

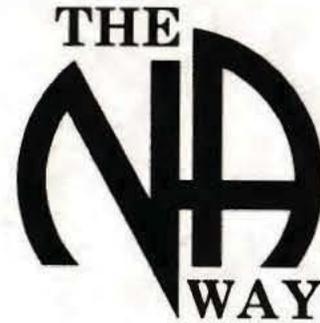
**My Gratitude Speaks  
When I Care  
And When I Share  
With Others  
The N.A. Way.**

**THE**  
**N.A.**  
**WAY**

**FEBRUARY  
1984**

# 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".



**FEBRUARY  
1984**

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VOLUME 2

NUMBER 6

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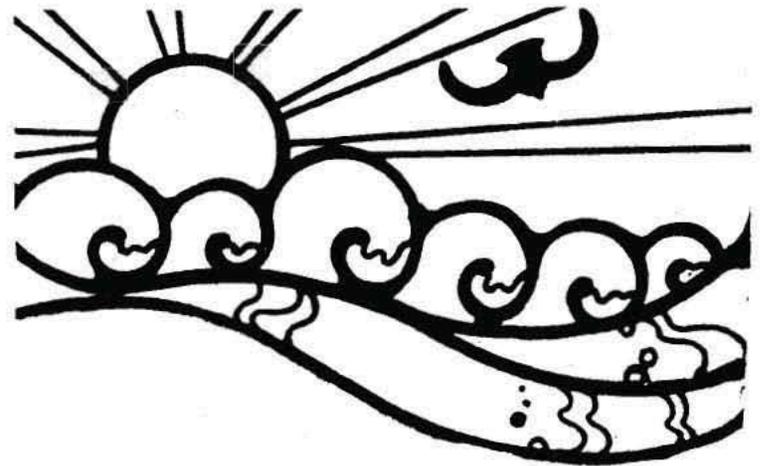
The N.A. Way Magazine  
World Service Office, Inc.  
16155 Wyandotte Street  
Van Nuys, CA 91406

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## Coverletter from N.A. Newsletter:

*from the Voice of N.A., Volume 1, February 1968*

Increased hope for more and better recoveries comes from a better understanding of our disorder plus the experience of addicts who have long term recovery.

In the past, all that was really known about the addict encompassed only a small segment of addiction. Since there were few, if any, real recoveries how could anything else be known, except our behavior while using, during withdrawal and through some short periods of abstinence. Even when long periods of abstinence had been imposed upon us nothing really changed to bring about real freedom from drugs.

We hope this will enlarge on one of our basic beliefs, that the best hope for any addict is the practice of per-

sonal freedom in abstinence and the maintenance of a simple spiritual program.

In comparing parts of our past with others it would seem that we all reach a point, sooner or later, when we say to ourselves or others: "I just don't have a way to go, if I only know what to do".

In N.A. we find a way to go and a way to know and in association with others like ourselves we learn to translate, "KNOWING WHAT TO DO" into "DOING WHAT WE KNOW".

We trust that this paper can help in that transition. That we can share hope, faith and courage with each other and reach our common goal, a clean, secure, satisfying, meaningful and productive personal life.

# MONSTROSITY

God, grant me release from self-obsession and use me as a tool of your will.

"...We tried to carry this message to addicts..." Those of us who want this new life of recovery have found that sharing the gift of release from our disease is the only way to stay free. We gather in small groups to do what we cannot do in isolation — recover. Together we establish and maintain an atmosphere in our groups that provides recovery to those who seek it and this sustains our personal recovery.

The humbly courageous among us teach us the principles that make this all possible — the steps and Traditions. They read. They see beyond apparent impossibilities. They show us the way. They inspire us. N.A. seems an obsession with them because they are uncompromising in principle. We learn from them but are somewhat intimidated by their zeal. They become our idols. We copy them and accept the responsibility they share so freely.

Now we become part of the structure that is supposed to maintain the atmosphere of recovery in our groups. Our predecessors move on to address other needs, often losing their anonymity through our worship, respect, and envy. Their ser-

vice seems impressive: their information endless, and their impact so vast. Our inventories, filled with self-will, lust for power, inadequacy and jealousy, lead us to honestly believe that they must be stopped. We share our fears with our groups. The members after all have the final say. Our leaders taught us that. Our ultimate Authority is the group consciousness, we believe. We teach the group to fear, and blindly reject any input from our predecessors. We must not allow them to motivate us with their ideas. They are power crazed. They would manipulate us with their minds. They are trying to lead us.

