
REACHING OUT

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NAWS, PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409-9099

Welcome

We would like to welcome all of you to the NA World Services 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,

Well, my experience is like so many in NA. I used to survive the self-torment I created. I would do things that were contrary to the principles my parents taught me.

I can remember being happy as a child, but that changed after an abusive incident. I felt dirty, afraid, and ashamed. Not long after that I found a solution to the way I felt—getting high.

It made everything go away; no cares and no memories, just a wonderful buzz. A few weeks later I was introduced to my drug of choice and had a twenty-one-year relationship that nothing could interfere with—not marriage, not children, not parents, not friends, not the law, not my conscience, and not God.

I expected to die on my terms, using drugs and using people. My drug of choice had one competitor as I grew older: other drugs and things that gave me a rush.

My world crashed around me on 1 January 2001. Every little fear, fault, and forbidden secret was suddenly upon me as I stared blankly at the police officer reading me my rights.

In jail I thought of the solution to my problem: I'm already in shame, so I might as well die that way. Three times I had the calm courage to follow through with my solution, and each time the man in the cell next to me would read a section of a religious book and I couldn't follow through. What now, a life of shame and guilt?

I got out of jail on an expensive bond and went back to work. I had to lie to my employer so I could keep my job. The guilt and memories I thought were gone were right there waiting for me like a bill long overdue.

I was fighting alone, and I was losing. I wanted to resort to another addiction. I knew I had a problem with sex. I again planned on suicide and twice, again, something put someone there to intervene.

Fed up, I went to an NA meeting. All I wanted was the address or number for SAA. I was greeted by a man and I got to the point; after all, I wasn't a drug addict. I used because I wanted to, not because I woke up shaking and sick. Of course, he didn't know the place I was looking for, but said that another member might, if I could stay and wait.

As I stayed and I waited, I noticed it wasn't anything like I remembered from 1986 when I had to do that joke of thirty signatures and report back to court to get a ticket for possession dismissed. I guess I hadn't hit bottom yet.

I listened to regular-looking people describe their problems, fears, and life stories. I thought someone had to be playing a joke on me. How could they know my life story?

After the meeting I tried to leave quickly because something broke and I, a grown man, was crying in public, in front of strangers. That man who had greeted me caught me at my car. I told him I didn't have a drug problem, I worked, took care of my wife and kids, and was just responsible. He asked, "Well, why did you come here?"

The next day came and I went back. I don't know why, but I did. I listened and realized that I was an addict with many different addictions. I was lying to myself, and my family and a few friends knew what I was refusing to accept.

Yes, I was the last to know. I ignored the stupid behavior, the money problems, the poor decision making, and the lack of respect toward others.

I've worked with three sponsors since I've been in NA, and each time I get to the inventory, life on life's terms interferes. I picked up my nine-month-clean keytag three days before I was sentenced to ten years in a Texas prison.

I am still in prison and blessed to have H&I visitors coming to help keep recovery available to those of us behind razor wire.

I don't like where I am, but thanks to NA I know that just for today I can be clean and love myself. It's funny; now I look back to my last using day and see a lot of just-for-today clean time. If I can say I have four years-plus clean, then anyone can, but you have to stay and keep an open mind, and then the miracle happens.

GF, Texas

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hi. My name is J and I am presently incarcerated in the state of Oregon for the second time.

I've been using all of my life, as far back as when I was twelve. I first started to use, I guess, to escape living in a dysfunctional family. I was in and out of juvenile detention until I was seventeen, and on my twentieth birthday I was on my way to prison for twenty years. Increasing my drug use led me to committing serious crimes in order to support my habit.

I spent a little over ten years in prison, at the end of which time I had completed a few alcohol and drug programs with a couple of years of A&D counseling. By the time of my release in 1995 I was married, and after being released I obtained a good job. For the first time in my life I thought I had it all—a wife, job, home, legal license, car, actual bank account, etc.

Seventeen months after my release I relapsed and started using drugs again. Four years after my release I once again found my way back to prison to serve another ten-year sentence. First would be fifty-nine months for parole violation, and then another sixty months for a new criminal offense, all due to the disease of addiction.

I've been clean for over five years, but to me that was meaningless until by chance I discovered NA. I came to NA at first because it was required of me in order to receive treatment for my hep C. At first I was angry at the system because I felt I was being forced to go to NA in order to get treatment.

