

THE
MAGAZINE
N.A. Way

November 1990
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*my
gratitude
speaks*

Annual Newsletter Issue
pg. 16

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

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THE N.A. Way

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The N.A. Way Magazine welcomes the participation of its readers. You are invited to share with the entire N.A. Fellowship in our monthly international journal. Send us your experience in recovery, your views on N.A. matters, and feature items. All manuscripts submitted become the property of World Service Office, Inc.

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Life and death

I am once again realizing the depth of my disease, how it moves me right down to the core of my very being. Just when I feel that I am experiencing some degree of serenity something comes about that upsets my apple cart.. turns it upside down. This is where the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous fit into my life. The keyword here is "life."

I understand the importance of these vital steps, during these times especially. Those feelings of fear, anger, self-doubt and of being overwhelmed triggers the instincts to run and escape from it all! This sequence of actions and reactions scares me to death. This time the keyword is "death."

Life and death go hand in hand in this program. I've seen a lot of both. I walk that fine line everyday. I know that working the steps keeps me among the living. The day I reject the Twelve Steps the addict in me will take over, driving me back to using and abusing in order to numb the pain. That spells certain death for me.

I try to work the steps to the best of my ability, with the help of my Higher Power. I know I can't do it all alone and I don't have to anymore. When I start feeling overwhelmed and somewhat desperate, I pray for

the strength to reach out and ask for help. When I was using I'd ask anyone for anything to get what I wanted. I lied at the blink of an eye. I was good at it, and that is a part of my past that I hate. So it is extremely difficult for me to ask for anything from anyone, today.

I can ask for help from my H.P. first. This is a start—It is the first step. Powerlessness and unmanageability in my life. This step also reminds me of where I came from and why I am here, within the loving heart and soul of the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. Sometimes I lose sight of that. Why am I here, how could my life have changed so drastically? Step one always brings this home to me, with quite a punch I might add.

I was afraid of becoming a social outcast and had visions of living in a cave for the rest of my life in order to stay away from drugs and the people who used them. How else could I stay clean?! I had no idea what true recovery was all about. When life on the other side finally became so miserable that I couldn't stand to look at myself in the mirror without crying, I decided to give up, surrender. I didn't know what recovery would bring. I only knew that I wanted to be free from the bondage of my addiction and the self-loathing I felt. I wanted my family to like me again. I wanted to like myself.

Change is still frightening to me lots of times, but I am learning how to deal with those feelings and work through them. I don't die in the process even through it "feels" like it at times. Today I can allow myself to feel all of my emotions. I don't have

to get wasted in a futile attempt to stuff them way down into a deep, dark corner of my soul. When I work through my stuff and come out on the other side I experience a great sense of accomplishment, because I did it without getting loaded! I am facing life on life's terms. And if this is what recovery is all about I'm going to keep coming back.

I'd like to dedicate this article to the addict who died today.

W.P., Oregon

A meeting with soul

I think that each one of us has our favorite meeting. I know that for myself over the years my favorite meeting has changed from time to time. By *favorite meeting* I am not referring necessarily to one's *home group* (which has its own special characterizations), but to the meeting which one most looks forward to attending each week. I attend at least four Narcotics Anonymous meetings each week and so it is important for me to look at the differing *personalities* of each meeting. Part of the reason I like to do this is that I like a lot of diversity in my life and by examining the different aura, if you will, of different meetings I am able to have at least four different types of Narcotics Anonymous experiences each week.

The meeting I went to last night is currently my favorite meeting. I guess some would consider it a controversial meeting because in its format the meeting states that it is concerned with addicts who are in life threatening situations and encourages sharing on this condition.

I don't find this meeting to be controversial in the least. In fact, what I find at this meeting is some of the strongest recovery from active addiction anywhere in my area. I hear people sharing gratitude and true spiritual growth. I hear people sharing laughter and joy as well as tears of grief.

Sometimes at a meeting when all that has been shared has been *how wonderful my life is now, how my worst day clean was better than my best day loaded*, etc. I look around the room for a newcomer and try to figure out what they think about what they're hearing. When your life is full of a lot of pain, self doubt, indecision, and self loathing, it can be very difficult to hear a bunch of people who are sharing nothing but *lofty platitudes* (apparently to each other). This is definitely not the case at the meeting I attended last night. It is the very reason that this particular meeting is so beautiful. Even when a member is sharing extreme pain, as many members at this meeting do, the recovery shines through. The fact of having a program, of having a loving god in my life, of having other members who care about me, of having recovery, all shines through the pain. Yes, even if I don't have long to live. Put simply, in my language, *this meeting has soul*.

Anonymous

On through the tears

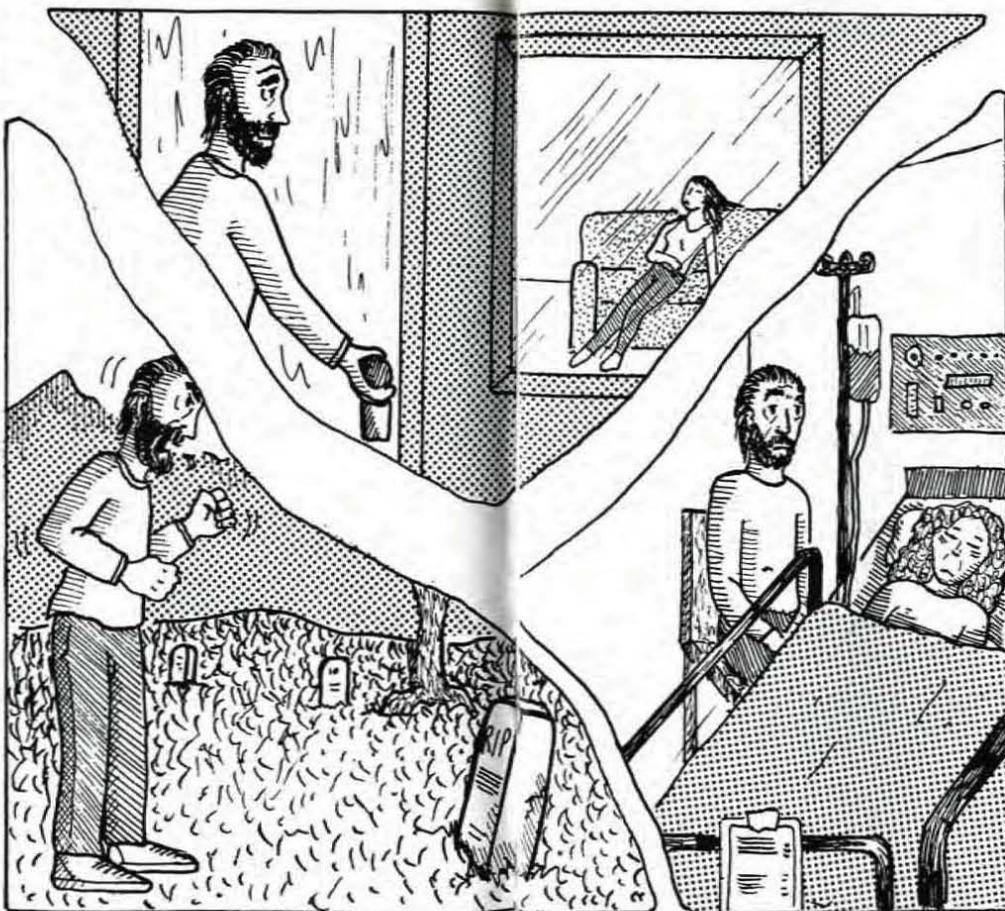
My wife had been in and out of the fellowship on what seemed to be a regular basis. I tried to be in control most of the time, not realizing I couldn't change her. I would occasionally pray for her and was always helping her out of trouble. I became so irritable that my recovery went on hold. Eventually we got a divorce. That was not easy. I kept in contact with my sponsor, the fellowship and my Higher Power. I hit as many as three meetings a day and wrote about how powerless I was and how my life had become unmanageable. I did a Fourth and Fifth Step about us and turned the situation over to God.

After about my four-year-birthday in NA we met again. We came to an understanding that she was to have her program, I was to have mine, and that we would work on one together. We worked fine for awhile and then the same old pattern set in.

This time I kept my program going, working on it daily to the best of my ability. She moved out.

I went to my mom's two days before Christmas to decorate the tree. My ex-

wife called and was loaded and said things I cannot say here. After I finished with the tree I went home. As I was walking up to my door I saw her sitting on the couch passed out, I thought. I opened the door and went in. My shotgun was laying in front of her body. I called 911 and being in shock, just stood there crying and swearing, cursing my God. I had prayed for his will for her, that something would happen so she wouldn't suffer anymore. But I didn't think he would allow this to happen.



I was arrested and taken to the police station as a suspect until they ruled suicide as what happened. I was given my one phone call. I called my sponsor. He came down and was there for me.

The next day my friends in the fellowship came and visited me. They came to help any way they could. I remember hating my Higher Power for allowing this to happen. Then self-pity set in. Why me? I attended many meetings. For a long time all I could do was just go to meetings and stay

clean. I didn't talk or read, I just went and I went clean. I was heartbroken, angry and resentful that maybe there was something I could have done, something I could have said.

