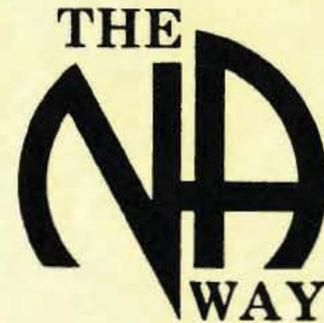


**My Gratitude Speaks
When I Care
And When I Share
With Others
The N.A. Way.**



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Looking Back





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What is Narcotics Anonymous?

N.A. is a worldwide 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. It doesn't matter which drugs you used, or what you have done in the past. We are concerned only with how we can help addicts recover. It costs nothing to be a member of N.A.—there are no dues or fees. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using. 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*. For more information about the N.A. groups nearest you, write us at the address below.

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.*
11. *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.*
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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In Our Weakness,

We Find Strength

I'm an addict. "In our weakness, we find strength" was the topic at my first meeting. Even then, I knew in my heart the truth of that statement, though I was too confused to understand very well. And the statement still holds true today.

In March of this year my younger sister died of AIDS. She was an addict and a prostitute. Only we addicts can share this without disrespect, and only with love. Through the ordeal I found strength to spend time with my sister, to share, love and just be there.

My N.A. friends have taught me that at times we just keep on putting one foot in front of the other, and whatever else we may feel or do, we "don't use, and go to meetings." Endless hours of prayer for knowledge of God's will for me and the power to carry that out has been of the greatest help. I need to express my thanks and deepest gratitude for the friends, real friends, who have been by my side. It is only when I experienced these rough times that I have begun to allow my friends and God to give me love. I've learned that N.A. is genuinely a caring Fellowship. We do not have to go through the emotional pain to accept the caring and love and reaching out to us—but the pain helped me by allowing me to just open up the door a little bit. Once the light enters it is so easy to

A Moment In Recovery

want more love. You know, I really didn't know if I was gonna pull through, when I "felt bad" my sponsor was there, friends offered help.

After a couple of weeks, or however long, I got out a paper and pen and wrote a Fourth Step on my feelings, just about this one situation. I found that I had a lot of hate for a society, that abuses women—and especially addicted women, who become so vulnerable through our disease of addiction. But what I was really beating myself about was that I am part of that society. In my past, yes even in my clean time, I've abused N.A. women and thought of them only as sex objects. And even though part of me has been the kind of person who wants to love and carry the message for the still suffering addict, there is the part of me that only cares for my own self-satisfaction.

Well, each time I see an addict come into the room, I see a little of my sister. I've prayed for my selfishness to be removed one day at a time, and things are getting better. I'm able to treat others with a little more love in my heart and share without ulterior motives. Please, this is not a guilt trip or a public confession; I'm simply sharing that miracles do happen, and through this program (the Twelve Steps) and the love in the Fellowship, we are able to go through hard times and come out the other side with the feeling of becoming better people and learning to enjoy this God given day.

I'm living just a little bit more joyous and just a little freer. Someone walked up to me while I was waiting in a long, slow moving line today and said, "You've got something I wish everyone else had." I said, "What's that?" The old guy said, "A SMILE..." You know, I thank God I'm able to share something like that, but it has taken practice, and a lot of applying the steps.

Right now, each moment, we have a choice to begin smiling or being filled with that killer, self-pity. I choose to smile today, and to enjoy what we have so freely been given.

In love,
Anonymous

I went to the local civic center the other day to pay a ten dollar registration ticket. I was pleased for a change to stand in the line labeled "TRAFFIC" rather than the line I was used to, "CRIMINAL." After paying the fine, I walked slowly past the various courtrooms with court in session. I saw at least three judges who had sentenced me to various jail terms and fines. All my arrests were for driving under the influence of drugs, and/or being intoxicated on drugs in public. I looked into the courtroom and saw the prisoners in their white jumpsuits, being led in handcuffed. I instantly recalled what jail was like, and how I used to be cellmates with these prisoners.

I remembered how I kept on using, arrest after arrest, not really caring if it happened again. I figured that drugs were "too much fun" to stop, and that jail was all a part of the fun. I felt tears beginning to well up as I thought of how today I was clean, and today I did not have a court date. I did not have to ask anyone's permission today to go to the bathroom, and I could leave the civic center freely and get in my car and drive away.

I got into the elevator and went down to the first floor. When the doors opened, I saw a large blank wall in front of me with one sheet of paper taped to it. I went by it and I noticed what it said: "TOO MANY DRUGS IN YOUR LIFE? CALL NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS." I walked to my car, and while I was warming up the engine I began to think about how today I have a program. Today I have real friends. Today I have a God of my own understanding. Today I *really do have a choice*. I do not have to use. Today, if I go to meetings and take the suggestions given to me, I will not have to fear getting arrested and jailed. I thought about all this, and all of a sudden I burst into tears. The sobbing was uncontrollable, and lasted at least fifteen minutes. I guess all I was really saying then is what I'm saying now—thanks N.A. I love you all.

