

THE
NEW
WAY

OCTOBER 1982

N.A.

N.A. is a non-profit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovered addicts who meet regularly to help each other to stay clean. This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only "One" requirement for membership, the honest desire to stop using. There are no musts in N.A. but we suggest that you keep an open mind and give yourself a break. Our program is a set of principles, written so simply, that we can follow them in our daily lives. The most important thing about them is that "They Work."

The N.A. Way presents the experiences and opinions of NAs. Opinions expressed herein are not to be attributed to Narcotics Anonymous as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply any endorsement by either Narcotics Anonymous or The N.A. Way.

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Dear Fellow Member:

Here is the second monthly issue of the N.A. Way. This magazine is written for and by N.A. members. The N.A. Way is a forum for recovery from addiction. A journal to help unify our fellowship worldwide by carrying the N.A. message to members and groups. The experiences and opinions expressed come from N.A. members who send us articles. We, the staff of this, your magazine are committed to continue this effort. We need your input in the form of articles, letters and suggestions.

In Loving Service,

The N.A. Way Staff

Please send your ideas, input, suggestions, and letters to:

The N.A. Way
P. O. Box 110
Lisbon, Ohio 44432

Input must be accompanied by signed release form overleaf.

All material submitted must be accompanied by a signed, witnessed release.

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SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

WITNESS _____

SELF ACCEPTANCE

Last night I chaired the "beginners discussion" in my home group. "Just for Today" was the topic I had chosen, a topic I needed help on. Our meeting format begins with the chairperson asking if anyone felt like using today or has a topic they want to discuss. Tonight I was all set to bring up my topic, but first asked the customary question as a point of order. Wouldn't you know it? Someone had a topic they wished to discuss. I was amazed because this person rarely makes even a one line comment at meetings. The topic was self-acceptance. This person had been writing a fourth step inventory, using our Fourth Step Guide, came to self acceptance and wanted to know what it was. I am so grateful that I was at that meeting, discussing self acceptance, a problem I have been having lately in my recovery.

Before coming to N.A. I spent my whole life rejecting myself. I hated myself and tried every way I could to become someone different. I wanted to be anyone but me. Unable to accept myself, I tried to gain the acceptance of others. I wanted other

ACCEPTANCE, FAITH AND COMMITMENT

When I came on the N.A. program I had identified my problem - I had the desire to stop using, but couldn't see how. Due to the nature of addiction my whole personality was geared toward getting, using, and finding ways and means to get more. All of my personality traits reinforced this obsession with self. Totally self-centered, I tried to manage my life by manipulating people and circumstances to my advantage. I had lost all control. Obsession forced me to use drugs repeatedly, against my will, knowing that it was self-destructive, and against my basic instinct for survival. Insane, and feeling hopelessly helpless, I gave up fighting, and accepted that I was an addict - that my life was totally unmanageable, and that I was powerless over the disease. My will power could not change my diseased body that craved drugs compulsively. My self control could not change my diseased mind, obsessed with the idea of using mood changers to escape reality. Nor could my highest ideals change my diseased spirit - cunning, insidious and totally self-centered. As soon as I was able to

accept the reality of my powerlessness, I no longer needed to use drugs. This acceptance of my condition - my powerlessness over addiction and the unmanageability of my life was the key to my recovery.

With the help of the recovering addicts at N. A. meetings, I abstained, a minute, an hour, a day at a time. I still wanted to get high. Life felt intolerable without drugs. Giving up left me feeling even more hopeless than before, and to cope, my mind told me to use drugs again. Acceptance of my powerlessness and the unmanageability of my life left me needing a power stronger than my disease to change my self-destructive nature. The people I met at meetings told me they had found a power greater than their addiction in the N.A. program. These people had been clean for months or years and didn't even want to use any more. They told me that I could lose the desire to use drugs by living the N.A. program. I had no choice but to believe them. I had tried doctors, psychiatrists, hospitals, mental institutions, job changes, marriages, divorces, all had failed. It seemed hopeless,

myself and others.

I review my behavior regularly and correct my mistakes as soon as possible. I am continually developing and expanding trust and faith in spiritual principles. I give to others, sharing myself, and our program, and try to live the principles that I have learned.

These twelve steps have allowed me to stop using; taken away the desire to use; and have given me a new way of life.

NEWCOMER

You come to us
with those empty eyes
Haunted, searching
desperate for friendship,
Understanding and love.
You remind me of me.
Your denial, your "not yet's"
Will you ever surrender?
Stay with us?
Or will your "not yet's"
Become reality?
We tell you
You have a choice....
But do you hear us?
The streets call to you
Will you go back to them?
Time will give us answers.
Until then,
Our moment of silence
Is for you, my friend
All roads do lead to surrender
But yours seems so long.

