

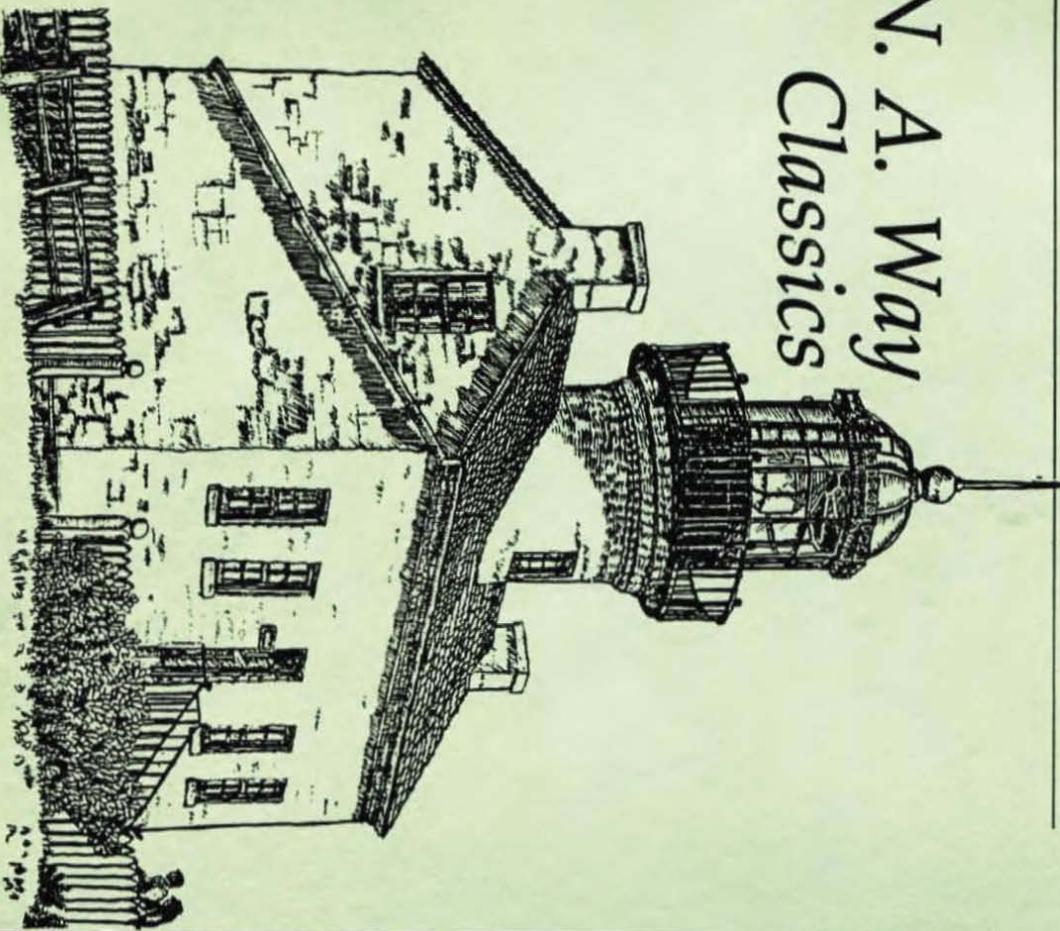
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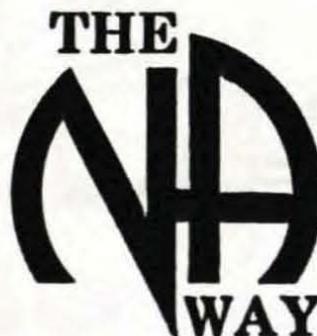
N. A. Way Classics



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 these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

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THE INTERNATIONAL
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OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Experience, Strength & Hope | |
| Abused or Abuser? One Mother's Experience | 1 |
| Oruamo | 4 |
| Differences | 6 |
| On Becoming a Lady | 8 |
| What Is Wrong with Our Fellowship? | 10 |
| Physical Abstinence Is Not Enough | 12 |
| Once a Junkie | 14 |
| A Recovering, Recovered Addict | |
| Seeking Recovery | 17 |
| Wellness | 18 |
| Thoughts on Tradition Two | 20 |
| From Our Readers | 24 |
| Comin' Up | 27 |
| Subscription Form | 29 |
| Copyright Release Form | 30 |

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Experience, Strength & Hope



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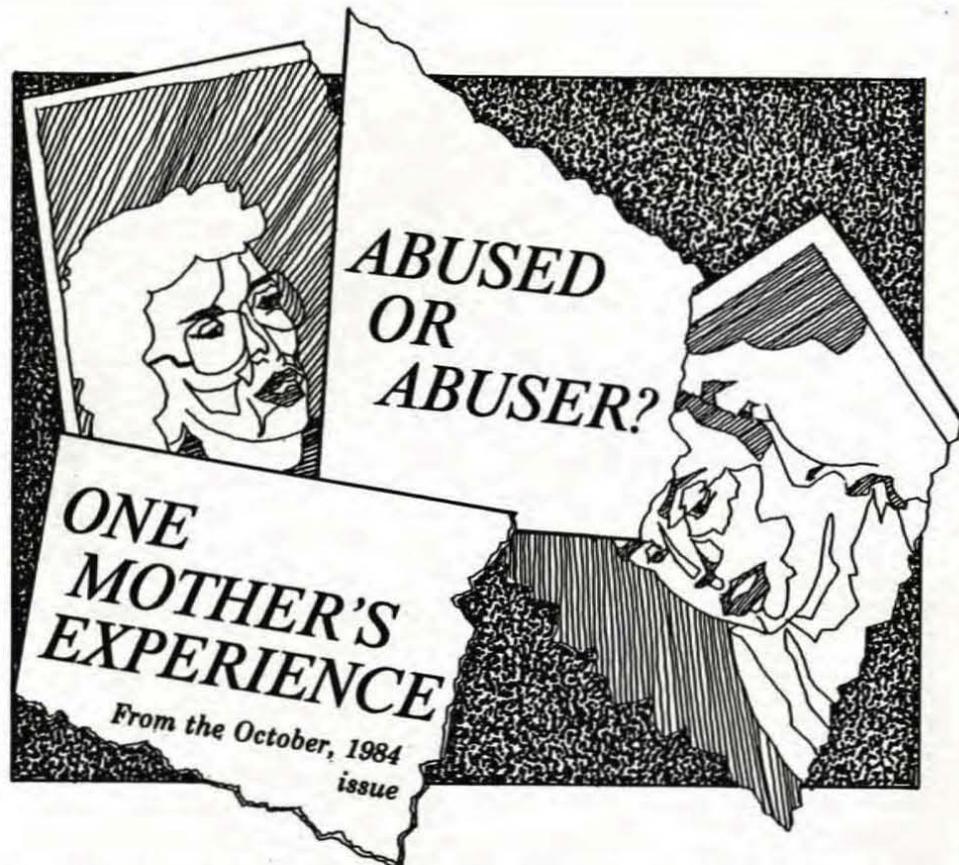
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What is Narcotics Anonymous?

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 above.



As I continue in my recovery, it becomes increasingly clear that the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous are applicable to, and need to be practiced in, every area of my life. As a parent, these steps and principles are teaching me how to nurture and care for my children—when to protect and when to let go, how to be both responsible for them and responsive to them.

It hasn't always been this way. One of the symptoms of our disease is the inability to face life on life's terms. To me, that admission became terrifyingly clear. I discovered I did not know the first thing about being a mother to my children. I was, in fact, totally unprepared and powerless in that area.

I had always deluded myself into thinking that I was a good parent. As the oldest of nine children, I was held responsible for their actions, and the punishment for failure to control them was always a beating, at best. I was cast into the role of "little mother" but never taught how to care.

I escaped my abusive home via Haight-Ashbury, psychedelics, and a young rock musician. When I became pregnant, I promised myself that *my* children would not be raised as I had been.

