

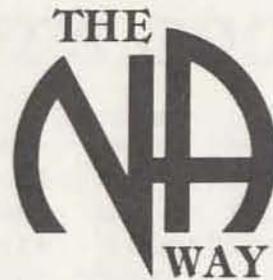
My Gratitude Speaks
When I Care
And When I Share
With Others
The N.A. Way.

THE
NA
WAY

NOVEMBER
1983

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".



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IT'S GOOD TO BE BACK!!

Recovery, for me, is a process which works best through daily attendance at meetings. This was true at three months clean, and is just as true today, at three years. Anything else is merely a shortcut which never really works. The times that I've forgotten this basic truth are the times when my recovery was on shakey ground. By the Grace of a Higher Power I stayed clean through those times, but it sure wasn't easy!

Service work is a necessary part of my recovery, but it doesn't replace meetings. Being responsible and productive within society is an aspect of recovery which I've really come to appreciate, but it does not replace meetings. That therapeutic value of one addict sharing with another, in an atmosphere of recovery, is what puts me into a state of "remission" from the disease of addiction. Sharing my day-to-day experiences, both good times and difficult times, at the group level is what I need to keep the fires of desire burning within. Without this, I start feeling "normal", life becomes mundane and repetitious, and I slip into complacency very easily. I lose track of the here and now.

I'm sharing all of this because I've just rediscovered it myself. For nearly eight months, I was only getting to a few meetings a week. I had the excuse of a night-time job and living in an unfamiliar area without my own transportation, but that's all it was, an excuse. At first, I was doing tons of service work, thinking this would compensate. It didn't...I just got sicker, and hid behind the mask of being a dedicated service worker. Life was one compulsive tangent after another, and I eventually burned-out on this type of "service". My next hiding place was my job.

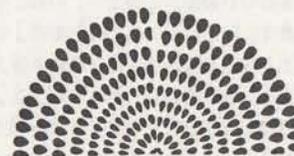
I poured more and more energy into being a top-notch employee, and went to even fewer

meetings. The meetings I did get to, I felt like an observer rather than a member. I shared on a surface level, afraid that others would find out how really desperate I was becoming. I was afraid of newcomers, thinking they would "bring me down". The Steps became a bunch of words which I could not quite grasp the meaning of, and most attempts at applying them to my life ended in frustration and despair. Just about all I had going for me at one point was the people I was sponsoring...they would call me at work everyday, and I could not refuse their requests for guidance. They forced me to keep some semblance of a program in my life, though today I feel like I cheated them.

I have a close friend in the Fellowship who stood by and watched me go through this self-induced hell. Many times he tried reaching out to me, asking if anything was wrong, and I would put him off with a stony silence. He became a threat to my misery, so I avoided him as much as possible. But he just waited, and believed in me. I'm sure it wasn't easy for him. I finally began to crack. Slowly, bit by bit, the strong walls of my denial crumbled away. I started opening up to him. It felt good, but I still didn't trust him too much. There were two morning meetings I had helped start months before, but had stopped attending. I needed my sleep! While I slept, he went, week after week, and kept those meetings going. I finally reached the point where I was either going to grow or go. I wanted to die or get loaded, anything but feel the way I was feeling. I started getting up and going to those meetings. It was real hard at first, because I felt like a fool. I had to get honest and admit that things were not going well with me. I was blaming my difficulties on my job, but at least I was finally sharing. I almost quit my job, but something inside told me that wasn't

my real problem. I talked to my boss, who knows all about N.A. and how important it is to me. He suggested I start some more morning meetings, and go to them! My friend said he would help support them, so doubtfully, I started two more morning meetings. I started listening and learning. When I would share, I talked about how I feel, instead of what I know, and I began to feel like a part of the group. Others identified with me, and I could feel their love and concern. The magic of the Program began to take over, and before I knew it, my problems became challenges...my weaknesses became strengths. Surrender became a joy instead of a fear. Belief in a Higher Power became real instead of just words. Today, newcomers are showing up at every morning meeting I go to, which is everyday. One new guy showed up in a taxicab! His car broke down on his way to the meeting, but he had his priorities in order enough to get to the meeting, any way possible! That kind of spirit is filling me with a new desire, and I can feel a change coming over me which I can't describe, but it's healthy. I feel very lucky and grateful to be back on the track of recovery.

