

THE
NAMay[®]
MAGAZINE

December 1993

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

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Definitions
are subject to
revision, too!



Recovering from the disease of addiction is the foundation of my life. All too often I see recovery sadly mistaken for life itself. For me the program of Narcotics Anonymous has given me the ability to venture forth and live a full life outside of meetings, provided I put the program first. I got clean at a young age, and now have a little better than three years clean. I have developed my once-nonexistent self-esteem to a point where today I am really starting to believe in my ability to live life to its fullest. There is no success that is beyond my reach today. However, as an addict, I have a difficult time understanding what true success actually is. I have an even more difficult time understanding how to maintain a balance between the humility required to seek God's will for me and the freedom to dream my dreams. In searching for this balance, I have found it necessary to alter my definition of words like "success" and "happiness."

Happiness is one of the most elusive and vague goals I have for my life. Sometimes I create formulas for happiness such as money + a relationship + friends and God = happiness but, as I get closer to attaining any or all of the ingredients of this recipe, I tend to feel miserable because I am faced with constant fear of the pain that would come if I were to lose them. On the other hand, I think people who claim to develop spirituality to the point of transcending such desires are, in fact, subtly disguising their fears of failure as spirituality. I see it a lot in the program where if a person begins to get out and start living life and starts to develop financial ambitions, or gets into a relationship, that person is shamed for his or her lack of spirituality by members of the fellowship who are paralyzed by fear from achieving such ambitions. It is my belief that to hide out in meetings and turn my back on my dreams and



ambitions is to turn my back on God and the miracle of life he has given me. Life is a precious gift, and I show my gratitude to God by living it to its fullest. The majority of the spiritual lessons I have learned in meetings and literature were useless until I got out in the world and applied them to every area of my life. Until applied, they were just abstract pieces of knowledge.

So far, based on my experiences, I believe that God wants me to dream huge dreams. God wants me to want things, and God wants me to get out there and work for the things I want. I believe to the core of my soul that it is one-hundred-percent spiritual to want a family, financial security, and maybe even a page or two in the history books. I am convinced that I can have dreams about accomplishing great things in this lifetime and still be spiritual, but not by the definition of happiness I had when I walked into the doors of Narcotics

Anonymous. I have spent a great deal of time reflecting on the nature of the state of happiness. Many times I think that attaining the material dimension of my dreams is happiness, only to remember that the more I try to own material things, the more I am imprisoned by the fear of losing them. This leads me to a question: If I am not to own them, or if I am to never have security that I get to keep them, what is the use of striving toward them? What is the use of a relationship (of any kind) if I never get to feel secure that the investment of time and emotional energy will keep it alive? Security seems to be the key to happiness, and striving toward my dreams seems to be part of the procedure, but I have also learned that there is no human security; that is, I will never be able to totally rely on anything or anybody in the physical universe. Even the laws of science and nature are broken from time to time. In fact, the only place I

can find security is in the part of God that resides in the abstract of my own character.

From this perspective I am beginning to see that, yes, reaching for the things I dream about is God's will for me. A combination of some of my dreams coming true, only to lose what I worked so hard to get, is part of God's will for me. Overcoming the fears of failure, and taking the risk of being ambitious is God's will for me. God's will for me is to develop my character through the contrasts of living life through the pursuit of my dreams. The challenge of recovery is to focus on the growth that comes

perspective I can accept the things of the material world as being exactly as they should be to serve a higher purpose. From this I gain serenity. From focusing on the lesson rather than the tool used to teach the lesson I gain security in a strength of character that cannot be taken away from me. This combination of serenity and security is beginning to develop a true happiness in this once-hopeless addict's life. I am able to enjoy God's gifts without them being poisoned by my need to hold on to them. I can truly relax and enjoy today when I remember that I have the strength of character and emotional stability that

to turn my back on my dreams and ambitions is to turn my back on God

from the experience of trying, not from the experience of gaining ownership of what I wish to possess. In my relationships, I try to focus on the growth I receive from the interaction and additional perspective a relationship brings rather than whether or not the other person will be there tomorrow. If I let the myth of ownership divert my attention from the lesson God has intended, then I have missed the entire point, and will get stuck on that lesson until I learn. From this

ensure my success tomorrow regardless of the changes in my life. A combination of faith in God and in myself gives me something that I can hold onto, and frees my spirit to give honor to God's beautiful creation: Me!