M.L.
California



I need simplicity and clarity in my recovery. For me, using was very complicated and confusing. I lied to my connections and my fellow consumers. I lied as a dealer. Confusion and complication enabled me to talk myself into doing whatever I wanted or needed to do to go on living a sleazy life.

Rationalization did not leave my repertoire of character defects when I got clean. I still can convince myself that it is right for me to do just about anything. I have had to learn to not rely on myself, for I am but a slender reed. Things go better for me if I rely on principles. I need guidelines or I get into trouble.

I am learning to take responsibility for myself. At first my awareness was limited to this: If I take care of myself and you take care of yourself, we'll both be O.K. That's fine, but I am able to rationalize my way into doing anything I like. So this principle, while valid, did not take me very far.

I have had to learn to take total responsibility for myself. I did things, and I am responsible for them. I can change, because I am responsible and I was responsible. Of course, I'd rather be a victim. I often saw myself as a victim of my parents, of the system, of drugs, of addiction, etc., but if I am a victim, I cannot even try to change myself. I was a victim, I am a victim, and I can only go on being a victim. Other people have problems as bad as mine and worse, and

A Responsible Member of Society



they did not become addicts. How can I understand all this?

I became an addict by working hard at it. I pursued drugs, spent money on them, learned the necessary rituals, etc. I devoted my life to using. My denial started early in life and still continues.

God will have to remove my character defects; I cannot do it. But I can change my behavior, and I am responsible for doing that. My responsibilities, my part in that relationship, listed in no particular order, include, but are not limited to:

- Staying clean.
- Taking the Twelve Steps, over and over again.
- Supporting myself.
- Paying my bills.
- Carrying the message of recovery.
- Doing N.A. service work.

I'm not doing a perfect job of living up to my responsibilities, but I am doing better than I used to do. Taking responsibility for myself has given a new meaning, a new dimension, to my recovery.



THANKS FOR THE WEEKEND N.A.

My wife and I just returned from a three day weekend on a rental houseboat in remote Lake of the Woods, Canada. We went with two other couples, and the six of us had a marvelous time. The trip was a bit expensive by our budgetary standards but we shrugged that off, knowing the extent to which we previously squandered our money on drugs.

We spent the days and nights fishing, hiking, swimming, eating a lot, talking and reading. We had meetings whenever we wanted to! There was no gossiping, no flirting, no arguments, no deceit, and absolutely *no using* of any kind.

All six of us are recovering addicts. We take our recovery seriously, and try to work our programs daily. We let our Higher Power take over the controls and we marvel at the wonderful job He does.

We have found, as the program informs us, that you can have good fun clean! The Fellowship goes beyond the hours spent at meetings. There is a new way of life out in the real world, and sharing it is part of our spiritual growth.

Grateful to N.A.,
T.C.
Minnesota

WE KEEP WHAT WE HAVE ...



... BY GIVING IT AWAY

After five years clean and much energy devoted to N.A. service, I decided on a career change. I had been employed for nine years at a job I didn't care much for when I was offered a position as a counselor in a local treatment center which had just opened. I talked it over with my sponsor and several other close friends, and all but one agreed that the move appeared to be a positive one.

The first few weeks were a real challenge, as I learned the paper work and observed other counselors and their techniques. Overtime was expected, of course. After all, I was only an intern, and all interns work a lot of overtime. Meetings, which had been top priority, slipped down the scale, along with sharing with N.A. newcomers. My days lengthened from ten, to twelve, to sixteen hours, from five, to six, to seven days a week. The time off to participate in N.A. service functions just never came about as promised.

Gradually, as I began to be more and more obsessed with being a "responsible, productive member of society," I began to let go of one service commitment after another. Slowly, the N.A. Program, which had been the most important thing in my life, and had in fact given me life, took second, then third place in my life. Contact with other N.A. members became less frequent, as easing my guilt through justification of my actions became more and more uncomfortable. "It's a new center, it'll work out in a few weeks," then, "a few months" then, "soon." "We're having staff problems" (which was true;

as the staff—who were all recovering—missed meetings regularly and lost their priorities, many relapsed). They were replaced with less experienced staff, many new to recovery. As a result, more time was demanded of me as I became "senior staff." I moved into an apartment on the grounds and was often on call 24 hours.

Bit by bit, the serenity, the recovery I had (which was much of the reason I was hired for that position in the first place) faded away. There simply were not enough hours in a day to do the things my recovery required and put in the hours my employer demanded. "No time" for communicating with my Higher Power, (and when I took the time, I didn't like the answers He gave me anyway).

