



Greater Philadelphia Regional Services Committee

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To: World Service Conference '93
From: Greater Philadelphia Region

Greetings from Philadelphia!

This year our region has gone through some financial difficulties which almost prevented our attendance here in L.A. , but we're here— alive and kicking!

Holding our '92 regional convention was a monetary nightmare. Thanks to some RSC trusted servants, we came out of it with all bills paid but lost a lot of profit. No legal suits are forthcoming. There is some distrust at service levels which we are building back up currently.

We held the 13th ECCNA which was hosted by an area in Philadelphia in June '92, which as a result of poor planning was also a financial nightmare. Both conventions did support group growth for which we are grateful. However, we are still working on solutions for both the financial and spiritual problems. Another new item is our 1-800 helpline which is gaining some serious want from our areas to implement. Coming soon to an RSO near you!

The Regional Public Information and Hospitals & Institutions Subcommittees have been quite involved with attendance at multi-regional workshops around the eastern regions. They were unable to attend this year's conference, but continue involvement in their respective world committees.

Unfortunately, there will be no '93 convention for our region, nor will there be an east coast convention. Maybe in '94 we may continue again, hopefully with some insight from the World Convention Corporation and/or possible workshops.

Respectfully in Service
With Love and Fellowship,

John Swanson, RSR

Henry Dietz, RSR Alt.

Greater Philadelphia Region

HIV and AIDS in NA

This article was generated by the World Service Board of Trustees in April 1993 in response to the needs of the fellowship. It represents the views of the board at the time of writing.

Any life-threatening disease causes us to work our program rigorously, whether we're afflicted by it ourselves or are supporting members who suffer from it. HIV and AIDS have become a reality in the NA recovering community. The paradox of this disease, like the disease of addiction itself, is the need to belong while already feeling separated. The strain of having to deal with a potentially fatal disease striking so many addicts, compounded by the disease of addiction itself, can be overwhelming. It is no surprise that, at times like these, we often ask ourselves if continued recovery is worth it. At our potentially weakest moment, we need more than ever the strength found in our fellowship.

HIV and AIDS affect us all in NA. Fear of the virus can allow the defects of self-centeredness, denial, rationalization, and the instinct of flight to assert themselves. The spiritual principles that made recovery possible and that strengthen our groups must continue to guide us during these times.

HIV and AIDS in NA are considered by some as an outside issue--a subject not to be discussed for fear of diluting our message of recovery from drug addiction. That point of view has not been stated in any world-level publication, but it has been implied through silence. Our lack of direction coupled with ignorance of the virus and an often inflexible interpretation of the traditions has caused many groups and committees to label HIV and AIDS as outside issues. While there are many issues around HIV and AIDS that may well be outside issues, the experience of recovering addicts with HIV is not.

Committees responsible for conventions, learning days, workshops, etc., have often been directed not to include HIV/AIDS as a topic. Our reasoning for this was based on our lack of experience and our fear. Instead, we have been guided toward having topics on life threatening diseases in general. This was sometimes done out of concern that participants of a topic meeting on AIDS might choose to discuss the medical treatment or the political ramifications of the disease. While some of those fears might have some basis in reality, open-mindedness keeps us focused on our shared experience, strength, and hope.

There are a range of HIV and AIDS-related issues that are outside issues; for example, offering medical information, educating using addicts about needle-cleaning or endorsing the availability of clean needles, supporting or opposing AIDS

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Freedom from Prejudice

This article was generated by the World Service Board of Trustees in April 1993 in response to the needs of the fellowship. It represents the views of the board at the time of writing.

More frequently than ever, the World Service Board of Trustees is being asked to comment on the issue of prejudice within NA. It would be easy for us to write a paper which simply says: Prejudice is wrong. Cut it out! However, we believe that there is no imposed solution. Only we, as individual members of Narcotics Anonymous, can resolve this problem. It presents each of us with the challenge to practice more fully those principles which make our recovery possible--the spiritual principles found in our *Twelve Steps* and *Twelve Traditions*. Each of us is responsible for carrying the NA message without regard to age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion, or lack of religion (*White Booklet*, Revised, p. 2).

Most of us have felt the pain of prejudice at different times during our lives. Even so, we often delude ourselves into believing that we are personally free from all prejudice. This type of denial allows us to pass judgement on the quality of another member's recovery or sponsor, tune out when certain members share, or avoid particular people or groups of people. We may make snide or "humorous" remarks about someone's race, sexual preference, age, gender, body shape, culture, or spiritual beliefs. We may avoid members who are physically ill or are taking prescribed medication. Whether subtle or blatant, all forms of prejudice harm our unity and prevent us from fulfilling our primary purpose.

We do not and cannot recover alone. Some members can remember being unwelcome in other fellowships. Some of us recall sitting alone with a *White Booklet* waiting for another addict to show up at a meeting so that we could have our own NA group. Another addict, any addict, was exceedingly welcome. As we have become prosperous, laden with choices of where to recover and with whom, we have allowed the defect of prejudice to assert itself and, more sadly, to live in our hearts.

While it is possible for us to walk through the doors of NA with the defects of character which promote attitudes of hostility toward others, over time these defects make recovery difficult if not impossible. As a defect, prejudice shares some of the same characteristics as our disease. It is based in fear, self-centeredness, suspicion, and intolerance. These qualities represent our disease rather than the spiritual process of recovery in NA. Our

program is carried from one addict to another without regard to anything but the desire to recover from our disease.

Although the spirit of Narcotics Anonymous is without concrete definition, it seems to encompass tolerance, acceptance, love, gratitude, and giving. If we can achieve and maintain this spirit, we will flourish. Our literature states that there are three things essential to our recovery. One of these is open-mindedness. We can have no reservations about maintaining the character defect of prejudice which separates, divides, isolates and can eventually destroy us as a fellowship. We cannot be fooled by the subtleness of our disease that closes our minds and causes us to think of one addict as different from another. We must surrender to this aspect of our disease and allow a loving God to heal us as a fellowship, allowing us to continue to focus our efforts on our primary purpose.

Our message says that any addict seeking recovery can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way of life. Ours is a message of hope and freedom. Let this message be our common bond. It is to this NA way of recovery that we direct our attention and effort toward the changes that need to occur within ourselves to produce the miracles of recovery.

We need to look at our diversity as the strength that allows each of us to truly say "any addict seeking recovery." Because we see this diversity as a wealth of color, race, gender, culture, and belief, we wholeheartedly welcome all addicts. It is not enough to tolerate; we welcome with open arms. It is not enough to accept; we give. We do not need to fear each other; we love. With these principles, we may stop the destruction of our disease, have our intolerance, fear, and self-centeredness removed, and do together that which we cannot do alone.