MA, Oregon

A moment of silence

Hello, my name is Lisa, and I am an addict.

I would like to share with you how silence has changed in my life.

I can remember in my early recovery when my group would stand in a circle having a moment of silence for the still-suffering addict, followed by the Serenity Prayer.

I would stand in the circle with my eyes opened, recite words that I didn't yet understand, and look at everyone else standing in the circle.

I would look at what they were wearing, and note how cute they were, especially if they were male. I would then take a look at myself and feel that I didn't belong because I didn't have nice clothes and I was overweight (and still am). I also thought that I was stupid because I didn't yet have a lot of knowledge about the Twelve Steps.

One night, a few months into my recovery, I was hurting. I felt scared, but I was clean and at a meeting. When we opened our meeting with a moment of silence followed by the Serenity Prayer, I closed my eyes.

With my eyes shut, I quietly listened to the words. They filled me

with a calmness. I had experienced unity for the first time: unity with God, others, and myself. It was a really beautiful feeling.

Like an addict, I wanted more—much more—of this good feeling, so at the next meeting I did it again—I shut my eyes. I didn't get the same effect, but what I did feel was similar: peace, serenity, and love.

As time went on, I still kept my eyes closed during the moment of silence. I began to use this brief moment to converse with my Higher Power, whom I choose to call God, a God of my understanding. Sometimes I would thank God for getting me to another meeting clean, and giving me another day of recovery. Gradually, I started to add things such as, "God, thank you for letting this group of people stand together in this circle. Thank you for the newcomers. Thank you for the people who keep the door open and the coffee made."

During a meeting the moment of silence is the only time I can stand quietly in a room full of addicts.

About six years into my recovery, I came face to face with the reason I had a hard time with silence.

When I was a child there always was noise. There were many children in my family, and usually there were cousins around. All of us kids would be playing. There were sounds of laughter. We would be playing ball, tag, dolls, house, or telling stories. I remember this as a good feeling, a normal feeling.

At night we would go to bed and fall asleep, dreaming of the day's events. Unfortunately, there were many times we were woken up by the

awful sound of my parents fighting. At times things were broken, thrown, or smashed. Doors would be slammed shut, blocking any light into our rooms. In the darkness we would hear desperate crying from our mother, and that dreaded moment of silence.

By the time the moment had come, my sister, with whom I slept, would cuddle up next to me and cover my ears; she would say absolutely nothing.

I was filled with fear for my mother and her life. I would want to go back to sleep and try to dream of nice things, mainly to forget the silence. I would wonder, when it was time to wake up would mom be okay? Would she be alive?

After one of these awful arguments, my mother, my baby brother, and I went out of state to visit my aunt and her family. One day I was sexually abused. There were no adults around at the moment. I ran down the stairs into the kitchen, screaming for help, scared of what was happening. The chairs were set around the table, coffee cups and plates were still on the table from lunch. The front door was open, letting fresh air come into the house. I could feel my heart racing, my eyes searching for someone. I looked hard but no one was there. I was scared into being silent.

Shortly after that I started to get sick to my stomach. I suddenly got a high fever and when my mother returned, I was white. My mother asked me what was wrong; I just looked at her and said I wasn't feeling well. They took me to a doctor that night. They couldn't find any-

thing wrong, but gave me something to relax.

That moment of needing someone there was filled with silence—a silence that had consumed me. It was a moment that I had tried many years to forget.

Growing up in silence was a painful thing. I learned to be silent—a silent, scared little girl, who didn't know what to do or say. During the intervening years there were other times when no one was there to help, and things happened to me, things that have been really hard to face, to open up about, share about, and to forgive.

Since I have been in recovery, and have gotten to know myself, I have opened up the door to those memories, screamed, and someone has heard me. I have gotten the help I needed.

Several counselors have told me they were not surprised that I was a mother at the age of fourteen. But most of the monsters are gone. I have also gotten some education, and have told my story.

However, I still have a very hard time when there is silence, especially during a meeting of NA. Addicts in my home group know that I have a really hard time with silence. They have been real helpful with saying something before too much silence has taken place. Some have even started to hum when we have that long silence during a meeting. I have also started to count or say the alphabet in silence, thanks to a suggestion from a sponsee. I can now make it a little longer during the silence in a meeting. At times I still feel that silence is another addict trying to



scream for help. I want them to know we are listening.