I tried to keep that promise during their infancy and early childhood, but I had learned well the lessons of my own childhood. My dad had vented his alcoholic wrath upon us in the

form of repression and punishment, and I was repeating this pattern of uncontrolled rage. I resented my parents for abusing me, my husband for failing me, and my children for needing me. I lashed out and blamed everyone else for situations in my life which I had either created or could not control. Finally, filled with despair, I abandoned the boys completely.

During my first year of recovery I was plagued by guilt and fear. The more my sponsor urged me to write about my role as a mother, the more I procrastinated.

"My older son, particularly, was not overly impressed by my 'transformation.'"

Rather than dealing with the patterns I had perpetuated, I spent that first year preparing externally for the return of my children. I rationalized that things would be different now.

I was wrong. Ten years of my temper tantrums had not endeared them to me. My older son, particularly, was not overly impressed by my "transformation." He resisted my anxious attempts to create an instant, loving, perfect family. Both boys were afraid of me, and my doubts about being able to take care of them were reinforced by their apprehension. I reacted to their uneasiness by making up more and more rules, trying to force them into obedience and respect. My misguided ideas of what a parent should be encouraged the restrictive atmosphere in our home. I had ignored my kids for so

many years, but I was attempting to glue back the shattered pieces of our lives in one day. I began to feel more and more like a failure when I couldn't control their actions or their feelings. I had stopped taking drugs, but my disease continued to thrive.

Four months after they returned, our tension-filled house exploded. My older son walked into his bedroom closet and tied a rope around his neck. He could no longer cope with my persistent berating and reprovals, and being too afraid to fight back, had simply chosen to get away from me any way he could.

His suicide attempt was not successful, but it shocked me into an awareness. That was a turning point in my recovery. I could no longer deny the patterns of abuse I had subjected my kids to. I had recreated almost exactly the destructive home I had run away from.

In this past year I have had to learn, one day at a time, to accept that my children are children, and not miniature adults. I have had to live by the principles of the first three steps, admitting powerlessness and unmanageability as a parent. I am now willing to earn their love and respect, rather than demand it. I am learning not to displace my own frustrations on them, but to practice my Sixth and Seventh Steps.

I am also learning how to forgive my own parents. My amends to my children are meaningless as long as I harbor resentments; as long as I remain the abused "child," I am not accepting responsibility for my actions as an adult and a parent. My amends to my children must be practiced every day. It is not enough

to say, "I'm sorry," and then continue the pattern of denial and abuse. I am learning to practice patience and tolerance in the areas where I have been most negligent of these principles.

It is an ongoing process. I have to constantly be reminded that I am not going to get well over night, but as my sponsor teaches me about unconditional love, I am learning to pass it on to my sons. God willing, one day at

a time, we are slowly healing the wounds. Today I am enjoying my kids. They are not perfect, but neither am I. They are no longer the burden I thought I was saddled with. I am no longer the self-created monster they feared and despised. We are learning about care and trust, for the first time in all of our lives.

C.K., California





From the
November, 1984
issue

The Maori [a native New Zealand language] word which probably brings the warmest message to any addict is the commonly used *aroha*. This one word conveys all the nuances of meaning contained in the words, love, faith, hope and charity. That great feeling of warmth and humanity emanating from and through any successful N.A. meeting is, in its own way, *aroha*.

There is, however, another Maori word which comes to my mind when I'm reflecting on the power of N.A. and its Twelve Step programme. That word is *oruamo*, or "for all."

No matter who we are, where we are from, whatever we have done, whatever and how often we used, how old we are, how sick we are, how short or how long a time we have been clean, how many treatments or how many "crashes" we've had, if we are addicts, Narcotics Anonymous is for every one of us. For all of us. *Oruamo*.

At the beginning of this year, one of my favourite fellow addicts died after many years of happily staying clean. Once or twice a week this man, a Maori, would stop by to see me and would share a "thought for the day."

Sometimes he spoke the thought, and sometimes he simply handed me a little scrap of paper with the message written on it. These messages were usually related to *aroha*, to

"And you know, there's always a tool in the bag to suit anyone. Anyone at all."

equality, to humility. My favorite message from him came early in my recovery. It went something like this:

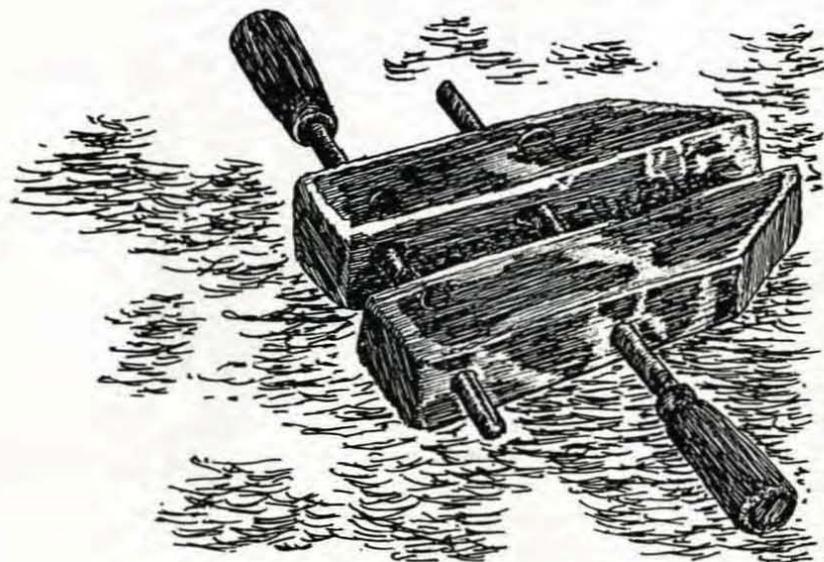
I like to think of the Twelve Step programme as a "bag of tools." No matter what the occasion, what sort of person I'm communicating with, I only have to dip into that and I can always find the right tool to "fix" the situation. And you know, there's always a tool in the bag to suit anyone. Anyone at all.

