

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

**THE
NA
WAY**

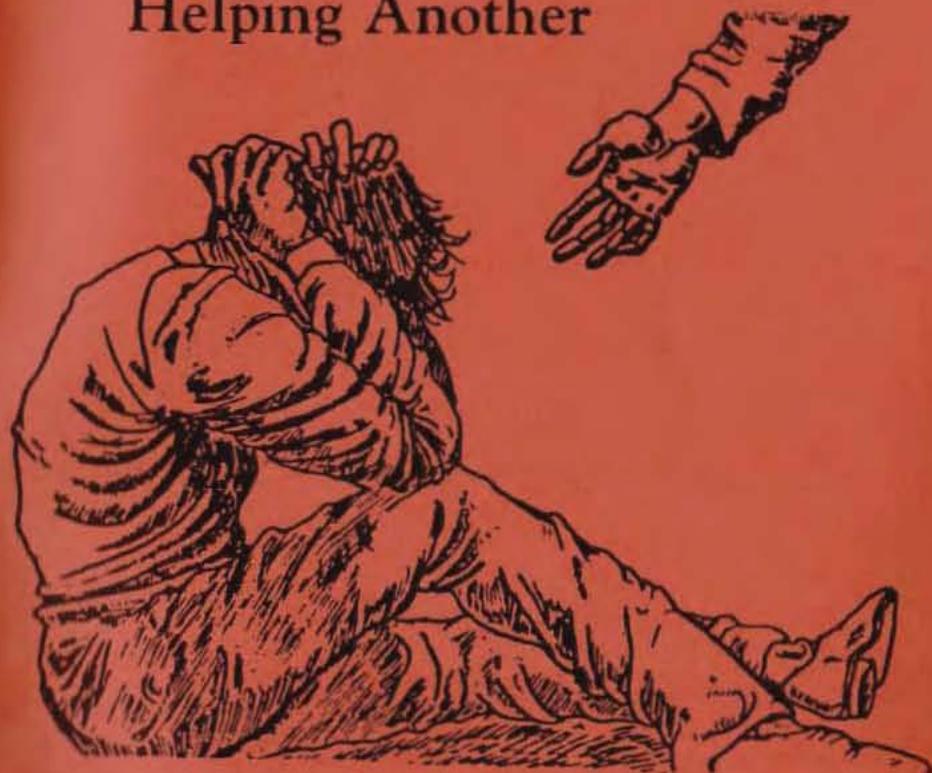
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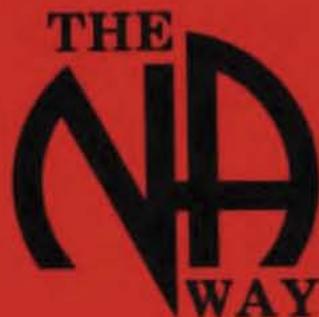
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One Addict

Helping Another





THE INTERNATIONAL
JOURNAL OF THE FELLOWSHIP
OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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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 recovering 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*.

All members of Narcotics Anonymous are invited to participate in this "meeting in print." Send all input along with a signed copyright release form to: The N.A. Way; World Service Office, Inc.; P.O. Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409

THE TWELVE STEPS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

1. *We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction — that our lives had become unmanageable.*
2. *We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*
3. *We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.*
4. *We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*
5. *We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*
6. *We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*
7. *We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.*
8. *We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.*
9. *We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*
10. *We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.*

We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us, and the power to carry that out.
11. *Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of those steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*
12. *Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of those steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

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From the Editor

The offer for back issues that appeared in last month's magazine is getting a strong response. If you will recall, we are offering a package deal for all issues of the magazine that have ever been in print. The same offer appears in this month's Newsline. Those who want additional copies of the order form or who may be new subscribers to the magazine may want to watch for that offer. We will wait a while longer to see how many responses come in before we go ahead and have them typeset.

I suspect that there are many events going on in the Fellowship that are not yet published in this magazine. Remember that we will print notices of your one day events, whether they are learning days, banquets, service conferences, conventions or whatever, and your weekend events as well. Many members travel from time to time, and would like to know about your event. Send us the info mentioned in our Comin' Up section and we'll keep the Fellowship informed.