In my early recovery I wanted what this Fellowship offered. You told me not to use anything, to get and stay clean just for today, and then I might recover from my addiction. I'm grateful that the fog has lifted somewhat, and with your help I'm able now to say what I mean. Today I want even more of what N.A. has to offer. My God has given me the ability to hear the feelings behind your words... sometimes. I don't think that the words sober or sobriety are in our basic text. The words clean and recovery are. Can old dogs learn new tricks? I think so! I have faith that many of our "old timers" will soon see the denial and confusion in their language, and in their lives, study our new book, and surrender again to recovery from addiction the N.A. way. The proof of my faith will be in their words.

HEARING THE MESSAGE

I'm sitting here on the grass outside the home of a friend. I didn't always know he was a friend. I denied it for a long time. I thought he was an opinionated, self-centered asshole, not realizing the familiar qualities I saw in him were my own.

We met at my first N.A. meeting. This was after several detox centers, private hospitals, a state hospital, stripped down and shackled, locked up in two state penitentiaries, a federal military prison, and countless years of suffering from the disease of addiction.

My friend tried to share his understanding of "Our Disease of Addiction", and the recovery possible through the N.A. program. I didn't want to hear "his" message.

Today I have noticed some things about myself. I'm still negative and doubtful towards people. I still have a gut full of fears even after two and a half years of clean time. Do you possibly think I should ask my friend how he found out about the N.A. way of recovery, or should I just continue to work my program of abstinence?

He's a lot like me but I've seen him

change and today I know that recovery is possible even for an opinionated, self-centered asshole like me. I can hear the message even after two and a half years of abstinence in and around the N.A. program. Do you think I should embrace "Our Program of Recovery"? That program that I see working in his life? You most certainly would say yes.

My disease tells me I feel better now, having realized and written this, and that I've done enough. Today I have a choice, so I think I'll pray for the strength and hope necessary for me to do what we know is best. The hard part about this is that I've learned to "not use" and remain opinionated, and self-centered. New ways are scary. Will I risk to share or stay isolated, and full of fear? Habits learned clean are hard to change, but not impossible. I'm willing - willing like I was when I first got here, willing because of the pain. I feel pain right now.

I think I'll talk to my friend. I think I'll stop suffering needlessly and ask for help.

SURRENDER TO RECOVERY

Concentration on recovery doesn't always come easy. The message I often hear is a mixed one, full of chemical identities. I'm not far enough away from my own surrender and release from my "substance centered" disease. When I hear all the substance-ism, I fear for my recovery.

My total surrender to the first step of N.A. came after three and a half years of abstinence from all mood changing, mind altering substances. Working with others, sharing as a speaker had reinforced my illusion of being powerless over drugs. I felt there must be more. I could speak of my "thinking problem", but I censored myself for those thoughts and feelings. I had a "problem" with relationships, and compulsions in every area of my life. The message contained in our N.A. approved basic text helped me finally realize what I am powerless over: my disease of addiction.

The censorship of myself eased. I heard the meaning of "Powerless over my Addiction". My addiction became clear. Surrender was no longer an elusive butterfly. It was a reality. My reality. It filled

the small empty spot in my heart that I had sought throughout my "sobriety". Recovery is in my life today. It's an endless, uphill journey, rewarding me with each step I take. Each day, more is revealed.

TODAY I FIT

Have you ever felt like a square peg that someone was trying to shove in a round hole? My whole life was spent feeling just that way. I was constantly trying to whittle my square sides down so that I could fit into a round hole somewhere. I never felt a sense of belonging anywhere, and yet tried to fit in everywhere. It always seemed I fell about an inch shy of fitting in. I was not pretty enough to fit in with the beauty queens. I wasn't smart enough to fit in with the intellectuals. I wasn't bad enough to fit in with the drop-outs. Not rich enough to fit in with the jet setters; nor poor enough to fit in with the street gangs. I was just never enough. The worst part of it, I didn't even fit in with myself. I was never enough for even me. I was detached from everything.

I made my way around the twelve step programs and still never felt like I belonged. Something was still missing. I kept trying to make myself fit in. The labels which are based on substances just never seemed to fit. I remained an outsider. I kept trying to fit in and never could.

