
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 simple newsletter will assist you in your recovery or H&I efforts throughout the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

FROM THE INSIDE

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hello! My name is C.N. and I am an addict. I'm writing to share my experience, strength and hope.

I am presently serving a two year prison term in Wisconsin. I grew up in a dysfunctional family, where my surroundings were fighting, alcohol and constant blame. Like others, I started using drugs at a young age, because I had emotional problems and at that time drugs were the answer. I lived to use and used to live. I believed the only friend I had was my drugs. I over dosed at age 13, ending up in a hospital. Me, a problem? I couldn't face my problems. I thought no one could understand me, no one would listen to me and no one could help me. I felt unloved and useless.

My self-esteem was very low, my parents mentally abused me and I believed I was no good. Through my teenage years, I was in a shell, a shell that I have put myself into. I hid my feelings because I couldn't express them. I was holding resentments and defied authority. With the problems bundled up inside of me, I managed to have a juvenile criminal record. My behavior or actions reflected my feelings.

As I grew into an adult, I managed to keep from getting caught in illegal activity. My ways were street smart, sneaking, lying, manipulating, stealing, and cheating, still using drugs everyday to escape my feelings. Each and every day, I would wonder, "Where can I catch a buzz today?" No matter what I had to do or how far I had to go, I always found my "buzz" for the day.

Well, to make a long story short, after five years of being sneaky and defying the law, I got caught in my own game. I was busted and went to county jail and was released on a signature bond. I learned not to sell, but while out on bond, I still used everyday until sentencing.

When I got to prison, I stayed clean for one month, only because I wasn't on the streets and the drugs weren't readily available. Finally, I got hold of drugs in here and began walking around all drugged up. One night, I got a surprise cell search and unfortunately was caught with drugs in my cell. I then had to have a urine test, which was negative, and had to sit for four days in the adjustment segregation. There, I learned that drugs don't get me anywhere in life, except into trouble.

I found N.A. here and have been involved for four months. I can honestly say that no matter how many drugs are available here, I have been clean for four months. I never thought I'd see a month pass without having a buzz. The N.A. program is held once a week and once a month, for those who can't make it every week.

Just for today, my thoughts will be on my recovery and life without drugs. Just for today, I have a program to get a better perspective on my life.

Narcotics Anonymous has shown me that I am a sick person with an addiction and problems. N.A. has helped me to break down the shell that I had made and to be open and honest about myself with the faith that my Higher Power will guide me through. My

Higher Power is everything to me. He loves me and gives me what I need, not what I want.

Thank you N.A., for giving me the support I need to help myself start a new foundation for my life. When I am free, I will continue N.A. to build my self-worth and to help me through the Twelve Steps, day by day!

Love ya all,
C.N., Wisconsin

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is A _____ and I'm an addict. I am currently residing at a Federal Prison Camp in Florida. I walked into the law library the other day and spotted this copy of *Reaching Out*. I became instantly grateful. I picked it up and read it from front to back several times. All the stories touched my heart and I identified with those people in so many ways. It is not enough for me anymore, just to feel and be grateful. I have to show my gratitude. When I do this, I truly feel joyous happy and free.

I am writing this letter for myself, with the hope that it will touch another addict. I would like to tell anyone reading this letter, if nobody has told you they love you today, believe that I love you.

I started my recovery scared and apprehensive. I was very unwilling and distrusting, not wanting anyone to get close enough to me that they would know the true me. After being loved and understood, my walls fell down and I started to open up. I was even able to help some people. My outlook grew brighter and the fog began to lift. I was working steps and I was feeling a part of something. I was getting honest, open-minded and willing. Now that God was a part of my life, I became ready to take a fearless and searching moral inventory. Immediately after that, I admitted to God, myself and another human being, the exact nature of my wrongs. Although I didn't rush, I didn't waste any time for I knew I had prison facing me. You see, as a result of my using, I had created so much wreckage in my past that prison was inevitable.

Amazingly enough, or should I say miraculously enough, my trial took a bizarre turn. My attorney grilled government witnesses and objected to everything that was said and done. She had also

told me exactly what and what not to do. I was to become a puppet and a dishonest one at that. I became increasingly uneasy and uncomfortable as the proceedings went on and it became very clear the answer that I had prayed for, was for me to get honest in court and make amends. I went against everything my attorney told me and asked the judge if he would care to listen to my entire story. I was very candid and honest. I didn't exaggerate or minimize as I learned in Steps Four and Five. I just told the simple truth. As a result of this honesty, I felt better and knew I had done the right thing. Apparently, the judge felt that I had done the right thing. He sentenced me to six months in prison.