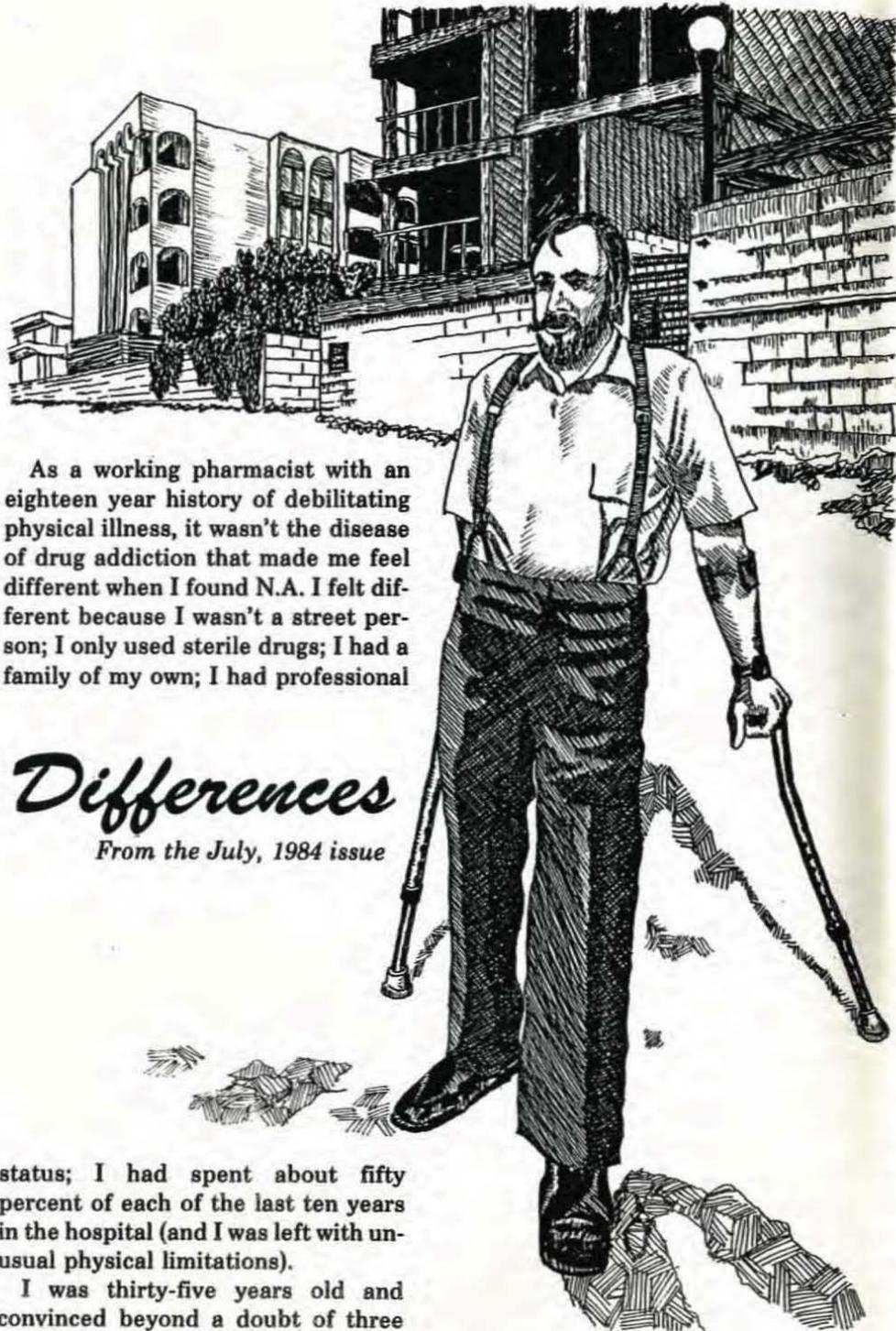
For me this bag of tools has proven time and time again that there is always one step to work on to help me over whatever the hassle I have gotten myself into. Once I used a chemical to evade facing the hassle; now I just dip into the bag of twelve tools, and you know, I eventually come up with *aroha* every time.

Now into my fourth year of staying clean, I find I am relying on the Sixth and Seventh Steps a great deal, and more often than not I end up turning to the Eleventh—for direction, I guess.

But more than anything, I can claim right now the knowledge that the Twelfth Step (which of course leads back into Step One and then on through the programme yet again) proves conclusively that this "bag of tools" is for all of us. If we allow it to be, it is *ORUAMO*.

D., New Zealand





As a working pharmacist with an eighteen year history of debilitating physical illness, it wasn't the disease of drug addiction that made me feel different when I found N.A. I felt different because I wasn't a street person; I only used sterile drugs; I had a family of my own; I had professional

Differences

From the July, 1984 issue

status; I had spent about fifty percent of each of the last ten years in the hospital (and I was left with unusual physical limitations).

I was thirty-five years old and convinced beyond a doubt of three

things: (1) There was no way to live without drugs, (2) I would be confined to a nursing home by age forty, and (3) I could not ever be a productive member of society.

These three convictions raced through my mind *each time* I was in intensive care, *each time* I went to surgery, *each time* I recalled the death of my daughter, *each time* I worked a few months and then went back on disability insurance, *each time* I failed to be a responsible husband and father, and *each time* I filled my being with narcotics.

Eventually I found my way to Narcotics Anonymous. Over a long period of meetings, treatment, and reading N.A. literature, I latched onto "Just for Today." Living that philosophy, I became selfishly wrapped up in surviving. My involvement in service work became progressively more important. After two years drug-free, I found a sponsor and began working steps.

To detail the struggle here is pointless, but somewhere along the way I gave up the struggle and got involved in my recovery. Without specific intent, I have found a Power Greater Than Myself which has helped me to conquer those three convictions of hopelessness with which I lived.

I have been drug-free for over three years. My physical illness is in remission most of the time. I have not been hospitalized for three-and-one-half years, though I still live with limitations and complications.

With respect to becoming productive, I have been an active volunteer in several areas for two years. Writing this is productive for me and perhaps for someone else. The most

exciting recent development is that I have made a decision to return to school at age thirty-nine and study a new discipline which may allow me to earn a living.

"My life may take any of a thousand directions, and I could live with them all for one reason—I am willing to go to any length to avoid dying from this disease."

This presents many fears, real and imagined. Also, many problems could possibly arise. All I am doing is making a commitment to try, knowing that I can live with the results. My life may take any of a thousand directions, and I could live with them all for one reason—I am willing to go to any length to avoid dying with a needle in my arm.

All this is what has happened only this far into recovery. I am willing to be here to experience more of recovery. Life can get better only if I let it.

Today, the differences I held onto for so many years may still be with me. They just aren't too important anymore. Through all the things that made me uniquely me, I was given the opportunity to find a new way of life in N.A. Just for today, I choose to take advantage of this opportunity.

Anonymous

It seemed for years I knew I didn't use drugs like the other people I hung out with. I couldn't ever get enough. If you would have asked me, I was never high enough. The dope was no good, I needed more, no one ever understood. Neither did I! They could stop for months at a time. I said I didn't want to, really I couldn't have—I tried.

Lots of times my addiction took me places I said I'd never go. I wound up with people I never dreamed I'd ever know, but I felt comfortable with them because they got high like I did. Anger—rage—was a lifetime companion, and with these people I could act it out.

Then after yet another embarrassing incident, guilt, shame and fear would set in and I would be confused as to why I acted that way. It was like I had no control, like I was crazy. I really didn't want to do those things but I couldn't help it. Being a female wasn't easy. The guilt came from my mother's voice saying that ladies don't act that way.

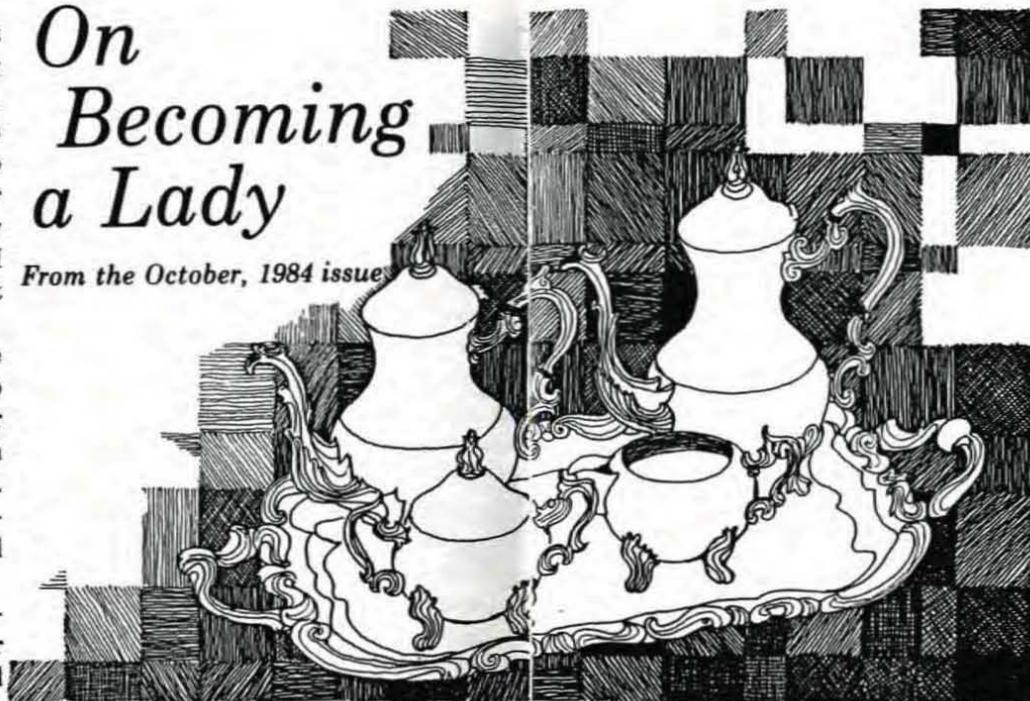
I surely wasn't a lady, and I didn't really want to be either. Ladies were people who drank tea, played canasta, and stayed home all the time acting proper, whatever that was.