The N.A. Way is looking for cartoonists who may contribute material for the magazine. If you are an artist or know an artist, and/or if you know someone with a sharp wit who may write the scenerios for the cartoons, have them contact us. It occurs to me that the person who does the artwork and the person who writes the script or scenerio need not be the same person. Once we locate both, we can match them. I think the addition of cartoons to the magazine at this point would add just the right touch of variety. As with all material contributed for the magazine, include a signed release with all drawings or scripts.

Thanks again to the Fellowship for your continued and growing support, and welcome to our new subscribers. Keep that input coming in. Together we can continue to carry the written message. Alone, we're in bad company.

R.H.
Editor

Thoughts on Tradition Two

"For our group purpose there is but one Ultimate Authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." These are powerful principles, and they apply to our area, regional and world services as well as our groups.

"Ultimate" means final or highest, fundamental, elemental. This does not exclude other, lesser authorities. Through our service structure we delegate the necessary authority to our trusted servants, service boards and committees to accomplish their tasks. We give the WSO the authority to carry on the day to day affairs of printing and publishing, and acting as our main contact and distribution center. We give the WSC Literature Committee authority to produce literature for review by the Fellowship. Through our representatives we gave the WSC Chairperson the authority to appoint a "select committee" to compile a service manual for us, subject to review by the Fellowship and approval at WSC.

Dictionary definitions of authority include: a) the right to control, command, judge, or determine; b) a person or body with such rights; c) an accepted source of information, advice, etc.—an expert; d) a commanding influence. As addicts, many of us have had problems with authority, sometimes reacting with anger, resentment and rebellion. Authority may demand obedience, punishing disobedience. In Narcotics Anonymous, obedience is entirely voluntary; we are free to apply our spiritual principles to ourselves and recover, or ignore them and accept the consequences.

Let us remember always that group conscience is supposed to be an expression of His will for us, not group-will or committee-will or self-will.

For an individual, the choice may be freedom or a return to active addiction. At group, area, region, and world service levels, the choice is to have unity and thus effectively carry our message, or disunity and thus frustrate our primary purpose—carrying our message to the still-suffering addict. With extreme disunity, of course, most of us would surely die, leaving addicts everywhere in the hands of their disease. In less extreme cases of disobedience, intolerance, or indifference to our spiritual principles, the price is slowed growth in recovery, confused newcomers, and many addicts dying without getting a chance, due to our ineffective service.

In our addiction, many of us rebelled at "expertise" with our know-it-all attitudes, our grandiosity and close-mindedness. Through Tradition Two, we acknowledge that a loving God knows better than we what is good for us. Our Steps teach us this, especially Steps Two, Three, Six, Seven and Eleven. In our service structure we require experience, integrity, and a record of performance—expertise—of those entrusted to serve.

Here we have the only appearance of the word "love" in our principles, and the only time God is mentioned in our traditions. Of course, "God" appears many times in our steps, and perhaps the reason "understanding these traditions comes slowly over a period of time" is that they can only be deeply understood through application of "a spiritual awakening as a result of those steps..." If we ask ourselves, "How would our loving God have us serve?"; if we try

to surrender the will of the Ultimate Authority; if we remember that honesty, open-mindedness and the willingness to try remain as indispensable today as they were when we first got here, all will be well.

Let us remember always that group conscience is supposed to be an expression of His will for us, not group will or committee will, or self-will.

Another necessary ingredient for making good decisions is good information. It is difficult to hear the voice of a loving God through a partially informed, misinformed, uninformed majority. This lack can lead us to make decisions not in the best interests of N.A. Decisions made in anger or unnecessary haste have caused us great pain in the past. Let's not expect different results from the same mistakes.

Inherent in any democratic structure like ours is the danger of an oppressive, tyrannical majority. This is why the word "conscience" is used instead of "majority." Ideally, we will search our conscience in carefully examining the pros and cons of important issues in the light of our principles, carefully considering minority opinions before making decisions.

"Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." So we **do** have leaders. Of course. Without them, without sponsors, without our service structure, without responsible guidance, we would be lost in chaos and self will. In N.A. we are led by the example of those whose lives show the application of spiritual principles, of service to God, to N.A. and to those still suffering, of services gladly rendered and obligations willingly met; God-centered rather than self-centered. This example we are willing to follow. "Trusted" implies integrity, responsibility, expertise and leadership.

