
REACHING OUT

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World Service Office, PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999

WELCOME

We would like to welcome all of you to the WSC Hospitals & Institutions Newsletter. We hope that the contents of this simple newsletter will assist you in your recovery or H&I efforts throughout the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

FROM THE INSIDE

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I've just completed Volume Six, Number Two of your wonderful newsletter, and must say it saddened me to realize that such gratifying material had been laying around my cell for six days before I finally made time to read it.

However, without further sad tidings, let it also be known that I am profoundly grateful for NA groups and of course God, though not necessarily in that order, for the help we, as humans, all need so badly.

See I am an addict, and have been such an unmanageable dustpan personality for twenty-eight of my forty-two years of life.

The truth behind the dustpan personality is due to my lack of knowledge about the Fellowship of NA. Its purpose, God as I now understand Him, and the radiating energy to love others as well

as myself. But of course NA has enriched my life with rich opportunities whereby I can grow, prosper and reach new levels of understanding about my connection with God.

To endeavor making a long story short, I'll begin where I took this fall in 1975. Anyway, I escaped in 1982, sick of committing crimes, it took seventeen days on foot to reach Atlanta. Becoming a success added false security to my unmanageability. Relocating to Michigan, I started a new life, working, dating, church-going, and living what would be considered a fair life. Well, at least until 1985. My lady rented a club and gave me a surprise birthday party. Imagine me arriving to find 75% of her social friends whom I hadn't met before were (are) cops, District Attorneys, and doctors. Boy, what a surprise!

False pride kept me from leaving, so I posted up in a corner which led to a drink, which was my biggest mistake. Six months after that one, I started shooting up (yes, again) and she left me. Pretending not to care, I went all the way out. In 1987 she found out about me being in the hospital. She suggested I get into the NA program. Going the first three nights wasn't too bad. Yes, you guessed. She was with me, but after telling me she wouldn't be back, I didn't go either. However, my using took my mind away from the statement a guy had made during one of those meetings.

Oh yeah, I was recaptured in 1988, joined NA last year and became GSR in 1990.

Our group was very small then, however, we have advanced to 20 members now. These brothers are as anxious as I am about learning.

Being a fairly new group, and being serious, there isn't any reason we shouldn't get this beautiful network properly going.

Therefore, I pray that you are enjoying the very best this holiday season has to offer. And, of course, I hope to hear from you in the near future.

Keep succeeding,
C.H., Louisiana

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is D_____ and I am powerless over my addiction. I am presently serving a twelve-year sentence for crimes I committed during my last time out. I had attended NA before, but didn't listen to suggestions and found myself in the middle of a sick relationship. We all know the rest of that story.

After my last time out, knowing that I'd be going to prison, I ran. I traveled the East Coast visiting meetings every day. I worked the program harder than ever. Staying clean was no longer a joke—it was my life. After completing my first honest Fourth Step while staying at a migrant work camp in North Carolina, I went back to traveling. Some months later, I was asked to speak at a twenty-eight day program and detox center in Pennsylvania. While sharing, I became convinced of my own dishonesty. I knew then that if I didn't turn myself in, and clear away the garbage in my life, there would be a good chance of my using again. After the meeting, and I shared this with the group, I drove to North Carolina, took my Fifth Step, spent some time with my sponsor, and turned myself into the authorities.

Paying the price of our past behavior is all part of the growth process which brings about the miracle. I've never had any spiritual awakenings like I've read about. No lightning bolts, or supernatural beings bringing me bolts of wisdom. For me, it has been a series of attempts to become honest. Honesty has begun to bring back my sanity. The more honest I become, the more manageable my life seems to become. The more I work on faith, the less fear I live in.

For the last two years I have had to attend another twelve-step program because this institution doesn't have an NA program. There are other addicts here and fortunately the meetings are open.

I'm also grateful today that no matter what the circumstances are in my life, or how much anger, fear and resentment is all around me, I don't have to pick up. The Twelve Steps have given me some principles to practice in my daily living. The fellowship has taught me how to love. I can love you all today, for what I am, when you are with me.

Reaching Out has been a real blessing from the loving God I have in my life. Knowing there are others in the same place in their recovery as me, and others who care enough to do the service work it takes to carry the message of hope has reminded me that I never have to be alone. Thank you NA!