Meanwhile, I hated myself. My family would tell me I was crazy, and I immediately would fly into a rage and start destroying the house, all the while screaming how wrong they were in accusing me of being crazy. Makes sense, right?

When I came to Narcotics Anonymous my life seemed hopeless; I was full of fear and just broken—really broken. I knew for a long time that I wasn't normal; drugs weren't working

On Becoming a Lady

From the October, 1984 issue



for me and I just couldn't stop using. What a horror!

After the drugs were removed and time went by, I took a look at the First Step and laughed. Powerless? Not me, then I realized after another addict explained it—yes I was powerless. But unmanageable, that was kind. Unbearable, definitely. So what, that was nothing new.

That Second Step is the one that really saved my life. "Restore me to sanity" was not the problem. I didn't need restoration, I needed some sanity, period. I don't remember ever having any in the first place. For the first time in my life I had a glimmer, however faint, of hope. Maybe I did have a chance at something besides the technicolor horror movie I have been living for the last sixteen years.

Because other addicts shared with me, I believed in Narcotics Anony-

mous. The group was only four or five people, but they were a power greater than me. I felt so weak, anything would have been greater than me.

Today, the Second Step is one of my very favorite of them all. The hope that still remains with me is loud and clear. Even though my thoughts are sometimes still squirrely, I don't have to act on them.

Today, the program is still that power greater than me, but I also have a God in my life that can help me get through anything if I just ask Him. I have been given a gift of sanity just for today. I don't use, I try to change and grow, and I work with another addict on a daily basis. I have found hope in this program that I'd never had before.

I have become a lady by my own standards. I don't drink tea or know how to play canasta, but I do the best

I can to act appropriately rather than react inappropriately. One thing I do know is if I pick up a drug it'll all come back. I make that choice every day.

"I don't drink tea or know how to play canasta, but I do the best I can to act appropriately rather than react inappropriately."

For this addict, not to use for one day is an act of sanity. My behavior is rational and controlled, and that is sanity. The fact that I care about another human being is sanity. Caring about consequences of my behavior is sanity. My debt of gratitude for the God of my understanding, and for Narcotics Anonymous for giving me this way of life, can never be fully paid.

In the four years I've been involved with N.A., I haven't been to jail, haven't hit anyone, haven't been to an institution, except for H&I meetings, haven't felt the loneliness, desperation and despair I felt my whole life.

Thank you N.A., for I am a living testimonial that "once an addict, always an addict" is no longer true. I have found a life second to none, and the oldtimers tell me to fasten my seat belt; I'm in for the ride of my life, one day at a time. Boy oh boy—I can't wait!

L.G., Florida

What Is Wrong With Our Fellowship?

From the July, 1985 issue



I have heard fellow members asking "What is wrong with our Fellowship?" I have given this some thought, and I believe that the answer is "nothing." Not with our Fellowship. There is something wrong, but it lies within each of us as individual members.

There is a lot that is right with our local Fellowship. That it exists is one thing. We do have a Fellowship in which to seek recovery. Local addicts such as myself are no longer crying in the dark.

We have a place to go to work on our recovery from the disease of addiction. We have meetings to attend—five here in town and another forty within fifty miles of here.

We have an active area service committee that has been meeting monthly to serve the needs of the local groups. We have people who have been willing to serve as trusted servants at the group and area levels.

Several of these members have been willing to serve in more than one position.

We have a pool of literature ordered monthly from the WSO. At most of our meetings, literature is regularly available to the newcomer. Several of our members have purchased copies of our Basic Text to make them available at the meetings without tying up group or area reserves.

We have a hotline that is listed, and calls are relayed to N.A. members through a twenty-four hour answering service. A half-dozen local members are willing to receive those calls—many at all hours.

We have meeting lists that are updated periodically and distributed at our meetings. We have pleasant

meeting halls for our regular groups, with storage for literature and coffee. In other words, we have a lot that is right with our Fellowship.

So what is wrong? Indications that something is wrong might include power struggles of one sort or another, resentments among members, relapses, a seeming lack of unity, few sponsors, disruptions at meetings, but most of all how few newcomers return for a second look. The lack of returning newcomers, it seems to me, is the real evidence that something is wrong. Many members believe that a larger fraction of newcomers would return if "something" were different.

Still, our Fellowship is just fine—just where it should be—offering all that it can to the still suffering addict. Just as the problem lies with each of us, so does much of what is right. A lot has been done, but much more can be done. If we are going to attract the newcomer we must each reflect recovery.

The question should be "What is wrong with me?" or better yet, "What can I do to make things better? Am I working my program? Am I backsliding or am I moving forward? Do I understand the steps and traditions?"

"A fellow member recently gave me a bumper sticker for my bathroom mirror that says, 'You are looking at the problem.'"

Have I been open-minded about evolving formats at the meetings? Am I being of service? Have I become complacent? Do I attend the meetings regularly? Do I offer rides to the

meetings? Do I clean up and dress neatly for the meetings? Am I on time, or early, or late to meetings? Do I help set up? Do I help clean up?

Do I disrupt or cause distractions at meetings? Do I give the person sharing my full attention? Do I act like I care? Do I give long lectures when I share or do I keep it brief and allow others the time? Am I sharing from the heart, about my recovery today, or about long past experiences? Do I advise the newcomer, or do I accept him? Is my goal to let everyone know how well I am or is it my goal to get better? Do I have a sponsor? Am I sponsoring anyone? Am I really recovering? Today?"

When we ask what is wrong with our Fellowship, we ignore what is wrong with ourselves. We are people with addictive, self-centered behavior, trying to learn to live a new way of life. A few months or years in the Fellowship does not equal recovery. Recovery is a life-long process. We are all just beginning. In a sense, we are all newcomers. A fellow member recently gave me a bumper sticker for my bathroom mirror that says, "You are looking at the problem." I submit that what is wrong for each of us can usually be found in the bathroom mirror.

M.L., Michigan

Physical Abstinence Is Not Enough

From the January, 1984 issue



She does it when she's bored, nervous, tired, or when someone corrects her behavior and she feels sorry for herself. She sucks her fingers automatically, without thinking, instead of taking appropriate action. It's no wonder she does it, her mother is an addict and so am I. Actions speak louder than words.

My daughter sucks her fingers. Not all of her fingers, just the first two on her right hand. Her teeth are getting crooked and our dentist says that unless she stops right now, her bite will be permanently affected. It's hard for her to stop. Sucking her fingers seems to give her a form of comfort.

Although we have abstained for several years, gradually recovering, each of us continues to act compulsively rather than appropriately on occasion. Maybe that's as good a definition of addiction as any: compulsive,

self-centered reactions to life situations.

I know that the answers to my living problem lies in new recovery-based behavior. Just knowing is not enough. I must take action on N.A.'s spiritual principles, demonstrating my readiness to have my defects of character removed.

Living this program is difficult and demanding. My disease tells me that it's okay to act on my impulses as long as I stay clean. My disease tells me that living a program of total abstinence is enough.

When confronted with a stressful situation, I generally think that I'll feel better if I take comfort in some form of familiar self-gratification. Often I'll just act compulsively on these thoughts. I take my pleasure and the stress disappears for a while. I usually become so self-engrossed in my pleasure that I continue to do whatever it is that's pleasing me until it begins to hurt me. At that point the guilt usually starts to creep in.