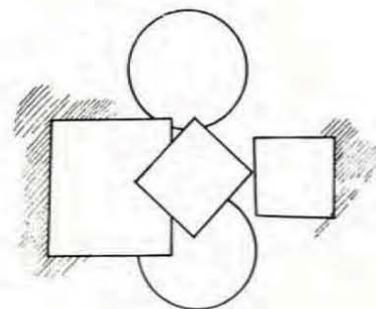
When I came around N.A. I still had those feelings of not belonging. You see, I never used "narcotics" and got caught on that word. Thanks to some good people in this fellowship, I came to understand and surrender to the first step which states that I am powerless over my addiction... period. The first step came to read just that for me. I finally belonged. I no longer had to try to fit in. I am not an alcoholic, I am not a drug addict, I am not a compulsive overeater, nor any combination of those labels. I am all of them and more. ...an Addict.

Thanks to the third tradition, I no longer need to try to fit in, for it states that the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using. It doesn't put any stipulations on what or how much I used in the past, just what I wish to do about it.

I have the desire to stop using, and I am free today to recover from my addiction. The freedom is based on the fact that my recovery is limitless. Abstinence from a particular substance is not my goal. I can choose to stop using lots of things today,

and I have the desire to do so. I want to stop using substances, people, places, situations, lies, cons, old ways, and on and on. These things are all symptoms of my disease and as soon as I choose to acknowledge them as such, just that much sooner will I grow in my recovery.

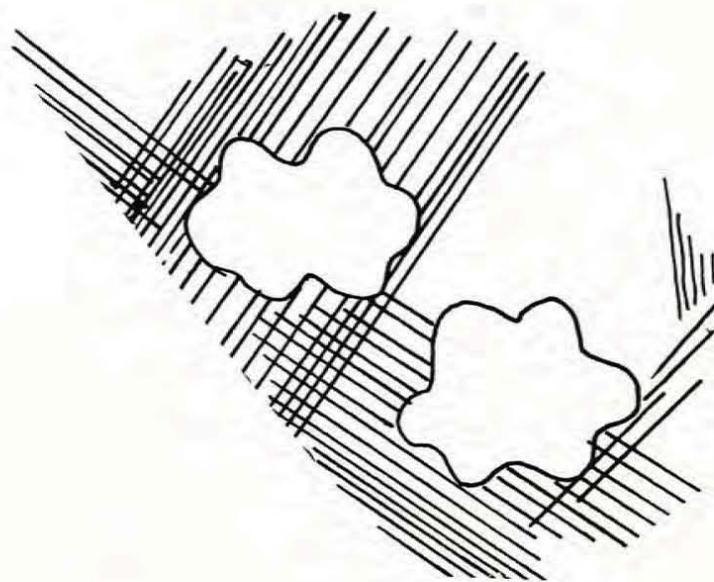
Today I am a round peg - an ADDICT. That simple identity enhances my recovery. Today I fit into a round hole - the N.A. fellowship. The explanation of the symbol of our bellowship states that "the outer circle denotes a universal and total program that has room within for all manifestations of the recovering and wholly recovered person." I no longer have to try to fit in. Thank you, N.A., for giving me the sense of belonging that I have searched for all of my life. My searching is over and I am home.



OUT OF THE DARKNESS

Dawn, usually the hour of confusion and panic, was different for me today. I woke up and stayed up even though it was thirty minutes earlier than I had planned. The old confusion in my mind did its best to take over. Most of the sensory messages I felt from my brain were based in fear and panic. The predawn darkness scared me. Visions of problems, unresolved floated up to my conscious mind like monstrous thosts. I concentrated on them in the quiet dark, fresh coffee clearing the haze of sleep away. Two cups into my self-obsessed misery, the program began to slip into my thinking. A problem that I needed a solution to required me to refresh my memory on our experience. I searched for my book and became increasingly frantic until I found it. During my third cup of coffee, I read and the tension began to melt away. It was becoming ever brighter, and I noticed the light. The shadows of my larger than life problems still kept me in the dark as I concentrated on them. Grappling with control, full of willfull resolve to find answers, I closed my eyes. Prayer still feels strange to me,

I don't know what God looks like. I shared my concerns and my heart's desires with this Higher Power that I don't yet understand. I asked to be released from these things. Then I tried to listen. I'd asked to know a presence. It happened for me this morning. The birds began to sing. The tension flowed out of my body. My mind was stilled. I became surrender for a few seconds and knew that God was real. When I opened my eyes, the world outside had come alive. My problems were gone, their shadows no longer blinded me to the light of dawning recovery. I am free.



One phone call can make all the difference
in the world!

To live and enjoy life. This is God's will
for me and for you.

The addict in me works the same with recovery
as it did with drugs - the more I get -
the more I want!

Talk about keeping it simple:
Remember what I asked for yesterday, God?
Well, it's ditto today.

From insanity to peace in twelve simple
steps.

Today thanks to N.A. I have something worth
giving.....myself.

All you get from sitting on the pity pot
is ring around the asshole.

Have you hugged an addict today?