I know God was talking through the judge that day. God gave me this opportunity to help some people I might have never had contact with otherwise. I still work my steps. I'm on six, and I maintain contact with my sponsor by phone and mail.

I thank God for putting the fellowship and the steps in my life. It is through Him and the gifts he has given me, that I have been able to realize the opportunity to show my gratitude.

God bless you all,
Another grateful addict,
Florida

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hi! My name is R _____ and I am an addict. Greetings from the state of Kansas. It is in the name of love, strength, hope and courage of the N.A. program that I am writing.

I have used and abused drugs since the age of ten. Although my story is like most, for some reason, it took me longer to grasp the message of hope, strength and courage of the program. Some of us are sicker than others, thank God. Very simply, my life has been a slow but progressive death, full of hurt, pain, failure, misery, loneliness. Not only did I lose touch with reality, but I lost self-respect, worth, and motivation to care, change or be human.

I have been associated with N.A. for twelve years, relapsed several times and because of my addiction went through several treatment centers. I've lost everything that meant anything to me, love, respect,

trust, two marriages, children, education and ended up in prison three times, only to get out and return three times.

I am now currently serving a five-twenty with eight months to do before being eligible for parole. I have nine months clean time and have been associated with N.A. for that long or longer, on a regular basis. Now I am very serious and determined about my addiction and recovery, as there is a difference between being clean and being abstinent.

My message for my brothers and sisters of the program is that there is hope and we all share a common goal or bond. This is a program of action. The program won't work unless you're willing to put forth some effort. You get out of this program, what you're willing to put into it. Open your mind, become willing to share and get involved in this program of life.

It has taken me a long time to realize that I am not unique. Taking a risk by asking for help, opening up, letting people know, see and care for me, took a lot of love, patience and understanding by others. I've never felt so much peace and serenity, or felt like I fit in. I actually see myself changing and liking me. Today, my life has new meaning and purpose. I've learned to accept what I am, an addict, knowing that today is all I have. Sometimes it's rough, but as long as I don't use, practice the steps in my life and spread the message, I'm doing all I can. The program and the people in it are my family now and I love one and all of them as through this I live today.

Give yourself a break, take it easy, one day at a time, only open you're mind enough to listen as if you're sick and tired of being sick and tired. If you want help, there are people who will understand, accept and walk a mile with you. The desire has to come from within. Use the program, people, steps and phrases, as it is yours for the taking. Remember, we only keep what we have by giving it away. We are not responsible for our addiction, but are for our recovery

Sincerely
R.K.
Kansas

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I have just received my first copy of *Reaching Out*. I am an addict named L _____ and I am doing time in New York. I came to the rooms of N.A. two and a half years ago, after I was arrested for the crime that eventually landed me in prison. Looking back now, I see that I was thoroughly in the grips of my disease. I just didn't know it then. I also didn't know I was angry, self-centered, hostile, lonely and afraid. One day at a time the program has helped me to see the mess I had made of my life.

Eventually I went to a treatment facility in upstate New York. There I really got the message, not to say I didn't use again after I was released. I did, but N.A. had messed up my high. Using wasn't fun anymore. I should add that all the while I was making court appearances and working a full time job, I was telling my sponsor that I would commit suicide before I would go to jail.

By the time I got to jail the program had helped me see that life, even behind a wall, is a precious gift not to be wasted. Before I came to jail I began working the steps. I completed my Third Step on the day I was sentenced. I celebrated my first year on May 8, 1990.

There are no meetings available in my present facility. I have been using the mail, my *Basic Text* and Conference-approved literature to keep connected to N.A.

N.A. saved my life, literally. I once wondered how I would live without drugs. Now I wonder how I lived with them. Thanks for letting me share.

Gratefully,
L.W.
New York

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is I _____ and I'm an addict. I am presently doing time in a treatment center in Ontario. I asked for help once I was inside and got classified to come here. I have been abusing drugs for many years and tried to escape from myself in every way conceivable. By doing so, I developed a serious drug problem.

I was referred to N.A. once I got here. It has brought me great freedom and the feeling of never being alone again. I felt alone, after many times of setting goals for myself and royally screwing up without anyone else's help.