The stressful situation still exists and my spirit reminds me of the appropriate "recovery-based" actions I should be taking. My disease insists that it's okay to take my pleasure. After all, I'm not using any drugs.... Corrective guilt is overshadowed for a time by a flurry of pleasurable activity, but it soon returns.

Today I have a choice—one basic decision to make—to participate in recovery or to participate in disease. I may make this choice if, and only if, I accept that I am powerless over addiction and cannot manage my life on my own. If I have faith in, and surrender to the spirit of recovery, and if

I take the appropriate action that my heart knows is right for me...

Denial, for me, is selling myself short. Denial is settling for abstinence alone when I could be recovering from addiction. Denial in action is self-delusion resulting in self-destruction.

"Just knowing is not enough. I must take action on N.A.'s spiritual principles."

My daughter sucks her fingers when she can't get her own way. I watch TV when my office gets cluttered. Neither of us uses drugs, but to me addiction causes our self-obsessive behavior. The difference is that thanks to N.A. I have a choice today. My spirit offers surrender. I may recover, if I am willing. Maybe I can live an example that will help her.

My sponsor said to me, "If you want what I've got, then do what I do."

My sponsor went to lots of meetings, so I went too...

My sponsor worked the steps, so I worked the steps too...

My sponsor went to the same lengths to participate in N.A. that he went to to participate in the drug culture while using, so I tried to do that also—it worked!

Now, new people ask me how recovery works and I say to them "If you want what I have, then do what I do."

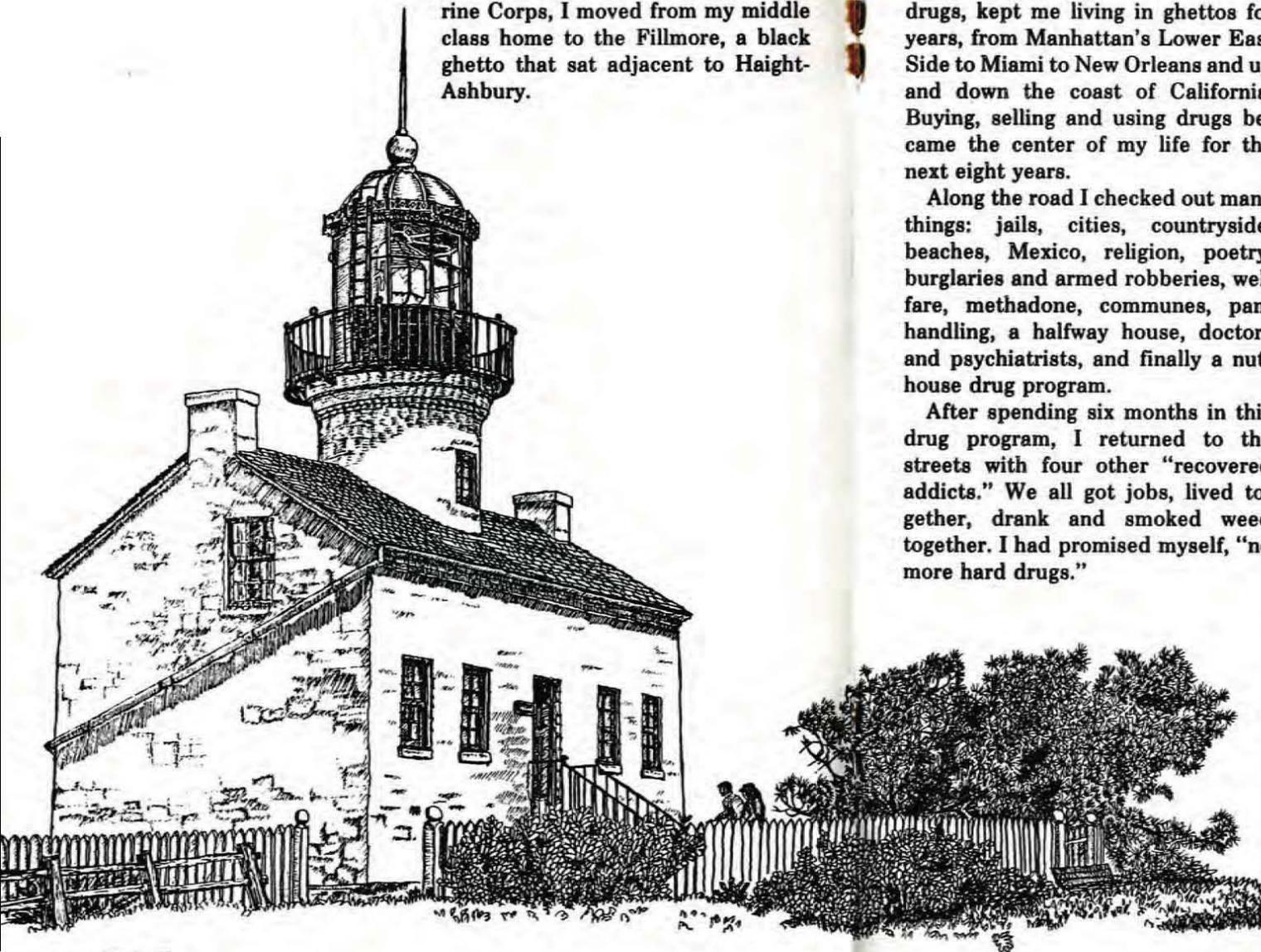
Anonymous

Once a Junkie

From the March, 1985 issue

My addiction began before I started using. As far back as I can remember, I wanted to fit in somewhere, but I felt lonely, angry, afraid and different, like I just didn't fit in. Drugs relieved a lot of those feelings.

I grew up in San Francisco in the Sixties. Somehow I managed to graduate from high school in 1964. After a short bout with college and the Marine Corps, I moved from my middle class home to the Fillmore, a black ghetto that sat adjacent to Haight-Ashbury.



Alcohol had been a problem since I was fifteen. At the ripe old age of eighteen, street drugs and ghetto life were my new home. My story is like so many others I have heard in N.A. It's a standard progression for many of us—weed, pills, psychedelics, shooting speed, then heroin.

Heroin became my "drug of choice." It, along with the other drugs, kept me living in ghettos for years, from Manhattan's Lower East Side to Miami to New Orleans and up and down the coast of California. Buying, selling and using drugs became the center of my life for the next eight years.

Along the road I checked out many things: jails, cities, countryside, beaches, Mexico, religion, poetry, burglaries and armed robberies, welfare, methadone, communes, panhandling, a halfway house, doctors and psychiatrists, and finally a nut-house drug program.

After spending six months in this drug program, I returned to the streets with four other "recovered addicts." We all got jobs, lived together, drank and smoked weed together. I had promised myself, "no more hard drugs."

I had never worked before, and now I was going to keep a job. My drinking got worse, but at least I had a job and wasn't "fixing" anymore. Somehow I managed not to fix for almost six years; then I started messing around with cocaine.

At first I "only" snorted the coke, but within nine months I could no longer work and was back shooting heroin again.

I was devastated inside—a junkie again. My wife and two children did not understand. How could I do this to myself? I had worked so hard these six years to get myself together, and now a junkie! I figured that it must be true, "once a junkie always a junkie."

Within two weeks my heroin habit was as big as it had ever been! I couldn't stop the pain with drugs. Out of desperation I checked into a dry-out center.

This was August 1978. They let me know that if I wanted to go to an N.A. meeting, someone from N.A. would pick me up and take me. I said, "OK, why not." At this time that N.A. meeting was the only one in San Diego.

Today I thank my Higher Power that meeting was there. The seed was planted—addicts not taking anything—I wanted what they had! I had tried another Fellowship before, but this time I really identified.

Unfortunately I didn't get completely clean until March 1979; it took some more pain and using to convince me. When I went back out I kept remembering those addicts in the Thursday N.A. meeting—they didn't know it, but they helped me come back.