Your friend and Mine,
D.J., Florida

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I'm L_____ and I'm an addict. My first addiction was to the drug alcohol in my early years (fourteen through eighteen). But as life went on for me, I came to know the drug scene. This was while I was in the Marine Corps. That time in my life I thought I could be anything I wanted. But to tell the truth, I couldn't get what I wanted (peace of mind). Drugs had me in the pits of hell for almost twenty-five years of my life and I am forty years old now.

I had never been in any type of institution or hospital due to my addiction. But I have been so close to death that only the grace of God was with me. Though I still didn't learn from those experiences which was during war time (Viet Nam '70 to '71).

But now two years ago come June 13th, I found another twelve-step program in prison. But I didn't quit using. I kept at it thinking I was alright as long as I wasn't hurting anyone. Then NA came into CCI and I was asked if I would like to check it out. Well, thank God I did. What I want to share is the line from our reading, "What is the Narcotics Anonymous Program?" My answer was this "This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs."

I am thankful that the grace of God led me to this program. I attend every meeting that we have here.

I am thankful for you for letting me share this with the fellowship in *Reaching Out*.

Bless you all,
L.T., South Carolina

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I would like to share my experience with drugs to all the addicts out there like myself.

My name is W_____ and I came to know Narcotics Anonymous in a facility. Here is where I learned about NA and the Fellowship of NA. I've learned a lot since I've been here. Every week they come from the streets and have a meeting. We go down and talk about our addiction and try to cope with it one day at a time.

In here I learned how to live life without drugs and how to talk freely with other addicts like myself. I have learned from those who are following the program of recovery to the best of their ability, and

how I can do the same if I am willing to make that effort. I have also learned from those who have made mistakes. I don't know why I had to find this program in this facility. I wish I could have found NA out there. I could have been clean and still out there, not in this facility.

Now I am here and thank God for the chance to live. Again, in here I learned about NA. I just pray that when I get out I continue to go to NA meetings and share my experience with other addicts like myself and to see if one out of ten get clean. That would make me happy and proud just to know that.

Well my addiction began when I was fifteen years old. I don't know how I made it this long. Now I'm twenty-nine going on thirty years old. Half of my friends are gone and I am still here. I thank God for this chance. Now I sit in this facility thinking about how I used to be out there, stealing and committing crimes just to support my habit. It's easy when you live in the Bronx. One thing I was not thinking about, I was committing suicide slowly. It took this time to make me realize it. Now I found NA and I thank God for this chance. Although this is certainly a suicide path itself. When I was aware and in a suicide moment I did not know that there was an answer. I did realize I was hopelessly addicted. I did not know there was an answer. There really wasn't at that time. I was in too deep, not knowing which way to turn. If I ever knew there was a program like NA when I was out there I think I would have tried it, even though the program doesn't work unless you really want it to work.

My addiction has cost not only my self-respect, but the respect and love of my family. At one point, I wanted to commit suicide and I was unsuccessful or too scared to do it. I just hope and pray when I get out that I stay clean and go to NA meetings and share my experience with others and try to give them hope for the future. I am going to find out where meetings are located so I can share my experience with other addicts.

This is my addiction to drugs and now I am a recovering addict in this facility and trying to help others overcome their fears. Thank you for lending me your ears.

Yours truly,
W.A., New Jersey

Dear *Reaching Out*,

At this writing I find myself incarcerated at the age of thirty-seven years old. This is the first time in my life that I ever faced living my life under lock and key. This is the first time in my life that I've ever been confronted with an addiction. However, I did come to this realization approximately two years ago, but failed to do something about it! My addiction at that time was marijuana. I underwent drug rehabilitation for a short period of time, for the counselors diagnosed me as being a borderline addict. To this date I still cannot come to the conclusion how someone can be a borderline addict. Either you are, or you aren't.

During my assessment of past and present drug usage, the counselor approached me with the question, "What makes you think you're addicted to marijuana?" My reply was, "because when I smoke it I become dysfunctional." The counselor retorted, "I'm dysfunctional and I don't smoke marijuana." Out of this, I arrived at the conclusion that I just maybe didn't have a problem after all and it was pointless for me to partake in drug rehabilitation when I wasn't an addict.

I was in big-time denial, for basically the counselor had given me what it was that I sought in the first place. I merely needed to hear it from someone other than myself. I was seeking approval.

It wasn't until November 1989 that I substituted drugs; marijuana to cocaine, resulting in a full blown addiction. Again I found myself undergoing treatment.

