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# REACHING OUT

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## Welcome

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

## FROM THE INSIDE

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Last night I dreamed of drugs, which is not at all unusual. Although I have spent six months in jail so far this year, drugs still play a major role in my everyday thinking. Sometimes it scares me so much that I'm actually afraid to get out and tackle the streets or "normal" life on my own. That is why I am attempting to gain admission into a treatment program, one that focuses on the Twelve Steps. Now I dream of the day that I am released, when I will be free—free from jail and free from my addiction, with thanks to Narcotics Anonymous.

It has taken seventeen years as an addict—bouncing in and out of jails and institutions—to fully accept and admit that I am an addict and that I am powerless over my addiction. Even worse, my life has become total chaos because of it. With NA, I have finally taken my first step toward recovery.



With all the crap that I witnessed in my life, from physical beatings, to overdoses and the deaths of my friends, I thought there couldn't possibly be a God. I realize now that my addiction was rapidly transporting me to jails, institutions, and close calls to death, but something, some power, has protected me. I know I wouldn't have lasted much longer out there because the drugs were killing me physically and emotionally. I thank my Higher Power for saving me from self-destruction and giving me another chance to live, even if it had to be done by putting me in here. Yes, God works in mysterious ways because, here in prison, I have found hope by sharing many experiences with other addicts and NA members. Each day I give thanks to my Higher Power for giving me the opportunity to live life to its fullest, in or out of prison, without drugs as my crutch.

Now, when I look in the mirror I like what I see. My vision is no longer clouded because of drugs. By using NA's HOW—honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness—I know that drugs will no longer defeat me. I have found new friends and new faith in Narcotics Anonymous.

Just for today, as long as I follow the NA principles, I don't need to use. I feel really good about myself. I am so thankful to be alive and to be clean. I am very fortunate to have found NA, with gratitude to my Higher Power. I can now sleep better at night knowing that I have the NA Fellowship on my side, while I'm here and after I'm released.

Although I'm in jail right now, I have NA. With NA and my new friends, my dreams are limitless, and no one can take that away from me.

Clean & serene in jail,  
KW, Canada

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is B\_\_\_\_\_ and I'm from Massachusetts. Soon I will be leaving this jail. Hopefully, I will never return again. During my stay, I have met some really good people in the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous who have helped me in more ways than they'll ever realize.

I am an addict and I am grateful to be clean today. With the help of Narcotics Anonymous and the support of my family and friends,

I want to live a clean life. So many people have tried before to make me see the light, but I was too stubborn to listen and too messed up to care.

This is not the first time I've been incarcerated, but it is the only time I've been willing to listen and learn. I sincerely hope that I can keep the willingness to stay within the program of recovery. My goal in life has always been to help other people in some small way. Knowing now that addiction to any substance always leads to jails, institutions, or death is by no means a small thing. My plan is to stay clean just for today, and perhaps one day I will reach my goal by helping another fellow addict. Thank you Narcotics Anonymous for a second chance at life.

B., Massachusetts

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is L\_\_\_\_\_ and I'm an addict, incarcerated for the third time. My first two incarcerations saved my life and, in a sense, my third one did, too. The third prison term was the result of crimes committed right before I went to treatment. I stayed clean for about seven months after treatment, then, when I realized I was actually going back to prison, I got scared and used again. The next five months I used off and on until I was sentenced on my birthday in December.

When I snapped out of my drug-induced stupor in the county jail, I felt so much pain and guilt; I wanted to die. I was in prison again. Thank God I had established some friends in NA before I had started using again. I received four or five letters every day from people in the program. Letters are so important when you are locked up. Throughout this incarceration, several of the members in my home group have continued to write and be supportive and encouraging. There is so much love from them. It's hard to describe.

I'm incarcerated in a small town where there are no NA meetings, so we have no outside members to come in. We do have one NA meeting, which I chair, here at the facility. Last evening a member from my home group drove two-and-a-half hours to come and speak. I've been on a high ever since. It's great to know that people will go to any length to maintain their own recovery and to share their experience, strength, and hope. I only wish we could get someone interested in coming in regularly (weekly). There are



several large towns close and a major city about forty-five minutes away. So far, I haven't had much luck getting any outside support, but we are surviving and recovering. Our meeting has thirty to forty-five addicts every Monday night. God willing, we will eventually get some outside support.

