is a beautiful way to develop self-esteem.

Eventually, we face alternatives squarely. We look for opportunities to turn liabilities into assets. What we learn from our experiences can benefit ourselves and those of us coming into N.A.

Our N.A. sponsors suggest there's no limit to the amount of benefit we can do as long as we don't care who gets the credit. Most of us credit God with what we accomplish.

When we let go of the negative impulse and act in positive obedience to spiritual principles, we begin to get the happiness and spontaneity cleanliness brings. We become entirely ready to have God remove our defects. Now, we're at Step Seven:

"WE HUMBLY ASKED HIM TO REMOVE OUR SHORTCOMINGS."

According to one of N.A.'s founders, we always have no more nor less than the minimum demanded of us by our conscience to allow us to get along with ourselves. The minimum we always have. We can rise above the minimum, yet, we always have the minimum we need to get along with ourselves.

Arrived at Step Seven, we're ready and God's ready. We humbly ask God to remove our shortcomings. We humbly ask God to remove our obsession with drugs.

This step seems to work best when we voice it unconditionally.

Many of us are willing to do it without reservations because we're tired of what we've been doing and how we're feeling. We're beat. Drugs beat us. Our selfwill beat us. We were beat down to a

point where anything we tried to do seemed to disturb our serenity. We found it difficult to act or sit back. The pain of trying to twist everything around so we could get by better brought us to our knees. While we're in this position, we have the humility to ask God to remove our shortcomings because there's nothing else we can do. Thank God.

Some of us feel it's God's will for us to be clean now. We're so grateful for the gift of cleanliness that we humbly ask God to remove whatever is blocking us off from spiritual progress. Of course, spiritual progress is a lifelong process. Day by day, step by step, our shortcomings are being removed on schedule in God's time.

The result of doing the footwork is a healing of a mental or emotional disorder at the moment it's surfacing to be let go of here and now. We let go through the steps and let God help us do the next action indicated. Action by action, we're walked through the experiences we need to heal our disorders and have emotional security. We can let go of our psychological dependence on drugs.

Being humble begins with being humble enough to admit it. After we admit it, then we can be willing to have God remove it. As the shortcomings are removed, we find glad moments of serenity happen more regularly and last longer.

Making amends also develops peace of mind. This begins with Step Eight:

"WE MADE A LIST OF ALL PERSON'S WE HAD HARMED, AND BECAME WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS TO THEM ALL."

This is an opportunity to apply our new found humility. We make a list of the people we have harmed, and become willing to make our amends to them all.

Writing this list is all we do in the Eighth Step. We make a list, or we take it from our Fourth Step inventory and add to it anything we'd like to amend.

The willingness comes to us as we rely in God to help us make amends for the resentments we've had with people or the hurt we've done because of our past.

This list is important because it shows us the relationships with people that are bothering us. We have so much energy scattered in these areas that it's hard to concentrate enough energy to get through the things that come up during the day. We can live and let live a lot easier when we know the areas we owe amends. As we realize our need to be forgiven, we tend to be more forgiving of people. At least, we know we're no longer intentionally making life miserable for the people in our cleanliness.

Making direct amends is Step Nine:

"WE MADE DIRECT AMENDS TO SUCH PEOPLE WHEREVER POSSIBLE, EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO WOULD INJURE THEM OR OTHERS."

Guidance from our sponsors can be an important part of this amend making step. With our sponsors, we consider each situation carefully. Very carefully. It must be given proper study as far as our present set of circumstances and responsibilities are concerned. Some amends actually take care of themselves. Others need to be thought of in terms of our wellbeing coming first. We owe it to ourselves and loved ones to stay clean and alive.

To go up to someone who is hurting from the burn of our misdeeds can be dangerous especially in money matters. Indirect amends may be necessary where direct amends would be unsafe or endanger other people.

In some cases, we may be able to arrange payment through a go-between or lawyer. We may have to make installment payments. Our sponsors may suggest we set up an amends schedule or plan. We're doing the best we're capable of doing today. We might not know all the money or amends we owe. Perhaps we've forgotten the people or places. Some of us simply donate money to a charity or do volunteer community service.

Sometimes, the only amend we can make is to stay clean ourselves. The act of staying clean is an amend because we're no longer part of the problem. We're part of the program. We're no longer out making a mess in society as the result of our drug abuse. Now, we're helping ourselves and other addicts achieve cleanliness. This is a tremendous amend to the whole community.