By coming to N.A. for me and my own addiction, I realize that it is a selfish program and I need to get all I can from it's members because one more "kick at the cat" could mean another sentence or death. The slogans are part of my life and I need always remember when and that I'm not God, as much as my addiction wants me to be. By keep going back, I need to give away what you so generously have given me.

Forever yours, N.A.
Canada

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Good day! My name is J _____ and I am an addict. I am 34 years old and currently in a treatment center in Perth, Western Australia. Eighteen months ago I was working at this same treatment center as a counselor. Twelve months ago, while working at another treatment center that wasn't N.A. based, I let my program and meetings slip, forgot that I was an addict and relapsed. I covered it up for a while and finally had to resign. From then on, it was all downhill and took care of some "yets" I hadn't covered before. I've been in treatment and clean for three weeks this time around.

While lying on my bed, reading a copy of *Reaching Out* that I picked up at a meeting this morning, it hit home to me how the God of our own understanding is everywhere. He takes care of us all, whether it be in the States, Australia, everywhere. Turning our will and our lives over to Him, He answers our cry for help. I can feel it and reading letters written by people on the other side of the world, who can feel it too, really gives me hope.

How true are the words, "No addict anywhere need ever use again." I thank my Higher Power that I have brothers and sisters all over the world, who stay clean the N.A. way, one day at a time.

May God as you understand Him bless you all,

Australia

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hi, my name is B _____ and I am an addict. I am in a jail treatment center. I have been clean for eighteen months, one day at a time. We have an N.A. meeting here and I am the secretary of the "Hope Without Dope" group. If I had not come to jail and found N.A., I know I would have died out there.

I think that the steps are the most important part of the N.A. Fellowship. Right now, I am working on Step Four. I have a sponsor, who is ten years clean, helping me through the steps and recovery. My Higher Power is the one who is really helping me through my daily life. I am planning to do H&I work, when I get out in two months. I have a brother, who has two years clean and is a GSR in this area.

I guess what I am trying to say is, that N.A. works, if you want it to. Because I want it to, it is working for me. I don't think it matters how long one's been clean. For me, it is how much I've grown inside of myself and how much I've changed today, being grateful for being clean in N.A.

A loving and grateful
friend in N.A.,

B.L.

Massachusetts

Dear *Reaching Out*,

The loss of family, love and life brought me to my knees and to the program of N.A. I'm fifteen months clean. I finally found self-acceptance and self-worth while living the program.

My name is L _____ and my story goes like this. I only used drugs once in my life and that was at the age of 13 years young. Now I'm 40 years old and found that I abused them for the past 27 years.

I'm down doing seven years for sales, this being my fifth hitch through the Colorado Department of Corrections. I started doing time in jails and institutions at the age of 27. This being hard running and addiction that got me here today. I lived for drugs and had totally forgotten what life was all about. The one night stands,

living on the edge and always wanted by the law became my life.

Then I found the program of Narcotics Anonymous. This program of HOW has turned my whole life around. Through this program, I found that I was always willing to use and abuse drugs. Now I've found that willingness is the key to freedom from addiction. Through this program, I've found that willingness is to love and acceptance, what drugs and addiction are to death. I'm now not afraid to trust in my fellow human beings and to share my love and respect. N.A. gave me a new foothold on a new life. It's been 27 years getting here and I believe the next 27 years will be filled with humility, faith, courage, gratitude and loving service within the N.A. program. There is no life through the stormy weather of addiction.

Always in the wind,

L.C.

Colorado

Dear *Reaching Out*,

Hello! My name is D _____ and as you can imagine, I am incarcerated.

First of all, I would like to thank all the people with the World Service Office for being there, not just for the N.A. on the streets, but for those of us needing to learn how to live there effectively, with a new purpose.

I became property of the State of Alabama and began my recovery on April 12, 1989. It did take a few months to feel some good was involved. There was a lot of anger and confusion in the beginning. I thank my Higher Power that it was not worse. I must admit there is still a little anger occasionally, but at least I am getting the tools to work with in order to deal with it and the other problems I didn't realize existed, for a long time.

It does feel good to feel good without having to be high. I don't think I considered it possible a little over a year ago. As a matter of fact, I would have considered the person I had become as insane. There would have to have been something wrong with someone feeling this at peace with oneself naturally.

I'm fairly new to the program. I quit using my drug of choice about a month before my sentencing. During that time, I went to several N.A. meetings. I had not put down the alcohol and didn't feel I had a problem with it at the time. I was proud, at the time, of just putting down the needle. After seventeen years I should have been. I had finally hit bottom. What I didn't see at the time was that I started drinking a lot more to take the edge off. Now I see what they were talking about.