Yet the moment of silence before the Serenity Prayer is a good silence, a time I share with God. I now also ask God to show a hurting addict the way to a meeting. Over the years I have met many newcomers who still return. I thank God for each and every one of them.

About three years ago, we started to close our meeting with a moment of silence for the addict who will die that night followed by the Gratitude

Prayer. During this moment of silence I ask God to take the addicts who will die, to hug them, to tell them they are loved, and that they may have paved the way for another addict to seek recovery.

I recently celebrated ten years of recovering from addiction to mood-altering chemicals. I go to at least two meetings a week. I still see newcomers. I am also learning how to change the silence within.

LS, Minnesota

Exact nature

It is said that water seeks its own level. This saying seems to apply well to recovering addicts. It's real easy for me to find both what I need and don't need.

This observation occurred to me while waiting for the Sunday spiritual speaker at the Eleventh Virginia Convention. For the past four years, I've come to Virginia for the convention every January. Again, as in the past, I'm leaving here a better man. I'm going home today with an expanded consciousness, an awareness, and an improved contact with my Higher Power and gratitude for his involvement and direction in my life. There were about a dozen of us who came to this convention, all seeking different awarenesses. Some sought their awareness through immediate gratification, while others were on a mission to be awakened spiritually. My decision was not to try to control the experience, but to simply "go with the flow."

In past years I have come to Virginia with a particular issue or problem that I needed to work on, but my recovery has brought me to a point where I know that I have no control over what is going to be put in front of me anyway. In the Northeast we recently were shown just how truly powerless we are over nature. Storms and floods came through and caused

millions of dollars worth of damage and major devastation. This showed us that we cannot control or change nature. Only God can control nature. Likewise, only God can remove the flaws or defects in our personal nature.

So this year I arrived in Virginia without any preconceived notion of what I was going to work on. I remained open for suggestions, open for my Higher Power to do with me as he pleased.

I don't know why, but this convention didn't feel right. I was all psyched up for a few days before coming down and even on the way down, but when I got here it seemed like a big let-down. It wasn't the convention. People were friendly, there were lots of hugs exchanged, and I had the opportunity to fellowship with friends I've made over the past few years. So I spent some time with my sponsor,

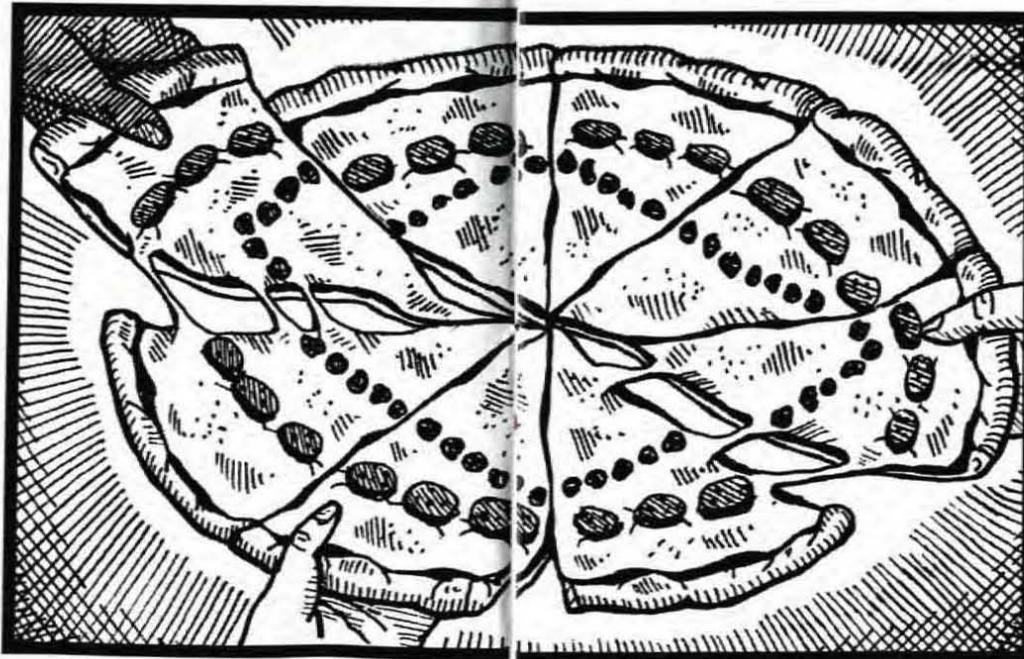
which usually makes me feel better. It did help to a certain extent, but something still didn't feel right; something was missing. I went to some step meetings and a few workshops, and spent some time one-on-one with people. I even got a tattoo, but something still was missing.