When you don't know what to do, pray. More
important - when you think you know exactly
what to do - pray.

Relapse may always be a question for me,
Not today! is my answer.

My concept of active addiction is that of
ultimate evil: to leave the company of the
living before you die.

Of all the lives that I've lived, recovery
is by far the nearest to being myself.

Today I can stop trying to be something I'm
not and start trying to be just what I am.

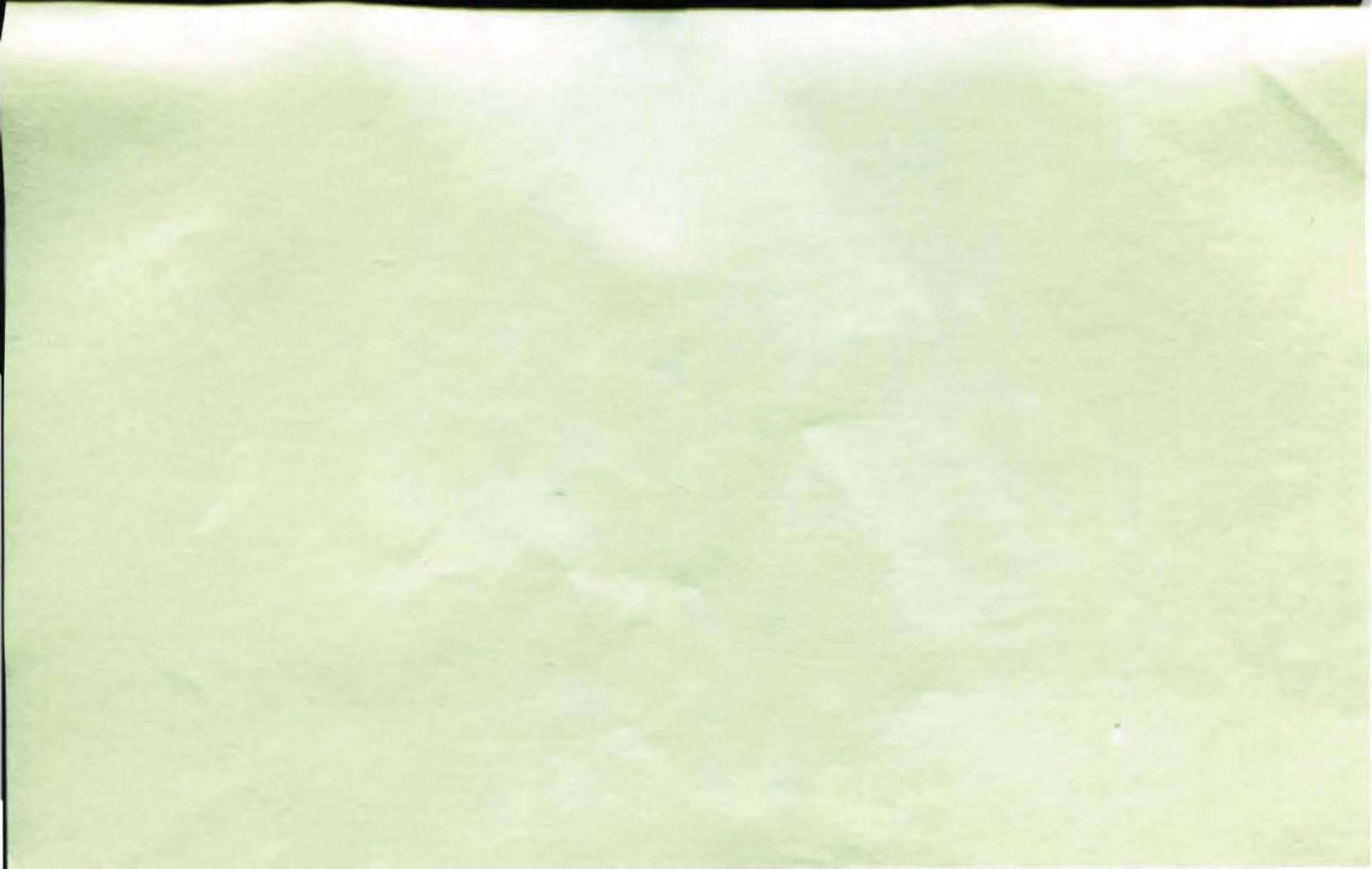
Don't worry about anything, instead, pray
about everything.

You may have to swallow your pride someday
to save your ass.

To me, the first step in "turning it over"
is sharing it with another addict.

Today I'm free to make new mistakes.

One thing about the addict in me is that
I tend to believe what I think.



My Gratitude Speaks
When I Care
And When I Share
With Others
The N.A. Way.