

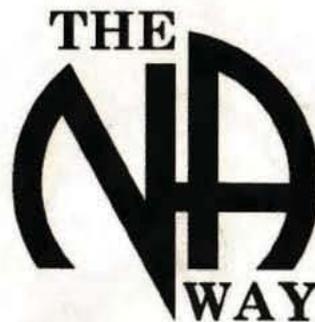
**My Gratitude Speaks
When I Care
And When I Share
With Others
The N.A. Way.**

**THE
NA
WAY**

**MAY
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".



MAY
1984

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Unconditional Love

When I can give my love away to others honestly, when I can go inward, I can do all in love. I can overcome the impossible ego, the lust of mind - powerless over addiction. I will not demand, hate, mock, ridicule, or try to change others in the name of love, but love them as they are. I will love you unconditionally. I choose to be happy, joyful, honest and satisfied in love. How wonderful to have fullness of life, real joy and peace.

Unconditional love (not wanting a thing, but reaching out with encouragement, hope, strength, comfort, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, joy and peace) will live in you. My God loves without condition. Some feel that God is love and a person who lives in love, lives in God, and God lives in that person.

My gratitude speaks when I care and when I share with others the N.A. Way.

THE

N.A.

WAY

Our disease is one of the most insidious and disgusting afflictions a human being can suffer from. We are forced to be our own worst enemy in the name of pleasure and freedom. We do all sorts of things to our bodies along with the dope, let down our friends and relatives, bend and break any rules, laws or suggestions which appear to be the least inconvenient to us and lash out violently at anyone who even thinks about causing us the least inconvenience. What's ours is ours and what's yours is questionable. We are great ones for getting it wrong. We resist improvement in every possible way. It is no surprise that medicine, religion and psychiatry had no answers we could use. Even these disciplines which specialize in treating the physical, spiritual, and mental pain of the world's population using every resource at their disposal can't help us. It is an incredible fact that this is the same spirit we appeal to when we are in

our worst shape and most terrible trouble. We seem to know intuitively that there is nothing in the world which can help us.

It would be nice if all these traits would disappear in the recovery from addiction we find in N.A. As we all know, recovery is more real and less tidy than that.

We still have our opinions, preferences, and assorted rough edges. Our Twelve Steps have the Power to give us the results we seek; freedom and relief from the effects of our active addiction. But there is nothing we can do about the fact that we are addicts except to accept it. We are none of us sure when we act from our spirit or from our disease. We have to do certain things recommended to us in the Twelve Steps on a daily basis lest the disease reinfect our thinking and our actions once more. The more secure we feel, the more vulnerable we are. Our relapses don't begin with the drugs -- they begin with the gradual slipping

away from the principles and values which gave us so much in the very beginning when we thought there was no hope.

Recovery resumes when we turn away from the notions of power and control and again surrender to the spiritual principles of Narcotics Anonymous. It seems so simple, yet members and would be members die for lack of this simplicity.

Usually the first thing we do as newcomers is attempt to saddle ourselves with tokens of power and control. We want a lasting relationship, a good job, a house, a car, the whole bit within the first year of what is really a convalescent period. Our disease, like other life-limiting and life-threatening diseases will kill us if we cannot discover and act on the life-giving principles of Narcotics Anonymous. Not everything said and heard in N.A. meetings is N.A. Obviously we have a lot of room to grow in accordance to our needs. Freedom to express ourselves isn't limited unless we get too far into personal preference. All this makes what is agreed to be N.A. (as described in our approved literature) very special. Still the written material can only hope to be in accord with the spiritual nature of our Program. Unless it moves us or rings a spiritual bell, it is useless and good-for-nothing. Even our services are spiritual. Unpaid, untrained and seemingly unable people, victims of our disease, open our meetings throughout the world. They meet the needs of the groups and

members, take suffering addicts into their homes and perform the many wonders of N.A. service... usually quietly and anonymously. They don't take credit because they don't want credit and recognition. If their cover gets blown, they can lose their service ability. Truly all we can hope to be are instruments of a Loving God and any time we try to take credit or let others put us on a pedestal we have to wait for a while before we can get with it again. We can't even stay clean by ourselves but how easy and seemingly sweet it is to fall back into the illusion of personal power.