After the banquet a bunch of us were hanging out in the hotel lobby and one of the guys who was with us was approached by an addict with nine days clean and visibly having a hard time. Well, this friend of mine spoke with him for about thirty minutes and then called for reinforcements. My sponsor (a fairly long-winded gentleman) spent over an hour speaking with this young man. The rest of us went about the usual convention late-night activities: trying to find coffee; a place that would deliver pizza; and a place where six guitars, a bongo drum, two harmoni-

cas, and a flute could jam while we tried to sing Grateful Dead songs out of key with what little voice we had left after forty-five minutes of screaming "Keep coming back" at the banquet. Well, the hotel manager took care of a conference room for the musicians to meet and also supplied coffee. One of us found a pizza parlor that would deliver at 1:30 a.m. I've noticed that, in my recovery, spiritual awakenings seem to be mozzarella-induced.

So my sidekick and I were indulging in immediate gratification with sausage, and this young man with nine days clean came over to us again with that look of overwhelming despair and confusion. We shared with each other what we were feeling and I shared with him my views and feelings about recovery. As I shared my feelings with this young man, I cried when I reflected on the pain that I went through and the pain I caused to those around me. We cried together and gave each other one of those hugs that can only come from the soul. I shared my experience, strength, and hope with this young man and I urged him not to leave, but to stay here and work through this.

In Narcotics Anonymous we have to stay here if we want to reap the benefits that this program has to offer. I don't like to tell people, "Keep coming back." My friends will tell you I always tell people, "Don't go nowhere." I was grateful that I was able to help this young man for, in him, I saw the years of youth that I had lost to my addiction. I hope I convinced him not to throw away his recovery and his youth. I lost more than half of my life caught up in



active addiction; I pray that he doesn't follow in my footsteps.

In the midst of the normal hoopla that goes on at a convention, he went his way and I didn't see him again.

As I walked to my room I knew that God had directed me and given me the opportunity to do his work one more time; I knew what this weekend was all about. I was at peace with myself, my Higher Power, and my fellow men.

The theme of last year's Virginia convention was "The Promise is Freedom—The Message is Hope." For me, the by-product of that hope and freedom is gratitude. Lately I've taken many things for granted in my life. I have my Higher Power and a fellowship of people who love me in spite of myself. I have a wife and two healthy sons, a beautiful home, food on the table, and clothes on my back. Now I know what my sponsor meant when he used to tell me to write a gratitude list and start with oxygen. But the greatest gift I have is me.

I didn't have to find God. I had to find me. God was with me all along. Once I got with God, there I was. For this, I am truly grateful. I owe a debt of gratitude to Narcotics Anonymous for getting me to God and to God for giving me myself back. I also owe a debt of gratitude to those recovering addicts who were here before me to love me when I got here. If you weren't here when I was ready, I wouldn't have had anywhere to go.

By the way, the topic of this morning's reading in the "Just for Today" book is gratitude. Coincidence?

FP, New Jersey

What is a sponsor?

A sponsor is:

The one person we can go to with all of our problems and not be told how to fix them.

The person we go to when the world is falling apart and we need to be reminded that this, too, shall pass.

The person we can cry in front of and who will remind us that we are better off than we used to be because of our recovery.

The guide that we place on a pedestal only to be reminded that he or she, too, is human and subject to human frailties.

Someone who knows when to talk and when to listen with a tolerant ear.

Someone who is willing to love us when we are not willing or even able to love ourselves.

Often the first real friend we find in our lives.