What did I do to deserve this? Why did God do this to me? I remember thoughts of suicide. Is this recovery—NO—this is reality. I came to realize that to get over these self-destructive feelings that I had to open up at meetings, write and re-write the steps and have faith.

While at a meeting a friend suggested that maybe my ex-wife died so someone else could recover. It made sense to me and I hung on to it. I came to believe that she isn't suffering anymore and that God is looking after her now. I realized that I must take care of me in order to survive.

I had to surrender to the fact that what happened, happened. I couldn't bring her back, but, I could be brought back to sanity.

I called every area in my region and talked to people to see if they knew anyone who had been in a similar situation. I left my phone number with each area and prayed someone would call. Three days later I received a call. There was a recovering addict on the other end who expressed his concern and offered me hope.

He suggested some things that helped tremendously, (like) that I write a letter to her telling of my recovery and saying the unsaid things.

I felt released from my burden in a way, and as long as I let God handle it, I was OK. I still sometimes took my will back, but the grief was not as bad as before.

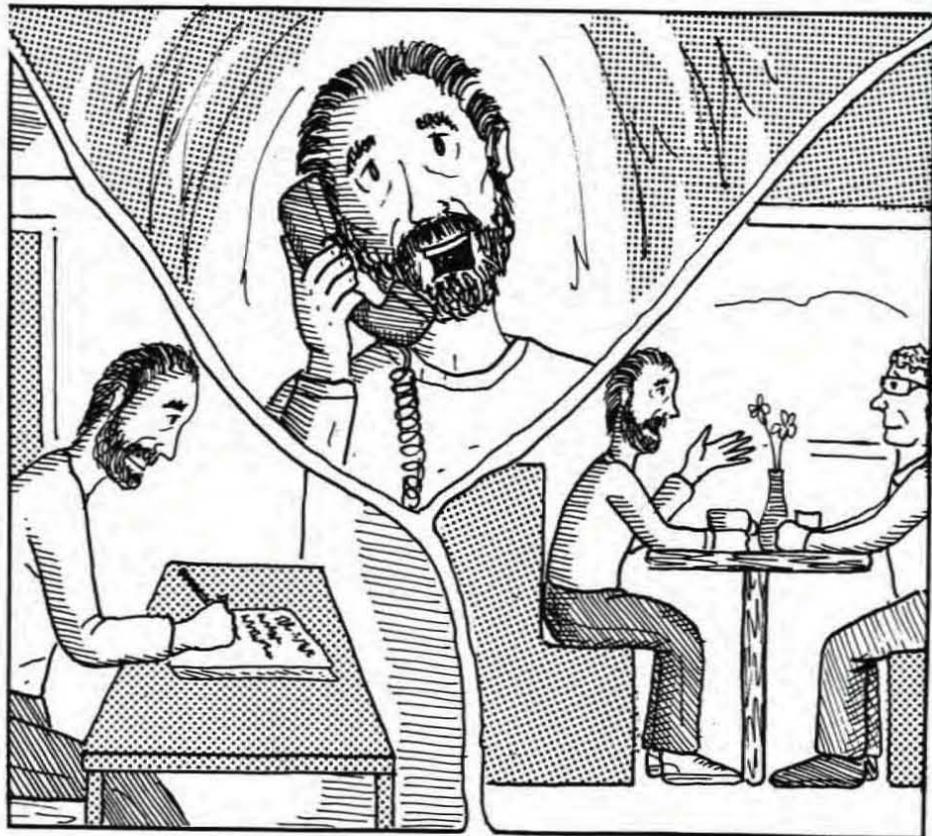
I continued on with my journey in recovery, but then last summer my best friend (since I was seven years old) developed cancer and passed away. The grief was back again, only this time was different; different because I knew ahead of time he would not be around. I cried again. Tears are nature's way of relieving the weight of grief.

My friend asked to be cremated and taken to a mountain. His friends and I took his ashes to the mountains. We were driving up there and a very strong urge came over me to use. I said the serenity prayer over and over until we reached the top of the moun-

tain. My obsession to use was gone and we released our friend to his Higher Power and said farewells. I wrote a letter about this experience and read it to my sponsor. I knew I must keep going on in my recovery or else I would go into self-pity and maybe die. I wanted to live I wanted to stay clean.

I met a special woman through this fellowship and our lives went great together. In February of 1990 she had an epileptic seizure and fell out of bed and suffocated.

Almost to the point of insanity, I realized that the bottom line is God's will, not mine. I used the Serenity



Prayer and steps 1, 2 and 3 over and over.

During the time she was hospitalized, I kept the faith that God's will would prevail and that I must accept his will, whether I agreed with it or not. Many brothers and sisters in NA came to offer support and unconditional love. We even had a few meetings in the waiting room. I was reading our Basic Text and some sentences stood out more so than others: "It is imperative to keep NA members close at all times if at all possible. We grow through pain in recovery and find such a crisis a gift." Maybe help from my Higher Power was doing it, but I grabbed those lines and held on.

Later I was writing when a depression grabbed me and I wanted to die, but I didn't want to use drugs. I wrote a suicide note and left my home in blind rage and fear. I prayed out loud and meditated for about three hours.

On the car radio I heard music and a select few lyrics. I believe they were God's lyrics talking to me. They said that "He will never leave me," to just "lean on Him," to "keep dreaming till my dreams come true," look around and see my friends, friends which no amount of money or drugs could get me. I came back home and my roommate had found my letter, he was freaked out. We hugged, cried and talked—then off we went to a meeting of NA.

I think the pain of grief or whatever will always be in our lives. But we have an option to let it control us or to fight it with the principles that we learn in Narcotics Anonymous and by remembering we are never alone.

R.T., Washington

The honest solution

After suffering from the effects of my disease recently, I found some strong medicine for my ailment—the truth.

My addiction has been telling me that since I've become an acceptable, responsible and productive member of society, I don't have a message to carry. "What can someone who is caught in the grasp of active addiction get from a lop like you?" my disease says. "You're an executive, suburban yuppie kind of guy. You drive a big American Sedan. You wear your hair short. You're married. You've finished college. You go to church. You listen to classical music. You've become a real "Casper Milquetoast."

Before I found a solution, this feeling of inadequacy in carrying a message to the newcomer resulted in my hovering around the fringes of meetings, not sharing, not reaching out to the still-suffering addict. It seemed like my disease didn't want me to work the Twelfth Step. I was caught between my need to "give it away in order to keep it," and my inability to speak up.

Well, my sponsor and I figured out a way around this dilemma; all I have to do is to tell the truth. As long as I'm as honest as I can be when sharing, I carry a message of hope. The truth of the matter is that my life has never been better. God as I understand Him has provided for me and kept on providing. Our Basic Text says that "the vision of the type of life we would like to have is but a fleeting glimpse of what God has in store for us." That's been the truth for me. If that doesn't provide an up-beat message of hope, that's okay with me. After all, the Twelfth Step only requires that I "try" to carry our message to addicts. The truth keeps me clean.

Usually, the truth in my life is that I have hope, I have happiness, I love, and I'm loved. Hence, my message is usually one of hope and happiness, although it may sometimes be tempered with some of the negative feelings that come up for me. While I believe our Fifth Tradition emphasizes the carrying of a positive message at the group level, I also believe it's important for me to "show my butt" when I'm hurting—and I do that by telling the truth about my pain.

I could choose to always share gooshy stuff, that life is always full of twinkies and balloons, that I'm surrounded by a pink cloud. But if there's

One thing I've learned about this addict, it's that I'm a good B.S.er—and a good detector of B.S. in others. When I was using, I learned how to bamboozle, run, game, scam, pinch, pilfer, lie, cheat and steal. And I learned to detect these not-so-admirable qualities in others. I don't think I'm that much different from many other addicts, and I don't think I or any other addict ever loses the almost intuitive ability to detect doo-doo in others. If I try to embellish or exaggerate my message to make things sound better, most addicts can see right through the B.S.

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So long as I share the truth with other addicts, my message gets through. The truth is that I used to be hooked like a dog on drugs, that I was unemployed and unemployable, that I was dirty and stinky and miserable. If I happen to become respectable, productive, and responsible in my recovery, then so be it. The truth is that the life I had envisioned for myself when I first walked into N.A. barely scratched the surface of the way things have turned out for me.

I'm sure that if I can present that truth to the newcomer, then I don't have to worry about how "normal" I've come to appear in my recovery. The truth speaks for itself.

P.R., California

The choice

I basically *crawled* through the door of N.A. I had reached the point of utter despair and hopelessness and I knew I was going to use and I couldn't stop myself. I was given a choice either going into a convenience mart and getting something for the feelings or making a phone call at the pay phone in front of the store. I was given the strength to go to the pay phone, put a quarter in, and call N.A. and talk to someone about my desire to use and get some directions. Because N.A. is, so am I, today.

I have been privileged to be a part of a great fellowship, a fellowship of men and women who have shared their disease and their recovery so I might live.

