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N.A.

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CarryTheMessage.Com
Source: Danny M.

Narcotics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from the disease of drug addiction.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using drugs. There are no dues or fees for N.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. N.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay clean and help other addicts to achieve this goal.

TWELVE SUGGESTED STEPS
OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

1. We admitted we were powerless over our addiction - that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all our defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove all our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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THE TWELVE TRADITIONS
OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon N.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority--a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for N.A. membership is a desire to stop using drugs.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or N.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose--to carry its message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An N.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every N.A. group ought to fully be self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. N.A. as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction, rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our traditions. ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

ONLY YOU CAN DECIDE

If you seem to be having trouble with drugs, or if your drug using has reached the point where it worries you a bit, you may be interested in knowing something about Narcotics Anonymous and the N.A. program of recovery from drug addiction. After reading this brief outline, you may decide that N.A. has nothing to offer you. Should this be the case, we suggest only that you keep an open mind on the subject. Consider your drug using carefully in the light of what you may learn from these pages. Determine, for yourself, whether or not drugs have truly become a problem for you. And remember that you will always be most welcome to join the thousands of men and women in N.A. who have put their drug using problems behind them and now lead "normal" constructive lives, staying clean day by day.

WHO WE ARE

We in N.A. are men and women who have discovered and admitted, that we cannot control drugs. We have learned that we must live without them if we are to avoid disaster for ourselves and those close to us.

With local groups in many communities, we are part of an informal international fellowship with members in foreign countries. We have but one primary purpose: to stay clean ourselves and to help others who may turn to us for help in achieving this goal.

We are not reformers and we are not allied with any group, cause or religious denomination. We have no wish to clean up the world. We do not recruit members. We avoid imposing our viewpoint of problem drug using on others, unless we are asked to do so.

Within our membership may be found men and women of varying age groups and many different social, economic and cultural backgrounds. Some of us used many years before coming to the realization we could not handle drugs. Others were fortunate enough to appreciate, early in life or early in their using careers, that life with drugs had become unmanageable.

The consequences of our addictive using (and thinking) have also varied. Some of our members had literally become derelicts before turning to N.A. for help. They had lost family, possessions and self-respect. They had lived on Skid Row in many cities. They had been hospitalized and jailed times without number. They had committed many grave offenses -- against society, their families, their employers and themselves.

Others among us have never been jailed or hospitalized. Nor have they lost jobs through drug using. But even these men and women finally came to the point where they realized that drugs were interfering with normal living. When they discovered that they could not seem to live without drugs, they, too, sought to help themselves through N.A., rather than prolong their irresponsible use of drugs.

All the great faiths are represented in our Fellowship and many religious leaders have encouraged our growth. There are even a few self-proclaimed atheists and agnostics among us. Belief in, or adherence to, a formal creed is not a condition of membership.

We are united by our common problem; drugs. Meeting and talking and helping other addicts together, we are somehow able to stay clean and to lose the compulsion to use, which was once a dominant force in our lives.

We do not think we are the only people who have the answer to drug using. We know that the N.A. program works for us and we have seen it work for every newcomer, almost without exception, who honestly and sincerely wanted to quit using drugs.

Through N.A., we have learned a number of things about drug addiction and about ourselves. We try to keep these facts uppermost in our minds at all times because they seem to be the key to our staying clean. For us, staying clean must always be our first concern.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED ABOUT DRUG ADDICTION

The first thing we have learned about drug addiction is that it is one of the more severe problems of modern history. Only recently, however, have we begun to benefit from new approaches to the problem. Doctors today, for example, know a great deal more about addiction than their predecessors did only two generations ago. They are beginning to define the problem and study it in detail.

While there is no formal "N.A. definition" of addiction, most of us agree that, for us, it could be described as a physical compulsion coupled with a mental obsession. We mean that we had a distinct physical desire to take drugs in defiance of all rules of common sense. We not only had an abnormal craving for drugs but we frequently yielded to it at the worst possible time. We did not know when (or how) to stop using. Often we did not seem to have sense enough to know when not to begin.