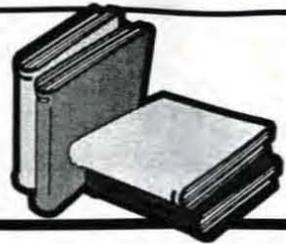
TT, Florida

Home Group

"You and your jack"



NA history



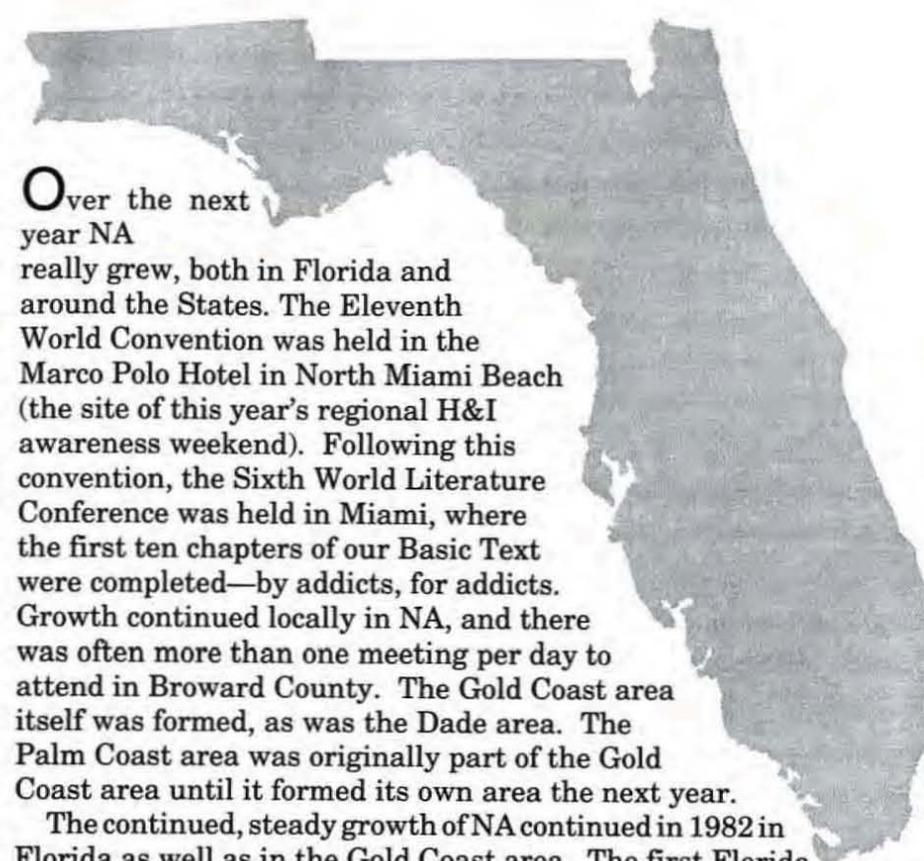
The early years in Broward County, Florida

Every year we celebrate the anniversary of Narcotics Anonymous in Broward County. From its humble beginnings—a single meeting in a storefront mission in Ft. Lauderdale in July 1978—NA in Broward County has grown into three separate areas. The Gold Coast Area alone has fifty-three groups holding sixty-seven meetings per week. Additionally, the hospitals and institutions subcommittee brings another sixty-four meetings per week to addicts un-

able to get to outside meetings.

At first, NA's growth in Broward County was slow. There were only four Narcotics Anonymous pamphlets and the original White Book for literature. It was only in June of 1979 that there was a second Narcotics Anonymous group meeting held in Broward County. Following the Ninth World Convention of Narcotics Anonymous held in Atlanta, Georgia, the South Florida Area Service Committee was formed. In the beginning there were only two groups in Ft. Lauderdale and three from Miami in this area but, a short time later, two groups from Palm Beach County joined.

In 1980, we began to see steady growth. We started a helpline service (then called the hotline), the first H&I meeting was started, and we sent a representative to the World Service Conference. Narcotics Anonymous was still a fledgling fellowship at that time; there were only nineteen states represented at the World Service Conference. In Florida, we had nineteen meetings by the end of 1980: six were H&I meetings, and one was held in Pensacola.



Over the next year NA really grew, both in Florida and around the States. The Eleventh World Convention was held in the Marco Polo Hotel in North Miami Beach (the site of this year's regional H&I awareness weekend). Following this convention, the Sixth World Literature Conference was held in Miami, where the first ten chapters of our Basic Text were completed—by addicts, for addicts. Growth continued locally in NA, and there was often more than one meeting per day to attend in Broward County. The Gold Coast area itself was formed, as was the Dade area. The Palm Coast area was originally part of the Gold Coast area until it formed its own area the next year.