As our steps lead us individually to humility, our traditions protect us collectively from our pride. To be a trusted servant implies many things, and different positions require different attributes, training, experience, and spiritual awareness. A spiritual awakening as a result of those steps is not necessary to make coffee; a deep understanding of our traditions isn't a prerequisite for typing; a spiritual awakening doesn't necessarily make a person a good administrator, accountant or writer. We must choose our servants

carefully, suiting the skills and other qualifications to the position.

In order for our structure to function efficiently, we must delegate authority and responsibility. We must give our servants trust for them to serve us well. Good servants, when they do a job, **do** it. They make decisions about the best way to do it, based on research, experience and principle; they don't come back to us with questions about every procedural detail. We **expect** our servants, our leaders, to apply our principles in their work, to seek the best information available in their decisions, to consider the short-range and long-range consequences of their actions, to carefully consider minority opinions, to work for our common welfare, to be prudent, responsible, accountable, and spiritual.

Our structure is designed to provide service, not government. The principle of rotating leadership is a check against vested interests. We are seeking N.A.'s best interests, not the best interests of any member, group, area, region, committee or board. When we comply with our principles, our best interests are N.A.'s best interests. "True spiritual principles are never in conflict."

The group conscience is expressed through our representatives and the trusted servants elected by those representatives. We rely on our trusted servants to be informed on the issues and to be aware of our opinions, ideas and desires relating to them. As members, we know the Ultimate Authority is expressed through our group, and we are free to instruct our representatives as much as we wish—but this is not always a good idea. If we fail to delegate enough flexibility or discretion—authority—to our servants, we are ripping ourselves off and denying ourselves the benefits of the broader information and experience of N.A. as a whole. Locking our representatives into unchangeable positions smacks of closed-mindedness and distrust; hardly N.A. attitudes.

Some issues must be decided by the groups—major changes in our structure, steps or traditions, for instance. Others are better left to our trusted

servants. Walking into a group business meeting with a 200-page report and saying, "We gotta vote on this," is insanity. So is expecting to find the will of a loving God in an uninformed vote. Lack of information leaves us open to manipulation by powerful personalities, and self will gets sanctioned as "group conscience."

Our whole program is based on shared experience, the idea of "I can't—we can," so when the members of a group lack the experience and understanding to intelligently vote on an issue, they may rely on their GSR to carry their conscience, not their uninformed opinion. At the ASC, through the broader experience of all the GSR's in the area, their subcommittees and trusted servants, they may be able to cast a more informed vote, or they may rely on their ASR to make use of the broader based information of the region. The ASR's, utilizing the input available, may decide to fully instruct their RSR, or they may express their area's conscience, and trust the RSR to carry that conscience to the WSC, and vote for the good of N.A. as a whole, based on the conscience and information shared at the Conference.

The experience, insight and competence of our service units should not be taken lightly. The importance of open-minded discussion and deliberation of the issues by our most experienced, most trusted servants should not be played down.

As the Ultimate Authority is expressed through our groups, so must the ultimate responsibility. We must choose our trusted servants carefully, particularly our GSR's for the integrity of our entire service structure rests on them. GSR's must be careful in considering their choice of their ASR, and ASR's the RSR, and RSR's the WSC trusted servants. The value of anonymity, the spiritual foundation of this and every other tradition, is very clear here. We must choose on the basis of principle—understanding, ability, experience, integrity—and not of personality, popularity, provincialism or parochialism. To do otherwise and then complain is irresponsible. Personal recovery may depend on personal responsibility in choosing our trusted servants.

S.L.
Pennsylvania

The Pink Cloud



Much has been said about the phenomenon known as the "pink cloud" or "honeymoon." This refers to a brief remission of symptoms during the early stages of recovery.

"What a cruel joke our Higher Power plays on us," I said after the pink cloud had come and gone. "Whatever could be the purpose of such wonderful, serene and euphoric feelings, which come, and are as quickly torn away?" Maybe this temporary hiatus from the pain of our disease is an opportunity to hook up our safety lines. Just as the window washer on the skyscraper connects lines to the building to protect himself, so must we make the proper hookups within the Fellowship.

It has always been easier to make the contacts, get phone numbers and find a sponsor when we are feeling OK. If we wait until a crisis to make that first phone call, we may rationalize our way out of it.

How many people walk around with a pocket full of numbers, kept like an insurance policy, "just in case I feel like getting high."

To make good use of the "pink cloud," it's time to start calling those N.A. friends and learn to share our feelings so that when things go awry, we are already in the habit of using the tools of recovery.