What has happened in N.A. never

ceases to amaze me. Just last week I was in San Diego visiting my daughter. I went to the N.A. office to visit, and later that night to a meeting. I guess they have sixty or seventy meetings a week down there now. Where I live we now have twenty-four meetings a week. A little over five years ago there were none. I am grateful to be a part of this wonderful Fellowship. I finally "fit in" just for today.

**"How could I do this to myself? I had worked so hard these six years to get myself together, and now a junkie!
I figured that it must be true, once a junkie always a junkie."**

For this addict, it is important that I don't fall in love with my own story. My past was degrading and painful! I have been taught that I must stay spiritually fit to stay clean one day at a time. I have been given a tool box full of things for me to do, depending on the situation I'm in.

First, I must continue to surrender, not only to drugs but to my addiction. Even though I've been clean now for a while, my addictive thinking has told me all sorts of bizarre things. When I'm confused or going through pain, I need to inventory how well I'm using the tools that have been given to me:

What step am I on?
Am I praying enough, and / for God's will?
Am I really using my sponsor?
What am I doing of service to N.A.?
Have I become complacent in any area?
Am I going to enough meetings?

My life is full today, and I owe that to the N.A. Program. Today I have hope; today I have love in my heart; today I have commitment to myself and others; today, no matter what happens, I don't have to take drugs to solve my problems.

D.D., Nevada

A Recovering, Recovered Addict Seeking Recovery

From the September, 1982 issue

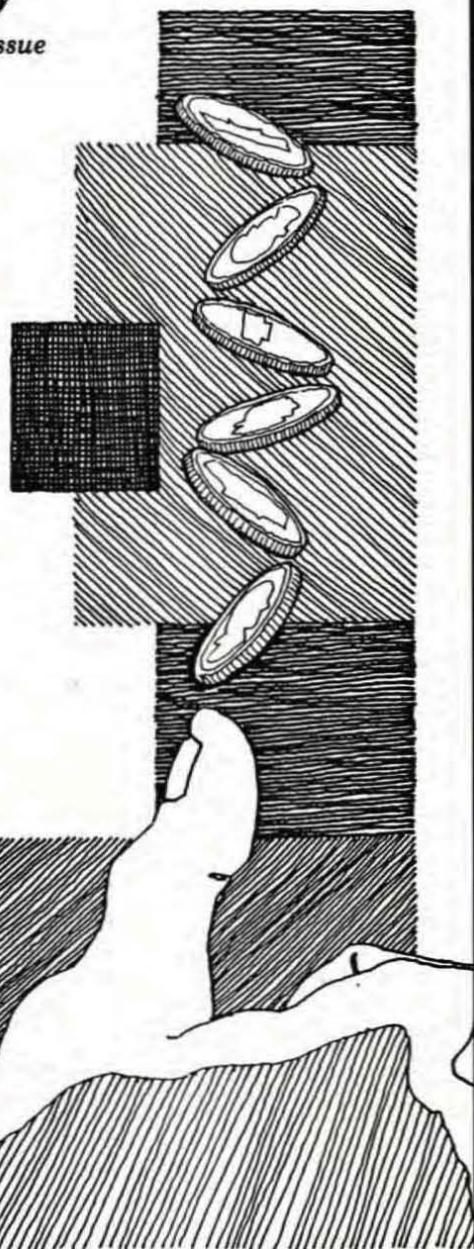
I'm so tired of trying to figure out whether I'm a "Recovering Addict" or a "Recovered Addict." Well, yes and no, both and neither.

I'm a "Recovering Addict" in the sense that my whole life and thinking are no longer centered in drugs: the getting, using and finding ways and means to get more. I am "Recovered" in the sense that I'm clean and have lost the obsession to get loaded. On the other hand, I'm not "Recovered" because I have a disease for which there is no cure and which is only arrested a day at a time depending on my relationship with my Higher Power.

Recovered/recovering—it's really confusing. I guess that in some ways I'm a "Recovered Addict," in some ways I'm a "Recovering Addict," and in some ways I'm just a "Hold-on-to-your-a**-with-both-hands-Addict."

All I really *know* is that I'm a CLEAN ADDICT, and my life is better than it used to be!

Anonymous



WELLNESS

From the June, 1984 issue

When I came in the door of my first N.A. meeting, I didn't know I was sick. I knew that I had a drug problem, I guess, but I really didn't want to call it addiction. I knew I had an on-going love/hate relationship with my drug of choice, so I was beginning to become convinced that my drug use figured heavily into my living problems. On that off-chance, I was checking out N.A.

The learning process that I took off on from that point has been a profound one. In the first phase of it, I finally admitted that my problem was drugs. I had argued pretty persuasively that my problem was not drugs at all, but that drugs were my diversion, my recreation, my social life. They had become a problem, but were not my fundamental problem.

Because you told me in N.A. that I would not recover from the gloomy pall that had settled on my life until I quit using, I assumed quite reasonably that you meant that drugs were my problem. I came to believe that.

After I had begun to apply the principles of recovery to my daily living over some time, I entered into another phase. You taught me something that came as sort of a shock. I learned that my fundamental problem was not drugs, and never was. I was right the first time!

Instead, my problem was something you called "addiction."

One fact finally became abundantly clear. As long as I accepted that addiction was an illness, that I had it, that I was powerless over it, that drug use would set it in motion again in a big way, and that in N.A. I could recover from it, then I knew some freedom from it.

You taught me to focus on what I relate to when I listen at meetings,

"In my recovery, wellness means striving for the ideals of balance, and of preventative maintenance."

not what I didn't relate to, and to share about aspects of addiction and recovery out of my honest experience that felt universal, not just about my own specific circumstances. In this way I learned to use meetings to get out of self an feel part of a spiritual whole. That, for me, through the practice of the Twelve Steps of N.A., has been recovery.

A third phase of recovery has been a time of maintenance of spiritual fitness. In this phase, the focus has shifted from illness to wellness.

I sometimes get the feeling, though, that uttering the word "wellness" in N.A. circles is somehow sacrilege; that many think striving for wellness means I believe I can be cured of addiction. I do wish to join the ranks of the N.A. "winners" who daily celebrate the gift of wellness without such denial. I get tired of hearing long-time members blame their disease for living problems that

happen years into recovery. They seem to imply that addiction cannot be arrested and kept in remission.

It would seem to me that such denial of recovery is as destructive as denial of my illness was early in the game.

The compelling reasons for shattering this line of thinking come quickly to light at many business meetings. Egos, self-centeredness, power games—whenever these are present, it seems to me that we have violated our Second Tradition by placing too small an emphasis individually on wellness as a lifestyle in ongoing recovery.

But back to the third phase of recovery, wellness. I certainly don't mean to imply by that term that there are no character defects to contend with, no problems that come up, no mistakes made, no weakness. I feel in long term recovery, though, we do better to attribute those things to humanness than sickness.

In my recovery, wellness means striving for the ideals of balance, and of preventative maintenance. Rather than waiting for big problems to erupt in my life, wellness means using Steps Ten and Eleven to identify the small ones and to allow the spiritual solution to address them (Step Twelve).

Rather than rationalizing that when my ego, my pride, my self-will or self-centeredness creep back into my behavior it's because I am what I almost affectionately call a "dope fiend," wellness means to me that I take responsibility as a human being for those behaviors and defects, and use the steps to apply spiritual principles to those spiritual problems.

I'm not sick today. I'm human. I can be sick again if I deny the need to actively maintain wellness through the daily practice of the N.A. Program, but today I have that choice. I must not deny my illness in that way, but for me, it's as imperative that I don't deny recovery either. Wellness is not only achievable in N.A., it's the rich promise for anyone who will pursue the steps with spiritual abandon.

