

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS



NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS
World Service Conference
Literature Sub-Committee

FOREWORD

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

The material for this book was drawn from the personal experiences of addicts within the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. This Basic 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.'

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 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 Basic Text on addiction—a book about addicts, by addicts and for addicts.

This effort was strengthened after the formation of W.S.O. with the publication of **The N.A. Tree**, a pamphlet on service work. This pamphlet was 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; Memphis, Tennessee; Santa Monica, California; Warren, Ohio; and Miami, Florida.

The W.S.C. Literature Sub-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, assembled, dismembered and reassembled. Dozens of area and regional representatives working with the Committee have dedicated 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 W.S.C. Literature Sub-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 the recovery we have found in the Fellowship 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 a 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,

LITERATURE SUB-COMMITTEE
WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE
NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

INTRODUCTION

This book is the shared experience of the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. We welcome you to read this text, hoping that you will choose to share with us in 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. 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 their perspective. 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" is too limited a term for us; our problem is not a specific substance, it is a disease called "addiction". We believe that as a Fellowship, we have been guided by a Greater Consciousness, 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 our common denominator is that we failed to come to terms with our addiction. Because of the degree and variety of addiction 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 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 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, we have prayed:

"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,

LITERATURE SUB-COMMITTEE
WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE
NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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.

Those of us who have found the program of Narcotics Anonymous do not have to think twice about the question: Who is an addict? We know! The following is our experience.

As addicts, we are people whose use of any mind-altering, mood-changing substance causes a problem in any area of life. Addiction is a disease which involves more than simple drug use. Some of us believe that our disease was present long before the first time we used.

Most of us did not consider ourselves addicted before coming to the Narcotics Anonymous program. The information available to us came from misinformed people. As long as we could stop using for a while, we thought we were all right. We looked at the stopping, not the using. As our addiction progressed, we thought of stopping less and less. Only in desperation did we ask ourselves, "Could it be the drugs?"

We did not choose to become addicts. We suffer from a disease which expresses itself in ways that are anti-social and make detection, diagnosis and treatment difficult.

Our disease 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 ourselves off from the outside world. Anything not completely familiar became alien and dangerous. Our world shrank and isolation became our life. We used in order to survive. It was the only way of life we knew.

Some of us used, misused and abused drugs and still never considered ourselves addicts. Through all of this, we kept telling ourselves, "I can handle it." Our misconceptions about the nature of addiction conjured up visions of violence, street crime, dirty needles and jail.

When our addiction was treated as a crime or moral deficiency, we became rebellious and were driven deeper into isolation. Some of the highs felt great, but eventually the things we had to do in order to support our using reflected desperation. We were caught in the grip of our disease. We were forced to survive anyway we could. We manipulated people and tried to control everything around us. We lied, stole, cheated and sold ourselves. We had to have drugs, regardless of the cost. Failure and fear began to invade our lives.

One aspect of our addiction was our inability to deal with life on its terms. We tried drugs and combinations of drugs in an effort to cope with a seemingly hostile world. We dreamed of finding a magic formula that would solve our ultimate problem--ourselves. The fact was that we could not successfully use any mind-altering or mood-changing substance, including marijuana and alcohol. Drugs ceased to make us feel good.

At times, we were defensive about our addiction and justified our right to use, especially when we had "legal prescriptions." We were proud of the sometimes illegal and often bizarre behavior that typified our using. We "forgot" the times we sat alone consumed by fear and self-pity. We fell into a pattern of selective thinking. We only remembered the "good" drug experiences. We justified and rationalized the things we had to do to keep from being sick or going crazy. We ignored the times when life seemed to be a nightmare. We avoided the reality of our addiction.

Higher mental and emotional functions, such as conscience and the ability to love, were sharply affected by our use of drugs. Living skills were reduced to the animal level. Our spirit was broken. The capacity to feel human was lost. This seems extreme, but many of us have been in this state.