God bless,  
LB, Oklahoma

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hi. My name is P\_\_\_\_\_ and I am a recovering addict. I would like to thank all of the recovering addicts for their letters to *Reaching Out*. You gave me hope. I'm glad that people do care. I am serving a one-year term for drug-related crimes. NA has a place in my life today. I have a desire to live clean. Without the fellowship, I think I would be dead.

Narcotics Anonymous is a wonderful fellowship; it has saved so many lives, including mine. Without the people in the rooms, so many lives would be lost.

Thank you fellow addicts and NA for letting me live today. Also my thanks to *Reaching Out* for bringing us the message of hope.

PT, New Jersey

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I, K\_\_\_\_\_, am incarcerated in a county jail in New Jersey. There are Narcotics Anonymous meetings here, and I go every week. The speaker touches my heart every time because I can relate to everything he says. It seems like I am the one speaking, and it makes me feel good about myself.

I am very interested in NA. It seems like using was all I was living for, day after day. Believe it or not, I was tired of getting high. I just needed someone to encourage me to stop using, someone to take me by the hand and say, "Come on, I'm taking you to a meeting." You know, I'd never heard of NA until I got sent to this place. I've heard of rehabilitation centers, but never NA. I'm very glad I found NA. I think I can stay clean if I continue to go, a day at a time. I'll be going up for parole this month. I hope they recommend me for a date.

KL, New Jersey

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is D\_\_\_\_\_ and I am most definitely an addict. I am forty-three years old and have spent almost twelve years in prison, although not all at one time—two years here, three years there. You all know the deal. All the time I have spent in various prisons never seemed to bother me. I guess not, half the time I was so high I didn't even know I was in prison.

Sure I went to NA, trying to get early parole. I learned how to talk the talk, but I never could seem to walk the walk. Then a miracle happened. I was in a federal halfway house, and naturally I had given my parole officer seven hot urine's in seven weeks and also got a new charge for shoplifting (trying to get money for drugs); this is when the miracle happened. I had a parole officer who cared about people and was familiar with recovery. Instead of simply sending me back to prison, he sent me to a rehab.

At this rehab, I was re-introduced to NA and the Twelve Steps. While there, I was faking my way through the program when something happened that changed my life. A speaker from the local H&I committee shared at one of the meetings, and I felt like it was me sitting up there speaking. I shared from the heart for the first time at that meeting. I was scared and felt unsure of myself. To this day, I couldn't tell you what I said, but I know that when I was done, I was crying and felt better than I had in a long time. The people that were at that meeting made me feel like I belonged there.

After leaving the rehab, I was sent back to prison on my new charge (two to four years). It was a different ball game this time. I started attending NA because I wanted to, not because it would get me out early (the judge made that perfectly clear). This time is the hardest I have ever done, simply because I know there is a better way awaiting me on the outside. However, it is also a great time for me. I take it a day at a time and every minute seems to bring me closer to becoming a whole person again. I know I have a long way to go, but I also know that by placing my life in God's hands, attending NA, being honest, and sharing the good as well as the bad, I can make it.

As of right now, I have ten-and-one-half months clean, a day at a time. For this I thank God and the Fellowship of NA. I would also like to thank *Reaching Out* and the H&I committees for bringing hope and inspiration to all of us who cannot attend meetings on the



outside. To all the inmates who think they can't make it without drugs, I would like to say that if I can make it, after over twenty-five years with the disease of addiction, so can you.

God's blessings,  
D, Pennsylvania

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is L\_\_\_\_\_ and I'm a forty-two-year-old female who is trying hard to recover.

I just wanted to thank you for the wonderful stories. They help me so much.

I am presently awaiting a five-year federal sentence on a drug charge. What I want to share is how I found myself behind bars again with two-and-a-half years clean.

I didn't want to accept the fact that greed for money and material things was part of my addiction. I felt that, as long as I stayed clean, God would allow me to have the things I wanted, not what I needed. So I started transporting drugs. Well, as a result, I'm living one of the promises of addiction—jail!

However, through God's grace and the Fellowship of NA, I've learned to accept the things I cannot change. As a result, the loving people of NA have continued to love me when I couldn't even love myself.

Today, I have three-and-a-half years clean and, most important of all, I have found God through the Twelve Steps of NA. Thank you NA and *Reaching Out* for saving my life and giving me hope.

Grateful,  
L, Tennessee

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hi, my name is D\_\_\_\_\_ and I'm an addict. I never thought that I would be able to say that and honestly mean it.