My heart is filled with gratitude and from the bottom of this addicts heart, I say THANK YOU!

Thank you for transportation to and from meetings!

Thank you for talking with me on the phone the many times I called and told you I felt like using. Because you were there, I didn't pick up that day.

Thank you for the handouts of trust you gave me.

Thank you for the coffee at meetings—I felt more at home with a drink of coffee in my hand.

Thank you for the cigarettes when I was out.

Thank you most of all for being yourselves—honest, open-minded, willing human beings showing this willing addict the way out of the dark abyss within; step by step, twelve in all.

Thank you most of all for my new life and being apart of this world once again. I am grateful.

Three times in the past I have attended colleges and dropped out before I completed the first semester. Now I have just completed the first week of my third semester.

Around a year and a half ago I was evicted from an apartment for non-payment of rent. This month I paid my rent two weeks ahead of the due date.

My apartment is furnished with furniture I have paid for except for a borrowed desk. Miracles do happen. The old process is reversing itself slowly.

I have been blessed with good health. After all the abuse my body has had I have been privileged to be able to ride a bicycle up to seven miles, one way, to go to meetings. Oh, did I mention that I am a forty-nine year old grandmother?

Do I look my age? No! N.A. and being clean has given me a youth I have never before experienced. I can honestly say "Thank you God for Narcotics Anonymous!"

Anonymous

Home at last

When I stopped using there was no NA in my area and I didn't know it existed. At the AA group I attended some people talked to me about absolute abstinence from all mind changing/mood altering chemicals.

During this time a few addicts got together and started an NA group. They met once a week in the same meeting place AA met six nights a week. There were mostly "alcoholics" and "alcoholic-addicts" that attended this meeting. I attended this meeting sometimes. The NA message was not a clear message. I attended and I was confused. I also felt threatened. I was afraid of NA.

I moved to another town, a large town that had an active NA group. A friend of mine brought me to the "Better late than never group." When I walked into that meeting I felt a peace that I had not found elsewhere. The people in AA were good to me and for me, but when I went to that NA meeting I had come home.

I became a regular at the meetings. I did not stop my AA attendance right away. That took some time. I continued to feel threatened at times. NA members and a loving God helped me through that transition. My new family was patient with me. I'm grate-

ful for that, because I was not always patient with them.

When I read in our text "Alcoholism is too limited a term for us, our problem is not a specific substance, it is a disease called addiction" tears came to my eyes. That was me. I was always looking for something outside myself to change the way I felt. Specific substances were not my problem. They were only symptoms of my problems. I love our literature because it was written for addicts by addicts.

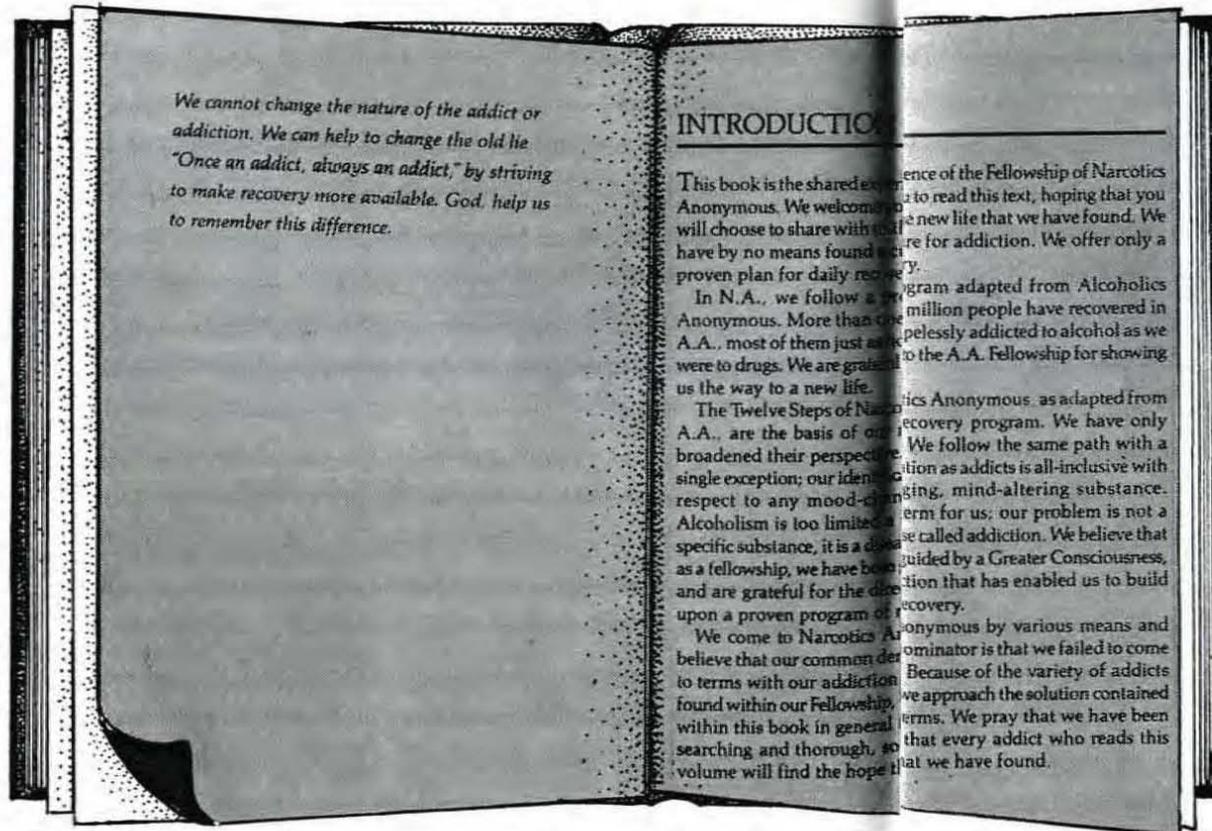
I came to love NA. I began attending conventions. NA became my family. My transition from AA to NA became complete after I attended the World Convention in New Orleans. The atmosphere there helped me realize that NA stands on it's own. We do recover.

Since then I have found my recovery in NA. I have no need to go elsewhere.

I recently attended an NA-history convention in Alabama. I listened to some of the people who helped compile the Basic Text. I saw some of the NA archives. I felt a unity for the fellowship. It was a spiritual experience seeing part of where we came from. It helped knowing that the fellowship struggled in it's recovery, just as I struggled in my recovery.

I pray that I can give the newcomer what I have learned in NA. I hope I can share our history and our struggles. Most of all I can share that NA stands on it's own. We do recover.

Anonymous



Obsessions and compulsions

I am a very grateful recovering addict whose disease is kicking up Big Time as I approach the threshold of my first year.

I finally got real willing and decided to do some writing, as it was suggested to me by my sponsor and some friends in the program.

Then it occurred to me, that as long as I'm writing, why not write an article for the *N.A. Way*. Perhaps there is someone else out there going through a similar situation, who can relate and to whom this article can help and encourage. So here goes.

I really don't know what's going on with me or why this is happening at this point in my recovery. There have only been a few minor changes and no major problems in my life. I really don't understand my obsession and compulsion to go back out and use again. (Or as a friend so bluntly put it; "Go back out and kill myself.")

A few weeks ago I had a drug dream and when I awakened I was crying because I thought that I had thrown

away nine months of clean time. When I realized that it was only a dream, I felt enormous relief.

As the day went on, I stopped feeling grateful that it was only a dream and my disease slipped into its selective thinking mode—only remembering the so called "good times" of my using days.

I toyed with my diseased thinking and finally decided that getting high just one more time wouldn't hurt, and before I knew it, I had made a conscious decision to get loaded and I set out to do just that.

Not only am I a very grateful recovering addict, but I am also a very BLESSED recovering addict. After the precarious predicament that I entered into, I should, by all rights and reasons, be a newcomer.

But that day when I went on my mission of self-destruction, my Higher Power did for me what I couldn't do for myself. He gave me a moment of clarity and restored to me enough sanity to realize that what I have in recovery is not worth giving up for that proverbial "one high."

My obsession started in a dream and my compulsion almost turned it into a nightmare of reality.

I don't understand why I was willing to trade the respect and trust of my family and friends in for my old familiar misery; but I do understand some changes that I have to make if I want to continue to stay clean.