However, as the weeks went by and I listened to other addicts and their stories, how working the Twelve Steps of NA had changed their lives, I felt that maybe I should give it a try myself.

See, being clean for over five years isn't when my recovery started. It started when I walked through the doors into an NA meeting. Even though I'm only on my Fourth Step of the Twelve Steps of NA recovery, I now have a home in NA and its fellowship. I'm no longer there because of needing treatment for my hep C. I'm there because for the first time in my life I've found a home with other addicts by working the twelve-step program of NA.

It has given me knowledge and courage to stay clean. The road to recovery isn't easy, and as an addict, it's one day at a time. But without NA, my recovery wouldn't be possible.

JB, Oregon

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is Y and I am an addict. Shortly before I began my sentence I surrendered to a power greater than myself. That power I chose to call God.

I was led in the direction of NA through a friend who used to hold his chips all the time. He used to tell me about the program. But I, being the addict that I am, was trying not to hear any of that. He told me he was going to a meeting and asked me if I wanted to attend.

He knew that I was trying to kick and was trying to do it alone. He told me his story and about how NA had changed his life. I knew he wasn't lying because it was right in front of me.

I was in a relationship and had a family, but I went to the meeting anyway. Right then, after I listened to a few stories, I knew I couldn't do it alone.

After that meeting, I went home and a lot of things had changed. Everything was happening so fast. My relationship was a disaster. In the mix of all that, I had just gotten my two oldest kids back. I wanted to think that my life was together, but it wasn't, because I was wanted by the law on a felony warrant that was three years old.

A couple of days later, at a meeting that just happened to be across the street from my house, I listened to what other people had to share. Right then I knew that I had to make some positive changes in my life, just for once. I talked to my sponsor and my oldest son and told them about my old warrant and that I was ready to make some

adjustments in my life. So, I turned myself in and was sentenced to three years in prison. When I came here I brought my Higher Power with me. I feel so clean and uplifted.

Since I've been here I've been using a contact that was given to me by the World Service Office. I wrote to the address and I have now been working the steps, doing assignments, anything that's been suggested by my contact person.

Until I worked Step One I hadn't known what dereliction was. Believe me when I say that in more ways than one it was a major part of my life. I must admit that I sat around for a while doing nothing and feeling sorry for the negative choices that I made while I was using. The key was, what am I going to do now that I'm not using?

I don't want to end up at the dead end of some street, lost, walking in the darkness and doing who knows what, or living in a dungeon with no lights, gas, or water.

When I discharge I have no positive place to reside. Everyone says that I need referrals from parole, which I'm not eligible for, so I need to wait until I discharge to apply for transitional shelter and treatment so that I can have a personal interview.

If I don't have a destination when I get off of the bus, I know I will be under stress. I'm so afraid, and even more afraid because I can't predict tomorrow. I do have the desire to remain drug-free, and I have in my mind that just for today I will not use—no matter what.

Through my Higher Power, NA, and the NA contact I have, I can see the light at the end of the tunnel. I will not give up before the miracle, because the darkness has passed and the true light is shining in.

YH, Texas

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is W and I am a recovering addict. I am serving a sentence in a correctional institution in the state of Ohio. I am really at my bottom now. I have struggled with drug addiction in the past, but with God's grace I am in prison, not dead.

Before coming to prison I had relapsed a number of times, and each time it got worse. I have now been clean for ten months. I thank the God of my understanding for helping me to stay clean and for being able to learn more about recovery in NA.

I have been reading the *Reaching Out* newsletters about other recovering addicts and attending the NA meetings here in prison. What I've learned from my own experience, as well as the experience of others, is that the disease of addiction wants me dead.

Since I've been in recovery I have contacted other recovering addicts however I can and have shared my experience. The solution they share with me is that total surrender is the foundation of this God-given program of Narcotics Anonymous. You never have to use again.

I also remember members of the fellowship telling me to beware—the disease of addiction can manifest itself in life in other ways that can trick me into thinking I can take just one. However, I will use another recovering addict to help me combat the disease.

I'm relatively short and I've been given IP #23, *Staying Clean on the Outside*. In the pamphlet it has suggestions about what I should do once I leave here: Don't use no matter what. Go to an NA meeting. Ask your Higher Power to keep you clean, today. Call your sponsor. Read NA literature. Talk to other recovering addicts. And, last but not least, work the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous.

I never have to relapse again, just for today. Thank God for NA and the *Reaching Out* newsletter.