I am writing to you from behind prison walls where I have had a lot of time to really get to know myself and to get close to my Higher Power that I choose to call God. I have never had a problem with God, but I would call on Him only in my times of trouble.

I have been in prison before, but never thought I had a drug problem because I was too busy using and copping to realize it. This time I was lucky enough to find the NA program before I was locked down.

Two months before I was sentenced, I went to a treatment center with the intention of just smoking pot. After a week, something happened to me that I cannot explain. I just felt closer to God and all the people around me; I knew my life had to change. While in treatment we went to at least two NA meetings a week and I got a chance to meet some real nice people.

After my release, I was going to two meetings a day until I found a temporary sponsor, then I went to at least one a day. After thirteen days on the street, I was in prison, but I stayed clean and kept my program and Higher Power first.

My sponsor has been a big help working my steps with me and helping me take things a day at a time. This has been the hardest part for me because I love to live in the future and always regret my past, but I am starting to let go of the past and let the future come. It's still a struggle, but I have all the help I need from other recovering addicts in NA. My life hasn't come together overnight, but I'll tell you it's getting there. I have a lot to look forward to on the outside. I have regained the trust I lost in my family and I have a lot of new friends. I owe my life to the NA program. I can't wait to get out and start giving back what I received, through H&I work and any other way possible.

If my words can help anyone the way others have helped me, I will be grateful. For anyone out there that wants this program, it's here for the taking. I can honestly say that, today, I'm clean and happy. Thank you.

DP, Maryland

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is B\_\_\_\_\_ and I'm an addict. Thanks to NA, I can recognize it and do something to help myself and others recover before it's too late.

As a two-time loser and relapser, now in the Georgia Department of Corrections, I have been gifted with the serenity of recovery. I had to surrender my will to win a battle with addiction. I can now recognize it was my will that got me here, and God's will for me to work a program of recovery through the Twelve-Step Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship. Just for today, I know that I never again have to use drugs. Jails, institutions, and death do not have to be my only alternatives; I can find hope, faith, strength, empathy, and love in my program within NA.



I am here in prison for the second time for a drug-related crime to serve a ten-year sentence. Obtaining drugs any way I could was something I thought I had to do to avoid becoming sick, although I now realize I was also willing to do this. Now, thanks to the NA Fellowship, I realize how sick I was when using and how the principles of recovery have renewed my health. I am grateful for the wisdom to know the difference.

I remember not taking addiction or my recovery seriously. I felt that I was different, I had recovered. I did not need to follow simple suggestions such as checking in with fellow addicts, getting a sponsor, attending meetings, praying, and working a spiritual program. I relapsed seven years later. Today, after having experienced the side effects of tolerance, progression, and another felony, the slogans I hear like "let go and let God," "we can do what I alone cannot," "keep coming back," and "just for today" take on a new meaning to me.

I have been appointed group chairperson of our newly formed NA meeting within the prison system here, thanks to the grace of my Higher Power, whom I choose to call God. I have learned the meaning of "we must give it away to keep it." The commitment has kept me working the steps. I remain open, honest, and willing when sharing in our meetings; it has helped me in my recovery. Attending meetings and sharing my experience, strength, and hope does not come easily for me but, as I do, I find that I am neither different nor alone.

When I attend meetings regularly and share with another addict, I remember who and what I am: an addict whose life has been controlled by self and drugs, one that has come to know a new meaning of life by abstaining from all drugs.

My selfish way of using and finding ways and means to obtain more drugs has enabled me to use self-destructive thought and patterns of living that have bankrupted me spiritually, psychologically, and physically. I have suffered the consequences: jails, institutions, and near death due to an overdose. Not all of us need come to these alternatives.

I have a conscious contact with God and, by applying the Twelve Steps to my life and working them daily, I can keep what has been freely given to me in NA. The reward has been a new sense of freedom. I no longer have to suffer from an obsession to use. From

a desire to stop using, working the steps, and the help of God, I can maintain this new sense of freedom even here in prison, as long as I do not use or create reservations for future use.

Today, by keeping good associations, sticking with the winners, reading my Basic Text, participating in meetings to the best of my ability, turning my life and will over to the care of God, and asking Him to consciously guide my life, I have been relieved of old feelings of restlessness, irritability, and discontent. I have come to know patience, empathy, and love and became happy, joyous, and free. By my sharing this with other addicts, God is allowing me to grow in my spirituality and I am free. Thank you NA.