M.L.
New Jersey

Self-Pity and Fellowship

I remember a time when I just broke up with a girl I cared a lot for. We planned on getting married, and when she left, she left me in a world of loneliness, depression and resentment that I couldn't handle.

For a period of years before, I had been heavily into drugs but had quit prior to meeting this girl. Now in a shell of loneliness and depression I returned to the destruction I had previously known, no longer caring or hoping.

Feeling sorry for oneself has a strange comfort. If we dwell on self-pity for too long we'll find ourselves in deep depression. In this state it is easy not to care, not to hope—it is easy to feel like giving up. It is at this time, our extreme low, when we addicts are vulnerable to falling back to using. We need to throw self-pity out as soon as we notice it coming on. **We don't have to let it control us.**

Had I stayed in the good fellowship of people who cared, and shared my suffering rather than dwelling alone in self-pity, I would have eventually overcome my sorrows—through the help of friends—not through the false hope of escaping with drugs.

For today—a prayer:

Please help me to deal with loneliness and depression through You and through the Fellowship of N.A., not through an escape into drugs.

Please help me, when self-pity comes on, to talk to You, to talk to friends and to get involved in activities that will take my thoughts from my problems. May I learn to help others with their problems and not to dwell on my own. May I maintain peace of mind through constructive thoughts and activities. May I not take my recovery for granted.

J.P.
Ohio



I Can't —

We Can

I have never felt like a part of anything. Since my disease of addiction is, in part, an emotional disease, I act on my feelings. No matter that my feelings are not always clear to me; no matter that my feelings are clouded by my own viewpoint; no matter that my feelings change from fevered intensity to being severely subdued. All that mattered to me was that this is the way I felt, so I just acted on those feelings.

Whenever I felt like I wasn't a part of anything, I disconnected from being a willing participant in everything—even life. Then I felt alone. Seeing others united, I began to compare my feelings of loneliness to what I perceived as unity among others. I became envious of what I thought they had; I became bitter and resentful.

The longer I stayed apart from the rest of the world, the more impossible it became for me to reach out. I blamed people because they just didn't like me. I blamed life because it treated me so unfairly. I blamed God because he had deserted me when I needed him the most. I developed the ability to turn immediately away from my self-imposed inner turmoil, and place the responsibility for my feelings on people and things outside myself. I was never responsible.

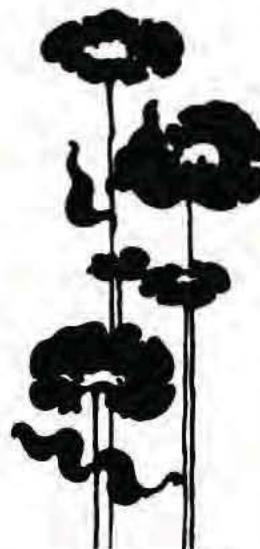
Well I thank my Higher Power that he didn't desert me, especially when I needed him the most. He lead me to N.A.—to the program, the steps, the traditions, the people, the caring, the sharing, and the suggestions. I am learning to become a "part of." I feel on the inside like I stumble awkwardly into conver-

sations, and when nobody judges or ridicules me, I become less afraid to talk. I bumble blindly into my true feelings and everyone is supportive. They share their own blind bumbings, and the accomplishments that result. I have hope for me. I feel less alone, more a part of something.

I reluctantly got involved in service. At first I was afraid of making mistakes. I didn't know the procedures, and I was very self-conscious. The group offered me guidance and reassurance that whatever my efforts were, they were appreciated. It became safe to try to join in. I got into service and experienced a new feeling. I felt a part of the unity that I used to just stand back and watch. I found a new feeling of usefulness in serving a worthwhile cause. I started to look back inside myself and feel like I'm someone worthwhile, and the people in N.A. supported and guided me. So I'm learning to place the responsibility for my inner turmoils and pains where they originated—on me. Accepting that reality was a big step for me.

Denying my responsibility for the pain I felt inside was the beginning of a snowball effect of character defects. Today the security, the safety, the caring, the guidance and the support of the Fellowship of N.A. are helping me to melt that snowball of pain inside. With all that love—if I have the willingness to help myself—I become a living, happy PART OF the human race. This is the life that my Higher Power willed for me all along. I have always been unable to see that, because I was so busy simply existing in the life that I willed for me.

D.G.
Washington D.C.