As addicts, we have learned the hard way that will power alone, however strong in other respects, was not enough to keep us clean. We have tried quitting for specified periods. We have taken solemn pledges. We have switched types of drugs. We have tried using only during certain hours. But none of our plans worked. We always wound up, sooner or later, by getting "loaded" when we not only wanted to stay clean but had every rational incentive for staying clean.

We have gone through stages of dark despair when we were sure that there was something wrong with us mentally. We came to hate ourselves for wasting the talents with which we had been endowed and for the trouble we were causing our families and others. Frequently we indulged in self-pity and proclaimed that nothing could ever help us.

We can smile at those recollections now but, at the time, they were grim, unpleasant experiences.

Today we are willing to accept the idea that as far as we are concerned, drug addiction is an illness, a progressive illness that can never be "cured" but which, like some other illnesses, can be arrested. We agree that there is nothing shameful about having an illness, provided we face the problem honestly and try to do something about it. We are perfectly willing to admit that we are allergic to drugs and that it is simply common sense to stay away from the source of our allergy.

We understand now that once a person has crossed the invisible borderline from heavy drug using to compulsive addictive using, he will always remain an addict. So far as we know, there can never be any turning back. "Once an addict, always an addict", is a simple fact we have to live with.

We have also learned that there are few alternatives for the addict. If he continues to use, his problem will become progressively worse; he seems assuredly on the path to Skid Row, to hospitals,

to jails or other institutions, or to an early grave. The only alternative is to stop using completely, to abstain from even the smallest quantity of drugs in any form. If he is willing to follow this course, and to take advantage of the help available to him, a whole new life can open up for the addict.

There were times in our drug using careers when we were convinced that all we had to do to control our using was to quit after the second, or the fifth time, or some other number. Only gradually did we come to appreciate that it was not the fifth or the tenth or the twentieth time that got us "loaded"; it was the first! The first time was the one that did the damage. The first time was the one that started us on our merry-go-rounds. The first time was the one that set up a chain reaction of addictive thinking that led to our uncontrolled using.

Another thing that many of us learned during our using days was that forcing ourselves to stay clean was generally not a very pleasant experience. Some of us were able to stay clean, occasionally, for periods of days, weeks and even years. But we did not enjoy being clean. We felt like martyrs. We became irritable, difficult to live and work with. We persisted in looking forward to the time when we might be able to use drugs again.

Now that we are in N.A., we have a new outlook on being clean. We enjoy a sense of release, a feeling of freedom from even the desire to use.

Since we cannot expect to use normally at any time in the future, we concentrate on living a full life without drugs today. There is not a thing we can do about yesterday. And tomorrow never comes. Today is the only day we have to worry about. And we know from experience that even the "worst" addict can go 24 hours without drugs.

When we first heard about N.A., it seemed miraculous that anyone who had really been an uncontrolled user could ever achieve and maintain the way of staying clean that older N.A. members talked about. Some of us were inclined to think that ours was a special kind of using, that our experiences had been "different", that N.A. might work for others but that it could not do anything for us. Others among us, who had not yet been hurt seriously by our drug using, reasoned that N.A. might be fine for the Skid Row addicts, but that we could probably handle the problem by ourselves.

Our experience in N.A. has taught us two important things. First, that the basic problems confronting the addict are the same whether he is panhandling for the price of a "fix" or holding down an executive position in a big corporation. Secondly, we now appreciate that the N.A. recovery program works for almost any addict who honestly wants it to work, no matter what his background or particular drug using pattern may have been.

WE MADE A DECISION

All of us now in N.A. had to make one crucial decision before we felt secure in the new program of life without drugs. We had to face the facts about ourselves and our drug using realistically and honestly. We had to admit that we were powerless over drugs. For some of us, this was the toughest proposition we had ever faced. We did not know too much about drug addiction. We had preconceived impressions about the term "addict". We associated it chiefly with down-and-out derelicts. Or we thought it implied degredation in some other form. Some of us resisted making the admission that we were addicts. Others clung to mental reservations.

Most of us, however, were relieved when it was explained to us that drug addiction was an illness. We saw the common sense of doing something about an illness that threatened to destroy us. We quit trying to deceive others - and ourselves - into thinking that we could handle drugs when all the evidence pointed to the contrary.