The continued, steady growth of NA continued in 1982 in Florida as well as in the Gold Coast area. The first Florida Regional Convention was held in 1982 and the Gold Coast area had grown to twenty-five meetings.

It was in 1983 that we held our first celebration of the anniversary of Narcotics Anonymous in Broward County—our five-year anniversary. More than three hundred addicts attended this function. Following the publication of our Basic Text in 1983, NA truly began to blossom into the worldwide fellowship we know today. It has been amazing to see the growth and to be a part of NA in the Gold Coast Area. The fact that we have thrived so over the years encourages me to keep on staying clean, to help carry the message and to support Narcotics Anonymous. We do recover.

Reprinted from The Bottom Line, the Gold Coast, Florida area newsletter.

Today a worldwide fellowship

●NA members observe World Unity Day and celebrate our fortieth anniversary in the Windy City

Imagine—you're a recovering addict who lives in Montevideo, Uruguay. There are only three NA meetings a week within seventy-five miles of your house. You look forward to every meeting, profoundly grateful that NA is growing in your country. Late one night, your phone rings. You answer, your voice cracking with anticipation. On the other end of the phone are approximately 10,000 recovering addicts, calling so that you may join in saying the Serenity Prayer at NA's world convention in Chicago, Illinois, USA.

A wonderful dream? Not at all. For addicts in Sweden, Australia, Panama, Uruguay, and Peru that's exactly what happened this past September during WCNA-23.

The telephone connection was an idea that came from members of the World Service Conference Administrative Committee in an effort to do

something special for World Unity Day. World Unity Day is an annual event called for in a 1992 motion passed by the World Service Conference.

Though the motion itself only asked "that the WSC coordinate a world unity day," it was decided that, in order to make the event something more than a symbolic nod at international development, some formal plans would need to be nailed down to actually commemorate the day. It was decided that World Unity Day would be celebrated during the world convention each year on Saturday immediately before the main meeting.

Because, this year, World Unity Day coincided with our fortieth birthday celebration, the World Convention Corporation allowed Mitchell S, WSC chairperson, Michael McD, WSC vice chairperson, and Becky M, trustee, to make a presentation that combined the two events.

The celebration began with Mitchell explaining what the celebration would entail and establishing phone connections with the participating countries.

Michael then gave a brief history of NA, concluding his presentation by sharing how much NA has

grown in forty years, evidenced by our twenty thousand meetings worldwide and our ongoing translation efforts.

As Michael talked about translation projects in progress, NA members from each of the eighteen countries represented at the world convention were preparing themselves for their part in the celebration. Each one came up to the microphone, introduced him or herself, and said, "happy birthday, NA" in his or her native language.

"Everyone was just pumped up," said Michael, describing what it was like to be on the podium watching everyone in the meeting. Mitchell agreed, describing the atmosphere as having "an amazing amount of power."

At this point, the lights were dimmed and the room became quiet. Everyone listened as Becky began the Serenity Prayer with the traditional "God..." The response, "Grant me the serenity..." from ten thousand addicts actually present at the meeting and those listening by phone from all over the world was described as both "solemn and wonderful."

Evidently, there were a few technical glitches at various points but, all in all, things worked out well.

Australia, one of the countries participating by telephone, had a local celebration hosted by the Sydney North Area in a community hall with about two hundred addicts present. "It's a very small area," said Garth P, a trustee who lives in Australia. Noting the broadened perspective gained by those attending Australia's

celebration, he added, "There were people who were blown out by the fact that there were thousands of people on the other end of the phone."

Conference leadership has already begun planning for next year's World Unity Day celebration at the world convention in Baltimore. They expect details to be available before WSC'94 so that any questions can be answered at the conference.

"I think [World Unity Day] will grow in international participation every year," said Becky, expressing hope for future celebrations of our worldwide fellowship.

As a matter of fact, everyone seems to be looking forward with anticipation. Garth summed it up by quipping, "All we're waiting for now is a hook-up by television satellite."



Newsletters



With my own kind

From *Common Bond*, the Ohio regional newsletter: *I ended up in jail after a three-year relapse that my Higher Power decided I should survive. I wrote my first honest First Step, which I shared with my father, who is also in recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. I would like to share the love I received back with all of you.*

Dear Son,

I can't begin to put into words the feelings I experienced when your mother and I read your letter. This is what we have been waiting and praying for these last three, long years.