**Keep
it
Simple**

Before I found the Fellowship, I believed that life was a complicated matter and I was proud of my complicated approach to it. I arrogantly believed myself the possessor of exclusive knowledge about "where it was at." The idea of a simple approach to life or thinking was an alien mystery to me.

I brought this ability to complicate things with me into recovery, and I have to guard against it every day. I have to remember that a day without a drug is a good day. I have to insist on the simple truth that going to meetings and staying clean are the two most important things in my life today. When I complicate my recovery, I eventually realize that I'm starting to try to control it, and that I am exercising self-will.

Paralysis by analysis is one of the major symptoms of my illness: I will use any amount of complicated thinking to rationalize my actions and deny my feelings. A good example is my approach to the Second Step. I started by deciding that I'd had a spiritual awakening and that I had sussed God's will. My God seemed rather irrational and complex. Although I wanted conscious contact with this God, I knew I didn't have it.

I had set up my own intellect as God and was continuing to fight the reality of my situation. When I did find my Higher Power, it was through surrender, willingness, and honesty. I found that my Higher Power loved simplicity. For me, self-honesty is the best part of simplicity, and dishonesty the most dangerous of complications. I am afraid, even as I write this, of complicating just through trying to explain. It is said that we are complicated people, and that the programme is simple. When I complicate my thinking, I am fighting the programme; when I keep it simple I give my Higher Power and the meetings a chance to work on me and for me.

N—
London



TEXAS UNITY CONVENTION

The Seventh Annual Texas Unity Convention will be held at Lake Whitney, Texas later this month. The theme: "That no addict seeking recovery in Texas need ever die—three days of caring, sharing, giving growing and loving." Registration is \$5.00, and the events range from an "ask-it basket (from N.A. Recovery Text)" to a "barefoot meeting," with various meetings and events sprinkled throughout. The accommodations are in cabins on the lake. In addition to the facility mentioned with the dates and other information in the "Comin' Up" section of this magazine, reservations can be made at: (all 817) Cedar Creek Lodge, 694-3514; Country Inn, 694-5303; Cherokee Lodge, 694-3388; Angler's Haven, 694-3400.

Only in the Program

I believe that only in this program could an ego-maniac like me eventually find herself falling to her knees in despair and then surrendering over having said a harsh word, or having exaggerated the truth "just a bit." These may sound like small defects, but they were eating me up inside. It happened to me when I went through the Sixth and Seventh Steps this time. I used to think those two were the easiest steps of the twelve! I thought that all they required was to recite the words. But, I found there is so much more. The profound difference these two steps have made in my life matches or betters anything I've felt as a result of practicing the other ten steps in my life.

After almost five years of clean time, I found myself this year still plagued with subtle character defects. The gross unmanageabilities had seemingly been corrected, but still I knew I did not feel completely clean inside. I felt as if I still roared like a tornado through people's lives. There were many people I still didn't trust. I didn't trust myself; I found it difficult to believe I deserved the good things that were happening to me in my recovery. I feared, and was convinced deep down inside, that someday I would lose the good things, because I knew that true humility was impossible for "people like me."

If we're too busy waiting for that one big miracle to happen, we'll miss all the small ones that happen daily.

I could keep up a pretty good act on the outside, but in my gut I was consistently afraid. I was afraid to even try to change or let go of my fears, because I knew "I was different." I figured I was incapable of such a deep-rooted change. I thought, "It's easy to change my lifestyle, but I'll forever have to put up with my personality traits because they've been with me for the three decades I've been on this earth! It sounds cliché, but I prayed that "no one would find out what I was really like!" I desperately wanted to keep up my act of being Ms. N.A., Ms. Wellness, Ms. Okay.

What happened? For about a year, I could barely keep up the act, although I worked very hard at it. When it became too much for me to handle, I steered clear of the Fellowship, so that no one would see. Ultimately, however, I couldn't hold out anymore. I became paranoid. I felt I was shrivelling up. I feared I was doomed to practicing the program with half measures, because I didn't know the program had a plan of action for self-conscious people like me to find humility. My head was whirling with all these fears, and one day, a bit of fog cleared.

I started talking about my fears. I talked about how I still didn't like myself as much as I wanted to. Next, I plunged back into the steps, starting with the

First Step, even though my sponsor and I suspected the answer to my troubles lay somewhere in the middle of the twelve!