"We keep what we have by giving it away." I quit giving it away, I sold it; and as I found yet another way to prostitute myself, I gradually lost much of what I had gained in those five years. Self-respect went, and I was no longer being true to myself. Peace of mind was replaced by guilt and worry.

Fear entered my life again in growing proportions as I focused more on the possible consequences of losing my job, and less on God and His will for me. I felt like the hypocrite I was, as I shared with clients that "aftercare" (regular attendance at N.A. meetings and regular contact with an N.A. sponsor) was the reality of recovery from addiction. That doing these things and learning to consistently work the steps was what works for addicts to recover. I was no longer *doing* these things, I was only telling others to do them, and at times, asking for direction from some of the people I worked with, people who had a definite personal interest in my decisions, (they had to do my work if for some reason I didn't). My "20/20 hindsight" tells me I didn't get the impartial answers I needed. Nor did I give them to others.

My physical health suffered, as tension aggravated an old back injury and my once dormant colitis became active again. I became more uncomfortable physically, emotionally and spiritually, as my contact with the God of my understanding continued to fade away.

"Burn out," which I believe is referred to in Chapter Seven of our Basic Text as "emotional and spiritual lapses, causing us to become defenseless against the physical relapse of drug use," became a frightening reality. "Our experience shows that those who keep coming to our meetings regularly stay clean." How close did I come to "the physical relapse of drug use?" Too close, I'm certain.

Regularly attending Narcotics Anonymous meetings, sharing with my sponsor, and working to restore my communication with my God began to rebuild that feeling of peace and serenity I had before, when I was living true to myself. Traveling to conventions and workshops in other areas and listening and sharing with others like myself is restoring the self-confidence I lost so much of.

Accepting help from others and learning to ask for it before it gets extremely painful is teaching me much needed humility. I have learned that much of my self worth was based on my ability to earn a good living and on being financially independent of others. Unemployment, and learning to use my time responsibly is showing my value as a human being. Participating in N.A. service as a member of my home group is showing me that I was a "responsible, productive member of society" all along, and still am.

Thank you once again, N.A., for saving my life. Thank you, N.A. members, for being there for me once again. For not telling me "I told you so," even when you did. For not calling me stupid, or putting me down, but for accepting me and loving me until once again I can learn to love myself. Learning through these self-imposed periods of pain is showing me even more meaning to our First Step. Powerlessness over addiction is much more than just drugs, and will lead back to them unless I continue my recovery, each day.

Anonymous

N.A. MAGIC



I believe there is a three-part process that the "winners" go through in becoming winners. I don't know about anyone else, but after I had detoxed, I wanted what those people I now call "winners" had. We all know the ones I'm referring to—the ones with that special shine in their eyes, the friendliness, the true demonstrated concern, that "at peace" attitude. These were the things I wanted; that was recovery!

My experience over the last 2800 days of abstinence led to the following conclusion about this type of N.A. recovery. All these members seemed to have three things in common—the three things I have come to call "the trilogy of N.A.":

1. They worked the personal program of recovery, the Twelve Steps of N.A., in their entirety.
2. They were involved in the Fellowship (meetings, functions) of N.A.
3. They were involved in the N.A. service structure.

Pretty simple, huh? Well for my first four years of clean time I refused to accept that these were ways to recovery. Sure, I worked the steps, but all of them? Come on man! I also participated in the N.A. Fellowship, but I participated in other Twelve Step Fellowships too. And hey! I was secretary of the recovery house meeting I went through for fourteen months! Only missed five meetings!

More would be revealed.

It wasn't enough (I hope you guessed that). I wasn't at peace, I wasn't happy with myself—or anyone else for that matter.

In other Fellowships I couldn't talk about my addiction freely, and I couldn't relate to the literature. I looked at my secretary job as an ego builder for awhile, but it then became

a chore. I hadn't worked the steps in their entirety because I rationalized that the one hundred plus hours I spent in group was an ample substitute for a Fourth and Fifth Step. I wasn't taking direction from anyone; I was too selfish, scared, egotistical and ashamed (all at once!) to ask another man to get close to me.

Then a miracle happened. One of those recovering people called me one day during one of my routine, clean, crises. He asked me, "Who is your sponsor?" Have you done your Fourth and Fifth? Are you carrying the message to the addict who still suffers? Do you feel good about yourself? Are you happy?

To all these questions I had to answer no.

Needless to say, the man became my sponsor immediately. Since then, my life has changed, from the inside out. I learned to work the steps as they are written. I got involved in N.A. service. And most importantly for me, I began to recover solely in N.A., the only Twelve Step Fellowship that offered me recovery from the disease I suffered from, the disease of addiction.