I have missed you so much. I think of you and your brothers every day and try to imagine what life would be like if we didn't have this deadly disease between us.

All the feelings and insight you shared with me in your letter are exactly what came to me when I was in treatment. I felt like I was warmed over when I realized for the first time what I had done to the rest of our family. It devastated me, son. I was

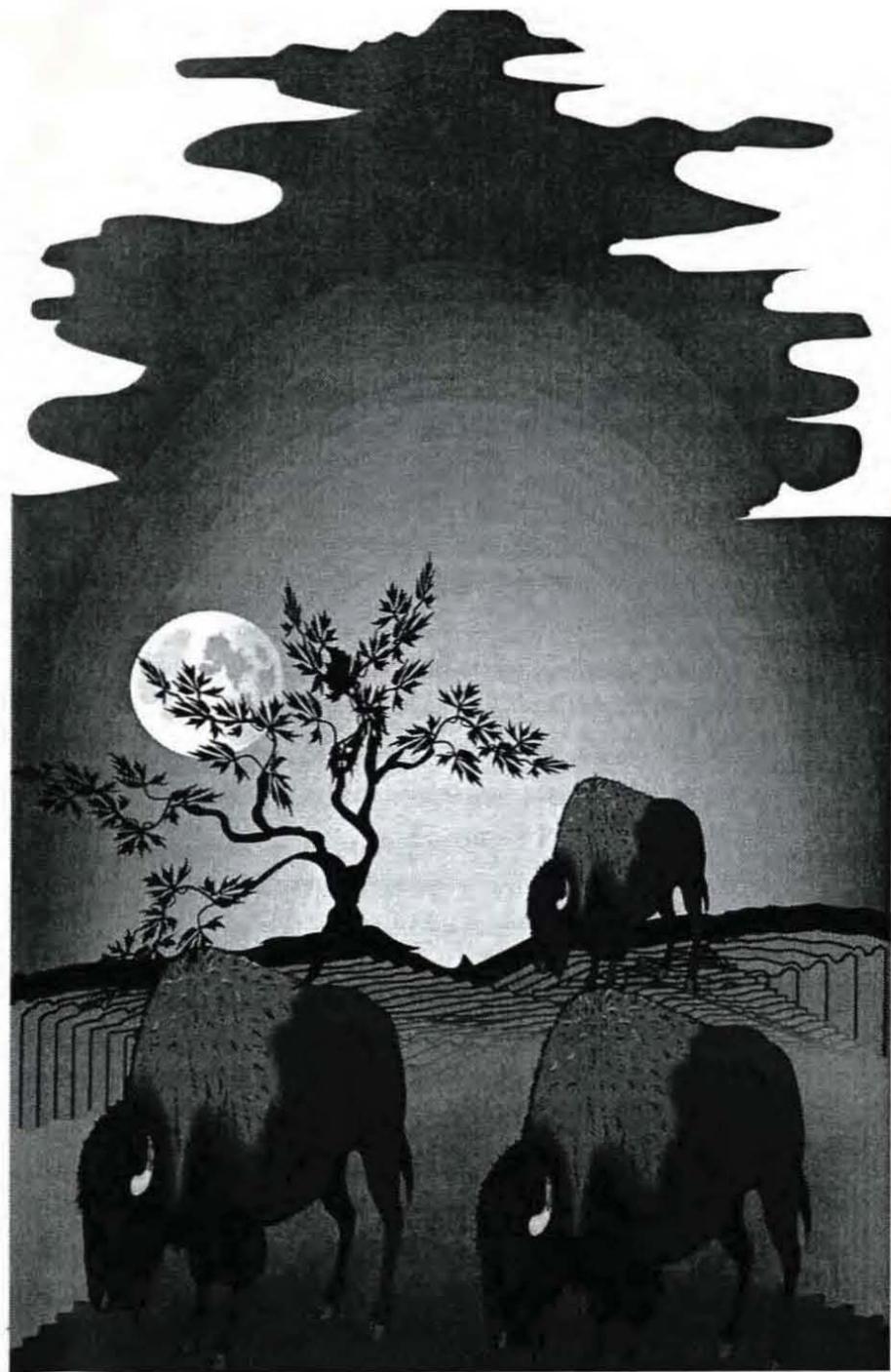
so ashamed of myself. I made a decision at that time to go to any lengths to repair the damage I had done—not only to myself, but to my family.