I think today that that process paid off. By the time I was ready to take a look at Steps Six and Seven, I had been made aware of some character defects I had never had cause to look at before—defects such as exaggeration, "white lies," egotism, and perfectionism! I never suspected I was a perfectionist! I thought perfectionists were goody-two-shoes who had a problem with being martyrs, and usually were pretty close to being perfect! I thought I had far too many shortcomings to come anywhere near being perfect. It never occurred to me how much I really wished I was perfect! I also learned, for the first time, the pure definition of honesty: the absence of any intent to deceive. It became apparent to me that I had just cause for being suspicious of others' mistrust of me in relationships, because I realized I was not being totally real with them!

So in Step Six, when I said I was entirely ready to have my defects removed, I meant I was sick and tired of my own behavior, and I was willing to do my part to change. When I asked God in Step Seven to remove my shortcomings, I meant I was willing to be on the look-out for His instructions on how to change. I learned that the search for humility does not mean thinking less of myself, rather, it means thinking of myself less!

Today, God as I understand Him is teaching me through other people, and through the level of comfort (or discomfort) in my gut. I'm learning that changing some of my more negative personality traits is not as scary or as drastic as I had feared. I'm more willing to try to change the person I thought I was, because I've found the process is really quite simple.

For example, today I try to speak softly—especially when I think I'm right and others are off the mark—to avoid intimidating the people I deal with. I've found intimidation causes others to retaliate! I try to catch my exaggerating in mid-stream and correct it, because I've learned it's hard for people to trust someone who makes things out to be bigger than life!

I try to say only that which is necessary, rather than re-state my position in detail over and over, because I'm learning that my desire to provide too much detail is more often an effort to convince everyone that I know what I am talking about. It's often an attempt to pump myself up, at the expense of boring and alienating others.

Does it surprise you that learning these truths about myself, and trying to practice correcting them on a daily basis, has resulted in a drastic change in me? Does it surprise you that I now believe N.A. does not give us a second chance at life, but rather, a chance at a **second** life?

When I learned how simple it can be to change, I was stunned. I felt I had come to know what it is like to walk hand in hand with my Higher Power. Today, together, we really **are** making a difference in this addict's life!

The result is hope. I am becoming the woman, the employee, the friend I've always wanted to be, but had feared I couldn't. And people are responding in positive ways I've never encountered before! I still have days when I slip back into the old behavior, but since I've been given a plan of action in the steps, I know **how** I can change. And, I'm not trying to do it alone. Truly today, there are more good days than bad days. I've come to believe that is the intent of the program, and in working the steps, I deserve the good. Honestly, I am able to say more than ever, "I am a good person, and I'm headed for an even better life, because both the good and the bad traits come with the package of living, and God and N.A. surely are **not** finished with me yet!"

K.S.
North Dakota

The Program

Works — If

I Work It

In the past, I made several attempts to stay clean because my using was tearing apart my family. I also knew that it was ruining my life. However, this did not really matter, because I did not care about myself. I could see what drugs were doing, but my obsession to use overpowered everything—including my deep love for my parents. My disease controlled every aspect of my life.

I sought help in N.A., but I was not willing to give up my old ways of thinking or my old behavior patterns. The only difference in my life was that I was not using. I was absolutely terrified at meetings. I knew that you people had what I wanted, but I was not willing to make the effort to get it. I wanted to be able to use moderately and to have your serenity at the same time. However, no matter how hard I tried, this was impossible.

I went to meetings regularly, but I was looking for the wrong thing. I would not share. After the meeting was over, I would look around at you people, become absolutely terrified, and run out of the room. There were a few bold moments where I asked someone to be my sponsor or got a phone number. However, this was to satisfy my family; not once did I call anyone. Needless to say, it did not work.

My last run is what gave me the willingness that I have today. I have finally hit my bottom, instead of hitting everyone else's bottom. Today, I want to be clean for myself. I had to try working the program that N.A. suggests. I knew that my way did not work and that it never would.

Today, my life is better than it has ever been. This is not to say that I have no problems. However, today I can deal with them. The program has given me a new way of life. I consider it to be a miracle that I am clean today. But, what is even a greater miracle, is that I have serenity and peace of mind.

I am very grateful for N.A.; I know that I am not trapped. Anytime I want, I can have my old way of dying refunded to me. However, if I work the steps and follow the suggestions that N.A. gives me, I can live clean and serene—one day at a time.