You see, after I jumped the hurdle of six months, I got a little cocky and began to think that I knew all there was to know and couldn't be touched by my disease. My ego ("edging God out") came into play and I began

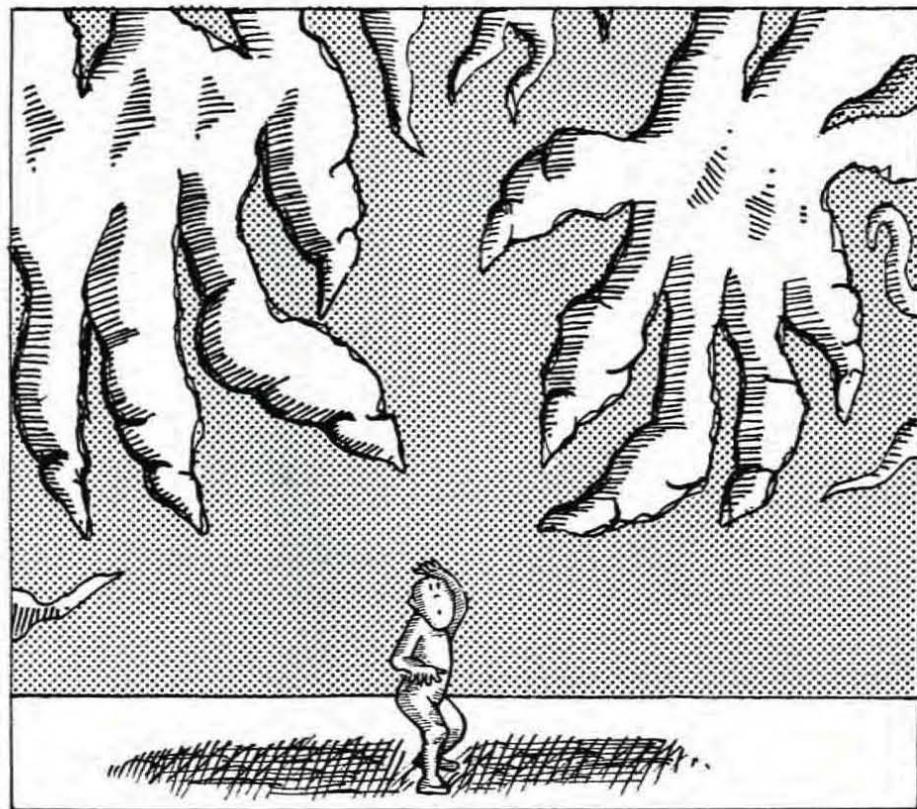
thinking that I was keeping myself clean. I became self-reliant and failed to keep a conscious contact with my H.P. I got lackadaisical about going to meetings, reading the literature and using the tools of recovery. This kind of reckless living almost cost me my clean time, but more importantly, it could've cost me my life!

If you are battling with obsessions and compulsions, I beg of you—DON'T USE! It's not worth it. My Higher Power allowed me to get just close enough to a relapse to realize that I am not in control and I can NOT do it alone. As I have heard it said so many times: "An addict alone is in bad company."

This experience has been a frightening one, but it has gotten me back on track. I have once again become zealous about my recovery, willing to go to any lengths to stay clean, and open-minded to suggestions and directions. I now know that I have to incorporate the N.A. principles in every area of my life—and that includes my dreams.

I am deeply indebted to friends in this program who were patient, understanding, honest and loving with me. And I am grateful to my Higher Power who was there for me when I needed Him most with open arms, protection, love and forgiveness.

V.C., California



Getting it right

At my first N.A. meeting I knew I had found home. The things I heard and the people I saw convinced me that this was truly home. Never before could I relate to so much in one small room. Addicts from all walks of life with so much in common overwhelmed me. I was ready and nothing could stop me.

I jumped into the fellowship with both feet and little or no reservations. I did what was done by those before me. I went to many meetings, found a sponsor, started to work the steps, got involved in service from day one (I cleaned ash trays and made coffee on a regular basis and neither smoked nor drank coffee). As my time in recovery grew so did my service commitments. I chaired meetings. Attended area service meetings, served on area subcommittees and even became a sponsor. I kept coming back and soon I learned that it was not about "drugs" but it was about a disease called addiction.

I worked through the Twelve Steps and learned to apply them to my everyday living. I started to see the Twelve Traditions and what they did

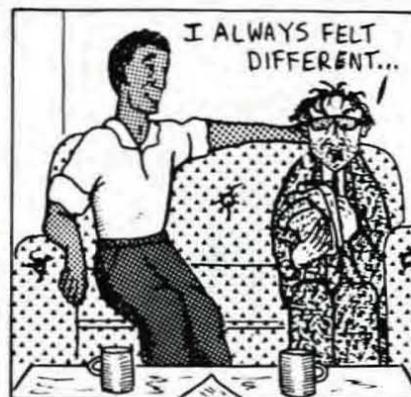
for the addict as well as the fellowship. I was changing and for the first time in my life I was feeling real. I could feel. I could cry. I could love and be loved with no strings attached. I could trust. I could, I could, I could. There was no end to what I could do. What made this all possible was you, addicts in recovery before me that showed it could work if we let it. "God,"... "HP,"... What these meant to me in the beginning and what they mean to me now are a million miles apart. HP or God, as I choose, gave me life from day one and has kept me alive when I wanted to die. God gives me free will today. God allows me to make choices and hopefully to learn from the wrong ones. God is with me always and never leaves me. God will allow me to push him out of my life if I choose to, but he follows closely by, waiting for me to welcome him back.

N.A. has not made me perfect, only more healthy. I do not have all the answers but I have many of the solutions. I am free today from the disease of active addiction and all the pain and misery that goes with it. Because of N.A. I want to live today, Just For Today. I want to give away what was so freely given to me so that others may have what I have. I saw what I wanted at my first N.A. meeting and today I have some of it. There is so much more out there for me today and all I have to do is continue to live the spiritual principles taught to me by addicts in N.A. Thank you N.A. all over the world. By the way, I'm still cleaning ash trays and making coffee!

Anonymous

Home Group

Revelation, part two



NEWSLETTERS NEWSLETTERS NEWSLETTERS

A recent reminder that this is traditionally the time of year for a "Newsletter Issue" of *The N.A. Way Magazine* was heard with some chagrin, but the project has turned into a blessing. Hundreds of newsletters from around the world were examined. It is truly heartwarming to see the written rainbow they describe. Though dark edges of tragedy, anger and discontent are honestly expressed, joyful excitement and mellow acceptance also decorate the written N.A. experience.

Notes from the editors of the newsletters most obviously speak for service workers everywhere. Their notes this past year span the range from the constant "Please send copy!" and "Don't you guys care?" to the dramatic surrender of "I am outta here, find some other addict to get do this #X%\$ job!"

The choices selected for re-publication here are by no means presented as the "best" of this year's crop. It is unlikely anyone even knows the true extent of the newsletter population in our fellowship. Some are only printed two or three times and then pass out of existence. Others are very strong and have been steady for years. It is herewith claimed that each helps further the carrying of the N.A. message.

You will find some pieces that are basic and simple and others that stretch your mental muscles. Some are innocent love for the Spirit and Fellowship; others directly challenge our perspectives or mischievously take our inventories. For everyone who struggles to get these things said, thank you.

Editor

FROM: The Basic Newsletter
S.F.V., California

Tis the season

Well, here it is, the holiday season. All around I can see that the festivities have begun. People are getting ready for the beginning and end of the calendar year, for the giving and receiving of gifts and for all the celebrating with their family and friends. This is an uplifting time for most of the world. I'm depressed! There's just no trying to hide it. I've done better but right now I'm just plain down. Why? What's goin' on? Things are going pretty good for me right now. Bills are paid, relationship's good, we're healthy. So, what's up?

It hits me. Suddenly I know. Those old feelings seem to be brought to life again. Holidays and addicts; we don't mix too well. At least we didn't when we were using. Using. Yeah, it's just like it was yesterday. My family wanted to hang out together. What a drag. All it really did was get between me and getting loaded. Even the booze users frowned upon

narcotics' use and if I drank with them it always seemed that I drank too much. We were different. That's all I seemed to really know and the holidays just drove that home like a sledgehammer driving a carpet tack.

But now it's different. By some act of nature or divine intervention, things aren't like that these days. I get along with my family better than I ever have. I actually enjoy being with them most of the time. I consider that to be a gift. I'm even starting my own family, speaking of gifts. So why does this holiday spirit thing seem so depressing to me? Maybe I'm just not used to things going well for me? Maybe feeling the wholeness and love that comes from the family experience is still so new to me that it catches me off balance? Those "old tapes," as some say, seem to be playing, even though the experiences that they are based upon are a few years gone. Those old feelings are powerful, and actually I haven't really had all that much practice at getting through the holiday season without using. So now what? What do I do now?

I can hear it like a voice. My own, my sponsor's, my friend's, their sponsors' and their friends' voices. They're saying: "Get grateful, count your blessings, make a gratitude list, work with a newcomer and experience his fresh pain, get out of yourself, be of service." The hand that rows the boat is usually too busy to rock it.

The holidays can be rough and dangerous times for addicts in recovery but we can deal with it and we don't have to do it alone. Those of us without families, or whose families drink or use other drugs, can always hang out with our N.A. family if we want to; if we'll just take the initiative. Our will to survive ties us together and maybe we need to stay that much closer during the holidays.

*From the Editor
December/January 1990*

FROM: The Bottom Line
Gold Coast Area, Florida

Anyone may join us

I remember the relief I felt when I first heard these words. I felt all my life that I had to be somebody or had to have some special skill in order to belong. The reality of that was that it was basically true.

But now, here I was in a place, feeling the depths of despair and loneliness and hopelessness. I was hearing words like belonging and fellowship, feelings that had attracted

me to drug usage in the first place. But these people were saying they were clean, they had been abstaining from all drugs. I heard things like the newcomer being the most important person, for we could only keep what we had by giving it away.