My friend just looks at me now and says, "It's good to have you back! I missed you." Believe me, it is good to be back! Each night I pray for a continued desire to make meetings, everyday. It's working.



MY BOTTOM JUMPED UP

AND BIT ME

Mine is not an original story, but it's valuable to me, for it's the only one I've got - for a change. I used to have a lot of stories; a different one for every person I met. I told people what I thought they wanted to hear. I was positive that if I told you who I really was, and what I really felt, that you'd either walk away in disgust,, or think I was crazy. So, I told you grandiose stories about where I'd been, what I'd done, who I'd seen, etc., etc. I knew that I wasn't good enough, in any aspect, for you to like me just for me. I was boring, lazy, judgemental, obstinate, argumentative and extremely unhappy. I also didn't have a very good self image, as if you couldn't tell.

What I didn't realize was that anyone can tell a good story, if they practiced enough, and it was not me you liked when I told those stories. You may have liked the stories I told you about who I was. But most likely, you just thought I told funny stories, because you knew me. You knew that I was an addict, even before I suspected it. You knew that compulsive lying was one of the characteristics of this disease called addiction, because you had done the same thing.

I was an addict who was actively practicing my disease for "only" a couple of years. I never used a needle; I never did a large variety of drugs; I never lost a car, my drivers license, a house, children, or my job (probably because I never had any of those things to lose). I never, I never, I never....YET!

I did, however, find out that the insanity of addiction was too big for me to handle alone. This was only accomplished after a year and a half of practicing extreme denial: 1) I wasn't old enough to be an addict at 15. (How old are addicts, anyway?) 2) I didn't use large enough quantities or often enough to be one. (How much do real addicts use?) 3) And, I didn't use the right type of drugs to be an addict - you can only get hooked on heroin and morphine, right?

Wrong! Drugs were but a symptom of my disease. As our literature states, it doesn't matter "What or how much you used,, or who your connections were...".

My disease started the first time I was teething, and my Mom put a little whiskey in my milk, to help me relax. It started when I suddenly had only one parent to live with, and goin' out and smokin' a joint helped the pain go away. It started when I lied when the truth would do, and got away with it. And when everything in life seemed a little more bearable if I got high. And on, and on, and on.

I did not deal with the things that people deal with, in order to learn how to grow up. I got high instead. It was much easier that way. Until I couldn't get to school without "a little help from my friends". Until I couldn't get to school, period. Until I couldn't make it home at night. Until I couldn't make it home at all. I was too busy escapng. It was wonderful. All my problems were passing me by, and I WASN'T AFFECTED. But, my life was passing me by. I'd been kicked out of school, after being an honor student the year before. I got kicked out of my mom's house, then out of my foster parent's house. I got kicked out of my circle of "friends". I was slowly kicking myself right into the state of insanity that lead me into N.A.

Like I said before, I worked for a year and a half at cleaning up, before I did it this time. And it's been five years now. Not that I've "made it". But I'm living and enjoying life without drugs. The world no longer rotates around me, my, and mine. (Not that it ever did, but I sure thought so.)

Today, I help other people see what this program has to offer. I go to schools and tell them about what N.A. is, and how it helped me, as well as a lot of other "hopeless, helpless addicts". I am involved in group, area and regional service to further our primary purpose. That is truly a change. My only purpose used to be to find out what you were gonna' do for me, what you were gonna do to me, or what was in it for me.

I needed to write about all this, because today, I had an obsession to return to the craziness I've just described, I don't know why, but I do know that by sharing it with someone else, the feeling will pass, and I don't have to act on it. Maybe this will help someone else, too. I sure hope so!.