L.S.
Nevada



Gratefully reprinted from
San Diego's No Name
Newsletter



Trust

My recovery began two years before I attended my first N.A. meeting. Until then it hadn't seriously occurred to me that I might have a drug problem—everyone I knew used like I did. I thought my life was such a mess because I was constitutionally unsuited to life on Earth. I wasn't an addict—I was crazy.

The changes began when I encountered a clean member of N.A.: my brother. We had ripped and snorted our way through high school together. We met after a few years separation when he had been clean a little while. He had not exactly changed so much as side-stepped the things that had been making him so insane. It was still him, but he wasn't so sick any more. That encounter gave me the idea that I could change, too.

I didn't hit my first N.A. meeting, though, until I was really ready. The money I had put aside for one more attempt to educate myself into a normal life had been spent on dope. My best efforts weren't enough. I called my brother, told him I thought I **might** have a drug problem, and asked him for more information on what had happened to him. He read the Twelve Steps to me and suggested that I check the thing out for myself.

I approached the program at first as if it were a psychological exercise. I saw only what I was prepared to accept, and edited out the rest. The first three steps became, "We admitted drugs had made our lives unmanageable, came to believe that we could stop using drugs and learn to manage our lives better, and made a decision to try our best to do so." That didn't work out too well.

I landed in a treatment center after relapsing and burglarizing my parents home. It hit me: If my recovery depended on what I was going to figure out on my own, I wasn't going to recover. I began to work the steps as they were written, and they began to work changes in me.

The changes frightened me. I did an inventory every day and came up against things I had no way of dealing with. In meditative prayer one night I came face to face with a Higher Power and was scared silly by It. But I was too proud to admit once more that I couldn't work my own program my own way. I didn't talk with my sponsor about these things or ask my home group for input. I just stopped taking inventory and praying.

I wasn't cut out for recovery in N.A., I figured. I knew that I could not use without paying a heavy price, so I didn't take anything. But I lived without the benefit of the experience of others who had gone through the same things and come out clean. Life got real uncomfortable real quickly. Three months later I started on my last run. It took a couple of major miracles to bring me back from it alive.

When I returned I was willing to trust N.A. implicitly (like I really had a choice, right?). I went to two or three meetings a day. I didn't just listen—I took dictation. I didn't talk much—the best idea I'd had was agreeing to let N.A. help me. These people had something I didn't, but wanted. Rather than take time away from their sharing it with me, I kept quiet, ears open. It worked.

Time went by—clean time. Soon, I became involved in the Fellowship through service. That was where I got my first opportunity to really practice the principles I'd been learning. I accomplished a lot. I made a lot of mistakes and had to admit them. I ran up against people who disagreed with me (of all things!), who didn't like me any more than I liked them. I make friends closer than any I'd ever dreamed of. And I learned to live with it, all of it.

L.M.
Nevada



A Message to the Recovering Addict in Prison

Do your moods shift from extreme optimism to emotional exhaustion? Welcome to the wonderful world of making a commitment to a drug-free lifestyle, phase one. This is a typical reaction, no matter where you are. There are long term withdrawal effects that continue for awhile. They include anxiety, depression and fear. This is natural. Such a radical change in lifestyle isn't easy. Plus, throw in the psychological need to mourn and grieve the loss of a whole image, way of life, system of beliefs and behavior, and you're going to have some rough days, so Easy Does It!

We didn't become addicted in one day. We may also be without loved ones. Even if the relationships may have deteriorated towards the end, they were still important to us then and still are now.

These are topics you may not wish to discuss right now, but in the near future, despite your current environment which diverts your focus sometimes, you need to be aware of all the sneaky tricks this disease can play on you. I hope you can talk about this with someone. You need to get this out in the open. Growth can be painful, but if you don't deal with that pain, it will ambush you in the end, and you'll probably get sucked down again.

M.L.
Chicago

Editor's Note: The WSC-H&I committee has just begun publishing a newsletter for addicts in institutions, and for N.A. H&I committees. If you are in an institution and wish to be on the mailing list for the newsletter, write to: H&I Newsletter, WSO, Inc., P.O. Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409.