Being a skeptical person in heavy denial of any kind of problem, I didn't believe you people at first. I was terrified, I wasn't sure if my use of drugs was causing the problem or not, but I believed them when they told me "if you think you have a problem, you're probably in the right place!"

I finally opened up to some people and told them I was on methadon. I told them I was afraid to stop and didn't want to get sick again, for I had tried to stop countless times in the past. Older, wiser group members shared with me their experience, strength and hope; how they had stopped the same drug. Later I found out all drugs are the same, it doesn't matter. How each had been using at different levels, but they had all been able to stop through the recovery program of Narcotics Anonymous. They told me to Keep Coming Back. They told me the only requirement for membership was a desire to stop using.

Although many of these people looked, sounded and acted different, I felt a bond, an empathy. We had all had the same feelings and gone through similar experiences. I knew I had found a home.

I was also indignant at the mention-

ing of God. I thought this was a bunch of "moonies" or religious fanatics. They told me I had a choice, I could choose a God of my understanding. I was insulted by the prayers at the beginning and the ending of the meetings. They told me I didn't have to pray, I would when I was ready to or never at all. I have come to believe that moment of silence we observe at the end of the meeting was what kept me alive. For when I was using, people knew of me and my family, the suffering we had en-

FROM: The Recoverer
Washington/Northern Idaho Region

My welcome to N.A.

When I first came to Narcotics Anonymous I felt awkward and wondered if I really belonged here. I'd been going to another Twelve Step program, but I wasn't staying clean, and I was resentful about that and angry at the hard line on drugs I heard in N.A. meetings. Perhaps I thought I was being preached at, or maybe I thought I knew it all. Whatever was going on in my head at the time, I had a negative attitude toward the program, and I wasn't listening to what people were saying. Many times I'd rush out of a meeting the moment it closed, thinking that they were pointless and that I'd never return.

And yet when I allowed myself to be open-minded for a minute I had to

dured, and they prayed for us during that time.

There is a power we can tap into when we do not judge, stereotype, or moralize but rather when we care, share, empathize and identify and carry the message of recovery and provide an atmosphere of recovery.

ANYONE MAY JOIN US, REGARDLESS OF AGE, RACE, SEXUAL IDENTITY, CREED, RELIGION OR LACK OF RELIGION. . .

*Anonymous
March/April 1990*

admit that something was happening—I was staying clean. So I kept coming back.

At some point in those first few weeks a guy started intercepting me after meetings before I could make it to the door. He remembered my name, and he'd hug me and say that he was glad I was there. I doubt I believed him at first, but in time I felt more at ease in meetings and would even speak occasionally, and I felt less inclined to make a break for the door and get out of there when the meeting was over.

It's been a couple of years since those first meetings. I'm still clean, and the guy who welcomed me with open arms is a good friend. When I look back I wonder what would have happened to me if he hadn't taken the trouble to try to make me feel welcome. Would I have kept coming back and eventually gotten connected with the program anyway? Or would I have gone back out to use and suffer for more years before I made it back—if I made it back?

I guess I'll never know the answer to that. But I do know that as a newcomer someone cared enough to try to make me feel welcome and told me keep coming back no matter what, and for that I'm grateful. The way I show it is by sharing this story, and by stepping up to newcomers after a meeting and welcoming them.

Dan K.
January, 1990

FROM: N.A. Today
Australia

The dearly departed

Whenever I get the guts to speak to someone after a meeting I often find what they say has a calming effect on me, I don't feel as anxious after speaking to them.

I've had a number of things said to me like. . . "Relax". . . "Get out of your head". . . and the hardest one for me to accept. . . "Hand yourself over to God!" To be fair I must admit they usually say "God as you know him."

Recently I heard that someone in a clinic had chosen a motorcycle as his higher power! Well, call me traditional, but I don't think I could come at something as abstract as a motorcycle! Well, maybe it works for that person. And who am I to knock someone else's view of a higher power, especially since I haven't thought about one for myself!

The "God" thing is a worry for me. You see, I was brought up a Catholic, now a "lapsed Catholic" thank

God! . . . oh dear, what a ridiculous thing for me to say! Anyway, the point is, I associate God with unquestionable authority and ultimate judgement. . . like all good Catholics.

I, like so many other tortured Catholic kids, was taught to respect God through fear of "His Divine Retribution." Each night I had to offer up thanks to "God" for not being killed or maimed and I knew if I didn't pray something awful was going to happen, (the nuns made sure of that little guilty thought.)

So, when I first sat down in a meeting and I looked up and saw the word "God" I panicked!

At first I thought I had been lured into some clandestine Christian meeting. All I needed was for Fred Nile to pop his head through the door and I was out of there! But then I remembered who took me there, a friend I could trust to be too much of a capitalist to be a true Christian!

Then I started listening, (as I tried to screw myself into the carpetpile from nerves.) I wasn't in a room of Christians at all! I was in a room of bloody heathen! Whom, I might add, had committed acts of drug-violence against themselves that made my own story pale into insignificance!

I then decided I wasn't a big enough druggie to be included in this human morass of modern day penitents!

So I told my friend, and he simply said, "It's not what or how much you take, it's why!" I hated him for saying that. From that point I could find nowhere to run and hide.

For, if I was honest with myself, I had to admit I took drugs to drown my feelings of inadequacy, lack of confidence, low self-esteem, loneliness amongst friends, not having a lover, being bored and just trying to get to sleep at night!

Drugs didn't relieve me of these feelings, for I knew they came back as soon as the high wore off. (This didn't stop me from taking drugs nearly every day for seventeen years, however!)

That night, after the first meeting, I couldn't get to sleep. My friend's words, "Look for the similarities, not the differences" reverberated in my head. I found a lot of similarities amongst the stories I heard that day.

I couldn't stand it! How come the day before all I felt was a little depressed and unhappy, (I had not had anything for 20 days, I was doing a spring clean so to speak) and today I feel like killing myself because I fear I'm an addict!

Thanks for the nightmares, friend, I thought! The next day he took me to a different meeting. . . I felt worse. I went to another meeting, the Paddington Birthday meeting. I couldn't stand up and identify because I thought I was going to burst into tears. It was then I admitted to myself that I was

an addict...but half of me still wants to know whether I would handle drugs better, even after three months' respite.

I don't know when I will stop wanting drugs, that's something I suppose is best put out of mind.

For the moment I'm just glad I'm not using them. I'm thinking about the future. I want to start getting up and doing things instead of dreaming them. Already I have done a number of things that I had been putting off before I gave up. And my letter writing is a lot easier and clearer, something I am very grateful for.

I hope I never return to a life of drug using. After seventeen years of trying to be the "Edmund Hillary" of

the medicine cabinet, (always looking for the highest peak!) I've come to the conclusion that my drug taking was not just something I enjoyed, it was necessary for my peace of mind.

After eighty-five days of abstinence, I am now convinced there is another way to achieve that peace. It isn't easy for me, but I now know the alternative is hopeless.

Hopefully I will overcome my aversion to the "God thing," as others in this amazing association claim it makes their recovery easier...and I can tell you, I'm always looking for the easy solution to things.

J.

December/January 1990

FROM: Against All Odds
Daytona Area, Florida

Overcoming fear through service

It took three months of tipping in and out of N.A. before I surrendered and said, "my way isn't working, I'm going to try it their way." I started going to meetings daily, I got a sponsor and took my first service position as coffee maker of a group.

Coming into this program I was a very hostile and depressed person. But the simple act of making coffee brought me into personal contact with other recovering addicts. I didn't have a lot of social skills. Everyday conversation, which had once seemed trivial to me, became a friendly and warm act of communication. I started to feel good about smiling and saying hello.

The success of that beginning lead me to act as secretary for my group and later G.S.R. At first group business meetings seemed a strange set of interactions. Service structure was confusing, group conscience was just a vote. Traditions were abstract rules. Being strong willed and self-motivated, my learning process was slow. It took time for the wisdom of our principles to prevail. But learn I did, steadily. The more I learned the more I felt part of and comfortable in this new way of life.

The first time someone mentioned P.I. to me, I was too embarrassed to ask what it was, so I sluffed it off. But the next time the subject was brought up it was by the P.I. chairperson himself. He really seemed interested in having me—me personally-attend that subcommittee. He told me a little about the committee and why he had noticed me and why he thought I might fit in. Perhaps that first P.I. meeting was attended because I was grateful or flattered by the attention. But, I kept going back because I was welcomed and felt needed. It also seemed a way to give back to the fellowship what had been given to me.

Since that first tentative step into P.I., I have been privileged to serve with H&I, Activities, Helpline & Newsletter. Each had its own special gratifying rewards. I learned more about recovery in each subcommittee I supported. My self-esteem has risen as each of my responsibilities have been met.

My experiences in service have not always been a bed of roses. There were difficult days. Overcoming my fears of inadequacy took time. Learning how to get along with other recovering people was not easy. There were meetings when I threw up my hands and exclaimed, "you people are sicker than I've ever been." Strong personalities bulldozed over me, leaving me with feelings of frustration and anger I didn't know how to deal with. Criticism of any kind crushed me. Disillusionment with the imperfections of individuals left me depressed and questioning N.A.