TODAY IS DIFFERENT

Three years coming didn't seem like a big deal. To get through the first year I told myself "after a year my life will be manageable enough to return to using" and when it didn't turn out that way, I told myself, "I remember the desperation of looking for drugs and the endless waiting. The only way I'll use again is if I have enough money to fill an entire table with drugs, so I won't have to look or wait in desperation." That thought haunted me later when my grandmother died; she had left me a rather healthy inheritance. But as I now have come to trust, the God of my understanding took care of that. I got the news of her death while pasting mailing labels on the Approval Form of our Basic Text in 1981. What I remember the most about leaving that Thanksgiving mail-out conference was the amount of sharing and how many suffering addicts, Our Book, in print, will reach. The suffering addict it had already reached was me. Those pages reminded me of the desperation of my using life and had taken much of the euphoric memory away. I no longer needed to con myself into staying clean for now by promising myself to return to using later. I began to want, desperately, everything recovery had to offer.

My life began to change rapidly at that point. I completed a degree program that I'd dropped out of many times, I was hired by an employer I hadn't, in my wildest dreams, believed would ever even consider me. Mostly, I began to appreciate being alive for the first time in my life.

The second year seemed like a big deal. Our Book was approved, many pamphlets were written, new meetings began to thrive where I live (and elsewhere) and my Faith grew. During that year, the N.A. Fellowship, Our Steps, Traditions and my Higher Power began to

have deeper meaning for me. I learned that the God of my understanding has a sense of humor in which I can take great comfort. I believe He uses it when more direct methods have failed. For example, my sponsor has been telling me since my recovery began, that the Twelfth Step is for me. It's certainly written more than once in Our Book: "We keep what we have only by giving it away". But somehow my ego prevented me from seeing this, so my God's sense of humor had to intervene.

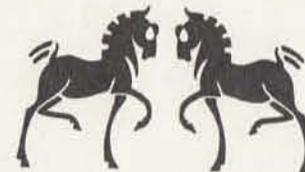
One day last spring I was on my way to work. We had just had a Northern Midwest reminder that winter is always just around the corner. It was mid-April and about six inches of wet sloshy snow had just fallen. I went through a bank drive-in window, thinking about the dreary weather. A little old Lady caught my eye as I waited at a traffic light. The snow had prevented her from waiting, for a bus downtown, inside the glass-sided shelter, so she was standing on the street next to the curb. Just then, a bus passed her by throwing snow, water and dirt all over her. The buses in this town won't stop for you unless you wait in the designated area. I felt sorry for her. I drove my car across the street, got out, and offered to give her a ride downtown. She took one look at my car and said, "If you think I'm getting in there with you, you're crazy!". I laughed and thanked God all the way to work. I finally could see that the Twelfth Step really is for me. That experience helped me see it clearly. The little old lady may have stood waiting for the bus until the snow melted. But I realized, in the time spent thinking about giving her a ride, moving my car to her and getting out to offer, I had forgotten about the dreary, long day ahead; I had gotten outside of myself for a brief period and could feel the relief.

One month later Our Book was in print, a dream come true, and again my Faith was reinforced.

In June of this year I began the long process of adopting a child. I've spent much time talking to my God about this. I can honestly say, because of my faith, if my God thinks it's right, it will happen. Today, He's in charge of all my decisions. I'm just responsible for the legwork. Together we have had endless interviews, filled out hundred of forms, and now I've begun the waiting process. Many adoptive parents say that this is the hardest part, the waiting. I've not found that to be true for me. The legwork was sometimes difficult and frustrating but that part is done. Now I trust that if my God thinks I can be a suitable parent, in his time I will become a parent, and if not, He has something else in mind.

So my third anniversary coming didn't seem like a big deal. Mostly, I suppose that is because today I try to make a Big Deal out of each new 24 hours the God of my understanding has the Grace and Love to give me.

I've often heard people say on their anniversary Birthdays, "It's a Miracle". For this N.A. member each new moment clean is a Miracle.