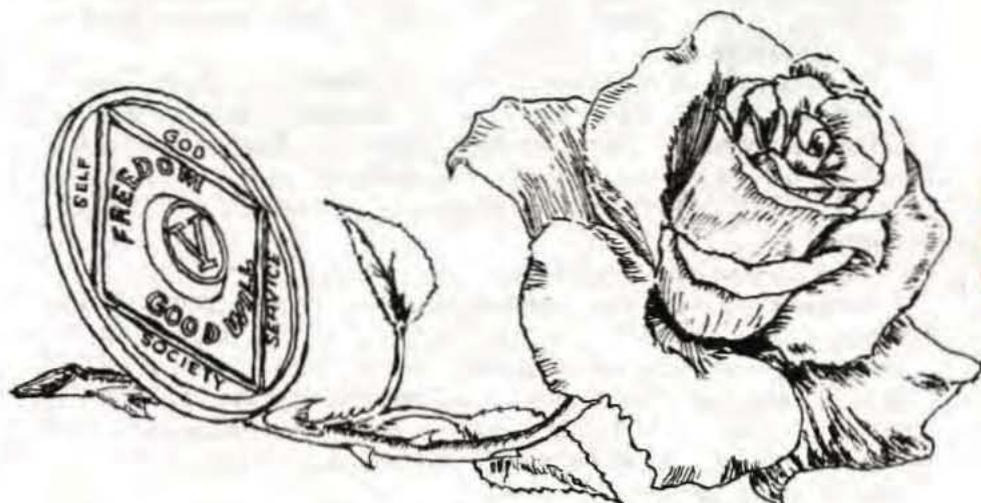
Since then I have made what I believe to be spiritual progress. Not that my life is a bed of roses, but the way I react to life has changed. The process of working on my insides via "the trilogy of N.A." has enabled me to better handle all outside situations.

I have had the opportunity to experience the magic of Narcotics Anonymous! I know that it has dramatically changed my recovery, and has enabled me to better carry the message to the addict who still suffers. I hope that you who are reading this will also be able to experience the magic I'm talking about—the ability to feel good about myself and my friends, the ability to be responsible. The simple *natural* calmness that comes from no longer thinking that I am the center of the universe. The complete freedom of having a choice today! These are just a few of the benefits that the magic of N.A. has allowed me to experience, and I am grateful.

I hope that you can come to know the magic I speak of, which is almost impossible to describe. Keep Coming Back—to N.A.!! Try the "trilogy." The magic is waiting.

C.G.
California

Looking Back



I got my five year medallion recently, and it led me to reminiscing about my beginnings in the program of Narcotics Anonymous. I remember thinking to myself, well how long is this going to last, ten minutes, just like every other time you said you were going to stay clean? I used to wake up and say today I'm not going to use because... (fill in the motive), then get to school and get high just because somebody got this great new stuff, *I just had to try*. After I failed I'd think, "Why did I do that? I feel just as crummy as I did before, look at everybody else having fun, what's wrong with me?" This went on for six months, then I found N.A. and decided to give it one last shot. But I thought, "If I don't make it I'm not ever going to try again."

Well I made it, and the people were great! It was amazing to me that they could love me after all I had done, but they did. My most vivid memory is when I celebrated two months clean. I was so high on life, so happy it just was wonderful; for the first time that I could remember I was winning. I got all dressed up for my meeting; I could hardly wait for 8:00 p.m. to come, and I waltzed in there six feet off the ground. I remember all the praise I got, and the hugs—those wonderful hugs. That night I knew that I belonged; I found the place where I fit.

As I look back at my roots in this program I can feel the love and understanding that was given to me so freely. Even when I was bouncing off the walls, sure that what I was going through was unique, they gave me that understanding look and repeated the words "Hang in there kid, it does get better." The new lease on life I received from the group and my Higher Power gave me the ability to grow emotionally more in that first year than I had in my entire lifetime. The program let me discover life and myself in a way I had never dreamed possible.

In the first year I had searched for an easier way and found out that the easiest way is the Twelve Steps, just as they are, *not* the way I had rewritten them to serve my particular needs. The way I discovered this was by doing all the things I was told not to do, like not doing a Fourth and Fifth Step right away, and not going to meetings at least once a week, and it almost got me loaded. I had it all planned, I would go to my senior kegs, lose my best friend and get wasted! What I hadn't planned on was my Higher Power. The whole day of graduation, people told me how proud of me they were because I was clean, and they knew that I could stay clean that night. In the back of my head I thought, "Screw you, I'm going to get wasted." Well things went just as planned until I got my cup, then my friend asked me what I needed a cup for, I told her just in case I decide I want a beer. She threatened to break my arm if she caught me drinking, and right there and then I knew that too many people cared about me for me to do what I had intended. So I stayed clean at my senior kegs; my behavior was terrible, but I stayed clean.