It was emphasized to us from the beginning that no one but we, ourselves, could determine whether or not we were addicts. The admission had to be sincere and based on our own judgment - not that of a doctor, husband, wife or spiritual adviser. Our friends might be able to help us understand the nature of our problem but we were the only ones who could determine whether drugs had become an uncontrollable problem for us,

Frequently we asked: "How can I tell if I am really an addict?" We were told that there were no hard and fast rules for determining drug addiction. We learned that there were, however, certain tell-tale symptoms. If we got "loaded" when we had every reason to stay clean, if our drug using had become progressively worse, if we no longer got as much fun from using as we once had -- these, we learned, were apt to be symptoms of the illness we call drug addiction. Reviewing our using experiences and their consequences, most of us were able to discover additional corroborating evidence.

Quite naturally, the prospect of a life without drugs seemed distasteful and dull. We feared that our new friends in N.A. would either be as drab as dishwasher or, worse yet, exuberant evangelists. We discovered that they were, instead, human beings like ourselves with the special virtue of understanding our problem instead of merely condemning us for it, as so many non-addicts had done in the past.

We began to wonder what we had to do to stay clean, what membership in N.A. would cost and who "ran" the Society locally and worldwide. We soon discovered that there are no "musts" in N.A., that no one is required to follow any formal ritual or pattern of living. We also learned that N.A. has no dues or fees of any kind; expenses incurred for meeting rooms, refreshments and other incidentals are defrayed

by passing the hat, but even contributions of this kind are not a requirement of membership.

It soon became apparent to us that N.A. has no formal organization and that it has no governing officers. The arrangement of meetings and the other jobs that are essential in keeping the Fellowship together are handled by informal committees whose membership is rotated periodically. These committees act as servants of the group for limited periods, not as officers.

How, then, do we manage to stay clean in such an informal, loosely-knit fellowship?

The answer is that, once having achieved it, we try to preserve it by observing and following the successful experience of those who have preceded us in N.A.

Their experience provides certain "tools" and guides which we are free to accept or reject, as we may choose. Because our being clean is the most important thing in our lives today, we think it the best part of wisdom to follow the patterns suggested by those who have already demonstrated that the N.A. recovery program really works.

For example, we take no pledges; we don't say that we will abstain from drugs "forever". Instead, we try to follow what we call the "Twenty-Four Hour Plan." We concentrate on keeping clean for just the current 24 hours. We simply try to get through one day at a time without drugs. If we feel the urge to use, we

neither yield nor resist. We merely defer taking that particular drug until tomorrow.

We try to keep our thinking honest and realistic where drugs are concerned. If we are tempted to use--and the temptation usually fades after the first period of transition into N.A.--we ask ourselves whether the particular drug we have in mind would be worth all the consequences we have experienced from using in the past. We bear in mind that we are perfectly free to get loaded, if we want to, that the choice between using and non-using is entirely up to us. Most important of all, we try to face up to the fact that no matter how long we may have been clean, we will always be addicts -- and addicts, as far as we know, cannot use drugs normally.

We follow the experience of the successful "old-timers" in another respect. We usually keep coming regularly to meetings of the local N.A. group with which we have become affiliated.

There is no rule which makes such attendance compulsory. Nor can we always explain why we seem to get a lift out of hearing the personal stories and interpretations of other members. Most of us, however, feel that attendance at meetings and other informal contacts with fellow N.A.'s are important factors in maintaining our objective to stay clean.

"TWELVE SUGGESTED STEPS"

Early in our association with N.A. we heard of "Twelve Suggested Steps" of recovery from drug addiction. We learned that these steps represented an attempt by the first members to record their own progress from uncontrolled using to enjoyable feelings of being clean. We discovered that a key factor in this progress seemed to be humility, coupled with reliance upon a Power greater than the addict himself. While some prefer to call this Power "God", we were told that this was purely a matter of personal interpretation; we could conceive of the Power in any terms we thought fit. Since drugs had obviously been a power greater than ourselves during our drug using days, we had to admit that perhaps we could not run the whole show ourselves and that it made sense to turn elsewhere for help. As we have grown in N.A., our concept of a greater Power has usually become more mature. But it had always been our own personal concept; no one has forced it upon us.