QUESTIONS

Waiting....
Listening...
Checking it out...
Are they for real?
Dare I trust?
Become vulnerable?
They tell me
vulnerability
is a strength...
My past tells me
it's a weakness...
Who do I listen to?
They tell me
I'm not my own best friend...
But who is?
Why should they care...
When I'm not so sure I do?
They touch each other
with smiles and glances...
filled with something they call empathy.
They hug, alot...
Without expectation...
Their closeness frightens me...
But my loneliness

frightens me too.
I want to run...
but have nowhere left to go.
I've run out of people
and places...
Except these people
in this place...
I ask
They answer
Patiently...
KEEP COMING BACK
What kind of answer is that?
I don't understand...
But want to.
I believe that I believe them...
About coming back, anyway...
Waiting...
Listening..
HEARING...
UNDERSTANDING...
BELIEVING...
ACCEPTING...
SURRENDERING...
RECEIVING...
SHARING...
AND...FINALLY CARING

WHAT IS THE N.A. PROGRAM?

I am an addict. I'm sitting in a Basic Text Study Meeting of N.A., and I'm the only member here. It's a morning meeting, and this is only our second week in existence, so I'll just hang tough and sit here for the whole length of the meeting. I just finished reading our second chapter, and now I guess I'll write about it. I came to share...

What is N.A. to me? It is many things. It is the light which led me out of the darkness of addiction, giving me hope where I had none. N.A. means Never Alone...It is a haven where addicts can gather together, free from outside influences, and feel understanding and love like never before. N.A., to me is being willing to do things I never thought I'd find myself doing like sitting in this small room in this meeting facility waiting...Why do I even bother? I'll tell you why! I have a disease which is with me twenty-four hours a day, everyday. It is in my bones, it's in my head, it's invaded every crevice of my spiritual being. Left untended, it will seek to destroy me, mentally, physically and spiritually, until I am totally devoid of any semblance of human-ness. N.A. is my only weapon against this disease. This meeting room may well save my life. I know of another meeting room, in another state, that has saved my life, many times. I was given many gifts of the spirit through simply sitting in that room, week after week, for nearly three years. I went to that room in that church, and witnessed the miracle of recovery manifesting itself in the lives of hundreds of addicts. Most of them are still clean today! I found myself in that room, and I came to believe in a God of my own understanding there, through sharing, listening and doing whatever I could to keep that meeting alive. There was a time when I

sat in that room, just me and my Higher Power, and waited - just like I'm doing now. So, although I don't like sitting here alone - I'd much rather be at home in bed, or out somewhere eating breakfast - I'll just sit here and wait. And I'll come back next week with my Basic Text, and read Chapter three and wait. I need this meeting room...I can feel hope, just sitting here, What is N.A.? It is my life!



AS I UNDERSTAND IT

As a small child, I asked my Mother, "What is God and where is it?" She walked me to the back door and flung it open, reaching her arms to the sky, trees and grass. She told me to go lie down and reach for the clouds; then maybe I could find the answers for myself. This was the greatest gift she ever shared with me.

Addiction sent me searching for the inner peace I had felt that day, so long ago. I was scattered in many different directions until I found surrender to the spiritual principles of N.A. Today, at last, I am free to be that uncomplicated little person again; laying on the grass, the clouds and my God within my reach.

ONLY A BEGINNING

Using drugs opened me to feelings which had been beyond my reach. When the drugs stopped working, I thought my life was over. It was really a beginning in disguise. The loss of my anger and my pride didn't really hurt me, it just helped me to see beyond my blindness into the reality of my humanity. Of course, there was the pain of my separation and the fear that there was nothing anywhere to help me! I had gone so far and could go no further - I felt like I had failed. Through N.A., I have found a way to go on. Early on, I figured we went only a little way in N.A. and were mainly glad for each other. Today I realize when I stopped dying, I started to live again. Many will tell you the way is short but I tell you it is long. Let go of your fears. Reach out to others who care. Today, we live. We can feel, see and do what was once closed to us. We appreciate the gift of life as only the dying can.