In the end the program always came through for me. H.P. calmed my fears. My sponsor helped to direct my actions. The principles of the program always worked when I worked them. So I kept trying and learned about faith.

There is always fear for me when I walk into a subcommittee for the first time, but my experience has taught me that the fear will pass and be forgotten as the rewards of service surround me. I always encourage N.A. members to become a part of. To take the risk, to be open-minded and willing. To be persistent and keep coming back. The friends I have made, the learning experiences I have gained, are the best things that could have ever happened to me. My life has been enriched by serving N.A.

Anonymous
October 1989

FROM: New Life Messenger
Ottawa, Canada

Secret service

My sponsor often encourages me to get into some kind of service in this fellowship. "It would be good for your recovery," I am told. So I ponder the various service positions, see what's available and lean towards something that's good for my bruised ego. It is then that my Higher Power reminds me that service isn't about me, it's about you. I remember the many times I have been the recipient of loving caring service.—the purest form of service, service done in secret.

At my first N.A. meeting I was twelfth-stepped. An "oldtimer" introduced himself, took me to the literature table, gave me his phone number. If this caring man had not spoken to me that night, I would not have come back. He made me feel welcome, like I belonged here. So today I try to give as I have been given to.

Secret services are those little things that say "you are valuable; you are worth caring about; I love you." It is welcoming a newcomer even when I'm feeling inadequate or afraid. It is driving members to meetings even if it's out of my way. It is giving that extra hug, asking people how they really are. It is calling members who haven't shown up for a while to see if everything is okay.

Most importantly N.A. secret service is just being there for someone, listening to them. It is the molding of the unconditional love that binds us together. And the payoff? My recovery grows as I step out of myself and risk loving another, being real for him or her. Secret service is gratitude personified:

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

Anonymous, March 1990

Reprinted from the Daily Inventory, Montreal, Canada

FROM: NA Today
United Kansas City Area

What is the N.A. message?

Sometimes in meetings we hear one member described as "carrying a solid N.A. message," and another described as carrying a "mixed message." For newcomers, and often even for oldcomers, these phrases can be confusing. What's so special about the N.A. message, and why should we care that we speak with one voice? Aren't we entitled to speak and think as we choose?

Yes, Narcotics Anonymous is an open, voluntary program, and every member is guaranteed the right to his or her own conscience. At the same time, our Fellowship is guided by its Twelve Traditions, the first two of which deal with the principles of Unity and Group Conscience. All of our traditions have their foundations in the spiritual principle of Anonymity, which allows us to be a part of something greater than ourselves. Being a member implies both some wonderful privileges and some serious responsibilities.

From the start of our First Step, the

N.A. message makes no distinction between one kind of addiction and another. It would be a simple matter to admit our powerlessness over drugs, or over certain drugs, and not others. But the N.A. Fellowship has grown to understand that our disease of addiction is all-encompassing in our lives, and has more to do with our need to use drugs than merely with the drugs themselves. That's why N.A. is not a drug program, and never has been (even though complete abstinence from all drugs is the prerequisite to our recovery). We know that abstinence from all drugs is not sufficient to work our First Step, because our addiction will seize on anything else to make our lives unmanageable.

In the same spirit, our Third Tradition states that "the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using." It doesn't say using this or using that. Addicts are experts at using the past as a justification for the present; using people and loving things; or using resentments and personal differences as an excuse to harm ourselves and others. Once we stop using our disease to make ourselves unique and special, we become "members" in the best sense—part of the solution—part of the message of recovery.

A solid N.A. message has little to do with our drug usage, because that was but a symptom of the disease that gripped us long before and usually long after we used drugs. If

we mention the drugs we used when we share, it's usually only so that the newcomer can identify more easily. But we know that the disease was the cause, and the drugs were but one effect. A solid message might contain a "war story," but it also contains a "victory story" as well. Our united N.A. message tells us that it doesn't matter what or how much we used, only that there is a solution within the 12 Steps of Narcotics Anonymous, and that with the help of each other and a loving God as we understand him, we may achieve relief from our disease.

Our Group Conscience is inspired by a Loving God, and no single addict can take the place of that Ultimate Authority. Together we decide whom we can trust to serve us, or ask to carry that message in our meetings. As the unity of our message has become stronger, we have made a group conscience decision to ask those who live and share the N.A. way to be our trusted servants, and speak at our meetings. We may love people with other messages and respect their rights to share, but we also must learn how to embrace them without embracing or endorsing those other messages. We have a message that works for us, and we don't have to apologize for upholding the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous.

*Anonymous
March 1990*

FROM: Together We Can
Maryland

Accountable

I hear a whole lot lately about the "trust your trusted servants" syndrome and the fear and the negativity that goes with asking them to be accountable for their actions while they are serving us, the Fellowship.

In my recovery I have been striving for the honesty within myself to be able to do things in life without having to cover my tracks and without the fear of being asked about what I have done. Part of the way that I have begun to accomplish this is that I placed enough trust in my sponsor to allow him to hold me accountable for my behavior and remained willing to look at myself when necessary. This process is helping me in all areas of my life. In my service to N.A. I have learned that I am a servant and need to do just that. If I do then I find that I have nothing to hide and am able to answer to anyone who may not understand or who may find fault in what I'm doing. You see the door is open for fault, because we are human and we may err and I find nothing wrong with being made aware of something, changing and growing.

Something else that I've learned through my service is that in being a servant when things happen they are not personal and they are not a threat to my self-worth or self-esteem. I'm just a servant doing what I'm asked to do and at any given time can be directed to do it different and I need to change. I've also found that I don't always understand why things may be being done and it's not a threat if I question the ethics or why something is being done, I just don't understand. When I think of service and being a trusted servant, I think of being trusted enough to let any-

one else see what I'm doing and why I'm doing it. What I don't think of is doing things for others without them asking or wanting it done. I don't think of doing things for others so that they won't have to do or worry about it. When I think of that, what comes to my mind is all the enabling that allowed me to get and stay sick! So yes, if you must, "trust your trusted servants," but don't be afraid to question them or hold them responsible for their actions.

*A member
May 1990*

FROM: The Clean Sheet
Dallas Area, Texas

Synonyms and other great mysteries

I speak only from my own experiences and observations which are open to revision.

At the table of N.A. I find myself in one of the most exciting spiritual second-hand stores on earth. Via the experience, strength and hope of others. I am able to freely sort through a host of practical spiritual tools that work today.

I am happy to report that abstinence has not been the only gift of recovery for me. Would that have been the case, I doubt I would have kept on coming back. Abstinence, daily abstinence, is the bedrock foundation of my recovery. Ongoing recovery is a daily result that involves spirituality, change and growth.

At one time, not drinking a beer or running a line of coke were foremost in my mind. As time passed in N.A., I began to deeply accept complete abstinence on a daily basis, as a way of life. Somewhere the nagging compulsion to use left me, yet such a daily reprieve did not spell recovery to me. Recovery and spiritual self-discovery have become synonymous to me. I've discovered I'm a spiritual being with a disease that affects every aspect of my life.

On a tape I once heard that addicts are afraid of new information. I find myself in agreement with that idea. New information can be very threatening to an insecure person (such as myself). Whatever the reason, fear is the lack of faith, faith I can gain by working Steps Two and Three.

It is easy to get trapped and stumble on new information that may appear contrary to what we know to date. An example is the terms "addict" and "alcoholic." The U.S. Government determined, a few years back now, that alcohol is a drug. Our own literature warns of the danger of viewing alcohol differently than other drugs. A drug is a drug; an addict an addict!

These days, active drug use does not permeate my thoughts as it once did; the disease of addiction is still with me, though. For the last year, suicide has become an issue for me. For a time I became confused on this and began to treat suicide as a separate issue. I am grateful to our

basic text, which says that we were slowly committing suicide with our drug use. Suicide is suicide, be it hypodermic, or knife; the end result is the same. Covert (or overt) suicide is most-assuredly an addiction issue for me, since the disease of addiction has affected every area of my life.

These days Twelve-Step programs abound. Research outside of these programs has shed great light on denial-based diseases. If you are married to an addict, overeat, are chronically depressed, or come from a dysfunctional home, there is a good chance that you'll find a Twelve Step program specifically labelled for you. For me, if I were to run to every group I found Identity with, I'd run out of days and still not touch every issue. I am first and foremost, an addict; the disease of addiction has permeated every area of my life, including "all issues" that have to do with me.

My disease is not dependent on drug use to survive and flourish. My drug use was only a symptom of a deeper spiritual, mental and emotional condition. That condition predates my use of drugs and via the Twelve Steps of N.A. I've found that who I grew up with, how I was raised, how I felt and feel about these issues, how I acted, felt, reacted, who did what to me, who I lived with and how I am today are very pertinent to my recovery. These are all issues of recovery from active addiction for me. I feel no departure from my

place as a recovering addict saying, "This was an abuse issue," or that my life is, or was, "co-dependent." To me, my use of drugs and my desire to stop using drugs is my full requirement met. I am a recovering addict with a desire to stay clean, that alone demands I face every issue of my life as a component of addiction. How can I afford to look at anything as separate from the disease of addiction, or the hope of recovery, if the Twelve Steps of N.A. suggest I practice honesty, openmindedness and willingness in all my affairs?