It wasn't until several months later that I found myself in another treatment center, for this time my usage had gotten out of hand. At this time I was introduced to the NA program and the Twelve Steps. This was where I found that I was not a unique being, that my story was no different than any of those who sat around the tables. At last I had found my respective place in the world. I was not alone!

The greatest thing that I heard was that I had a disease, a disease called addiction, that there was no known cure, however, the disease could be arrested. There were a few stipulations, yet they were not ones that I could not live up to. The first and foremost stipulation was that "I" must have the desire to stop using, also that I must tap into a source greater than I. For me that source was God and I had to surrender myself in order that I may win.

It was through God, the NA program and the Twelve Steps that I found a new freedom; freedom from my addiction! At this writing

I will have four months of being drug free. I have been incarcerated two months. Needless to say my incarceration was one of the consequences of my addiction. For this, I cannot blame my Higher Power, whom I choose to call God. I can only blame my self-will.

Yet with my continuous participation in the NA program I will never have to find myself behind lock and key again, unless "I" choose to pick up that first drug.

Yours truly with gratitude,
L.D., Missouri

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I was sentenced for the thirteenth time on February 5, 1991. It's another drug-related crime and incarceration, like all the others. One federal sentence, two state prison sentences and ten house of correction sentences which this is: eighteen months.

On February 6th, the day after my incarceration, I attended my first meeting. Who do I see at this meeting but an outside speaker who I ran with, stole with and used drugs with and also shared a cell with three years ago. He was clean for twenty-two months as he spoke at this meeting. We talked after and I've been in touch ever since. I know a force I can't explain brought us together and it may very well be God as I understand Him. There are a lot of meetings here. I feel grateful for all that is offered here.

I've come a long way in these past few months and I've started a twelve-step meeting in the kitchen where I work, and it's an early bird meeting. Also, I've taken the responsibility of chairing the NA meeting here since a good friend of mine left two weeks ago.

Through all the shame and guilt and rejection and lack of love throughout my forty-five years, I've finally stopped fighting and found a way to live. The Fellowship of NA has given me that way and as long as I do what is suggested and follow the Twelve Steps and use all the tools possible, my sanity is safe, as is my freedom.

There is strength and hope today and faith in the future. To realize that not only the physical recovery but the mental and spiritual recovery I've found through working the program gets stronger as each day goes by. I've found freedom in my jail cell that I've never had no matter where I was, in jail or out.

May the force be with you all,
T.B., Massachusetts

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is J_____ and I have been an addict for eighteen years. I used for seventeen of these years. I have ended up in jails several times and now I am in prison, doing a twenty-eight year sentence. I have almost done seven years on this time.

And it wasn't until May of 1989 that I admitted that I had a problem with drugs and that I needed help with my problem. So I attended my first NA meeting and I heard something that I had been needing to hear for a long time. One of the free world men that came in told me that he understood and cared about me and he also told me that I could stop using if I would just try one day at a time.

So that night I admitted that I had this problem and that my life was controlled by drugs, the getting and using and finding ways to get more. But still it was very hard for me to realize that my problem was my addiction. And until I admitted it and made a decision to stop using my life was out of control and I was one messed-up person.

Well to try and sum it all up, I have been in NA now for fourteen months and I have been clean and recovering. And thanks to my Higher Power, who I choose to call God, and my friends in NA and my willingness and open-mindedness and honesty with myself and others, I am able to stay clean the NA way. Thanks to the help of NA, I now, for the first time in a long time, have a life and I am happy.

Thank you,
J.J., Tennessee

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hi, my name is J_____ and I'm an addict. I got clean in the first part of last year because I was in trouble with the courts. I received a three-year suspended sentence which I was to serve on probation, but like an addict, I didn't think I really had a problem, so I went back out there to use.

As a result of my using, I violated my probation and was re-arrested for my violation. I am presently in county jail. I've been here for two months. It's sad that I had to end up here in order for me to realize I am truly an addict, but that's exactly what it took for me.

I've been going to meetings and really want to live a clean life. This time I'm doing it for me. I know that with God and NA I can make

it. I am very grateful to the Fellowship of NA and to my Higher Power because I've received a second chance. The court has ordered rehabilitation instead of incarceration. So I am sitting here waiting for my bed to open up at a treatment center. When I get there, I intend to do whatever it takes for me to stay clean when I finally hit the outside again. I know I have NA and God on my side. Until I found NA and my Higher Power I didn't think there was an answer to my life's problems. So thanks to God, my Higher Power and thanks to NA for a second chance at life.