It seems to me that each of our predecessors made a way for us. We receive these gifts and learnings and take them further. What we learn, whether from those who have gone before, from each other or from what a personal God gives us, we pass on so that others may find our way. We take no credit for our recovery or what little help we may be to others. To do so would be to undo what N.A. has given us.

As soon as I get over the idea that I alone, was responsible for the miracle of my recovery and therefore accountable, I could surrender a little more and give my God a freer hand. Those of us who have walked this path can speak of joy and freedom far beyond our wildest imaginings.

In the beginning I felt only pain and desperation. After I had been clean a little while, I started to see and feel more clearly. Relief and comfort triggered old warning signals that pain was just around the corner. It seems to me that in our using days, when we found any sort of happiness, it was short lived and followed by even more pain. We became conditioned to this "waiting for the other shoe to fall" attitude. We associated good feelings with the pain that followed. This pain mainly resulted from the fact that the longer I practiced my active addiction, the harder it was to get back into living by reasonable, human standards. The goals and rewards society offered were meaningless to those of us who lived from one short lived pleasure to the next. We had to stay clean a while to get back on "human standard time". Our friends, homes and jobs had to stabilize in terms of recovery before we could see much happening on a day to day basis which would last. Recovery is real and in time we can focus more clearly on what is at hand restricting ourselves less through fear or guilt. Each time we are warm and friendly, we are building a positive relationship to the world we live in. When we are mean and selfish, we cut ourselves off. The Twelve Steps of N.A. can guide us out of the maze of pain and pleasure.

My experience shows that we can reach a place where we are comfortable with our humanity. By trusting a loving God to guide our will and bring love into our lives, our defects are removed and we have the opportunity to amend the harm done to others so we can truly live clean and free. Admitting fault causes no sense of loss, prayer and meditation guide and strengthen us. Our spirits continue to awaken to spiritual principles and we are able to take an honest interest in the welfare of others.

Along this way, I've found, we learn whatever it is we need to know for us to be complete and happy. Our so called painful learning experiences teach us a great lesson if we just don't use. Whatever happens if we stay clean, leaves us in a much better position to keep the negative things from happening again. The real pain comes when we don't learn the lesson and are forced to repeat our mistakes. The greatest pain comes from tragedy to others we know or are close to, particularly if we didn't do our best to help. Only a personal God and the love of those close to us can help at these times. Most of our learning experiences teach us the high cost of fear. The phrase, "you are what you think" is particularly true for us. If we fear losing a job, we seem to do the things necessary to lose it. If we fear bankruptcy, we may bankrupt ourselves. In my experience if we are inordinately attached to anything, it may be taken from us to teach us freedom. Inordinate attachment may be another way of naming addiction and we are promised freedom.

Freedom can be scary. A prisoner of my disease, I still know the comfort of it's walls. To be able to walk free requires considerable recovery and yet it is there for each of us equally, with an equal price to pay and an equal joy and sense of wonderment when the last chain falls away. N.A. Recovery goes on from here.

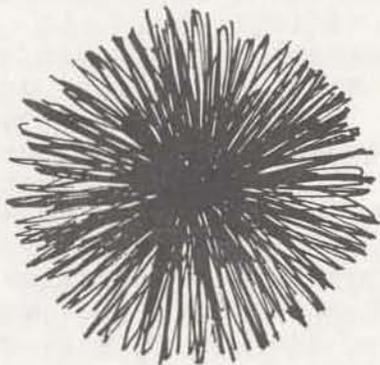
The underlying selfishness, which I assume will always be with me, is cracked and flaked away as I discover myself filled with joy over the success of another. Each time this happens, I become a little richer inside. To be truly rich is to live without fear of loss. When our private needs are met, we are more tolerant of others and the need for desperation is eliminated. When we have the feeling inside that we have really been able

to help just one other person without them knowing or having the insecure need to take credit, we will know what it means to be anonymous.