"What is the N.A. Program" tells us that we have no leaders. The group has entrusted us with it's service. We feel good. We have guided the group to a wise decision. We have blocked the ideas of those who can read. We are free to float in our confused status quo. We have hidden the truth. Power is the enemy. Now the group consciousness knows that POWER is in them. They savor it and flex their muscles on every issue.

"Slow Down" says the group. The group has become thier own fear. The Black Magic of jealousy, gossip, and paranoia has won again, and the addict seeking recovery is

the loser. The power and prestige force us to lose sight of our primary purpose.

In N.A. today, the power-trip is a group consciousness. Our Loving, Ultimate Authority may express Himself only through a group CONSCIENCE. Power-crazed group's opinions, prompted by information deficient prestige seekers, kill ideas that could save the addict's lives. A Loving God can also express Himself through our leaders, and we do have leaders. They don't govern us, but their long time, hard core dedication to N.A. has provided the atmosphere in

which we may recover. We know that we can block their ideas. Our negativity has proven itself.

But what has worked for them, freely shared, has given us a new life. A spiritual base in lived Steps and applied Traditions, fed by prayer for freedom from self-obsession, can give our groups back their conscience. We need your help. Our groups have lost their conscience and gone on a power trip, and this monster is killing addicts daily. Please, please pray and meditate, and go to a business meeting.

## *don't forget*

*There's times and troubles we all go through,*

*But we have a Higher Power to look up to.*

*No more torment and hearts breaking inside,*

*No more cheating and lying and trying to hide.*

*We can hold our heads high and still shed a tear*

*But the difference my friend is very clear.*

*Those tears we shed were hurt and grief*

*The dope and booze we took were to find relief*

*When I cry now it's natural and O.K.*

*Because I'm recovering, with help from N.A.*



## “Would You Please Make A Commitment To Serve?”

Immediately following election to a position of trusted service in our area, we are asked to make a commitment to serve. Most people share the enthusiasm for a task, that made them willing to serve in that capacity when nominated. Some share their experience, by committing to continue through hard times with little help and much criticism. Others even go so far as to volunteer to train their replacement. Occasionally this commitment to serve sounds like a wedding vow or an inaugural oath.

I've made several such commitments. I'm grateful that I've kept more than I've broken. I'm still clean! It was close sometimes. My obsession to share our message of recovery from addiction has led me into spiritual relapse. Several times, friends and spiritual advisors, steps and sponsorship helped me to share my way back into rec-

overy; usually with my back into recovery; usually with my back against the wall or on my knees in pain. This learning experience has taught me to make achievable commitments, to say no and ask for help.

A recent service project demanded my full attention. It became my sole commitment for one whole year. It was a dream come true for me, a means to help N.A. groups fulfill our primary purpose worldwide. I was awed by the magnitude of the responsibility, and worked daily at maintenance of my spiritual base. Every gathering of the Fellowship, from meeting to convention, offered an opportunity to share this responsibility. Many others made a general or spiritual commitment to help in this badly needed service. Much of my time was spent in regular temporary delegation of responsibilities after

circumstances (read H.P.) showed me that I could not do it all alone. With very little structure and much energy, the project successfully established itself.

With guidance, energy and work, I had co-ordinated the initiation of what was meant to be an ongoing project. The ball was rolling fast and I was proud of the momentum. Much of the project was infused with my personality. I feared too much. When my term of service commitment was up, I surrendered the project completely. I was proud of the success of the project. I was proud of the gift that allowed me to fulfill my commitment. I was proud that I'd surrendered it completely. I was proud and I was wrong, very wrong.

One of the people who had helped the most during the first year of the project was elected, and made a

commitment to serve the following year. Some logistical and functional changes were made which complicated the process involved. I'd left no structure or system to those who followed. Dedication I had, commitment I had, follow-through I lacked.

The establishment momentum carried the project for a while. Now it threatened to fizzle out. A lack of structure and guidance has doomed a very good idea and a potentially beneficial service project. Real commitment demands follow-through. I was wrong, my time is not up yet. Now I have a choice to return and help develop the structure that will insure continuation of the project or to stand back and deny my disease again by insisting that I've fulfilled my commitment.

I think I'll try to help. All roads lead to surrender.

---

Abstinence is a prerequisite for recovery. I can stay clean on my own. I need your help and the help of my God to recover. Continued abstinence is a choice offered through the gift of recovery.