Sincerely,
WB, Ohio

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hello. I hope this letter finds everyone great. I'm going to write something a little different. My name is D. I'm lucky to be back here in prison. I'm lucky to have the chance to be able to sit here and write this letter.

You see, I am an addict who has no control. I have pushed myself in such a negative way for so long. That's how I'm sitting where I'm sitting. But, as I sit here with thirteen months clean and three to ten years to go, I'm clean, working on my recovery every day—on myself, on my amends (and wow, there are many), and on my relationships with my family.

As negative as this may sound or feel, you know, there's only one way I can look, and that is up, and I thank my Higher Power for giving me another chance and for helping me to see me again. I pray this finds someone else who's been there.

As I have been taught, don't dwell on the past; think positive, and look forward. It does get better. Been there before, and it's time to stay clean and free—now!

DM, Texas

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is D. I'm twenty-seven years old and I'm now doing my third prison term. I'm not proud of that fact. I just know it's because I'm an addict. That's not hard for me to say.

I would like to say a few things that might help reach someone who is still sick and caught up in the disease, trying for recovery. I know the things about the NA program and about the steps—they work. I know I'm working them, one day at a time.

Honesty's the best way, as they say. Well, I always ran to NA because it got me out of trouble with my parole officer. For over ten years I did this, and now I'm locked up once again, but only for a short term, and I'm enjoying my recovery. I've been clean since the day of my arrest.

Before, I never wanted recovery. All those times, I hid behind NA because I relapsed and did not want to face the music. Today I want recovery and the Fellowship of NA, and I'm doing the Twelve Steps. Sometimes it's hard, but I have God on my side and I feel better being clean. Thanks to God and the NA program I'll be able to live a new, happy life free from drugs, jails, institutions, or death.

One day at a time, my name is D from California. Thanks for letting me share.

DW, California

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is A. I'm a grateful forty-year-old recovering addict. I've been clean for fifteen months this time, thanks to the God of my understanding and the NA members from one of the areas in Italy who helped me to believe something that I never believed before: that an addict, any addict, can stop using.

Now I believe in NA. What happened to me every day when I went to meetings was that we didn't look at your color or your religion. All of the members showed me the same thing—we're all sailors on the same ship of love and peace.

I never knew how much staying clean meant before. My life has changed. It doesn't matter that addiction led me to prison. The important news is that NA saved my miserable life.

I want to express my gratitude to NA and especially to the God of my understanding. Without the love and care of a Higher Power, nothing I've experienced would have been possible. My greatest respect and love to all of you.

Thank you,
AS (aka BC), Italy

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is R and ten months ago I started going to NA meetings. I'm incarcerated in Nebraska and just finished reading my first copy of *Reaching Out*.

I'm an addict and I thought my problem was really no problem at all. I'm addicted to prescription drugs and I thought that as long as the doctor was giving them to me, I couldn't be classified as an addict.

I went to my first meeting because I thought it would be a good way to get out of my cell. When I got to the meeting it seemed that everybody wanted out of their cells. Wrong. Some of those people, just like me, were addicts and wanted to be clean; they just weren't sure how to do it on the outside.

Behind the walls, with locks, it's quite easy for me. Before, I had it made. The doctor gave the drugs to me, so when I got to jail I just kept getting high. After I attended my first meeting I realized there would be a way for me to stop, just like everyone else. At first I thought, sure they quit, they can't bring illegal drugs into the facility. But I could.

The group was led by a man just a little older than me, someone I partied with when I was a teen, and he was one of those I thought would never stop.

It took almost eight weeks, but with the help of others I came up with a plan that seemed to fit my needs. I was told to explain my situation to the doctor. I knew if I told the doctor my situation, that would be it, but I really did need something for the pain. We decided that someone who understood addicts in recovery and the use of medications would go to the doctor with me and help me ask how

we could go about alleviating the pain without the powerful drugs that I had been taking. The result was that I saw a pain-management physician, and I'm currently being weaned off the prescription drugs.

With my Higher Power, my new sponsor, and the part of the NA group here who really are working the steps with me, I am currently almost one hundred percent off the medications. Without NA and my new sponsor I think it would have been a miracle for me to even try, but with the encouragement I get at meetings and from my sponsor, in a few more weeks I will be completely off the prescription meds.