The N.A. Way allows us to go our way in peace. We've had all the trouble we need for today. If we are in trouble and need help, we have a fortune in people to turn to, people we don't mind asking for help. Our Fellowship stands between 30,000 and 50,000 members today and we are growing by the minute.

Addicts are tired of dying and more find us today than has ever been possible before in the history of mankind. You are the reason. When they reach out, you are there. When they fall, you catch them and make thier way as easy as possible without killing them with kindness. When they want a meeting, you are there. When they call in the middle of the night you answer the phone or call them on the hotline. You answer their thousands of letters. You have the final say in our service structure. You carry our message in your heart and give it out all over the world. You are the N.A. Way.

PURPOSE CONSCIENCE

Greetings to all fellow addicts and others who read this magazine. What a privilege it is to be able to write something for a forum that is read by N.A. members world-wide. I understand that the N.A. Way is badly in need of more participation from the Fellowship. It is sort of sad that it is that need that finally motivated me to write. I would rather my motivation come from a pure and simple desire to serve N.A. I have thought about writing many times, but haven't found the motivation. Here it is, so here I am.

I start out this way in the hope that others who see this will relate and break out the old pen and paper. I would love to hear shared experiences from all over the Fellowship. The N.A. Way represents a fantastic opportunity for sharing in a unique and powerful way.

The subject of my article is Group Conscience. I have seen this term used, abused, and misused in our Fellowship enough to want to share my perspective about it. We also have used other expressions in it's place that sound similar, but carry quite a different meaning. Some of these even appear in our review literature. I do not mean to quibble semantics, but only to call for clarity and precision in our language in order to help us focus better on this extremely important phrase.

First, look at the phrase "group conscience" as it is used in Tradition Two:...a loving God as He may express Himself in our

group conscience." Notice that group conscience itself is not our ultimate authority — group conscience is the vehicle by which we collectively consult a loving God, who is our ultimate authority. This little distinction, easily missed in our sometimes hectic business meetings, has a least one important implication: the role of each individual participating in a group conscience decision is not simply to raise a hand. It also involves an ongoing effort to live the 12 Steps and thereby awaken spiritually sufficiently to have a working familiarity with ones' own spirituality. If Group Conscience is our Fellowship's conductor or conduit of a loving God's will for us collectively, then we must individually open our channel to a personal loving God by working the 12 Steps. "Higher mental and emotional functions such as conscience and the ability to love were sharply affected by our use of

drugs" (Narcotics Anonymous 2nd edition p. 3).

Secondly, let's be precise about our use of the word "conscience". Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary calls it "the sense...of the moral...goodness...of one's own conduct, intentions or character together with a feeling or obligation to do right or be good." Perhaps, stated another way, the conscience is each person's inner sense of right and wrong, or good and evil. Such phrases as "group conscious", "group consciousness", and "group consensus", even though each represents some aspect of group conscience, dilute the spiritual essence of the term group conscience. In my opinion we ought to be very careful to keep the focus on a loving God, and on our own awakening spirituality when we invoke group conscience, and carefully avoid the use of words that water down that focus, especially in our literature.



In this world of complicated solutions, answers, and problem solving techniques, the simplest is still the best.

The Unfolding of the Fellowship

When I went to my first N.A. meeting in 1978, we had only one meeting locally, no local service structure, and very little literature. For virtually all of us attending that single isolated meeting, N.A., was, for all practical purposes, the A.A. meeting attended by addicts (many of whom called themselves chemically dependent, alcoholic or whatever). We openly endorsed and quoted the A.A. literature when we referred to the Program, we called it A.A. as often as N.A. without really thinking. We had very little awareness of N.A. as a whole.

I was not particular about those things at that time. I felt we were all afflicted with the same condition regardless of what we called it, and that we all recover by the same principles. We had a very tight knit group; we loved our N.A. group deeply, and worked hard at our recovery and at carrying the message.

Many groups seem to be in this same condition today. Perhaps the best word to describe those groups is "underdeveloped". They are

often criticized by N.A. members who are appalled at what they see as a blatant disregard for the Traditions. In fact, many would argue that such groups are not N.A. groups at all because they do not follow the Traditions.

