

## RETURN TO FILE

Most addicts have strong feeling about their Higher Power and vigorously defend their right to their own understanding. The strength to move into action comes from our Higher Power. Asking for help usually precedes getting that help. By opening the gates of our hearts, we become ready to receive the help we need. We need to accept this step to continue our road to recovery. When our belief has grown to some point of trust, we are ready for Step Three.

## STEP THREE

We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.

As practicing addicts, our will and our lives were controlled by drugs. Our choices were determined by drugs. We were trapped by our need for connections and cash. Then, when we got the drugs, the search was over for a few hours or maybe a few days. During that time, our total being, the body mind and soul was dominated by the drugs.

For a time it was pleasurable, at least in the early stages of addiction. Ultimately, the effect began to wear off and then the drug showed its ugly side. Often we found that the higher our drugs took us, the lower they brought us. When our nerves were jangling like a fire alarm, we faced two choices. Either we suffered withdrawal, or we took more drugs. For all addicts, the day comes when there is no longer a choice. We must have more drugs. Whether we are under the influence or not, our will, our lives and every single action is directly controlled by drugs.

Obviously, our way did not work. In utter desperation, we looked for another way. In Narcotics Anonymous, we are told that we can turn our will and our lives over to the care of a God of our own understanding. This is a giant step, but anyone can take it. We don't have to be religious. All that is required is a willingness to believe. We had to be willing to do anything to get that next fix. What have we got to lose?

We have only to believe what we see with our own eyes in the transformed lives of other N.A. Members. That's all it takes--an open mind. If the word God bothers you, as it did many of us in the beginning, substitute Recovery, Good, Love, Spirit, N.A., Peace or anything positive, just so you mean it.

ORIGINAL

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None of these Steps work by magic. They work when they are lived. The Steps of N.A. are easier to live by than the law of the needle, bottle, pill or joint. If you want to stay clean and are willing to do a few simple things and are honest with yourself, we guarantee that you can stay clean.

We found that all we needed to do was try. When we gave our best effort to the program, it worked for us as it has worked for countless others. The Third Step does not say "we turned our will and our lives over to the care of God." It says, "We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understand Him." We Made the decision; it was not made for us by the drugs, our families, a probation officer, judge, therapist or doctor. For the first time since that first high, we have made a decision for ourselves. If we understand God to be simply whatever keeps the rest of us clean, that's fine. We ask that Power to take care of us as it takes care of others--even if it makes us feel stupid. We go off by ourselves or get with our sponsor and say, "God, I've made a mess of my life. I can't solve my problems and I ask you to take care of me and show me how to live." When we honestly try, it will work. Many of us start our day with this prayer or a similar plea: "Thy will, not mine, be done."

In the third Step, we simply recognize that there is a force for good in the world and we cooperate with that force. The release by letting go and letting God helps us develop what works here and now. We can experience this release daily by using the N.A. program. We let good things happen to us. Every action we took in regard to drugs was an effort to get comfortable. It did not work, or we wouldn't be where we are today. When we turn to a God of our own understanding for care and direction and guidance, we learn the real meaning of freedom.

If we have come this far in the N.A. program, we have already noticed some change in our lives. However, the change may not be as fast nor as dramatic as we wish. We turned to drugs because we are people who demand instant gratification and drugs gave us that instant satisfaction. We are impatient people. It is one of life's great problems for us. Just because we stop taking drugs, this problem doesn't immediately go away.

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We find that we will continue to have living problems. There are bills to be paid. We still have to function in society. Most of us still have families. We still have many of the same fears, doubts, and insecurities. In fact, because we are now facing life without drugs, the problems may appear to be more difficult and painful than ever. Do not lose heart. At these times, in our recovery, the Third Step is our greatest source of strength and courage. We are no longer bogged down by addiction. We have surrendered our will and our lives to the care of a power greater than ourselves. We are now a part of something which has brought order out of Chaos. We are no longer fighting fear, anger, guilt, remorse, self-pity, anxiety, depression and a thousand other ills by ourselves.

Day by day, we discover the magnitude of the Third Step. This is the Step when we come into contact with the sanity we are promised in Step Two. Reliance on a spiritual way of life is now possible for us. We are slowly beginning to lose the paralyzing feeling of hopelessness. We who have lived in darkness and horror for so long begin to walk freely in the sunlight of reality.

We find that our mood swings become less dramatic. We have natural highs followed by occasional lows. We are beginning to gain balance and harmony. We have learned to stop fighting and are learning to live. The only price is to quit fighting, surrender quietly and let the God of our own understanding take care of us.

We have come to enjoy clean living and want more of the good things that the N.A. Fellowship holds for us. We know now that we cannot pause in our spiritual program; we want all we can get. We are now ready for our first honest self-appraisal, and we begin with Step Four.