---

Write yourself well

---

# FELLOWSHIP

vs

# RECOVERY

An hour early for my home group, I wait for someone to show up. Lately, this meeting has not been well attended. That's understandable really, for several reasons. First, the meeting is in a rural community; most addicts in this area are urbanites. Coming here takes planning, effort, and money which is scarce right now. Second, this group meets on a Saturday night. Addicts in the Fellowship have Fellowship dances to attend, Fellowship speakers to hear, Fellowship parties to play at. Fellowship girl and boy-friends to cuddle up to, lots of Fellowship to get into on a weekend night. Who wants to go to a Saturday night step meeting? Especially a meeting where they talk about growing up; a meeting where recovery from addiction is treated as more than simply not using drugs, a meeting like this one.

It seems to me that weekends bring out the untreated disease in our Fellowship. Parties, dances, "good times", all clean and without using, yet where's the recovery? Maybe I'm too old or too serious. Maybe it really is okay to act the same way we did when we were using. As long as we're clean, and around the Fellowship. Maybe it's okay for you, but for me I guess it's not. Recovery to me has much more to do with how I feel about myself than how many participation notches I've got on my Fellowship calendar. Recovery means productivity and responsibility to me. Recovery means having had a spiritual awakening as a result of those

Steps, awakening to the fact that my actions affect other people's lives, that doing the same sick things and expecting different results just because I'm clean is a form of insanity, one of the ways that addiction affects every area of my life.

Most of my life I've been a "joiner". I joined all sorts of organizations and movements, to find an identity that would validate and justify my immature self-obsession and defiant anti-social rebelliousness. I sought out others like me who were "tuning-in" to mystic, cosmic, physical and emotional narcotics, like "free love", the empty "turn-on" of another lusty new body, naked, and so, so close. The "establishment" and all its productivity and responsibility went away for a while. It worked almost as well as drugs. The powerful anti-ideals were nearly as strong. Mob-think, revolution, socially destructive activity reinforced by comrades

equally defiant, immature. Rebellion stimulated me nearly as much as speed. When one cause ceased to be popular we always found another. We had this need, this hole inside, that could only be filled with....For me, it eventually had to be the strongest of drugs.

Narcotics Anonymous rescued me from my own mind. You, too, allowed me to join. You helped me get clean, and then taught me to work steps. You showed me how to grow up. Now the steps are working me. Sometimes I can see clearly now. Your denial is easy to spot. Fellowship participation is NOT a program of recovery. My denial is harder for me to see, especially when it's expressed logically and righteously. I think I'll open my Basic Text to the 12th Step. "...sometimes the only message necessary to make the suffering addict reach out is the power of example..."

When you like yourself, and feel comfortable with the differences that make you a special person, you may feel more comfortable about the differences you see in others. Although being like someone is easier than being different than someone, each person has special things he can offer the other!

# Thank You N.A. For My Life

I first used drugs at 13 years old. My mother made me promise to never use again. I promised.....

I didn't stand a chance. I used all kinds of drugs for 18 years. My problem was definitely, not with one specific substance.

At 19 years old, I was given 3 days to live, at 21 I was discharged from my second detox (main admission wards of mental hospitals) as INCURABLE. The doctors had given up on me, the courts saw me as hopeless and treated me leniency for a number of years. I believed I was a hopeless case, too. I "got busted" again and was offered a choice of another detox or jail.

One doctor said just try to stop using, a day at a time. I thought what a stupid comment to come from a trained doctor, and that he was a waste of time. That phrase was alien and unadaptable to my sick, extremely closed-mind.

Finally very shaky, nervous, self-consciously addict braved the unknown; without drugs. My head didn't work, my voice was slurred, and repeated the same incoherent sentences, forgetting I had just said them.

I really believed I would never be OK again. I was so sick that the

nurses contemplated removing the chairs from my padded cell. Three weeks after I cracked...

Shaking and crying I spoke to my God: "I'm sorry God I can't do it, I'm never going to be able to live without drugs again, forgive me!"

I lapsed into secondary withdrawals and a friend at my bedside persuaded me to "Keep on... don't give up now!" (God bless him, he's an N.A. member today trying to get a meeting going on the south coast). There were no total abstinence treatment programs in England then. I painfully tried to control my substitute drug: alcohol. This is how I came to N.A. 3½ years ago. I was the first member to get clean via N.A. London, what a pain I was to those early members, all 5 of them.

My 3rd try to stop using, the miracle happened. I've been privileged since to help start a few N.A. meetings. Today we are approximately 300 members in England.

My early recovery depression has long gone, the steps are a treasure to me. I may still be crazy but I'm a healthy crazy. I feel comfortable where I'm at. I understand recovery is my contribution to life. I have good orderly direction today. I know N.A. works, because I only work N.A. I trust it, try it, and live it.