The N.A. meetings stopped when I went to jail. I was sentenced to go through a drug treatment program, which was the first time for me. Part of the program was to attend N.A. meetings which really helped with the feelings I had. I was told meetings are needed to maintain my recovery and help control the stinking thinking that can always crop up and probably will. I know the disease is incurable and meetings help make recovery easier. The treatment program lasted eight weeks, then the meetings stopped. I wish there had been meetings in jail even though I managed to stay clean.

I was given a three year split on a fifteen year sentence for possession of a controlled substance. This was due to drug abuse and criminal habits dating back twenty years. I was really angry at first, as I did not feel my crimes were that serious. After completing a year I really thought I would be let go. I've come to find that I've been looked after by my Higher Power, as there are numerous people I've met serving 10 years to life for similar crimes.

I've been here a little over five weeks and thanks to the meetings I am able to cope. It really helps in keeping one's serenity, especially in this type environment. We have three N.A. meetings each week which keeps me free of wasted time. I must say it really makes me feel good to be part of the meetings. I'm 35 years old and it is my first time being part of anything. It really was a pat on the back for my program. I've been working on myself and I just hope I can help my fellow addicts find this serenity. It is really amazing in a place like this. Easy does it.

Sincerely,
D.M.
Alabama

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I'm an addict serving a twelve year sentence. Because of a shortage in DOC space, I have been held in county jail for eleven months, waiting to be transferred to another institution. Prior to my being sentenced to jail, I was obsessed and drugs controlled my life. I was using and selling. I lost everything, my family, home and business. My addiction started in the 60's. I thought drugs were cool and knew nothing about my disease.

After I was convicted, I hit bottom. I was emotionally, physically and spiritually bankrupt. I had fear, but this time I had to face it. I could no longer run or hide like I did all those years. By the grace of God, a miracle happened in my life. Somebody dropped an N.A. Basic Text at the the jail library. I had already attended a few meetings on the outside. I started working the twelve steps and somehow one day everything turned around. Today I deal with life differently. I work the program to the best of my ability, one day at a time with another addict in recovery. I never thought I would end up in here drug free, serene and happy. I know who I am and where I came from. Principles such as honesty and acceptance freed me from the vicious self destruction of my addiction. I don't have to worry about what I wear or how I eat any more because all I want is to be clean. Truly, it is nice to know a better way of life, even in jail.

F.M.
Colorado

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 N.A. 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:

**W.S.O.
P.O. Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA 91409-9999.**

FROM THE OUTSIDE

MEMBERS' PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH H&I WORK

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is M _____ and I'm an addict, living in New Zealand so this really feels like I'm reaching out. I have been living the N.A. program now for three and a half years and being clean has changed my life.

It took a long time to find N.A. and learn what it means to be an addict. I went to a treatment center when I was 19, quite convinced I was crazy. Apart from most people telling me that my behavior was erratic, to say the least, most of my life I had felt strange. I was like a lion trapped in a mouse's body and every so often the lion roared. I wasn't too keen with the suggestion, at treatment, that I needed to stop using. Unfortunately, in those days, N.A. was very scarce in New Zealand and the treatment center didn't talk about addiction. I focused on one drug and what it had done to my life. I left treatment with limited knowledge, heaps of arrogance and no idea about spirituality. I was still lost, crazy and spent nine years substituting drugs.

When I finally accepted that I needed to be totally abstinent, and it was through a lot of pain that I came to that point, I also accepted that the only way to maintain this was through N.A. I decided that I would give two years of my life to the program. I figured I had wasted so many and they seemed to go incredibly fast that two years was nothing. If N.A. hadn't helped me by then, at least I could say I had tried. I made conditions though. First, to do everything suggested to me in the book, at meetings, by my sponsor and work a daily program. Secondly, I would get involved in service.

Well, it worked. After two years, I couldn't believe my change in attitude. Life was glowing, I was glowing and I was still committed to doing one or two. After three and a half years, I have begun training for a career. I have two of my children living with me and the third lives down the road. I had given two of them away while I was using because I couldn't put them ahead of the drugs. I have fulfilled a life long dream and travelled to America. I have self-respect and respect from my peers. Life is manageable, I have spiritual awareness and I care about others. I'm happy because I like what I am doing in life.