It occurred to me some time later, after I did my first real Third Step, that my Higher Power has paid close attention to me and kept me clean, even when I decided to say screw it all. I remember that the first thing that ever stopped me from using was the paranoid thought that for sure I'd see someone from my group and feel like a speck of dust. That thought kept me going until I found my Higher Power, whom I love very much.

My spiritual awakening was as strange as my recovery was. When I first came in, I told everybody that I didn't know how to pray and they answered, "Fake it till you make it." So I started to pray. I didn't know to whom or what I was praying but I did it anyway, because I was told that I wouldn't make it if I didn't have a Higher Power. Well, as with everything else in my life, after a few weeks things were going well so I

sort of forgot to pray. A few days after this my ten speed bike disappeared and the light on the dial of my radio burned out. I started to pray again, never dreaming that the bike would be found intact, but it was just a few days after I started praying again and the light on my radio dial came back on. As crazy as this sounds, it reminded me that there was a force out there that loved me. I was very sick at the time, only weeks clean, and my Higher Power came to my level to let me know that He was there. Ever since that time I have not missed my evening prayers and meditation. Things still happen to me, but I feel better just knowing that the group and my Higher Power are there to help me through whatever it is.

Throughout the course of my recovery I have had to deal with the loss of loved ones, people who couldn't surrender to this program. After eighteen months in the program I lost three people in three weeks to addiction, and I have had to say goodbye to people in the program who have died from other things. It was much harder to take the death of the folks who died because of addiction than those who won their final battle. It scares me to think that 'but for the grace of God, there go I.' The others were oldtimers; one had been clean just short of thirty-two years, that gave me hope that maybe I too could win my daily battle against addiction.

Many of the people that were there for me when I came in are gone now, they have either moved away, found other groups, or have chosen to die, but the people who are still around are the dearest, closest friends I have ever had. There are newcomers who I have watched and helped to grow, and it is the neatest miracle one could ever witness. Each time I help another addict I get a feeling I would not trade for any material thing on the face of this earth, because I know that what I'm feeling is growth in this wonderful program. It never stops amazing me that no matter how much I give it comes back tenfold, I always have more to give.

This recovery of mine has been a bed of roses, however nobody promised to take off the thorns, and today it is my choice whether to get stuck or feel good.

W.C.
North Dakota

It Works

I was sitting here one night and was looking at the *N.A. Way*, and all of a sudden, I started thinking about how the program had saved my life and helped me through some very hard times. I thought maybe it was time to write, which is the thing I hate the most to do. I have been clean for a little over five years now, and the program has given me more than I could ever ask for. I have met the best friends you could ever find, and most of the time had plenty of sanity.

But I would like to share what happened to me lately. I have been going to meetings, doing service work, and trying to work the steps since I started five years ago, and up until about six months ago its been easy for me. At that time my marriage of ten years ended all at once. All of a sudden I had four children to raise by myself. My father, who was very close to me, was diagnosed with terminal cancer and was given three to six months to live. Along with that, financial problems hit hard from the divorce. I don't know why or how everything hit at once, but it did, and I found the only thing I had left was my recovery. It felt like day one coming into the program. For awhile, the pain and anxiety were bad. I was not able to sleep very much. I couldn't get out of myself or my problems, no matter how hard I worked the steps or prayed. I never wanted to get loaded throughout this time, but I didn't want to feel the pain either. I didn't really even want to live.

But when I was in meetings I felt better. And I started working the steps again, "just for today." The friends I have found in this Fellowship were there when I needed them. And God removed the pain. I was making it through this hard time with the *N.A.* program, one day at a time. It felt good to be alive again. After my dad died it was the end of the worst time of my life. So today I go to meetings regularly and do my service work. The program not only kept me clean through this, but it kept me sane also. I want to thank all my friends in the Fellowship for their help, and thank God for Narcotics Anonymous. It does work for me.

J.B.
Alaska

How This Program

Works for Me

When I started coming to N.A., I tried to convince myself I wasn't an addict. I also definitely didn't believe in a Higher Power of any sort. I am a health professional and my only religion is biology. While I had studied various spiritual teachings, I accepted no power above man. I did want to stop using "hard" drugs, but I had no desire to stop smoking pot. I thought for sure they were as different as night and day—that hard drugs got me into trouble, but pot was a friend, surely not a problem.

I met someone early on who had a lot of time in the program, but had felt just like me when he came in. He told me all drugs worked the same in an addict's mind. He said that pot would just lead me back to my drugs of choice, and that I was clearly an addict, judging from my using behavior. I still didn't believe it, but I decided to act as if it were true, as if it were the only thing that would work to keep me clean. I remembered what this guy had said, that I had nothing to lose and everything to gain by trying.