Isn't it curious that many wise and truthful sayings appear in books and magazines with no authors name but simply the word, "anonymous". Without personal regard or credit taking, they carry some message of joy or insight which makes them able to stand alone on their own merit. There is something great and eternal about these humble truths which have no certain origin in time or geography but are meaningful by the very value of their statement. To me this is what "anonymous" is all about. We all have our tiny span of time on this earth. We all fall prey to the same human frailties which are exaggerated in our addiction. We all are given ways to overcome our disadvantages. In recovery, we addicts have to place a high priority on overcoming our human tendency to be selfish and spiteful or flaky and irresponsible. What might be a "bad spell" to another can threaten our existence. Our peace of mind is our life line. Through anonymity, we can achieve what is beyond money. As we practice the N.A. way of life, we fill with goodness and joy till we overflow. The world becomes sane to us and we find ways to help make it better. Just as we were promised when we were new, we become responsible and productive members of society. Somehow this is more of a side effect or reflection of what happens inside instead of an end in itself. We learn to live clean, love life and care for others through trust and dependence on the God of our understanding. When all else fails, give it another try if it has worked for others. Each time we go through this the basis for our belief is increased and our willingness to do a little more than we think we should will grow.

Recovery is real. We are grateful we don't have to suffer the consequences of hollow surrender. The disease of addiction exaggerates my vulnerability, N.A. gives me the strength to overcome. Each time I honestly seek the answer to some question, I seem to find it. Each time I need help, it is there if I am awake to it.

I'm finding less and less need to rehash old issues and discover humorous problems of a new sort. It seems that clean, we will in time find ourselves wrestling over the dilemma of choosing between one good thing over another. Maybe then, even more so than now, we will need the Program and the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, and the God of our understanding.



WORD COP-OUTS

In N.A. the words are right, most of the time. That's very important to me. I changed words around to suit myself when I was seeking recovery elsewhere. I made "their" words fit what I thought was "my problem". It didn't work.

The words used to describe the problem and what to do about it were right in N.A.; Powerless over...addiction...a program of total abstinence...we do not care what you used...religion or lack of religion. I surrendered mainly to the right words.

Today I see many others who are conerned with our words. Some even use them to reinforce denial. It seems to me that the most abused words in our steps are; we and our (my).

The Twelve Steps of N.A. are written in the plural: we. They are written that way because more than one of us have experienced them. I must accept my personal powerlessness over addiction, others can help me but I must do it. I came to believe. I made the decision, I wrote my inventory, and shared it, I am becoming ready for relief from my character defects, I humbly ask God...etc., etc... You get the idea. Lately some people have shared with me how there needed to be another involved, how this was a we program. Certainly the Fellowship helps, sponsors help, sharing helps but in the final analysis we each do what we do ourselves. If we wait for some "WE" to pray and meditate....It's absurd. I must work the Steps in my life, I certainly can't work steps for you in your life. N.A. recovery is essentially a personal experience. This experience becomes more real when we share it but we can't have the experience for another person and much of the effort required is so personal in nature that we can only

share what happened for us, we cannot feel each other's experiences.

Lately I've heard a lot of people introduce themselves Hi, I'm____I'm powerless over my addiction...emphasis on the MY. How arrogant. Do they think that they have power over the addiction of others? Or do they think that their addiction is different from others? Or are they just trying to be unique? The personal pronoun "our" in... "We admitted we were powerless over our addiction.. " means that we own addiction. It doesn't mean that each of our "addiction" is special or different from other addiction. Addiction is addiction. We could have said "We admitted that we were powerless over addiction.." and our First Step would have the exact same meaning. The most disasterous form of denial I have seen yet is the denial that tells me my addiction is different than your addiction because I used different drugs or had different experiences.

Denial is a "cop-out" from reality. My recovery depends upon my ability to accept reality and practice the principals outlined in the Steps in that reality. In reality I work the Steps personally in my life, you can't do it for me and we can't do it together; I must do it or it doesn't get done. In reality I'm powerless over addiction, my addiction, your addiction, addiction where ever it is, who ever it afflicts, however it manifests itself. Addiction is the same disease whether you have it or I do. I'm powerless over the disease, not just the manifestation of that disease in me.