We offer our amends. When they are accepted that's okay. When not, that's okay, too. We're doing what we can. We can walk on with a clear conscience. We may also pray to be forgiven and be forgiving. When someone comes to us with an amend we forgive that person. A lot of courage and faith goes into making an amend. A lot of spiritual progress is involved, so we forgive as we would like to be forgiven. We forgive them and we forgive ourselves.

Miracles happen daily. We're staying clean. We can feel the joy in ourselves and see it on the faces of family, friends and addicts as we help each other in N.A. We enjoy being clean today. We find cleanliness helps us be as happy or happier than we've ever been. We can actually have fun living without drugs.

We're at peace with ourselves. Our conflicts disappear. When we disagree we can do it without being disagreeable. Debts and amends are being paid. We have the energy to enjoy physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health. We're becoming a fellow amongst fellows in our Fellowship and our community. We're one of society's most important resources because we're able to stay clean and help fellow suffering addicts achieve cleanliness. We really do have a place in God's plan.

One tool we have to improve our quality of cleanliness is Step Ten:

"WE CONTINUED TO TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY AND WHEN WE WERE WRONG PROMPTLY ADMITTED IT."

Our feelings relate to each phase of recovery we experience. Continuing to take personal inventory helps us find things that bring consistency and stability to us in all the changes.

We're like creatures of habit with deeply ingrained defects of character. The 12-Steps and God's grace may clear these up immediately or gradually, depending upon how much humility we need or how our attention needs to be gotten.

Sometimes, the thief, liar or exaggerator of twenty years does not transform easily into an honest or forthright person. We may find ourselves doing things we disapprove. We use the Tenth Step to help us from slipping back into guilt, hard feelings or remorse. When these happen we accept how we're feeling and admit it to someone as soon as possible.

On a daily or regular basis, we can check whether we're causing someone harm or discomfort, and where we need to make amends. We take care of these amends as soon as possible. When these things are left undone, they have a way of festering like an infection. We get to our sponsor and admit it. We are honest and take the indicated action, and through it we learn and grow.

Continuing to inventory each phase of recovery, helps us monitor what we're doing. It gives us a way to deal with any grief we bring ourselves. It helps create stability in our lives because regular inventory is a way to pay attention to the little things so they don't get blown out of proportion or build up to a relapse into drug abuse.

Relapses happen emotionally and mentally while we're clean. It's natural to have a relapse of this disease on a mental or emotional level because we're going through the process of learning how to let go and let God.

The changes involved can be very stressful especially when we're vulnerable to being too hungry, angry, lonely, tired or serious. We're vulnerable to old ways of thinking and reacting. In those times, it seems more expedient and somehow less dangerous to drive the wagon of our lives in the old ruts of selfdeception and self-serving rather than brave the newness or unknown terrain of self-honesty. It's difficult at times to be brave on an empty stomach. It's hard to be alert when we don't get enough rest or confident when feeling lonely. Openmindedness seems stuck when we're too serious. Tolerance seems to go out the window when we're angry.

When these things arise we have a continuing inventory of what we can do to stay clean here and now. We can do it. We have what tools we need to get through the present moment clean. As needs happen, we review our HALTS maintenance; getting food when hungry, rest when tired and a meeting, inventory and/or talking to someone about it when angry, lonely or serious. We call another clean N.A. member before we use drugs and begin to get the kind of help we really need--the help of each other while we learn how to help ourselves to the principles of this program.

Many of these things which seem so difficult in the beginning prove to be our greatest source of growth and strength.

We do what the N.A. way of life suggests. It's the only way we know for addicts of our type to change. For us, we change or die. We are tolerant of others because resentments or impatience can kill us. The acceptance and working the program are big changes from denial and fighting everything. As time goes by, we grow in spiritual health. Our old ways of selfishness and fear are being replaced with love and this Fellowship. Again, the main event is to stay clean. We don't use drugs.

We can continue to be grateful we're clean and continue to improve and strengthen our cleanliness through the prayer and meditation of 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."

Keep it simple--SMILE.

The clouds on our emotional horizon are usually caused by self-will. A smile can break through our moods and bring sunshine to a cloudy day. A smile can help cloudy thoughts pass away.

As we stop trying to change the things we can't, we have more energy free we can use to live at peace with ourselves and the rest of the world. Here is where the "Serenity Prayer" is helpful:

"God grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

This prayer can help us in any weather. We find ourselves praying because it feels good and it works. Prayer brings comfort. It helps us live a life of love and stay away from old ideas of fear and distrust.

As we seek our God, our personal contact with God; we begin to open up like a flower in the sun. We begin to see that God's love is here all the time, just waiting for us to accept it. We find we no longer have to go out and take in order to stay clean. We can put in the footwork and accept what's being freely given to us on a daily basis as we live within a Higher Power. We find relying in God becomes normal for us after awhile.