As the first weeks went by, I realized how hard it was just to stop smoking pot. That's how I learned for sure that I was powerless over my addiction. I knew my life had been unmanageable using other drugs; that's why I had come to N.A. Indirectly I had taken Step One, and I was ready for the magic answer.

There is no magic answer to our disease and its associated problems. But, over the last six weeks, I have found out there

is a way to make my life more livable, if not completely manageable. There is another way to live besides high, lying to everyone, stealing from anyone who had drugs, and hating myself a good amount of the time. That was getting to be a real drag.

I came to believe that this program could help me. I got to know many other addicts, once just as stubborn and devoted to drugs as I had been. They had found a home, a family in the Fellowship, and saved their lives in the process. I decided that was better than what it had been.

I began to feel that I had been delivered into the hands of these people, as an infant is put into its mother's arms by the doctor right after birth. I looked at my life a little closer, and realized how close I had come to jails and death many times, without thought or remorse. I started to stop denying I had a problem; I started to recover from this fatal illness.

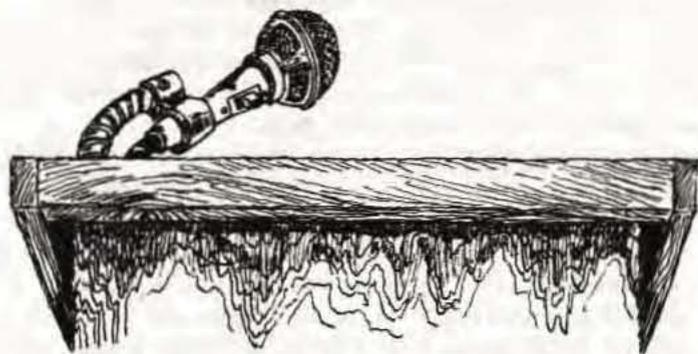
I realized right away that I knew nothing about staying off drugs, so I began taking suggestions—something I had never done before. I go to at least one meeting a day, more when I need it. I don't get cocky and I don't ever let my disease tell me I've got this problem licked. I know that is a lifelong process, and a slip for me will probably turn into a long fall to my death.

I asked that same guy I first met to be my sponsor. He is someone who I love as much as almost anyone I've ever known, who I trust completely with regards to steering my recovery. Nobody ever gave me so much in so little time. He showed me that the concept of a Higher Power is simply what you want it to be, as I understand it. For me, the Higher Power is merely the good that exists in us all; it's that radiating feeling I get talking to another addict with a lot of time, or just sitting in a meeting. So I came to believe, because I realized this power, this unity of all life, was always there in my life. I had merely been ignoring it. Turning it over for me means turning bad over to good, it means learning the wisdom to control what I can and not to worry too much about what I can't.

It hasn't been easy, but it's a lot better than the hell I lived in inside myself when I was out there using. My primary relationships are flourishing like never before. I accept now that all drugs must be gone for me to continue this happiness, although my disease still argues with me.

B.W.
California

Carrying the message? What message?



Carrying the message of N.A. recovery is important to me. Watching N.A. really start to experience its current booming growth is the high point of my life, next to being clean just for today. Three years ago I was homeless, broke, malnourished and without much hope. Today I am a successful businessman, a new father, a new property owner, and most importantly, I have some spirituality in my life.

I receive this spirituality from our Twelve Steps, and helping others is very important in this. I can only keep this gift of recovery by giving it away freely, just as it is given to me. When it is my turn to pick a speaker at my home group or when I sponsor an H&I meeting, it is my responsibility to see to it that our primary purpose is fulfilled to the best of my ability. Our primary purpose, as groups, is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. What is "the message"? For me, the message is that no addict need ever die from the disease of addiction without having had a chance to recover. All that an addict need do is work the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous.

I believe in unity, and in not disrupting meetings, but often my patience is tried (I guess my patience needs the test) by speakers making statements like "I don't really go to N.A., I got 'sober' in another Fellowship, and that's where I still go, but I did a lot of other drugs so I qualify for N.A." or "You should go to *my* particular church, rehab or half-way house."

I tried a lot of things early in my recovery, but I soon learned that as an addict, attending only N.A. was not only more comfortable for me, but essential to my recovery. Going elsewhere to recover was, for me, just another way of hiding from recovery. I called it looking for "stability" but it was really staying partially "apart from" everything by committing to nothing.

Today I depend on N.A. to live just for today. Sometimes after a tough day, I need to sit in an N.A. meeting and hear someone share about the Basic Text, or *Recovery and Relapse*, or any N.A. literature. When I hear those mixed messages, I'm not getting what I need even though I went to the right place to get it: an N.A. meeting.