I have come to accept that any issue that affects me personally is worthy of an honest, openminded

exploration via the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. Recovery: freedom from the wreckage of my past, a personal working spiritual program today, built on abstinence and guided by the spiritual framework of the Twelve Steps, just for today with other N.A.s, so it is for me!

I am a complex, issue-filled person who is very grateful for both the depth and breadth of our simple program. For me, I find one program simple and effective: life the N.A. Way.

Anonymous, Stonewall

January 1990

FROM: The Recoverer
Washington/Northern Idaho Region

What are we telling the newcomer?

My life depends on this program and I would like to spend just a little time talking about that. It scares me when I hear people carry a mixed message in meetings. What are we telling the newcomer?

I attended a couple of other meetings before I even heard about Narcotics Anonymous and always came away feeling confused. What a relief when I walked through the doors of my first N.A. meeting and heard someone say "I am an addict." Since then I have always found the answer I was looking for by attending Narcotics Anonymous meetings. In order for me

to really understand what's going on and how the disease of addiction affects my life, it is important for me to hear a clear message of recovery.

I have spent some of my recovery without a sponsor because I wasn't willing to attend other programs just to fill that need. I did a lot of praying and had a lot of faith that my Higher Power was guiding me in exactly the direction that was chosen for me and now I have a wonderful sponsor. She lives 60 miles away but she also is an addict with the disease of addiction. She knows how to guide me through the steps of the program.

As our literature states, my life was consumed by "the getting and using and finding ways and means to get more." Today, my life is consumed with a program of recovery in the Fel-

lowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

I understand that recovery is very personal and how you talk and what you say is your business. The Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous is our business though, and I believe that we need to do whatever we can to protect its integrity. It is important to convey our message in a loving, non-threatening way when we hear mixed messages being shared in our meetings.

N.A. is teaching me how to live. It is teaching me how to love. It is teaching me how to be loved.

I am not willing to allow the principles of our program to be compromised. I don't want to die.

Carol T.

February 1990



FROM: Sanity Newsletter, New Jersey

Editor's note: Being a Parody of William Shakespeare's Masterpiece — Alternatively Titled, "The Story of an Indecisive Lit Committee Member," a musing once more presented as a special treat for those trusted (sort of) servants whose passion is committee guidelines. "6-G" refers to a hotly debated literature issue in the 1990 WSC.

HAMLET

Enter: Hamlet,
saying . . .
"6-G or not 6-G;" that is the
question;
Whether 'tis nobler in the lit process
to suffer The slings and arrows of
group conscience,
Or to take arms against a sea of
choppy literature,
And hire paid staff writers? To com-
pile, to publish;
No more; and by publishing to say
we end
The heart-ache and the thousand
natural shocks
That lit is heir to, 'tis a completed
Step Book
Devoutly to be wished. To compile, to
publish;
To publish: perchance to sell; aye,
there's the rub;
For in the sale of lit what riches may
come
When we have shuffled off this group
conscience;
It makes one stop and wonder:
there's the issue
That makes calamity of the lit
process for so long;
For who would bear the whips and
scorns of lit involvement,
The endless workshops, the riotous
open forums,
The review and input of "It Works,"

and it's ongoing delay,
The slow pace of line-by-line and the
ungrammatical result,
Who would bear this when he him-
self might make it all quiet
With a staff-team writer? Who would
choose to write
To review and input and sweat to
complete a draft,
But that the dread of literature writ-
ten by a professional,
That undiscovered country of one
person's experience,
From which all group drafts return
sounding the same,
This makes us rather bear those liter-
ature ills we have
Rather than fly to others that we
know not of.
Thus group conscience does make
cowards of us all;
And thus the style and tone of the
literature we have
Is threatened with the possibility of
professional writers,
And the WLC schemes of great and
noble promise,
Are compared to what we already
have,
And the lit process loses the name
of action.
Soft you now! The World Service
Conference approaches—

The broad perspective

September JAC

Participants in the September 15 meeting of the Joint Administrative Committee in Van Nuys, Ca., heard preliminary proposals for the establishment of a "Budget Review and Utilization Committee" that may be established to oversee a unified budget for Narcotics Anonymous world services. If accepted, such a process would combine the budgets of the WSO, Inc. and that of the WSC.

The assembly passed a motion accepting the "direction of the current work on the draft entitled *Budget Review and Utilization Committee*."

Among several major items of business brought to the floor of this JAC was a proposed format for the 1991 WSC that will seek to ease some of the parliamentary loggerheads that have occurred in the past. Though the format has not been finally accepted it appeared the JAC was in concert about a plan to open the conference with an "International Forum."

The proposed 1991 WSC agenda is designed to offer an alternative to the "new motion" process that has hampered the disposition of business of

the conference in years past. To provide hearings for issues that have sometimes seemed to require the introduction of a "new motion" (motions that have not been heard or moved through committees) this year's conference will likely see the establishment of a series of panels immediately preceding the "old business" of the fellowship's boards and committees.

Printing rights described

The JAC, which is comprised of the chairpersons, vice-chairs and treasurer of the world service boards and committees, acknowledged the need and agreed to the release of a paper detailing conference approval for the publication and copyright process by which N.A. literature may be produced. The paper is a thumbnail sketch of conference actions to safeguard the integrity of the N.A.'s written material. The paper, (apparently released now to answer uninformed membership queries after some recent illegal printing) was slated for delivery to RSCs and their representatives by October 1st.

New Viewpoint needed?

At its Sunday, September 16, session the JAC elected to refrain from supporting the idea of a new, regularly produced, publication.

The suggestion considered was the establishment of a periodical for the expression of divergent opinions and ideas, mainly from RSCs. Upon hearing from the editor that the *Viewpoint* section of the *N.A. Way* is open for such expression, "short of lies or a lot

of cussing," the assembly tabled the plan.

The desire for easy and wide distribution of diverse ideas, opinions and concerns has been repeatedly voiced in forums and conferences throughout the fellowship, but few people (or RSCs!) have actually gone to the trouble to write to the *N.A. Way*.

Discussions in recent months, as well as those in this JAC, indicate some confusion about the editorial policies of the magazine. One committee chairperson said he'd understood that the magazine would not print letters concerning issues that were being debated as part of board and committee activity or that elaborated opinions on motions before conferences.

Others have shared their impression minority or unpopular views might be rejected simply because they could be inflammatory

That is not the case.

The principle of the old cliché about freedom of speech, to wit: "No one has the right to falsely shout *fire!* in a crowded theater," is usually respected by the review process participants; but the process does allow for getting the word out if there really is a fire.

Choices to print, reject or confer with writers are now made solely by participants in the review process. The participants in that process are elected and chosen by conference-established procedures designed to insure representation for ideas and opinions from any quarter, provided those ideas or opinions relate to the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship.

The review process allows a piece that is simply malicious or repetitive

venting about the same respect as a home group generally gives an angry member. Anything goes, unless it threatens our common welfare.

Of course, not everything sent in is appropriate for the magazine. We regularly get offerings from religious groups, backers of particular therapeutic approaches, community organizations or members of other fellowships with some angle they'd like widely distributed; as well as pieces from members of Narcotics Anonymous who wish to use the Fellowship magazine to verbally lash out at group conscience decisions or for especially narrow designs.

Our common designs get first dibs on the available page-space; but the review people, the *N.A. Way* staff and the vast majority of those who have recently spoken from seats on the Fellowship's boards and committees actively support the use of the magazine's *Viewpoint* and *From Our Readers* sections as a sounding board for N.A. diversity. Keep those cards and letters comin!

N.A. Way cover text

After months of consideration the editor, with the unanimous support of the *N.A. Way Magazine* editorial board and review panel, amends the standard back "cover text" to conform with conference-approved documents. While the paraphrasing of the text was never presented as conference-approved, several *Viewpoint* letters in past months have reasonably pointed to the potential for such an assumption. Here's thanks for noticing, and writing.

Comin' up



LET US KNOW!

We'll be happy to announce your up-coming events. Just let us know at least three months in advance. Include dates, event name and location, N.A. office or phoneline number, and a post office box. (Sorry, but we can't print personal phone numbers or addresses.)

The **N.A. Way**
MAGAZINE

P.O. Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA 91409.
(818) 780-3951.