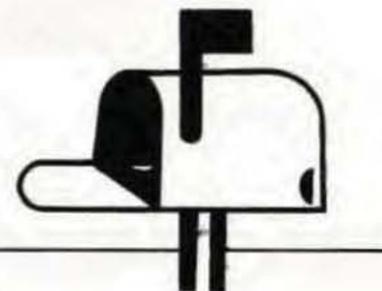
Freedom

the N.A. Way

I was always searching to be free. I wanted the benefits of freedom without the responsibilities. I sought the good times, regardless of the consequences. I would not be responsible. Eventually I could not handle the consequences, no matter who was responsible. I had to do something I had never done, I had to reach out. I had to be responsible for my actions. I had to find a way to stay clean. It became the most important priority in my life. I found the program and the Twelve Steps of N.A., and started to work them. Before too long my life started to change, and good things began to happen. The principles started to mean something to me, and I began to see how they work. For the first time I began to **feel** how they worked. As I took the action I was given the knowledge. Today I have the knowledge of freedom. Freedom **through** the benefit of responsibility. I have found what I was searching for; just not the way I thought I'd find it—the N.A. way.

Anonymous

Letters from Our Readers...



Dear N.A. Way

I've been in the N.A. program for a number of short 24 hour periods now. I've helped start two different groups, I've given two leads, I try talking to all newcomers. I thought I had a good understanding of things. How wrong I was.

This past New Year's Eve I had a chance to talk to someone who has been in the program for some time. I thank God for sending him my way. He changed my way of thinking.

He told me that my drugs were not my disease; I was lost. He went on to say that my disease was my addiction. Drugs are only one symptom of the overall living problem called addiction, and the First Step says that am powerless over my **addiction**. I look at things so differently now. I can see a brighter light at the end of the tunnel. Staying clean and working the Twelve Steps means so much more to me now.

This gentleman sent me some old cyps of the N.A. Way. I thank him and God for the N.A. Program. Thank you for being there in my new life.

K.F.
Indiana

Comin' Up

This space has been reserved for coming events anywhere in N.A. If you wish to list an event, send us a flier or note at least two months in advance. Include title, location, dates, contacts.

ARIZONA: Jun 21-23, 85; Wstrn Sta Unity Conv-2; Phoenix Hilton; WSUCNA-2, Box 13311, Tucson, AZ 85732; John or Shari (602) 279-0744

2) Apr 29-May 3, 85 World Service Conference of N.A.; Best Western (Airtel Plaza), 7277 Valjean St, Van Nuys, CA; for reservations, USA call 1-800-528-1234; Canada call 1-800-208-8993

INDIANA: Nov 1-3, 85; Mid Coast RCNA; Atkinson Hotel, Indianapolis IN; write Box 2182, Indianapolis, IN 46206

MARYLAND: Jun 21-23, 85; 6th East Coast Convention of N.A.; Towson State Univ., Baltimore, MD; write Box 26513, Baltimore, MD 21207

MICHIGAN: July 5-7, 85; Central Great Lakes RCNA; Valley Plaza, Midland, MI; call (517) Will 684-9168 or Greg 686-7622.

MINNESOTA: June 14-16, 85; Upper Midwest RCNA-II; Moorhead State University, Moorhead, MN; Gary 701-293-7000; Bx 9083 Fargo, ND 58109

OHIO: May 24-27; 3rd Anl OH RCNA; Holiday Inn, 7999 Prestige Plaza Dr, Dayton OH; (513) Jim 837-7517; Pat 390-6629; Rusty 426-8182

PENNSYLVANIA: Apr 12-14, 85; Greater Philadelphia RCNA; Franklin Plaza Hotel; Liz 609-423-0217; Bill 215-893-0867; Box 42629, Phila., PA 19101

TEXAS: Apr 19-21; 7th TX NA Unity Conv; Redwood Lodge; Lake Whitney. Reserv.: Redwood Lodge; (817) 694-3412.

WASHINGTON D.C.: Aug 30-Sept 1, 85; 15th Annual World Convention of N.A. (WCNA-15); WCNA-15, Box 2232, Washington, D.C. 20013

WEST VIRGINIA: May 10-12, 85; West Virginia Convention of N.A.-II; Cedar Lakes Camp and Conference Center, Ripley WV; Call (304) Barry 757-7537 or Phil 292-0896

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THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

1. *Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.*
2. *For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.*
3. *The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.*
4. *Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or N.A. as a whole.*
5. *Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.*
6. *An N.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.*
7. *Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.*
8. *Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.*
9. *N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.*
10. *Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.*
11. *Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.*
12. *Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.*