I know how to use phone books and maps—I can find other Fellowships, treatment programs, churches, etc. if I want to. And there's nothing in N.A.'s Traditions which discourages me from doing just that. To use those things is my right, but if I choose to expound on them when I share in an N.A. meeting, I am *not* carrying a clear, undiluted N.A. message to the addict who still suffers. That's cut and dried.

When this admittedly controversial subject is discussed, some say we who want to hear about Narcotics Anonymous in N.A. meetings are too closed-minded. Hmm. I don't know. But when did you hear about a meeting disruption or even a grumble if the speaker spoke about N.A. only? No confusion or disunity there, right? Maybe that tells us something about the wisdom of the Traditions.

I realize the experience of some of our members includes participation in things outside N.A. Great! N.A. has no opinion on participation or non-participation in anything outside of N.A. What we as members do outside of N.A. meetings is our own business. It's what we say and do *inside* of N.A.—like at a meeting, or when speaking as an N.A. member—that is subject to the Twelve Traditions. I also believe this controversy will dry up as we grow, and more people choose to base their recovery in N.A. and find it works. I just need to remember that my group exists to carry the *N.A. message*, and we are here to help the *addict* who still suffers. There's just no confusion in that.

T.B.
Pennsylvania

A Recovering Mother's Story

I don't actually know how to start this little story. There's so much to share when learning about life. Being clean is such an experience every day. You just have to be open to be able to see the little miracles put in front of you to get the most benefit out of life.

One of the areas in my life that I've had the most trouble in since I've been clean is the responsibility of being a mother. I love my daughter, and I thought I was a good mother because of how much I did love her, but I soon realized there was a lot more to it than just love.

I've just started realizing that it is a *privilege* to be able to raise my children. I now have two children of my own and I'm living with a man who has a daughter. We have been raising her for the last two and a half years. The responsibility of being a mother to my own children has been very hard to accept at times. Sometimes I don't want to have to go straight home and cook dinner, do laundry, make lunches, etc. Sometimes I want to only have to take care of myself. Sometimes I don't want to get up in the morning and get anyone else ready but myself. And then, with another inherited daughter, sometimes I get very resentful and think "Why should I have to do all this for her, she is not really mine."

I got so upset one day, and so overwhelmed; I felt so terrible about the feelings I was having that I called my sponsor and just cried, "I don't know how to be a mother, and sometimes I don't want to be." She told me that I have wonderful children, and that God made me a mother, and that I was supposed to do whatever I had to do in order to raise these kids, and that I would be able to do it. She helped me to see that it's a privilege to raise my children.

Today, it gets overwhelming at times—babysitters, financial troubles, no time for myself, but I love my children, and I look forward to the time when I have grandchildren. I love having a family, and having not just myself to think of, but my children as well, I love sharing my new-found life with my family. I'm growing up with my children and sharing in all kinds of new experiences.

The other day a miracle happened. My inherited daughter is five. I've been raising her for two and a half years. I get jealous when she does visit her real mother. I think "Why should she get her every month and have fun with her? Why shouldn't she have to share in the every day responsibilities of discipline, etc.? She comes home and talks about her "other" mom for days.

Well we got a letter in the mail the other day and it said, "...I would also like to express my sincere gratitude, thanks and congratulations to C—— I think she is a very good 'mommy.' I'm forever indebted to her for doing a job that I, for a number of reasons, cannot handle right now. I don't know what you two think about me, (my feelings, and actions) with her, but I want you to know, she is on my mind constantly. I feel very guilty about this situation. On the other hand, I honestly feel that the two of you are doing an excellent job, probably better than I could, teaching my daughter the good, clean way of living. With lots of love!" That made it all worthwhile and touched me very deeply.

Let me tell you, it is all due to this program, to my working the steps so I can handle the responsibility, so I can be a good mother, so I can feel the way I do about myself. If it weren't for this program, I would be dead, in jail or an institution. I would not be free to raise my children, or help anyone else. I would not be able to LIVE LIFE THE WAY I AM TODAY.

Thank you, God, for this program. I am ever so grateful for a second chance at life, my newfound friends, my job, my children, my relationship (it's a very good one, and we've been together two and a half years), thank you for everything.

C.S.
California

I LOVE

YOU

N.A.

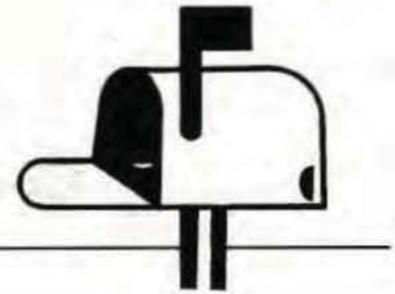
I am an addict who found life through N.A. I am fifteen months clean. I've had to face up to a six month jail sentence. There are no meetings here, so there is no recovery. For me I did not want to do this bid, though I can honestly say it is the best thing that could have happened for my recovery. It is incredible how much more in touch with my Higher Power and the Twelve Steps I am. For without a God of my understanding and the steps, and most of all the people who wrote and visited during this time—I just don't know.