A lot of us are thankful for this step because we're tired of not knowing what's best for us. The way we used to pray for things often got us into the trap of having to live with it once we got it. We would pray and get something, then have to pray for it's removal because we couldn't handle it.

Hopefully, having learned the power of prayer and the responsibility prayer brings with it, we can use the Eleventh Step and the "Serenity Prayer" as guidelines for our daily program.

We begin to pray only for God's will for us. This way we're getting only what we're capable of handling. We're able to respond to it and handle it because it's on schedule and God's helped us prepare for it.

Some of us simply use our words to give thanks for God's grace.

We know whatever the day brings, God has given us everything we need for our spiritual wellbeing.

It's okay for us to admit powerlessness because God is powerful enough to help us stay clean and enjoy spiritual progress. We can even enjoy our unmanageability because God manages quite well.

God is helping us get our house in order. This brings us to the carrying of the N.A. message.

There is a spiritual principle of giving away what we've been given in N.A. in order to keep it. We reap as we sow. As we sow cleanliness in ourselves and others by God's grace, then we're just as likely to reap it. We replace our old habit of using drugs with the new habit of helping others stay clean.

By helping others stay clean, we enjoy the benefit of the spiritual wealth we've been getting in N.A. This is Step Twelve:

"HAVING HAD A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AS THE RESULT OF THOSE STEPS, WE TRIED TO CARRY THIS MESSAGE TO ADDICTS AND TO PRACTICE THESE PRINCIPLES IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS."

The bitter lessons we've had turn to honey in the service of God, ourselves and N.A. as a whole.

We find an indescribable joy as we start to live again or for the first time. It's like the joy of watching a person with two meetings turn to a person with one meeting and say, "One day at a time." Or the joy of watching people who were struggling to make it, and then, suddenly, in the middle of helping another addict to stay clean; are able to find the help coming from inside themselves. And both those beginning to grasp and develop and those well into the program knowing it's going to be okay. God helps us as we help each other.

Life has a new quality to it of being good and worthwhile. We become spiritually refreshed and are glad to be alive. Many of us were barely existing when we got to N.A. We had enough to just get by and survive. Now, we're doing much more living than survival. While the bottom line is staying clean, we're actually enjoying it. We like being clean and helping carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers.

We now know how to pace ourselves more realistically. We don't expect things of people as much as we used to, so we don't feel as frustrated. We can handle being clean today.

The ability to live without drugs is one of our greatest spiritual awakenings. We don't have a drug separating our consciousness from God consciousness.

Going to a meeting really works now that we're clean. Somebody says, "Easy does it." We go to a hundred meetings and "Easy does it" gets watered a hundred times; next thing we know, we're going around saying, "Easy does it," and we're not even sure where we got it. We just know it works because we're clean.

And we can see it working in our fellow addicts. A person with one meeting turns to us and says, "I think the meetings are going to work for me." We see the happy faces of people who have finally

come into a safe harbor from the storm of compulsive drug abuse.

This is the importance of working with the addict who still suffers. Sometimes, we forget what the storm was all about. Working with other addicts we're constantly reminded how progressive and fatal a disease is drug addiction.

Living in the here and now is another spiritual awakening. We've done everything we can think of to avoid living in the present. We got to a point where we couldn't avoid it. All we had done caught up to us.

What's great about the 12-Steps is the fact we don't have to come up with anything different. Whatever we're doing or going to do, we can apply the program and it works. We know it works because we have put the 12-Steps to work in our lives. Because these steps work, we're clean.

Some of us were wondering how we could give all our using time to the program since we were always using or thinking about ways and means to find and use more drugs.

We can give all our using time to the program by practicing the principles of N.A. in all our affairs. This way we're always doing Twelve Step work because we're simply trying to live this program here and now.

Yes, we're a vision of hope. We're examples of the program working. The joy we have in clean living is an attraction to the addict who still suffers.

The message, however, is meaningless unless we live it. As we live it, we give it more meaning with our lives and actions than our words or literature ever can.

We attend meetings and make ourselves visible and available to serve the Fellowship. We give freely and gratefully our time, service and what we have found here. We know the more eagerly we wade in and work, the richer our spiritual awakening will be.

We do what we can to help the new member become aware of what the N.A. program offers. What we used to be like, what happened to get us here and what we're like now are examples others can also identify. We no longer have to die in drug addiction. The lie is dead. As members of N.A., we do recover to live clean and happy lives. Welcome to N.A.

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