When addicts from these two schools of thought confront one another, one school goes away calling the other "N.A. purists" who are out to stir up the serene waters of the group and quibble over semantic issues until the focus on recovery is lost. They believe that alcoholics and addicts recover quite well as one big happy family — "Why make them separate?" The other school goes away feeling that it is the first school who is making them separate by calling some addicts such things as "alcoholic" which implies that they are different from other addicts. They point to the 6th Tradition and now our basic text and say, "as Fellowships, we are separate. Why not face that reality?"

The problem, as I see it, is not so much a problem at all, but rather the controversy is part of a normal developmental process of individual groups and of N.A. as a whole. Consider an analogy. When a child is small it is extremely dependent upon its' parents. The child mimicks the parent. That is a normal part of identity formation. As it reaches adolescence, the child develops a strong need for its' own identity, separate from its' parents, and goes through a crisis period, or a somewhat stormy period of critical change, in search of its' own separate and distinct identity. ...We addicts know all about that! A healthy person finds that separate identity and moves into adulthood (something we addicts know less about), relaxing the independent spirit AND learning a style of cooperative interdependence rather than a dependence on significant others or rigid independence.

In my experience it is similar for N.A. groups and N.A. as a whole. Once an N.A. community becomes established, it spawns its' own new groups, but the first group in an area in which there are no N.A. groups usually springs from the A.A. community. In that sense, A.A. is our parent Fellowship, so it's not surprising or particularly alarming that isolated, underdeveloped N.A. groups have strong ties to the A.A. community.

Predictably, as that N.A. group gains members who cleaned up in N.A. and have no particular sense of allegiance to N.A., tensions

arise. The group is developing its' own identity. It eventually goes through an adolescence — a period of identity crisis in search of its' separateness and hopefully (if that passage is healthy and the crisis resolved), the group develops an autonomous identity and cooperates with its' "significant others" such as churches, the courts, treatment facilities, and A.A. At that point an "adult" group is not affiliated with, and avoids language and practices that imply affiliation with, any outside enterprise. This is not to condone language or endorsements that imply affiliation of any developmental stage, but simply to place the controversy in a context in which it can be better understood and dealt with effectively.

Perhaps N.A. as a whole is, at this point in our history, going through an adolescence of sorts. One of our major crisis today, as we are in a state of rapid growth and development, could be summed up by the question, "who are we as an entity separate and distinct from all other entities?? Our literature consistently points clearly to the path we must take to continue to move forward: we must continue to establish our identity as a separate, distinct autonomous Fellowship, independent of all related and unrelated entities; we must cooperate, not affiliate with any or all of these to better carry the message to the addict who still suffers.

One of the best ways I have seen to knock the wind out of the sails of the controversy surrounding these issues, has been pointed out in many ways in this magazine; simply to be clear about our own language as a Fellowship, Much care and hard work within our literature movement has gone into developing our own language with regard to our illness and our recovery process. This was not done to be cute, or different or unique or controversial. This was done because in N.A. we have taken on the task of broadening the perspective of the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions to include addiction to all mind altering, mood changing drugs. We have changed the language to take the focus off of the drug(s) entirely, and focus on the addiction process and recovery process. That does in fact set us apart. We are not in competition or contention with any other 12 Step Fellowship, we simply have a separate point of focus for our primary purpose. Our focus is on recovery from addiction irrespective of the drug or drugs involved. For N.A. to keep its' own focus clear, we must use N.A. language at N.A. meetings. That's the way we can keep our doors as open as possible to exactly those whom our Traditions target.

Some of that language is as follows (all clearly used in our book):

1. We introduce ourselves at meetings as "addicts", nothing else. That's a term

that includes us all, excludes no appropriate people, sets no one apart as different, and it's the only term used in our basic text.

2. Rather than the words "sober" or "sobriety" which imply freedom from alcohol, yet do not accurately describe freedom from many other substances, we use the words "clean" and "recovery" or "clean-time". These words again are all inclusive, setting no one apart.
3. We read and refer to ONLY N.A. conference approved literature during our meetings. Hopefully, our members read privately and perhaps discuss in other settings a whole variety of rich literature, but, again, to keep our focus clear, not during the meeting.