I already see the world offering more and my life becoming a steadier place to live. Once I'm out of this jail, which will be shortly, I can envision being at meetings and helping those who are truly looking for it.

I thank NA for being there, and for having someone who took the time to walk with me the whole way, never discouraging me but encouraging the steps I took in the right direction. I now know that I can tell anyone that if you want to be clean, NA can and will help if you want it to.

Thank you, NA, and I'll keep coming back because it works. My friend and sponsor is such an inspiration, and reads *Reaching Out* faithfully. I think it would be encouraging in a way nothing else could be if you noted that my friend is a wonderful and inspirational man from Nebraska, and telling my story is the best way I could thank him.

Thanks again,
RI, Nebraska

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hello, my name is C and I'm a recovering addict. I am currently incarcerated in a county jail in Alabama. However, I am originally from Florida. I'm waiting to go to prison on an eight-year sentence that the disease of addiction brought me to.

I was first introduced to drugs in 1993, and it immediately became an act-of-love thing. I was first introduced to NA in 2004 when I checked into a recovery program in Georgia, but I went for the wrong reason, so I checked out.

After about six months I had gone back to my bottom again and was going to be in the streets, so I went to a treatment center in Florida. After two months, I left. I really knew I was powerless over my addiction and that my life was definitely unmanageable—look, I was just sleeping in the streets.

Well, I left that treatment center also. I was missing something the whole time. I always believed there was a power greater than me; I just never used it.

In February of 2005 I was arrested in Florida on a violation of probation, which came from failure to report in the state of Alabama where I had picked up a charge while working in that state, and received an eight-year suspended sentence and five years' probation.

After a week I was extradited back to Alabama, and after about a month my probation was revoked. While lying in my cell I began to think about my life and where I wanted it to go, and that's when it hit me that I needed to turn to God for help.

The jail had a substance-abuse program that had just started up, and I wrote a letter and prayed that I would get picked to enter the program. After two weeks, my prayers were answered. I am now on my Seventh Step, and God has definitely removed my shortcomings. This is the first time in my life I have felt happy, and even though I'm locked up, I'm free on the inside.

I came across a copy of *Reaching Out* that was lying on a table in the program area, and I've read it probably twenty times. Even though it's an old issue, the addiction is still the same.

So, I am thankful for NA and all the addicts who share their experiences that another addict like me might receive something from. God bless, and I will keep coming back.

CW, Alabama

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I'm an addict and I made the choice to use again, knowing and not really caring about what would happen to me. I was two days short of two years, and stayed clean through six months of interferon treatment that cured my hep C.

What got me incarcerated again was a choice to do it my way, again. I'm pretty hard-core when it comes to using, and when it comes to recovery. I don't want you stepping on my dope, and the same thing goes with NA recovery.

My sponsor always says, "Just because you're in recovery does not make you exempt from pain." It's about working the Twelve Steps with a sponsor, finding out who I am, getting a relationship with a Higher Power, and finding the spiritual principles in the Twelve Steps so that I can become a practicing human being. It's my choice to practice these principles in all of my affairs.

I'll be out in a year, learning and practicing being a human being, one day at a time.

Much love,
RM, Washington

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is E and I am now thirty-nine years old and incarcerated for the third time in my life. I have pretty much been going down the same path since the age of twelve due to not really having a role model in my life.

My mother had to work since my parents got divorced when I was eleven, and I really took it to heart, but others around me did not seem to notice.

Well, I pretty much grew up not expecting much on a day-to-day basis, so I started hanging out with the wrong crowd and soon found myself in situations I was unable to wiggle my way out of, and since then I've been in and out of trouble and always blaming all of my problems on my past life experiences.

Today I look at it differently because I've found a group of others like me who have been down the same road that I have.

So now, by participating in NA I'm able to listen to others and use their experiences to help me sort through what I've gone through, and I'm just now able to talk about it and get that monkey off my back.

So, just for today I'm very grateful for the program of Narcotics Anonymous because it's helping me grow up and see things around me for what they truly are, and I'm holding myself accountable for the first time in my life.

Thank you,
ES, Oregon

FROM THE OUTSIDE

Editor's Note: This section is dedicated to aiding H&I subcommittees to gain a worldwide perspective on 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. You may also find personal experience from those members who heard the message on the inside, and are now out in the community. Members and H&I subcommittees should send their input to NAWS, PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999, USA.