CALIFORNIA: Nov. 18, 1990; 3rd Annual, Knotts Berry Farm; Eastern Counties ASC, c/o Knotts Berry Farm, P.O. Box 5861, Whittier, CA 90607

FLORIDA: Nov. 15-18, 1990; Serenity In The Sun IX; Hilton Hotel, 150 Australian Avenue, West Palm Beach, FL; rsvn.s (800) 445-8667; Recovery Weekend, 931 Village Boulevard, Suite 907-155, W. Palm Beach, FL 33409

HAWAII: Feb. 22-24, 1991; 7th Annual Oahu Gathering of the Fellowship; Camp Mokuleia, North Shore, Island of Oahu; helpline (808) 734-4357; Oahu Gathering Committee, P.O. Box 89636, Honolulu, HI 9630-9636

IRELAND: Nov. 9-11, 1990; "New Frontiers", Sixth Irish Convention of N.A.; Actons Hotel, Kinsale, County Cork; Call Actons Hotel at (021) 772135; IRCNA, P.O. Box 1368, Sherriff Street, Dublin 1, Ireland

MICHIGAN: Nov. 24-25, 1990; 1st Unity Weekend; Lansing Clarion Hotel, Lansing, MI; rsvn.s (517) 694-8123

OHIO: Dec. 28-31, 1990; 2nd Central Ohio Area Convention; Radisson Hotel and Conference Center, Airport, Columbus, Ohio; rsvn.s (614) 475-7551; COACNA, P.O. Box 14272, Columbus, OH 43214

2) Dec. 31, 1990; Central Ohio Annual New Years Eve Celebration; Ohio State Fairgrounds, Rhodes Center, 17th Columbus Avenue; COACNA, P.O. Box 14272, Columbus, OH 43214

OKLAHOMA: Jan. 18-20, 1991; 1st Annual Norman Winter Convention; Holiday Inn, 2600 West Main Street, Norman, OK 73069; Hotel (405) 329-1624; , P.O. Box 2653, Norman, OK 73070

PENNSYLVANIA: Nov. 9-11, 1990; Tri-State Regional Convention; Start to live VIII; rsvn.s (412) 391-4600, (800) Hiltons; TSRSO Inc., P.O. Box 110217, Pittsburgh, PA 15232

2) Nov. 23-25, 1990; Beehive Area Thanksgiving Convention; Sheraton Crossgates Hotel; rsvns. (717) 824-7100; phoneline (717) 283-0828; send speaker tapes; Beehive ASC, P.O. Box 291, Wilkes Barre, PA 18703

3) Nov. 23-25, 1990; Spiritual Foundation Mini Convention, Philadelphia Inner City ASC; Holiday Inn, 18th and Market Streets, Philly. info at Box 7333, Philadelphia 19101; , P.O. Box 2342, Philadelphia, PA 19103

SOUTH CAROLINA: Nov. 15-18, 1990; Serenity Festival VIII; Landmark Best Western Resort Hotel, 1501 South Ocean Boulevard, Myrtle Beach, SC; rsvn.s (803) 448-9441 or (800) 845-0658; Serenity Festival, Inc., P.O. Box 1198, Myrtle Beach, SC 29577

2) Jan. 25-27, 1991; USCANA, 11th Annual Convention; Hyatt Regency Hotel, Greenville, SC; rsvn.s 1 (800) 228-9000, info 1 (803) 282-0109; Convention Information, P.O. Box 2233, Greer, SC 29652

3) Feb. 15-17, 1991; 3rd Annual Area Convention; Westin Oceanfront Resort Hotel, Hilton Head Island, SC; info 1 (803) 861-9595; Just For Today III, P.O. Box 22155, Hilton Head Island, SC 29925

TENNESSEE: Nov. 21-25, 1990; 8th Volunteer Regional Convention; Hyatt Regency Hotel, 623 Union Street, Nashville, TN 37219; rsvn.s 1 (800) 233-1234; VRC VIII, P.O. Box 121961, Nashville, TN 37212

UTAH: Nov. 9-11, 1990; Western States P.I. Learning Day hosted by the Utah Region; Olympus Hotel and Conference Center, Salt Lake City; Information 1 (800) 355-7828

VERMONT: Nov. 9-11, 1990; Champlain Valley Area Convention; Ramada Inn, South Burlington; rsvn.s (800)-2-RAMADA or (802) 658-0250; CVACC, P.O. Box 64714, Burlington, VT 05406

WASHINGTON: Nov. 16-18, 1990; Seattle Area Men's Retreat; Camp Casey Conference Center on Whidbey Island; Men's Retreat, 5833 7th NW, Seattle, WA 98107

We need stories!

Remember, the meeting in print section of *The N.A. Way Magazine* is your section. Like any other meeting you're a part of, you'll get the most out of this one by participating.

Who writes stories?

You do!

The stories you see in this magazine are written by N.A. members—like you! You don't need to be a "great writer." All you need is your personal experience in recovery, and the willingness to share it. Without it, we don't have a message to carry. In every sense, that's *The N.A. Way*.

What do I write?

Share as you would at any other meeting. Is there a topic you've enjoyed hearing or sharing about at a recent meeting? Are you on a particular step, and having some eye-opening experiences? Has there been a recent turning point in your personal recovery? Share it with your fellow N.A. Way readers. We'd love to hear from you! Write us at:

The N.A. Way Magazine
P.O. Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA 91409 U.S.A.

N.A. Way

M A G A Z I N E

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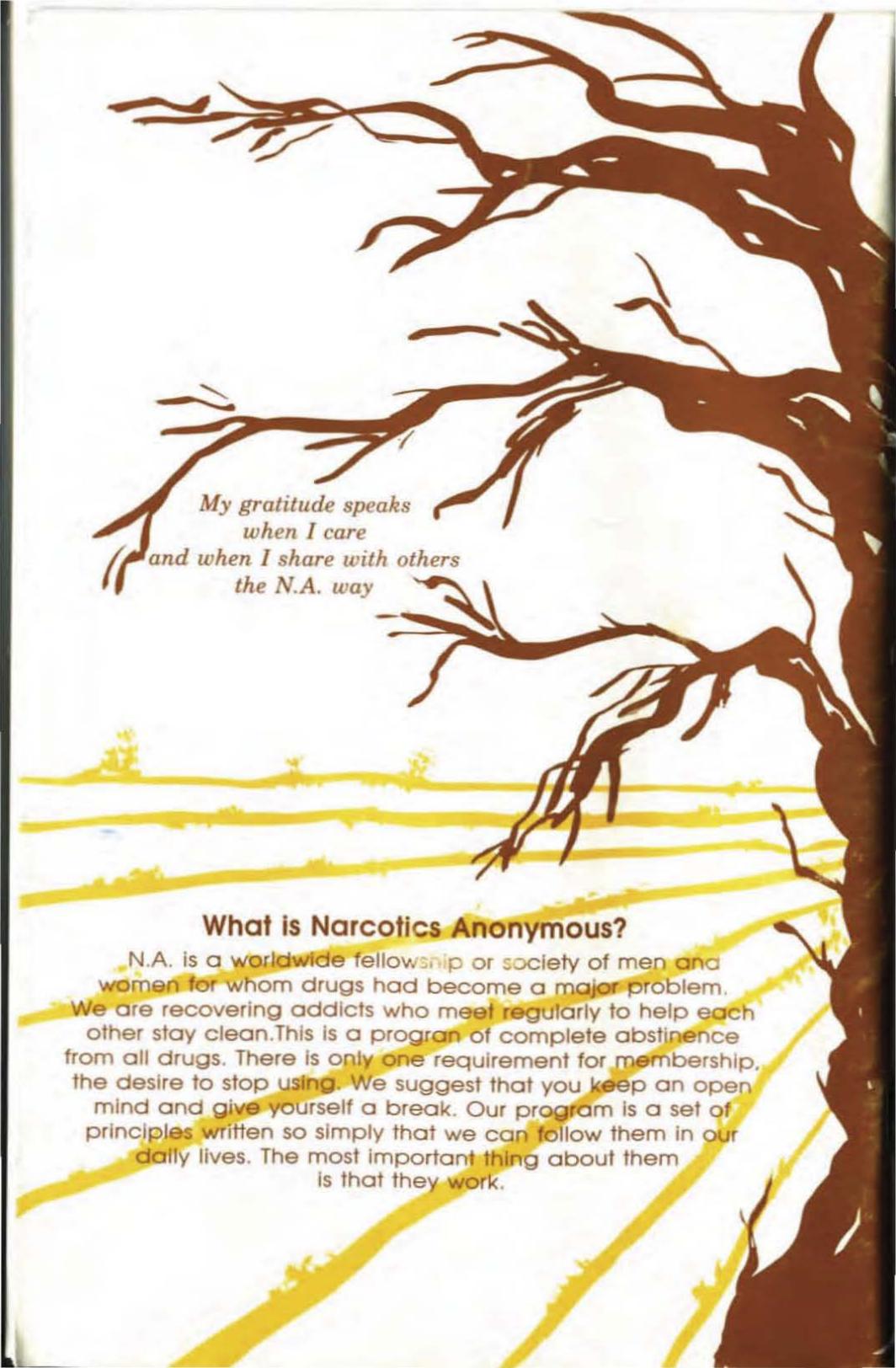
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issue to arrive.**

3TEA

The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous

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

Twelve Traditions reprinted for adaptation by permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.



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

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 stay clean. This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only one requirement for membership, the desire to stop using. We suggest that you keep an open mind and give yourself a break. Our program is a set of principles written so simply that we can follow them in our daily lives. The most important thing about them is that they work.