It seems to me that as we do just those few simple things to be consistent with our Traditions and Steps, the controversy dies down or dies out. It has been a thrill to be a part of N.A. at this exciting period in our history. The entire picture changed when our book came on the scene. We no longer have the excuse, "but we don't have a recovery text of our own" to be loose about our 6th Tradition. We are now well on our way to a full, strong autonomous adulthood as a Fellowship, willed into existence over time by a loving God.

Dear N.A. Way:

Thank you for sending the December pre-edit material to us. It's the first time we ever received this. Up until the Nashville Convention I didn't know what process was used to produce the N.A. Way. I also was a part of the W.S.C. Policy Sub-Committee in Miami Beach and have read the input on the N.A. Way guidelines. I would have liked to attend the workshop and conference the N.A. Way Sub-Committee held this weekend but was unable to attend. I hope your objectives you set out to accomplish came to be reality.

Anyway, please continue to send this pre-edit material whenever it is available. We will respond to it in two-three days in order to get everyone together. I tried to involve as many people as possible. We came up with twelve people really willing to do this. I explained to the best of my ability the things we hoped to accomplish, and we did. Most of these people that attended would like to be a part of this process in the future. I think it's great! People that never get involved did!!!! They not only accomplished something, they learned more about themselves and recovery from the disease of addiction.

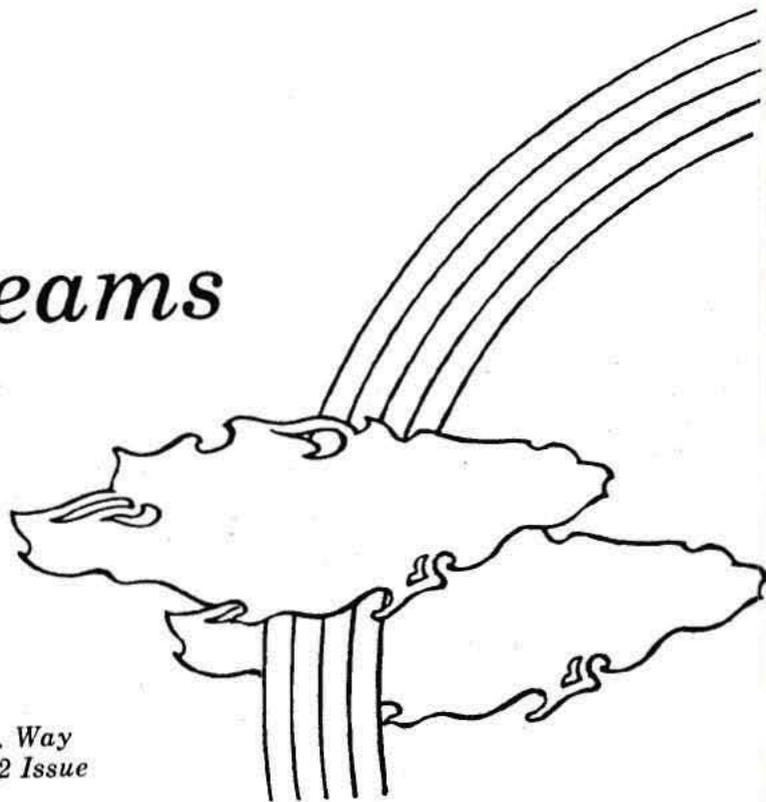
Keep in touch and thanks again for giving us the opportunity to participate.

Dayton Pre-edit staff.

Thank You!

Dreams

from N.A. Way
Nov., 1982 Issue



I got a chance to share during a recent weekend at the Second Anniversary of an N.A. group in a distant city and state. Over two hundred and fifty members came from around that and neighboring state to celebrate their clean time and recovery. I remember a World Convention of N.A. a few years back which had a total attendance of about this group's anniversary! The people were wonderful.....

The atmosphere was grand, lots of love and sharing. There was plenty of delicious food and members to make you welcome. I spoke longer than I had planned but there was something in me that needed to come out.