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I decided to write this for numerous reasons. I wanted to share an awesome experience I had while participating in an H&I meeting. Perhaps it may inspire another NA member to participate in H&I service. I know the experience has deepened my gratitude, and has actually deepened a sense of pride that my journey has put me on a path that involves doing service the NA way though H&I. I also wanted to share this with the men and women who are the recipients of H&I service, and share one of the reasons NA members go out of their way and take time out of their day to drive out to an institution to carry an NA message of hope and freedom to the addict who still suffers.

I, personally, have been participating in H&I service for way over twenty years, which in itself is a testimony to the power and beauty of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. Nineteen-plus years were spent primarily going into county jails and correctional facilities/prisons. I can't explain to you what that has done for my recovery. I've had many spiritually rewarding experiences by doing what those who came before me taught me to do.

Anyway, a little while back I was asked to take one of those nice, fairly long drives to participate in an H&I meeting at an institution. The panel leader who asked told me that out of the past five or six months they had only gotten into the institution once, so if I didn't want to come he would understand. Once again I only did what others have taught me to do—do my part, and my part was to show up.

Well, we got in that night, which was a good thing. We went to the chapel where we were going to have the meeting, put out the literature, and sat down to wait for the inmates to file in.

The meeting started in the traditional H&I manner, the panel chair opening the meeting and getting different guys to do the readings. Then the panel leader stated that he would share a little before he turned the meeting over to myself and another panel participant, followed by questions or sharing if any of the fellas wanted or needed to.

Being there was great, made me feel good, etc., etc., etc. What happened next was one of those moments when one sentence can really make the whole experience that much more worthwhile. That one sentence brought a lump into my throat and my eyes misted over, and I looked out into the audience, and they felt it too.

What the panel chairperson shared that night, that one sentence that I will never forget, is: "The reason we are here tonight is that we didn't want you to think that we've forgotten about you." I don't know how you're reacting to this as you read it, but the night that was shared it impacted a roomful of men who were all striving for the same thing—a daily reprieve from the insanity of the disease that wants to take us all out.

I can only hope that A asks me to come on a panel with him again in the very near future. I know the experience will enrich my recovery. Thank you, NA, and thank you, HP, for allowing my journey to cross the path of a member who got me involved with H&I.

HS, California

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. Send us a letter addressed *Dear Reaching Out*. 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. Please keep this in mind when you write to us.

If you are a member of an H&I subcommittee, let others hear how you or your subcommittee 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.

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



H&I Learning & Awareness Days Coming Up

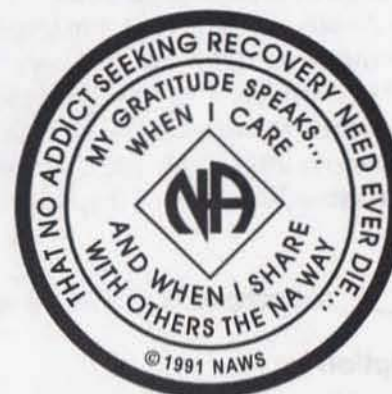
Note: If your area or region is holding an H&I learning or awareness day and wishes to have it listed in *Reaching Out*, please mail a flier or notice to NAWS.

Our planned publication deadlines are as follows:

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
October 2006	15 July 2006
January 2007	15 October 2006
April 2007	15 January 2007
July 2007	15 April 2007



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



"When at the end of the road we find that we can no longer function as a human being, either with or without drugs, we all face the same dilemma. What is there left to do? There seems to be this alternative: either go on as best we can to the bitter ends—jails, institutions, or death—or find a new way to live. In years gone by, very few addicts ever had this last choice. Those who are addicted today are more fortunate. For the first time in man's entire history, a simple way has been proving itself in the lives of many addicts. It is available to us all. This is a simple spiritual—not religious—program, known as Narcotics Anonymous."

(From chapter eight of *Narcotics Anonymous* (Basic Text)—"We Do Recover," page 84)

Reaching Out

SUBSCRIPTION ORDER FORM

Reaching Out is a quarterly, recovery-oriented newsletter made available free of charge to incarcerated addicts through the World Board of Narcotics Anonymous. It contains letters written by Narcotics Anonymous members who are in hospitals or institutions or are involved in H&I service. This newsletter is also available by subscription to NA members, correctional facilities, service committees, or anyone else who is interested. For the yearly price of \$31.00, the subscriber will receive 20 copies of the *Reaching Out* newsletter each quarter.

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