Another grateful addict,  
BS, Georgia



## FROM THE OUTSIDE

*Editors Note: This section is dedicated to aiding H&I subcommittees to gain a worldwide 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 articles for inclusion in this section to the H&I Coordinator at the WSO, PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999.*

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I'm an addict named D\_\_\_\_. Before October of 1985, my life was hopeless and, for the most part, without emotion. During the thirteen years of my life prior to picking up and the seventeen active using years to follow, I was told by many that my life and myself were insane. By the time I got to NA, I had countless brushes with the law, spent time in jail, and went through eight years of court-appointed psychiatrists.

An amazing thing happened when I stumbled into the rooms of NA. Very soon I no longer wanted to die, the voices in my head went away, and I even began to bathe on a regular basis. Within thirty days I got a sponsor and a home group and attended meetings regularly.

After seven months, I became GSR of my home group. It was a great honor for me and that is where I first heard about H&I from the oldtimers at our meeting. They kept asking me, "Where do they (H&I) need help?" The winners all wanted to be involved and give it back. As time went on, I was looking for a way I could help, too; I was feeling stagnant. I was also at a bad place with the steps. Soon after that I was asked to share at a detox. I was struck by the sincerity of the panel leader and his desire to give it back to those who didn't have access to regular meetings.

A year later, as I sat after a meeting, I complained that I had nothing to do and wanted to help. I was told that the region was going to try something different. We were going to bring an H&I meeting into a forensic unit. The next week we went and did what may have been one of the first H&I meetings in a state forensic

hospital. I was frightened at first, but as I was leaving, I was struck with enormous gratitude. The last month, I saw an old friend in the hospital at the H&I meeting. I was glad to be there for him. I chaired that meeting for thirteen months. I found that meeting to be one of the hardest and most gratifying meetings I've ever done. I've found today not only does NA work for me but, through H&I, I can help it work for someone else.

In loving service,  
DJ, Pennsylvania

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I am an addict. My name is M\_\_\_\_. I am fortunate enough to belong to the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. I also belong to my area and regional H&I committees.

I have been doing H&I work since I got clean. H&I work has changed, but in most ways remained the same. When I first became involved with H&I there was no committee. The H&I message was carried by the groups. At that time, if a member of NA wanted to get to seven meetings a week in my area, one or two of those meetings had to be H&I meetings.

Eventually, we formed an H&I committee in the area (the first area subcommittee). Then we formed panels, and God and the members of the area allowed me to serve as the first H&I chair. Next we formulated guidelines and began having monthly meetings. I would not have given a million bucks for what it felt like being a part of it all.

Now, six-and-a-half years later, I'm still a part of it all. The H&I committee in my area is the best-attended and most active of all the subcommittees (there are now five total).

It is very important for me to be a part of H&I service for two reasons. First, I feel it is my obligation to give any addict the message that was so freely given to me and to relay the fact that the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using. Second, maybe you were saved from death because of H&I, I know I was. I don't mean from hearing the message, but more from being a part of carrying it. H&I work is a two-way street, both helping the suffering addict in the facility and this suffering addict sometimes. So, I guess the best things are the lasting things. I know I'll keep going back!

MC, West Virginia



Dear *Reaching Out*,

We would like to share some of the highlights of our efforts with the first annual H&I Awareness Weekend. It was over a year in planning, making preparations, publicizing through *Reaching Out*, *NA Way*, and T-shirt sales. This event surpassed expectations in attendance and fellowship. There were workshops, speakers, and memorable experiences, strengths, and hopes shared the entire weekend. One of the many benefits that comes from service is the camaraderie that develops through singleness of purpose and principles. The how, what, and why of H&I work was discussed and represented through area, regional, and world members.

Thank you for all your support: *Reaching Out*, *NA Way*, and our World Service H&I Coordinator. Thank you for allowing us to serve.

Carolina Regional  
H&I Committee

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I am one of the newest WSC H&I voting members. The process I have gone through to get here has been nothing short of a miracle. God's will has shown at every turn. I am grateful and show my gratitude through H&I service.

My many years of active addiction taught me a lot of survival skills under very adverse situations. My first spiritual awakening came when I was arrested. I knew I didn't have to live in active addiction anymore, but I didn't know how to change. My introduction to recovery came when three women came into the prison to share with us. I knew I was in the right place at the right time for the first time in my life. I was the only woman inside who dared say I wanted to stay clean. When I got out there was a little more insanity (and using), but my meetings stayed very important to me, so eventually I put together some clean time.