*Freedom and Isolation  
from Miracles Happen Newsletter, July 1983*

*Because I'm an addict, I sometimes build walls  
My walls become prisons,  
Cells of myself, cold iron bars of my own deception.*

*I stand on my perch and judge.  
I'm the child who stands alone  
Due to the fear, dishonesty, and my own self deceit  
I am the door on myself.*

*I took my ball and went home.  
My bricks grew stronger  
My fears became my censor  
Watching my every move, my every action.*

*After years of dying, starving myself inside  
I knew if I wanted out I needed a key*

*That moment the light shined*

*I alone could not tear my walls down  
But with help the walls began to crumble*

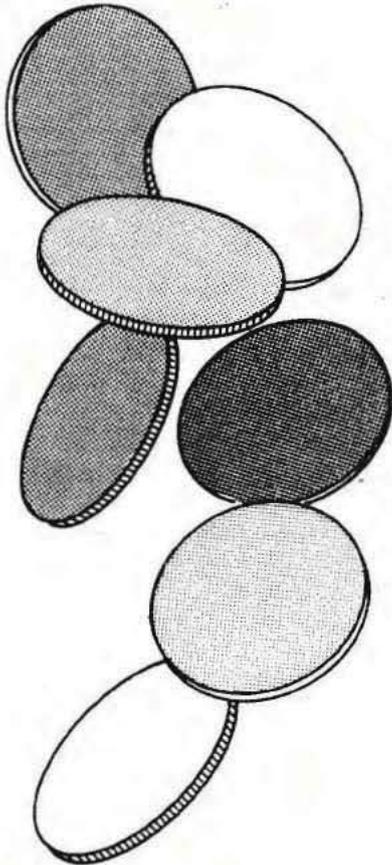
*The more I opened up the more the bars spread  
By defying the censor of fear I smelled freedom  
I ran toward the light  
I shared, I cared*

*And then, I became WE*

*The walls fell, the cell door opened  
And I was freed  
I can build a wall  
WE can tear it down.*

# TIME RECOGNITION

To my knowledge there has never been a written description of the "chip system" we use in Narcotics Anonymous groups in our area. Almost any member is accorded the privilege of giving out the chips from the time when they have the first inklings of what recovery might mean in their lives to being an oldtimer.



**WHITE CHIP:** The white chip is the sign of surrender, the color of cleanliness and purity and purity is considered to be earned by all the pain and suffering we experienced getting "qualified" for the program. The white chip is given to you; the rest are earned. Use of any mind-altering substance is a relapse and the person seeking recovery is expected to pick up a white chip on their own. Not everyone picks up a white chip at their first meeting because they are unsure of their sincerity. For this reason, we don't force a chip on anyone.

**ORANGE CHIP:** Orange is the international color of communication. This caring and sharing chip is given to members achieving 30 days without using. The chip came into being because in Atlanta, we felt that someone being released from a 28 day treatment should have a sign of group recognition, making that going home period a little more special. The color of this chip was brown when we were using engraved chips but changed to orange when the new chips became available.

**RED CHIP:** The color of danger, this chip alerts us to stop, look and listen. This is the period in recovery when we are most likely to say to ourselves "addicts can't stay clean 90 days! I must not be an addict". Group members are able to follow the progression of another members recovery just by following them through the chip system. This helps members know where someone is in their recovery and puts us in a position to help.

**YELLOW CHIP:** The color of sunshine, the yellow chip is also a sign of caution. We're not out of the woods yet. This six month chip is given with an air of caution but with hope that we can begin to see the light.

Note: Occasionally a member will say that the chip system doesn't work for them because group recognition takes them out of a 24 hour framework. Thinking about "all that time clean", they fear using again. Saying they want to stay clean just for today, we understand and let them alone. A member who falsifies their clean time is really sick and asking for help in a way that an alert group can respond to.

**GREEN CHIP:** The nine month chip is the green signal to go for the blue. It is called evergreen, the color of growing things. The 90 day, six and nine month chips are the color and sequence of traffic signals: Stop, caution and go. These are also the colors of the rainbow after a storm.

**BLUE CHIP:** One circuit around the sun, 365 days without using. It is the birthday chip for members clean one year. A blue chip winner! We celebrate with a party, cake, hugs and kisses, and sometimes with an engraved birthday chip to remember what the last one did for us. May it be the last one.

## TODAY!!!

Today, I did not have to use! This is the greatest reward that I'll ever have. It meant that I didn't have to lie, steal, con, or be sick. It is the finest of the rewards that N.A. has given me in my personal recovery, to have a choice and not to be forced by my disease to use.