Love, a recovering addict,
J.H., Illinois

FROM THE OUTSIDE

Editors Note: *This section is dedicated to aiding H&I subcommittees to gain a world-wide perspective of H&I activity. It reflects input received from H&I subcommittees and may address specific issues of interest to members in their H&I efforts, as well as personal experiences obtained through carrying the NA message of recovery to addicts who are unable to attend regular meetings. Therefore we are asking members and H&I subcommittees to submit input to the section to the H&I Coordinator at the WSO, PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999.*

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I'm a recovering addict and my name is R_____.

I was introduced to H&I NA meetings in a treatment center over two years ago and had a very strong seed of NA planted in those meetings. The message of NA recovery by the people in H&I was very clear. For that I'm grateful.

After release from that facility, I attended meetings regularly and I found my first sponsor. She was the person who brought the meeting from H&I to the facility I was in.

Today, I am involved in H&I in my area, and it has been a great reward for me to give back what has been so freely given to me. My Higher Power has put in my life so much to fill the hole I had for so much of my life. Thanks to my Higher Power for giving me new life through NA service and fellowship!

Anonymous

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hi, my name is G_____ and I'm an addict from New Zealand. First of all, I'd like to say how much I enjoy the newsletter, reading of other addicts experiences from both sides of the legal fence, both of which I can relate to.

I started using, drawn to the excitement on the seedy side of life. I realized my ambition very quickly, working in massage parlors as my main income, supplemented with any opportunity to get something for nothing.

I soon came to accept the reality of punishment by law for my activities; isolation from society and my family, amongst the scoring to use, using to live, and living to use.

When I finally had enough and was beaten by my addiction, I was scared, hurt, distrustful and had absolutely no coping skills for a life without drugs. I was lucky enough to end up in another treatment facility. This gave me some clean time (I hadn't been able to stay clean on the outside by myself) and some tools for loving.

However, it was in NA meetings that I was introduced to the concept of a spiritual program for loving—the Twelve Steps and Traditions.

When I left treatment, I was still emotionally crippled, fearful and distrustful, yet I could feel accepted in my hometown NA meetings. I began to recover. I was also introduced to the NA service structure and I had no problem identifying where I felt I could serve best.

At a few months clean, I was willing to take the message I was learning about, and slowly becoming, into hospitals and institutions. Since then, I have continued to do so.

My belief is that H&I meetings are grassroot meetings. I am brought face to face with my addiction, my past, and where my best efforts got me.

I remember that this may be the newcomers first contact with NA, as it has been for many, and that as well as carrying my own personal message, I am an example of the NA legacy of recovery in a fellowship of unity. It is a privilege to see people we have shared with in an H&I meeting turn and greet me as I walk into my home group (this just happened to me again last night).

In my recovery, I have served a term as the Central Area H&I Chairperson, and also for a short time as our regional H&I chairperson. I have made real friends in our fellowship through our questions, learning days, committee meetings, and sharing what we have received through our H&I efforts.

Thanks, God bless,
G.L., New Zealand

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Recovery from this disease was never easy for me. I knew I had a problem with using drugs. And I spent seven years in and out of jail, hospitals, and another twelve-step fellowship. A friend of mine who I used to use with got clean before I did and tried to twelve-step me into NA.

Things kept getting worse and I knew I had tried "everything" else so I tried an NA meeting. It was very uncomfortable to hear other people talk about my problem. But I kept coming back.

The program didn't take right away for me but I just kept coming. I knew there was no place else to go. I thought I was different and some people who came to the program and never had to go out sort of made me feel that way. I'm not sure if it was them or me. But anyway, no other recovery program or book had a chapter about this disease that I could identify with like recovery and relapse. I learned that *"Although all addicts are basically the same in kind, we do, as individuals, differ in degree of sickness and rate of recovery."* That sentence gave me hope that I could recover.

I haven't been in jail for over seven years now and I just celebrated six years clean. I don't have just hope or just faith. I believe the lie is dead. We do recover.

Today, I participate in my recovery by carrying the message to the addict who still suffers in a hospital or institutional setting.