I got mail almost on a daily basis in jail, and I read the Basic Text on a daily basis. I can honestly say that though the doors are locked, and people tell me when to walk and talk, I still am happy, joyous and free. I've only got seventy-five more days of this, and I just want to let people know, especially the newcomer and people who just keep coming back, that *it really works*. Wherever we are, if we practice these principles in all our affairs, we will be free—free to choose.

Most of all, I want to thank this Fellowship for being here for me, because without the people, the Twelve Steps of N.A., and God, I'd still be out there, or in here doing life. I also want to express my gratitude and love to the people who gave me as much support as they did from Long Island, N.Y.C., Kentucky and Florida. Today we can live, today we can be grateful and we can love. I love you N.A.

V.V.
New York

Letters from
Our Readers...



Dear N.A. Way,

Thank you for printing the article "Recovery and Sobriety" in the August edition of the magazine. The use of "sober" and "sobriety" in our meetings has frustrated me for some time now. I'm grateful to know I'm not alone.

I too, feel that it was fine to use those words when we, as a Fellowship, were just starting out, and there were no other words to use. However, we've come a long way since then, and there are words for us now, clean and recovery. Just as "alcoholism is too limited a term for us," sober and sobriety are also too limited to appropriately describe us.

When we work our personal program of recovery we find our true identity; so why can't *we*, as a Fellowship, find our true identity? Part of our Fellowship's identity is the use of the words that best describe recovering addicts.

We can stand on our own now, and let people know who we truly are. I'm grateful that Narcotics Anonymous is a Fellowship where I can learn about recovery from addiction, but only by staying clean—abstinent from any and all drugs.

Thank you for being there, and keep up the good work.

In loving Fellowship,
J.D., Ohio

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.

CALIFORNIA: Mar 7-9, '86; 8th Annl Northern California Convention, Monterey Conference Center; 8th Annl N.C.C.N.A., P.O. Box 223115, Carmel, CA 93922

CONNECTICUT: Jan 3-5, 86; Connecticut's first convention; Marriott Hotel, Farmington; Mike or Al 203-347-7856

INDIANA: Nov 1-3; Mid Coast RCNA; Atkinson Hotel, Indy; Box 2182, Indianapolis, IN 46206; 317-Terry 873-3295; Micky 873-6519

LOUISIANA: Nov 8-10; 2nd Annl Anniversary Campout; Burns Point Park; Howard T. eves. 318-836-5161; day 504-631-9466

PENNSYLVANIA: Nov 29-Dec 1; N.A. Thankxday Family Reunion Celebration; Best Western Genetti Motor Inn, Market St. & Penna. Ave., Wilkes Barre, PA 18701; Fat L. 717-287-5621; Rich B. 717-457-9751

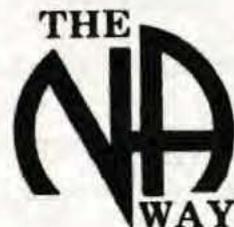
PENNSYLVANIA: Jun 20-22, 86; 7th East Coast Convention; Bloomsburg University; 7th E.C.C.N.A., P.O. Box 211, Taylor, PA 18517; Ron D. 717-457-9751; Frank G. 717-457-0587

SOUTH CAROLINA: Nov 1-3; Serenity Festival III; Myrtle Beach, SC; Jeff F. 919-746-3583; Michael D. 803-762-1690

TENNESSEE: Nov 27-Dec 1; Volunteer RCNA; Benchmark Hotel, 164 Union Ave, Memphis, TN; 901-Bill 525-4798; Gene 454-1313; Joseph 529-8779

VIRGINIA: Jan 9-12; Fourth Annl VA Convention of NA; Omni International Hotel; P.O. Box 3903, Charlottesville, VA 22903; (804) 979-8298

WASHINGTON: Feb 28 to Mar 2; First Annl Washington Northern Idaho Regional Convention; Sheraton Tacoma Hotel, 1320 Broadway Plaza, Tacoma, WA 98402; US 1-800-325-3535; Canada 1-800-268-9330



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THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

1. *Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.*
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.
2. *The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.*
3. *Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or N.A. as a whole.*
4. *Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.*
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.
5. *Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.*
6. *Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.*
7. *N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.*
8. *Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.*
9. *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.*
10. *Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, every reminding us to place principles before personalities.*
11. *Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, every reminding us to place principles before personalities.*
12. *Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, every reminding us to place principles before personalities.*