Finally, we noted from the Twelfth Suggested Step, and from the experience of older members, that work with other addicts who turned to N.A. for help was an effective way of strengthening our own progress. Whenever possible, we tried to do our share, always keeping in mind that the other person was the only one who could determine whether or not he (or she) was an addict.

We were also guided by the experience of the many N.A.'s who have given new meaning to three

time-worn sayings or slogans. "First things First" is one of the slogans, reminding us that, as much as we would like to try, we cannot do everything at once, that we have to remember the prior importance of being clean in any attempt to rebuild our lives.

"Easy Does It" is another old slogan with new meaning for addicts who are frequently tempted to extend themselves beyond their capacities - even when pursuing desirable objectives. "Live and Let Live" is a third keynote of N.A. philosophy, a recurring suggestion that the addict, no matter how long he may be clean, cannot afford to let himself become upset by petty irritations.

N.A. literature is also helpful to most of us in keeping clean.

Because N.A. is essentially a way of life, few of us have ever been able to describe with complete accuracy just how the various elements in the recovery program contribute to our present state of being clean. We do not all interpret or live the N.A. program in exactly the same way. We can all testify, however, that N.A. works for us when many other ventures have failed. Many members who have been clean for years say that they simply accepted the program "on faith" and do not yet fully understand how N.A. works for them. Meanwhile, they keep trying to pass their faith along to others who still understand all too well the disastrous way in which drugs work against the addict.

The N.A. program of recovery from drug addiction, we believe, will work for almost any one who has a sincere desire to stop using drugs. It will not usually work for those who feel that they are being prodded in the direction of N.A. by relatives, friends, doctors and others, no matter how well-intended the prodding may be. The addict himself has to face up to his own problem honestly.

We have seen some addicts stumble for a while before "getting" the program. We have seen others who made only token efforts to follow the tested principles through which so many thousands of us stay clean; token efforts are generally not enough.

But, no matter how down-and-out an addict may be, or how high he or she may be on the social and economic scales, we know from experience and observation that N.A. offers a clean way out of the squirrel cage of confused drug addiction. Most of us have found it an easy way.

When we first turned to N.A. many of us had a number of serious problems - problems involving money, family, job and our own personalities. We soon discovered that our immediate

central problem was drugs. Once we had that problem under control, we were able to make successful approaches to the other problems. Solutions to these problems have not always come easily, but we have been able to cope with them far more effectively when clean than we were able to do during our drug using days.

"A NEW DIMENSION"

There was a time when many of us believed that drugs were the only thing that made life bearable. We could not even dream of a life without using. Today, in a strange, miraculous way, we do not feel that we have been deprived of anything. We feel, instead, that a new dimension has been added to our lives. We have new friends, new horizons and new attitudes. After years of despair and frustration, many of us feel that we have really begun to live for the first time. We enjoy sharing that new life with anyone who is still suffering from drug addiction, as we once suffered, and who seeks a way out of the darkness and into the light.

Drug addiction is one of the major American health problems. It has been estimated that millions of men and women continue to suffer, perhaps unnecessarily, from this progressive illness. As members of N.A., we welcome the opportunity to share our experience in arresting this illness with anyone who seeks help. We appreciate that nothing we can say will have any real meaning until the addict himself is ready to admit, as we once did, that drugs have him licked and that he wants help.

That help is available in abundant measure. There are groups of us in many cities, villages and hamlets throughout the world. Many of our groups are listed in the community

telephone directory and information about our local meetings may often be obtained from doctors, spiritual advisers, newspaper people, police officials and others who are familiar with our program. Those who are unable to get in touch with a nearby group are invited to write to Narcotics Anonymous, P. O. Box 954, Berkeley, California 94701. We will be glad to put you in touch with the group nearest you. Should you live in a remote area, with no nearby groups, we will tell you how a number of "Loner" members are staying clean by using the N.A. principles and program.

Anyone who turns to N.A., locally or through our General Service Office, can be assured that his or her anonymity will be preserved.

If you feel you have a drug problem and honestly want to stop using, many of us can testify that N.A. is working for us -- and that there is no reason in the world why it should not work for you, too.

S E R E N I T Y P R A Y E R

GOD - Grant me the serenity to accept
the things I cannot change ..
courage to change the things I can ..
and wisdom to know the difference .

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