Recovery in N.A. has never been just a daily tally of pluses and minuses to me. The dreams we share and which grow in recovery give me hope. There is a time when reality catches up with dreams. Part of the pain of my active addiction was watching dreams die. Like us, they died a hideous twisting death. By the time I got to the Program of N.A., I had an aversion to dreaming. They always led to pain when they didn't come true. This anniversary showed me that dreams come true. Everybody there was evidence of a miracle.

When reality catches up with dreams today, hope becomes transformed into something you can see, touch or feel. The special brand of hope N.A. has to offer has the power to make dreams come true.

As I struggled with the feeling that there was something more to share, asking my god's help, I stood speechless a few times. It came to me to say, "If you have a dream and you're clean today, hang on to it!" It was a special gift to me to be able to share that feeling and I am grateful.

The bigger the dream, the longer it will take to come true, but our ultimate authority will show us the way. We are given the dreams, and through N.A., the dreams become possible, then they become real.

It is so easy to retreat into "hurt feelings", disillusionment and anger when I forget where my dreams come from. Dreams are given to us so we can start making arrangements today. Our whole Fellowship is a dream come true. When my God gives me a dream today, I realize it is a glimpse of something to come. If it is a good dream, I can talk about it, see what others have to say about it, get into some prayer and meditation and hopefully find some other members who share the same vision. Together we can make our dreams come true, but sometimes it takes a lot of "we". Dreams of the other sort can head off future difficulties through sharing awareness and looking for things we can do today. These things all take place today but recovery has taught me the power of vision.

My biggest dream today is of N.A. growing to include a quarter of a million members. I am not embarrassed to have this dream or to share it with others. This dream allows me to have a frame of reference so that my actions might contribute to something greater than myself which is a big part of what recovery gives me beyond simple abstinence. I know from having served on several conventions and conferences, the importance of good staging and doing what I can today for the day to come. When I see members pulling together to improve the various systems of communication within the Fellowship, I translate that into an increasingly clear and informed group conscience. When I see members pulling together to improve the vehicles that carry our message to places where addicts seek recovery, I translate that into an increasing number of members who have truly reached their Twelfth Step. Today we have increased unity of Spirit within the Fellowship and increased availability of our message of hope and recovery outside the Fellowship.

Our loving gratitude and patient sharing are overcoming the obstacles to our growth and continuance, one by one.

Dreams Can Come TRUE

When I look back on my life, I can easily see what a dreamer I was. Most of my life was spent in fantasy. Even as a young child I can remember being reprimanded in school for "day dreaming". And boy did I! I never lived in the moment. I was too concerned with what I would be doing the next moment, the next hour, week, year, etc. Yet, my dreams and fantasies were never obtainable. My perception of reality immobilized me to dream dreams which had the possibility of coming true.

One thing I've been able to realize in recovery is that maybe some of those dreams weren't so outlandish at all. The problem more likely was that my life was so unmanageable, my inability to change myself or my actions so intense that I did not know how to work with the necessary consistency which would bring those dreams into reality.

The basic text speaks of complacency as a large threat to those with substantial clean time

in recovery. That's exactly where I was, complacency ruled my recovery, and my life. I felt in a rut, I was doing the same things day in and day out and was allowing myself to get bored with my recovery and my life.

There are a few people who I have faith in today, those fellow recovering addicts who love me, and care about my recovery. I was sitting with one of them the other day, and these feelings of boredom materialized in our conversation. In the course of the conversation, we each talked about setting goals for ourselves. We each set them very high. You know, I'm working for something today in my life. It doesn't concern me that they are very high goals, for today I have a course of action in which I know I can enjoy the road to the goal as much as I would obtaining the goal itself. The program has taught me how to set goals and work to achieve them **JUST FOR TODAY**. Doing the things **JUST FOR TODAY** that may bring about that very high dream is very satisfying. It has put some joy back in my life. I've heard it said if you have no dream, there is no need to work, and if you do not work, there is no need to dream. Today, I am not afraid to dream for Narcotics Anonymous has given me a Power Greater than myself which guided my life, and gives me the strength to work for my goals, Just for Today.

Don't be afraid to dream, dreams can come true in recovery.

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