I want to share one of the most rewarding experiences I've had in recovery. I was in a 12 step program before I cleaned up. I used and went to meetings for a long time. I didn't talk about my using, thinking it was hidden. I talked well about other things. I was pretty together on the outside and because of this, I was asked to go into a prison and talk about my experiences. I did this, avoiding all reference to drugs. I still shook. I had stopped using one drug and didn't use words like abstinent and clean. I wasn't lying but I wasn't telling the truth. I was really sick and slowly dying inside. Years later, I found N.A., after I had been clean for about eight months. I was asked to start up a prison meeting. I will never forget the year I spent going to that prison as an N.A. member. I would sit and talk about being clean and free from all drugs. I would talk about working the program, the steps, every step and each step in it's entirety, not just the parts I liked. I talked about my Higher Power and love. I talked about commitment and honesty and more than that, I felt all these things. I felt my Higher Power, honesty and commitment. I felt the steps and what it is like to be drug free. I would leave

those meetings, every single one, with an incredible sense of hope. They were the most powerfully intense meetings of my recovery because I was talking about something I believe in totally, N.A. I was carrying the message and I knew that at long last I had it to give. I shall pray that I was heard.

Lots of love to you all and don't give up five minutes before the miracle.

M.

New Zealand

Dear *Reaching Out*,

I'm writing this out of gratitude. We hear a lot of talk about generating support for H&I, but if we were to share more about what H&I has given us, it would be more attractive.

Having done a little time myself before coming into this fellowship and surrendering to the principles of recovery, also, never being introduced to N.A. while inside, I automatically knew where my heart was. I gratefully carry the message wherever and whenever I can. I hope I never forget the pain and desperation that I felt when I walked in the door. H&I keeps me in touch with what that was like. As long as I stay in touch with what it was like as a newcomer, I'll work that much harder at staying clean, no matter what happens. On my Eighth Step list, I relived those nameless faces that I encountered during my years of active addiction. Amends to society was an impossible task, or was it? H&I has given me the ability to express my gratitude on an ongoing basis, and make my amends at the same time. When I see someone fresh off the streets in an H&I meeting, and their eyes light up when they hear what they need to hear, and see what they need to see, makes my labor of love all worthwhile.

I know that recovery is a constant uphill struggle and that I've just begun my journey, even with three years clean. I'm just a baby learning how to talk and walk as a real human being. Our *Basic Text* tells us that we must share what we have been given or we will lose it. I for one, cherish my recovery and H&I is my way of expressing a heart felt gratitude for the freedom I've found in N.A.

If you haven't made a commitment to H&I yet, just give us a chance. You might be surprised at the way you feel. Surrender and acceptance are the key.

In loving service,

J.R.

Ohio

Dear *Reaching Out*,

My name is A _____ and I am an addict. I am Vice-chair of our area H&I committee and began doing H&I work about a year ago. We recently started serving a juvenile girls' facility, where we use the panel presentation format suggested in the H&I Handbook, approved last year. Each panel member speaks on a different topic chosen from the topic list provided in that handbook. We leave time at the end of the meeting to answer questions submitted anonymously by the girls, using slips of paper passed out at the start. During our first meeting there, a piece of paper came up addressed to me that said, "You described my life. How can you speak so honestly about your incriminating past?" As we were leaving the meeting, the girl who wrote that came up and introduced herself. I can not describe how it felt to see the identification and amazement on her face. It was very emotional moment and when I reached out and hugged her, she hugged back. I knew she was feeling the exact same relief and excitement I had felt when I became aware for the first time in my life through N.A. that I wasn't the only one and there were other people like me. That girl received permission to attend outside meetings and last night I had the pleasure of giving her a 90 day token. I heard it said at an N.A. convention, that I recently attended that, "The scent of the rose stays on the hand of the giver." The scent or memory of this experience continues to bring me joy. I thank my Higher Power and Narcotics Anonymous for my recovery. I am truly grateful for the ability to do H&I service. Giving away what was so freely given to me, in this way, is one of the most rewarding things I have ever done.

In gratitude,

A.S., California

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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 N.A. 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 N.A. 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

Carolina Regional Awareness Weekend

August 16, 17, 18, 1991

Hyatt Regency Hotel

Greenville, SC

For reservations: Call Hyatt Regency at 1-800-228-9000

For further information: Call Dale R. (704)394-5532 or Kevin H. (803) 794-6497

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 flyer or notice to the H&I coordinator at the W.S.O.

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**MY GRATITUDE SPEAKS
WHEN I CARE AND WHEN I SHARE
WITH OTHERS
THE N.A. WAY**