I attended my first convention and came back to my home group with a new sense of awareness. When the secretary asked for panel members for the local women's prison, God put my hand up. Thinking about that first commitment still gives me the chills; I had found my purpose in life! That was seven years ago, and I still feel the same way about carrying the NA message. I joined the area H&I

subcommittee, which was pretty sparse at the time. We did everything we could to let other recovering addicts know H&I and the still-suffering addict needed them. We had dances, learning days, and flyer hangings. We went to groups and let the members know what H&I was. I was the subcommittee secretary for a year, then the chairperson.

This was a time of great change in our fellowship—the 4th Edition Basic Text and no more H&I can. It was also a time of change in my personal recovery. I ended a long-term relationship with an active addict and let go of my first sponsor (who was the wrong sex). I lost it! I forgot that Step Twelve tells us the way we get rid of the pain is by working the steps in all our affairs. One more day of insanity was enough; I came back to NA with a new vigor. I was told to keep coming. Your love saved me.

Two months later, I attended my first regional H&I subcommittee meeting. They made me temporary secretary and told me H&I service would take me to wondrous places. I never could have imagined that five years later I'd be here.

I take my recovery and service very seriously, but I also have learned about having fun. When a committee is fun it's attractive to new members. I've worked very hard to get to where I am today. We've worked together on input to the *H&I Handbook*, H&I and the Twelve Traditions, *Behind the Walls*, the mock presentation tape, the orientation tape, all kinds of guidelines, and, most recently, outreach, and our external image in international concerns. My sponsor also does H&I service. Some members call me a service junkie or even a service junkie groupie, but I'm just another recovering addict in NA who loves H&I.

Lovingly in service,  
JM, New Hampshire

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hi. I'm an addict and my name is T\_\_\_\_. I'd like to thank the God of my understanding for allowing me the chance to write a letter from the outside.

My story is not unusual or, should I say, unique, as I thought it was for so long. I continued down my road of destruction only to end up in jail after the judge called me a drug addict and sentenced



me to fourteen months. Well, for the first couple of days I thought I would die, because I was being detoxed in five days. Little did I know then, as I do now, that God was working in my life.

The first month I wasn't living, only surviving. Anyway, after I began to adjust to my surroundings once again, chameleon that I am, I lived by the laws of the jails, the gossip, the cards, and day-to-day living where you didn't feel, you just made it. Something started happening. I began going to church services and, while I was there, found some sort of peace; then, when I left, I had to become (or thought I had to) chameleon once again. In my cell I was alone and I began talking to this air vent as if it were God. He must have heard my cry for help because a few days later they called for us to go to an NA meeting. The message was brought up from H&I and its members began to lay the ground for a seed to be planted.

Now, I must admit, the first time I went to an NA meeting I went strictly to get off the tier, you know for a change; not knowing the first thing about NA, I was simply curious. The first couple of meetings I was just there. Then, again, something began to happen. The person sharing was telling my story. She seemed to be sincere. I began to look forward to Wednesdays and to attending these meetings regularly. I began to feel more comfortable at these meetings than I did back on the tier. Girls were coming and going in the jail like clockwork and I just couldn't stand it anymore.

One of the members I identified with assured me that I, too, could be on the outside and find a new way of life without the use of drugs. Well, that I pretty much believed, but I wasn't sure what kind or how much of a life there would be after the drugs were gone. I started talking and sharing exactly how I was feeling and that I was willing to go to any lengths and means to at least give it a try. That member gave me a great deal of literature that I actually did read. I enjoy reading and it was different. It was suggested when I got out—which was soon as I had already received a date—to attend an NA meeting before I did anything else. Well, that's what I did. I called NA only because I also had lost contact with all my old so-called friends and needed to be around people. I went to my first outside NA meeting and, God willing, will soon be celebrating one year in recovery. I'm grateful to be an addict because if I wasn't I wouldn't be who I am today. I am God's greatest miracle.

I write this letter to say thank you to my sponsor and to give what was so freely given to me. My life on the outside is just that; I have a life today. I'm not corny or square. I honestly like myself today and wouldn't give up the gift of life for anyone or anything in the world. The slogans and sayings you hear today are actual facts, I've learned. This program can and does work if you really want it—and I want it.

T.



**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.