With this freedom, I feel a closeness with my Higher Power, the gift to live. The gratitude that I have from this is indescribable, only another addict can understand it through empathy.

# The Gift of Change

The first time I worked the Sixth and Seventh Steps, I was motivated by the knowledge I could not go on as before and stay clean.

This was a time of great personal pain. Each time I turned around there was another defect looking directly at me.

In truth, my first attempt of a Seventh Step was a prayer for an end to the pain. I was asking my Higher Power to let the denial return and protect me.

Since that time, I have worked several Sixth and Seventh Steps. Each time they bring new and different results. Today, the Sixth Step is a time of growth and insight. I find it to be a confirmation of my First Step. I am able to see that addiction still affects all areas of my life. Amazed still to see myself surrender and accept.

My Seventh Step is no longer a prayer for the return of denial, but for the gift of action. Through my Higher Power's willing, personal, participation, I am able to do that one thing I never accomplished before---change.

When all else fails----read the Basic Text.

# .....Clean Up

Do you have one of those rooms or corners where N.A. recovery material just hangs out doing nothing? I do. Sometimes I have to sit on the floor because N.A. literature, tapes, etc. are occupying every flat inch of space. I sometimes find it hard to eat on my kitchen table. When I get desperate and need space for myself, I get everything in one pile, place it in that room or corner I mentioned before and then I start losing things that I need.

Last month as I was looking for some very important recovery material, I found a few N.A. tapes under a foot locker. They had probably been there for months. That's when I made a decision to share them with other N.A. members. I always felt I shared what I had, I even talked with other members about how much recovery material is just hanging out in someone's house. There are probably thousands of pieces that can be put together and developed into very important recovery material. I'd forgotten how much I had stored away myself.

I took the chance and sent a tape to another N.A. member, it was a tape I really enjoyed listening to. It was

hard to give away because I really wanted to keep it, yet it seemed to me another member needed it. I discovered that I enjoyed sharing this way. I did it again and again. It got easier. Now when I write to another member, I look around to see what I can share with them. Sometimes I just send a little card with the Serenity Prayer on it.

Right about here I want to mention the feelings I was getting. I was feeling good about giving this stuff away, I felt it was good for my recovery, a big change from the way I used to be. I started to wonder why I didn't need these things anymore. It seems to me that I do need the material I shared. I also believe my H.P. will give me what I need when I need it. It's a big relief for me to know I can pick up almost anything I have and share it with another person.

I really did enjoy listening to that first tape I gave away. A short time later a copy of that tape was sent to me by another N.A. member.

Keep coming back, it works.

We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

# "Freedom to be Me"

When I came into the Fellowship, I was but a fraction of a human being. I was enslaved and imprisoned in a body torn by the effects of using; in a mind twisted and demented by years of lies and misrepresentation of reality; by a soul lacking in spirit, bankrupt of faith, and hurting!

When I came into the Fellowship, I was told to surrender — that I had to surrender to win; how paradoxical I thought I had surrendered years ago...I had! Yet it was living life that I had surrendered; it was my freedom to live that I was relinquishing; it was my freedom to care, my freedom to love that I had surrendered. My surrender came when I picked up the first chemical.

When I came into the Fellowship, it was suggested that I stop talking, and listen. Was that giving up my freedom to speak, to think, to act? So I thought. Today I realize that I was only surrendering pride to gain the freedom to speak honestly, think clearly, and act righteously.

When I came into the Fellowship, I was without options; I had no choices; my last card was played. I was told to admit powerlessness and unmanageability over myself and my life, that I had to give it up to keep it. How paradoxical I thought. How could I give up the reigns I had pulled for so many years, to some

power greater than myself? Though the reigns were worn and twisted, they were still in my grasp, or so I thought.

Today, I have the freedom to give up the reigns and attain peace of mind; to give up the control and gain some serenity; to give up some ego and gain self worth.

Today, I have the freedom to feel, to choose, to care, to love, to live. By having faith in my Higher Power today, I have a day at a time, been able to grow from within, and to like myself.

The road to recovery is always under construction, but today I have the freedom to be a part of it all — today I am not on the side of the road watching the traffic go by. Today I am a vital, integral part of life.

Today, when I give up control, and back off of my pride and ego, I gain the greatest freedom of all, the freedom I find in true faith. In knowing the limits of my mind and body, I find wholeness of spirit.

Today, only through constant vigilance, through personal inventories, through rigorous honesty, caring and sharing, and most of all, through turning my will and my life over to the care and love of my Higher Power do I truly attain the freedom to be me.

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