KEEP IT SIMPLE

Simplicity is a powerful antidote to the empty existence of active addiction. The Steps of N.A. freed me to understand the nature of this disease, that affected all areas of my life. Living each step simply in my daily life has freed me to experience this gift of Recovery.

Keeping it simple, at the beginning meant changing only the things I could and letting go of the rest. Now it means not only looking at reality, but actually enjoying this world, living in the beauty of this time and space, expressing my gratitude by the way I live.

Simplicity is still a fragile thing, lost often in the fast pace of my addictive thinking. To recapture the peace in flowing through each second, requires much growth and the reward is life. It is no small miracle this life. My faith must be shown in each of my reactions. Back to basics once again each new moment.

Life was unbearable in my active addiction. Death was my walking prayer. Then I found the promise of N.A.; freedom from active addiction and started to learn how to live. Today I must take my recovery seriously, but to take my life too seriously is to deny this gift of rebirth. It is still free for the surrender. The sun will rise and set each day, whether I look at it or not. I have to relearn how to live; to release the self-destructive forces out of my recovery.

Taking time to walk in our woods, taking time to hold my little ones when I need a hug, taking time to listen to another member share joy or pain, these are also necessary parts of experiencing life.

At rare times, my inner-spirit gives me moments of clear vision. Perhaps this is that exclusive serenity. These moments come from simplicity of thought.

For me, life is a ongoing circle. The two ends will meet when I can become what my God planned for me on the day of my birth, when that first breath was taken and life was a new unlimited adventure.



MORE WILL BE REVEALED

I had an experience this weekend which left me feeling cleansed, glad to be alive, and filled with gratitude down to my toes.

It actually began early last week. I'd been debating about whether or not to go to a convention. I knew that if I went, it would not be so much for the recovery as to see someone who I was in an on-again, off-again long distance romance with. I'd already been given the awareness that the relationship was no longer healthy for my recovery, but the addict in me wanted to go anyway. Then I received a phone call from a friend in my old home-town. The Fellowship there was sponsoring an addithon to help support an upcoming literature conference, and my friend asked if I could come and share at a meeting. The topic of the meeting would be the tenth chapter of our Basic Text, "MORE WILL BE REVEALED". I accepted, and thanked my Higher Power for helping me make the decision I was having trouble making on my own; the addithon was scheduled for the same weekend as the convention.

On the day that I was to leave, I prepared myself by reading chapter ten over several times, taking notes on it, and then relating my own experiences in recovery to the contents of the chapter. I organized a ride with several fellow members and we were off!

As we drove, many thoughts went through my head. I had moved away from the town that was our destination earlier this year, after spending my first three years of recovery there. The adjustments I had to make through this major change were many, and very difficult, including a lot of doubts about whether I was taking a geographical, or if the move was truly God's will for me. I was finally getting settled in my new environment

and enjoying the security of a good and healthy environment for recovery. Nevertheless, some of the doubts still lingered.

Well, as events turned out, I didn't even get to share at the addithon. Some of the other meetings had run over their scheduled times, and the "More will be revealed" meeting was canceled. My preparation had not gone to waste...so many things were revealed to me during the twenty-four hours I spent there, it became obvious that my God had brought me there for a reason. I saw the living situation that I had left. It hadn't gotten any better, in fact it had gotten much sicker. The elements of the disease of addiction which I had found intolerable and unlivable were very evident. I compared my current living situation, which has become much more recovery-oriented, and became filled with gratitude for what I have, today. Old friends from the area who knew me well commented of how much growth they saw in me. They'd never seen me as calm and happy as I appeared to be. This meant a lot, coming from those who watched me struggle through the many trials of those first three years of my recovery. I was able to make amends to several people whom I'd been unable or unwilling to make amends to when I lived there. These experiences gave me much more than talking about my past experiences would have given me. My preparation of reading and taking notes on that chapter seemed to help me to appreciate the experience more than I would have, otherwise.

As we were leaving, I looked around at the friends who were with me in the car, and I felt really blessed and glad to be a part of my new N.A. family. As we drove down the road, I knew that I was heading home. It felt good!

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