A final thought on wellness and service: After some years in the N.A. service structure, I have one growing conviction. The greatest service I can do for N.A. is to live a life of personal integrity, grounded in spiritual maintenance. In my job, in my friendships, in my N.A. service commitments, wherever, if I can have stability and integrity—wellness—I firm up the fabric of this program and become a healthy ambassador to those who may send us our next newcomer.

In early recovery I had to acknowledge my sickness before I could get better; that took some honesty and courage. Now, in ongoing recovery after some years have passed, I need to acknowledge my gratitude for wellness of mind, body and spirit, and take the consistent and regular actions necessary to maintain that wellness. When I do, I become an N.A. winner. That too takes some honesty and courage, but its very liberating.

I simply believe what we say at every meeting: "Keep comin' back, it works!"

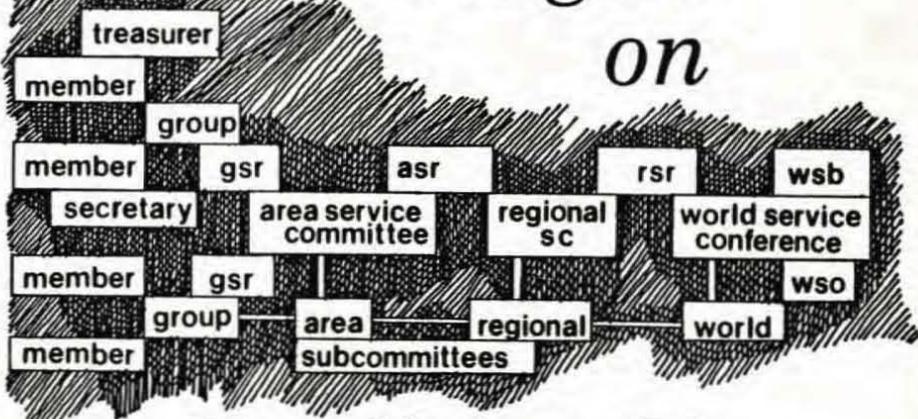
Anonymous

"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

Thoughts on



Tradition Two

From the April, 1985 issue

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, com-

mand, 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. 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 ef-

fectively 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

"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."

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 ap-

plication 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 these 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

"When we comply with our principles, our best interests are N.A.'s best interests. True spiritual principles are never in conflict."

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 two hundred 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 sub-committees 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 compe-

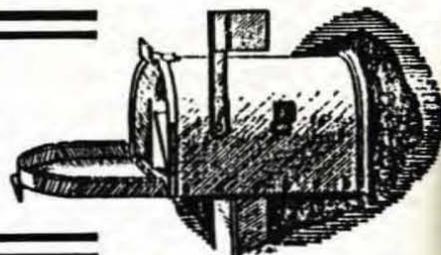
tence of our service units should not be taken lightly. The importance of open-minded discussion and deliberation of the issues by our most experienced, most trusted servants should not be played down.

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

From Our Readers



NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

We hope you have enjoyed this second annual "N.A. Way Classics" issue. We have gone back to the very first N.A. Way ever to be printed, the September, 1982 issue, and have selected material published through 1985. You may continue to expect this practice each year in March. The next special edition will be the September issue, when we publish articles taken from newsletters around the Fellowship.

You may have noticed a change in our look beginning with this issue. We are excited about the changes made so far, and we're not through yet. You will see more adjustments to this format over the next few months.

The appearance of the magazine used to be the source of most of the criticisms we heard from you. We were using cut-outs for our graphics, and a much rougher typeface. Most of the more recent comments we have received indicate that you are more pleased with our current artist's work. So are we, and we are interested in going one step further.

We would like to invite members of the Fellowship to submit your own original artwork for publication in the N.A. Way. Send us your cartoons and your sketches depicting some

aspect of recovery from addiction and we'll send them through the same review process that articles now go through. The sketches should be pen and ink, but if you think you have another method that will reproduce well in our format, send it along. We're open.

Keep those stories coming in. Without your ongoing participation there is no N.A. Way. We look forward to hearing from a lot more of you.

R.H., Editor

NEW START IN NEW ZEALAND

Dear N.A. Way,

I received my renewal notice the other day for my N.A. Way, so I thought I'd let you know how grateful I am for the ones you have sent me.

There is a newly opened chemical misuse clinic here on the coast in a town called Hokitika so I have dropped a good few down there, along with most of the literature WSO sent me.

A few of the ex-patients are letting out quiet hints that they think an N.A. group would be a good idea, so since we have a group starter kit and a Basic Text I'm hopeful we'll have a group meeting here soon.

I'm sending money for two subscriptions to the N.A. Way, as I think it is the best way I can get the message spread while there is no group established.

Thanks to you and everyone there for helping.

D.C., New Zealand

A FAMILY'S HOPE

Dear N.A. Way,

This is just a note to tell you that the address for my mother's subscription is completely correct. Thank you for having this magazine. I will personally help my mother read it. I can't remember ever seeing her without narcotics for more than a week. Since she was admitted to a treatment center, where she's still going for therapy, she has been free of her number one love, her drugs.

My whole family has been messed up by the addiction, and we will be looking forward to getting this magazine. Thank you for having it and for caring about people like us.

Anonymous

PASSING THROUGH

Dear N.A. Way,

It seems so permanent sometimes. Those feelings of anger, fear, self-pity, resentment and loneliness seem so permanent. I'm learning that sometimes I have to pass through a lot of darkness, a lot of unwanted feelings, to get to the light, to get to those feelings of peace, love, and serenity.

When I first got clean, I only saw negativity. My past was negative, my present was negative, and my future was negative. Today, I can remember some fun times in my past, my present doesn't look all that bad, and my future I leave to the God of my understanding.

So, while we're passing through I'm reminded of these words from the N.A. Basic Text: "DON'T USE, NO MATTER WHAT!... Practice spiritual principles in order to stay clean.

Yeah, what a relief to know that we're just passing through. Just think, it won't be long until we're in the light, where we belong.

C.B., South Carolina

CAN YOU HEAR THE MESSAGE?

Dear N.A. Way,

The reason I'm writing this letter is to possibly improve the meetings in our area and other areas as well. I hope not to sound self-righteous or hurt anyone's feelings. There seems to be a problem in our area, and hopefully by writing this letter I can bring it to our attention.

Tonight in our meeting an addict shared that she was having a hard time staying clean and that she would appreciate it if nobody would talk or joke while the meeting was going on. By this, you should know the problem. We have too many distractions during meetings.

I really respect this girl for what she said. It also made me think about the newcomer who comes once or twice and we never see again. Is it

because they can't get the message of recovery by not being able to listen? Could it be they're afraid to share, or while they're sharing they think the two people sitting straight across them are whispering about what they're saying?

This really hurts to think people go out and use because they can't hear something that might help them stay clean. Isn't our primary purpose to carry the message to the addict who still suffers?

PLEASE let's stop getting up and walking out while someone's sharing. Let's stop whispering while someone's sharing. Let's stop talking in the doorway while the meeting's going on. Let's stop flipping bubble gum and cigarette wrappers across the room. Let's be a little more considerate of others. Let's start carrying a good clean, clear message of recovery so that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use and find a new way to live—the N.A. way.

My gratitude speaks when I CARE and SHARE the N.A. way.

Anonymous, West Virginia

GROUP CONSCIENCE

Dear N.A. Way,

I would like to respond to the letter from C.B. in Oklahoma that appeared in the January 1987 issue.

I can assure the N.A. Fellowship, and C.B., that every effort was made to inform the groups in Oklahoma of the proposed changes to the White Book. These changes to our White Book and other issues contained in the Conference Agenda Report for 1985/86 were discussed and voted on at group and then at area

business' meetings. All the questions contained in the Conference Agenda Report for 1985/86 were then voted on by the ASRs at the Oklahoma Regional Service Committee meeting held in April 1986. This Oklahoma "group conscience" was then taken to the World Service Conference by the RSR and RSR-Alt.