R.H., Arizona

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is J_____ and I am an addict. I wanted to take some time to let you know how an important H&I work has been in my recovery. I always thought I would like to get into H&I because I have a cousin who was incarcerated due to this disease, and because when I was in detox the H&I meeting that was scheduled became a book study due to either lack of involvement or a chairperson who was unable to attend. I was very disappointed. I wanted to show H&I how it should be done.

What happened: One night I was rushing into a meeting because I was insane with self-pity. A fellow addict stopped me at the door and asked how much clean time I had. I replied "six months." He said,

"Come on, you're going to share at an H&I meeting." I was scared but I wanted to get involved and this was a way to begin. On the way there he explained to me the importance of sharing a clear NA message, my first real input on that subject. H&I was showing me something.

After I shared the most wonderful thing happened. I was truly able to get out of myself. All that self-pity was gone and I finally felt some love and empathy. H&I had shown me more.

Today I am still an active member of H&I and it continues to show and teach me new things on a regular basis. I have also been grateful to serve as literature coordinator since July of last year, and have watched our literature orders grow as our subcommittee grows. We are even ordering Spanish literature for our prison meetings. H&I has paid me back a thousand times for disappointing me that night. Still, I wonder if H&I disappointed me or if my Higher Power was working his master plan to get me more involved. I have made a commitment to H&I. Thanks to my Higher Power, I have never been absent.

Gratefully,

J.P.

Las Vegas

ATTENTION!

Since the July '91 issue, the WSC H&I newsletter, *Reaching Out*, has been available by subscription. We have been informing you through fellowship publications for some time now. All regional and area H&I committees who wish to augment their current allotments can subscribe for one year at \$28.00 per subscription. This will allow you to receive 20 copies per printing, for a total of 80 copies per year. Subscriptions are also available to treatment centers and institutions who may wish to subscribe for their clients and inmates. Subscription cards have been sent to regional and area H&I subcommittees. If you need additional subscription cards, or if we somehow missed your committee, please contact the H&I project coordinator at the WSO.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR: If you are a recovering addict who is housed in a correctional or treatment setting, let us hear how Narcotics Anonymous has helped you in your life. Many times the articles that we receive cannot be used because they concentrate on using and not on how NA has helped addicts to recover.

If you are a member of an H&I committee, let others hear how you or your committee have carried the NA message of recovery.

We would like to thank all of the members who have sent in articles and other written contributions to the newsletter. We all have a responsibility to the suffering addict, and to ourselves as recovering addicts, to do our best in carrying the Narcotics Anonymous message of recovery—to participate by sharing with others what we have been freely given.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

At WSC '91, the World Service Conference Administrative Committee was assigned the project of addressing outreach efforts for world services. In an effort to fulfill that assignment, we are asking for fellowship experiences with NA meetings/groups which are isolated within correctional facilities. If any H&I member or NA member not housed in a correctional facility has had experience with forming meetings/groups within an institutional setting not serviced by an H&I committee, we would like you to share your experiences with us. Successes, problems, whatever information you feel may be pertinent in identifying and assisting isolated meetings/groups. If you are an addict housed in a correctional facility and have experience in forming a meeting/group with or without outside support, we would like you to share your experiences with us as well. Successes, problems or any information you feel would be pertinent to this project are welcomed. Any experience, input or information can be sent to:

Reaching Out

c/o the World Service Office
PO Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA, 91409-9999.

**GET INVOLVED AND HELP US CARRY OUT OUR
FELLOWSHIP'S PRIMARY PURPOSE!!**

H&I Learning & Awareness Days Coming Up

5th Annual Florida Regional
Hospitals and Institutions Awareness Weekend
October 2,3,4, 1992
Riverside Inn Resort
Homosassa, Florida
For Reservations: Call (800) 442-2040
For Information: (813) 547-0444
or write 1992 H&I Awareness Weekend,
c/o RCASCNA, PO Box 10053, Brooksville, FL 34601

2nd Carolina Regional H&I Awareness Weekend
August 14-16, 1992
Townhouse Hotel
Columbia, South Carolina
For Reservations: Call (800) 277-8711
For Information: Kevin H. (803) 794-6497,
Craig R. (919) 755-1325, or Bob B. (803) 782-9215

Note: If your area or region is holding an H&I Learning or Awareness Day, and wish to have it listed in *Reaching Out*, please mail a flyer or notice to the H&I coordinator at the WSO. Remember, we print in January, April, July, and October.

**MY GRATITUDE SPEAKS
WHEN I CARE AND WHEN I SHARE
WITH OTHERS
THE NA WAY**