



**Narcotics
Anonymous.**

BEHIND THE WALLS



**NOT TO BE USED AT N.A. MEETINGS
FOR SERVICE COMMITTEE USE ONLY**

John ...
100% ...
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INTRODUCTION

This booklet was written specifically for individuals who are currently incarcerated and who may have a drug problem. The following pages are reflective of the experience of recovery, both in and out of institutions, from the disease of addiction.

We urge you to give yourself a break and read this today. It may help you to stay clean today. There is hope, it may change your life.

BEHIND THE WALLS

Those of us recovering in Narcotics Anonymous know that our life of using drugs was a maximum security prison in its own right. We share our thoughts, our feelings, and our experiences, because through recovery in N.A. we have found freedom behind the walls. Our experiences may differ, but if we look hard enough, we may find that our feelings are similar. We may begin to understand each other's experience with recovery.

My story differs not much from most. Growing up, I always harbored inadequate feelings. I used drugs as a confidence booster and it suppressed any bad feelings I had. Everything I said I'd never do I usually did. I lied, I cheated, and I stole. I was being arrested fairly regularly and I finally ended up doing time.

Our drug use can begin at any age. For us, our progression with using ends in jails, institutions, or death. When we took a closer look, we, we found what addiction had done in our lives.

I am 41 years old and have a long record of jails and institutions. I started at age 10 in reform school and graduated through the system, missing nothing. I started using drugs at age 15 on release from reform school, and dedicated my life to drugs and crime. My biggest claim to fame was that I could handle it, and it kept me using for 25 years.

I have done anything and everything to get the drugs I needed. But today it's different for me. Today I am not using. In the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, I was able to find some purpose for existing without the use of drugs, and most importantly, a new way to exist without drugs--the Twelve Steps. I find in this program that if I try to the best of my ability to apply the Twelve Steps in my daily life, things will happen for the best, maybe not exactly when I want it, but in God's time. A lot of times I don't even know why they happen, they just do. I don't try to figure it out, I just know it works for me and I'm grateful.

As we work the Steps, our reactions and feelings change. We begin to attract others into our lives. We start to allow people to get close to us, rather than drive them away. We learn to trust and to be trusted. We no longer have to hide who we are for fear of being rejected. The sense of emptiness all addicts know begins to leave us.

I had about 9 months clean and was asked to talk at a meeting and I was terrified. I knew that I had to take a stand for what I was doing and becoming or I might risk relapse if I didn't. God once again carried me on that night and I was very surprised at the reaction of my fellow inmates. I realized that things were happening like they were supposed to and in God's time, not mine.

My wife turned up pregnant by my neighbor and quit coming to visit me. I got a letter from the parole board telling me that I would be given no parole during my entire sentence due to my previous record.

All those things happened to me in a very short space of time and I was about to explode inside. I know now that it was the grace of God, my friends, my sponsor, and those N.A. meetings that carried me through those times. I wanted to use very much. But I kept remembering a line in the Basic Text that said, "No matter what, don't use and you will have the advantage over your disease."

Those terrible feelings of fear, hopelessness, anger and resentment slowly were being replaced within me by hope, faith in my Higher Power, understanding, and acceptance.

Many of us believe that we rely on a power greater than ourselves to help us live clean. When we realize we have found a power which can free us from using and from the obsession to use, we become more willing to trust this Higher Power. We may choose to call this power God, but it is our choice.

I have to believe in a Power greater than myself and trust that Power to restore me to sanity. I can't run my life, I am powerless, so I have to turn my will over to this Higher Power. I have to apply all Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous in my life and God has to help me. I can't do it on my own. I can walk the yard of this institution, but it takes more heart to ask God to help me take these Steps.

The Twelve Steps are a program for living. Our experience shows that the Steps will help us to work through any situation. Our ability to apply the Twelve Steps daily comes slowly. We find that as we are developing the strength necessary to live life on life's terms, the principles we use in our daily lives allow us to face times of fear or pain.

I did 5 years, and stayed clean. Living in the general population was hard. I had a lot of faith that God would carry me. I read what N.A. literature I could get. I went to N.A. meetings when they were held. Letting other people know what I was feeling and letting them know how I was working the Steps was real difficult for me. I was in jail for a long time and there were meetings that were closed down for lack of support. I worked the steps the best way I could.

I admitted I was powerless over my addiction, that my life had become unmanageable. That was real evident to me, all I had to do was look around me and see the locked gates. At that point I came to believe that there was a power greater than myself that could restore me to sanity. I knew I didn't want to use. I knew there was a better life for me, and that was enough a lot of the days.

If I could share one message with newcomers, it would be that your life doesn't have to be the way it was before. We all have the disease of addiction, we all do things we are not proud of, but we have the chance to work through that.