If a member or a group did not receive information on these issues, it may have been because the member was not active in a group, or because the group did not have a GSR, or because the GSR was not active at the Area Service Committee meetings.

Decisions that are made in Narcotics Anonymous that affect the Fellowship as a whole are never made by a few individuals. Only after input from each group comes through their GSR, then through the ASR, and then onto the RSR for a vote at the World Service Conference can a decision be made. This is why it is important to have trusted servants that participate at group, area, and regional business meetings. Whenever a trusted servant does not fulfill his or her responsibility, the flow of information stops. Or if a group does not elect a representative to be present at business meetings, the flow of information stops. In either case, the Fellowship suffers in many ways.

It is time once again for a review of the Conference Agenda Report for 1986/87. The issues contained in this report will be discussed in group conscience meetings all across the state of Oklahoma as well as around the world. I hope that the attendance at these meetings is high, and that no N.A. member's opinion goes unheard. So, please attend your local business meetings and be a part of, not apart from, recovery in Narcotics Anonymous.

L.S., Oklahoma

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.

ALASKA: March 6-8, 1987; 3rd Annual Alaska Regional Convention; Travelers Inn, 820 Noble Street, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701; (907) Pat H. 452-7342; Larry L. 457-7326

ARIZONA: May 22-24, 1987; 1st Annual Arizona Regional Convention; ARCNA-I; Doubletree Hotel, 445 S. Alvernon Way, Tucson, AZ 85711; (602) Jeff 841-0046; Connie 398-9442

AUSTRALIA: Apr 17-20, 1987; 3rd Australasian Convention Easter '87; Glenelg Town Hall, Moseley Square Glenelg; Tony M. 085-366124

CALIFORNIA: Mar 27-29, 1987; 9th NCCNA; Marriott Hotel, Burlingame, CA; 9th NCCNA, Box 6323, San Mateo, CA 94403; Todd (415) 347-3296; Joe (408) 296-4833

CANADA: June 12-14; 2nd Annual N.A. Roundup; Garneau Community Hall, 10923 84th Avenue, Eventon, Alberta; (403) Neil 465-5424; Sue 464-2805

2) (CANCELED) Apr 10-12 1987; 1st Annl Ontario Reg Conf

FLORIDA: July 2-5, 1987; FRCNA 6; Diplomat Hotel, 3515 South Ocean Dr., Hollywood, FL 33019, (305) Mike 564-1262; Chris 891-1867; Bee Gee 565-7312

ILLINOIS: June 26-28, 1987; 3rd Annual Flight to Freedom Campout; Coy's & Wilma's Campground, Rend Lake, Sesser, IL; (618) Vicky 242-5968; Mark 532-1327

2) July 24-26, 1987; 3rd Mid-Coast Convention; Holiday Inn, 7550 E State St., Rockford, Ill 61107; (815)398-2200; Greg 963-5811

KENTUCKY: March 7, 1987; KRCNA-I Fundraiser; Unitarian Universalist Church, 3564 Claysmill, Lexington, Kentucky 40503; Brenda (606)271-0647; New Hotline (606)252-3484

2) April 10-12, 1987; KRCNAI; Ramada Inn, 4767 Scottsville Rd., Bowling Green, KY 42101; Deanie (502)843-8209

LOUISIANA: March 6-8, 1987; LPRCNAV; Palace Suite Hotel, 2211 MacArthur Dr., Alexandria, LA; (318)443-2561 2) Sept. 3-7, 1987; World Convention; WCNA 17; Sheraton New Orleans Hotel & Towers, 500 Canal St., New Orleans, LA 70130; (504)525-2500

MASSACHUSETTS: Apr 17-19, 1987; 2nd New England Reg Conv; Marriott Hotel, Springfield, MA; NERC II, Box 422, Chicopee, MA 01021; (413) Steve 736-3979; Nancy 593-3809

MICHIGAN: Jul 3-5 1987; Freedom III RCNA of MI; Interested Speakers should submit tapes ASAP. for review to Program Committee, Box 770, Flint, MI 48501

MISSISSIPPI: April 3-5, 1987; MRCNA-V; Best Western Trace Inn; (Hwy 6 & Natchez Trace) Tupelo, MS; Allen (601)862-7334

MISSOURI: June 5-7, 1987; 2nd Annual Show-Me Regional Convention; Ramada Hotel, 2431 N. Glenstone, Springfield, MO; Bob R. (417)358-5800; (800)781-0500

NEW JERSEY: May 8-10, 1987; 2nd NJRCNA; P.O.Box 597; Manasquan, NJ 08736; (201) Nancy 223-2909; Karin 483-0310; Interested Speakers submit tapes to Program Comm, Rd 1, Box 222, Pennington-Mt. Rose Rd., Pennington, NJ 08534, Tom (609) 737-8791

NEW MEXICO: July 3-5, 1987; WSUC IV; Box 37558, Albuquerque, NM 87176; Susan (505) 984-2305, Debra (505) 982-8650, Bill (505) 984-1469

NEW YORK: May 29-31, 1987; Freedom Three; Third Annual Greater NY Reg Conv; Stevensville Country Club, Swan Lake, NY; (718) Danny 347-6643; Tina 342-5233

OHIO: May 22-24, 1987; Ohio Reg Conv; Holiday Inn Cascade Plaza, Akron, OH 44372; Please submit speaker tapes for consideration to ORCNA V; Box 5837, Akron, OH 44372; (216) Meredith 832-5361; Curt 453-1758; Gary 864-8175

2) June 12-14, 1987; 8th ECCNA; Kent State University, Kent, OH; P.O. Box 1492, Youngston, OH 45501; (216) Bob 545-4387; Laura 898-2176; Roy 638-7895

3) July 17-19, 1987; 3rd CCANA; Camp Venton; Summit Valley Park, Summitville, OH 43926; (216) Rusty 385-5761; Bill 424-7681

OKLAHOMA: March 27-29, 1987; 1st Annual Oklahoma Regional Convention; Central Plaza Hotel, 112 N. Eastern Ave., OK City, OK 73117; (800) 522-4383, Leo (918) 747-4556

OREGON: Apr 4-5, 1987; OSI Regional Service Conference; Bend, Oregon; (503) Tom 382-3324; Ericka 382-2480; Joyce P. 388-2168

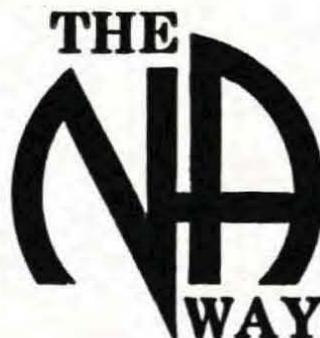
PENNSYLVANIA: Mar 6-8, 1987; Central PA Convention NA; Holiday Inn-Center City, Harrisburg, PA; 717/234-0193:

2) Mar 27-29, 1987; 5th GPRCNA; Dunfey City Line Hotel, City Line Ave. & Monument Rd., Philadelphia; GPRCNA, PO Box 42628, Philadelphia PA 19101-2628; (215) Steve & Sharon 925-7766; Alice & Marge 534-2887

TEXAS: Mar 27-29, 1987; LSRCNA II; LSRCNA II Pro Subcom, PO Box 300794, Houston, TX 77230-0794; (713) Rick 531-6734; Janie Rae 973-7002

WASHINGTON: Mar 27-29, 1987; Washington, Northern Idaho 2nd Annual Reg Convention; Vance Tyee, 500 Tyee Dr., Tumwater, WA 98502-7398; 1-800-426-0670

WEST VIRGINIA: May 8-10, 1987; WVCNA-IV; Cedar Lakes Conference Center, Ripley, WV



*THE INTERNATIONAL
JOURNAL OF THE FELLOWSHIP
OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS*

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ASSIGNEE: (TO BE COMPLETED LATER BY WSO)

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
2. 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.
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.
6. Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
7. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
8. N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
9. Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
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, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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