Admitting to myself that I was an addict, and that the symptoms of the disease had destroyed all that was precious to me, was a difficult step for me to take, but it was something that had to be done if I ever wanted to be happy again.

It was also just as difficult to put space between myself and practicing addicts, for it meant isolating myself from you, your brother, and many drug-using acquaintances which made up my little insane world. Sometimes, I nearly went crazy because no one could understand where I was coming from or how much I was hurting.

I turned to my Higher Power at that most troubling time and it was revealed to me that it was my time to live the message of recovery and that other people who didn't understand no longer had the power to keep me from my sacred duty. I had made a decision to return to "my father's house" of love, discipline, and self-respect.

I once shared with you the vision I had while in treatment and I'm sure you have not forgotten it. It was in that vision that my Higher Power directed me to live from that day



forward with my own kind. That was the message that I saw in my being a buffalo. I was lying down in a beautiful, high mountain meadow with hundreds of other buffaloes around me and we were all at peace with ourselves and each other. There was no fear; we were content.

I didn't understand that message until I went to my first NA meeting and I realized that, for the first time, I was with my own kind. After all those years of loneliness and self-made isolation, I have found my home. It is with great pride and joy in my heart that I welcome you home, son.

Your mother and I desperately need you and your brothers, living clean, to make our lives complete. I have experienced great joy and happiness in my journey of recovery, but there is this terrible, painful void in my spirit that only my sons can fill. I know and accept that the path I have chosen to travel was a difficult thing for other people to understand, but to be the father and husband my family needed and deserved, it needed to be done. It was very clear to me that the way to repair the damage I had done and make the amends that needed to be made would take more than saying "I'm sorry" every twenty minutes. I had to live it. My Higher Power had directed me.

I promise you, son, on my father's spirit, that I will always be here for you. Not only as a father to guide, love, and support you, but also as your brother in recovery. To share the gifts of a new, joyous, and free way of life together. We will never have to stand at the end of the road, lost and defeated, as long as we stay

on the sacred path of spiritual principles. I have found that it is in NA that my Higher Power leads us once more to live in harmony with ourselves.

Welcome home son, I love you so much.

Anonymous

Trash or treasure?

From *Sanity*, the New Jersey regional newsletter: When I came to NA, I had low self-esteem. I felt so ashamed, guilty, and dirty. I never thought of a drug addict as anything but a piece of dung, so how else could I view myself when, in desperation, I had to admit that I'm an addict?

Could I really expect to have any self-respect, self-esteem, or self-worth? Of course not. My disease had robbed me of those long before I heard of NA. I felt quite uncomfortable but I kept coming. I came to meetings because the fear of not coming was greater. After all, the worst that could happen at a meeting was much better than anything in my addiction. Except for the first hit off my pipe, my active addiction was nothing but fear and pain. I knew I needed to stop using. It took a long time and lots of insanity running wild in my life to bring me to the point where I was willing to change. Surrendering to my disease, the program, and my Higher Power were essential to my recovery. By daily

recognition of a Power greater than myself, I am able to obtain strength to overcome my obsession to use. I still think about picking up, but today I have a choice. By the grace of God I can choose not to use. My disease is not cured, only in remission. If I so desire, I can have it back any time. I surrender daily so that I can change and keep my freedom of choice.

As I began to recover, I became more aware of my thoughts and feelings. I noticed my behavior was unexplainable in some situations, that is, unless one understands how people can act when suffering with low self-esteem, guilt, and shame.

I was self-destructive, depressed, and arrogant. I felt so bad about myself that I was unable to accept a compliment or encouragement. I could not open up to the fellowship for fear of rejection. I felt like the refuse littering the stands after a football game—trash, if you will. My disease fostered these thoughts and feelings; it wants me to isolate and die. My disease, or Lower Power, wants me to believe that I'm trash when my Higher Power is transforming me into "His" treasure.

As my Higher Power began cleaning me up from the contamination of the sewer from which He plucked me, my Lower Power saw fit to engage me in psychological warfare. My disease wanted me dead. It still wants me dead, any way possible, but if it can get me to do it myself, so much the better.

The only way to effectively fight my disease on a daily basis is with strength obtained from my Higher Power. My Higher Power will cer-

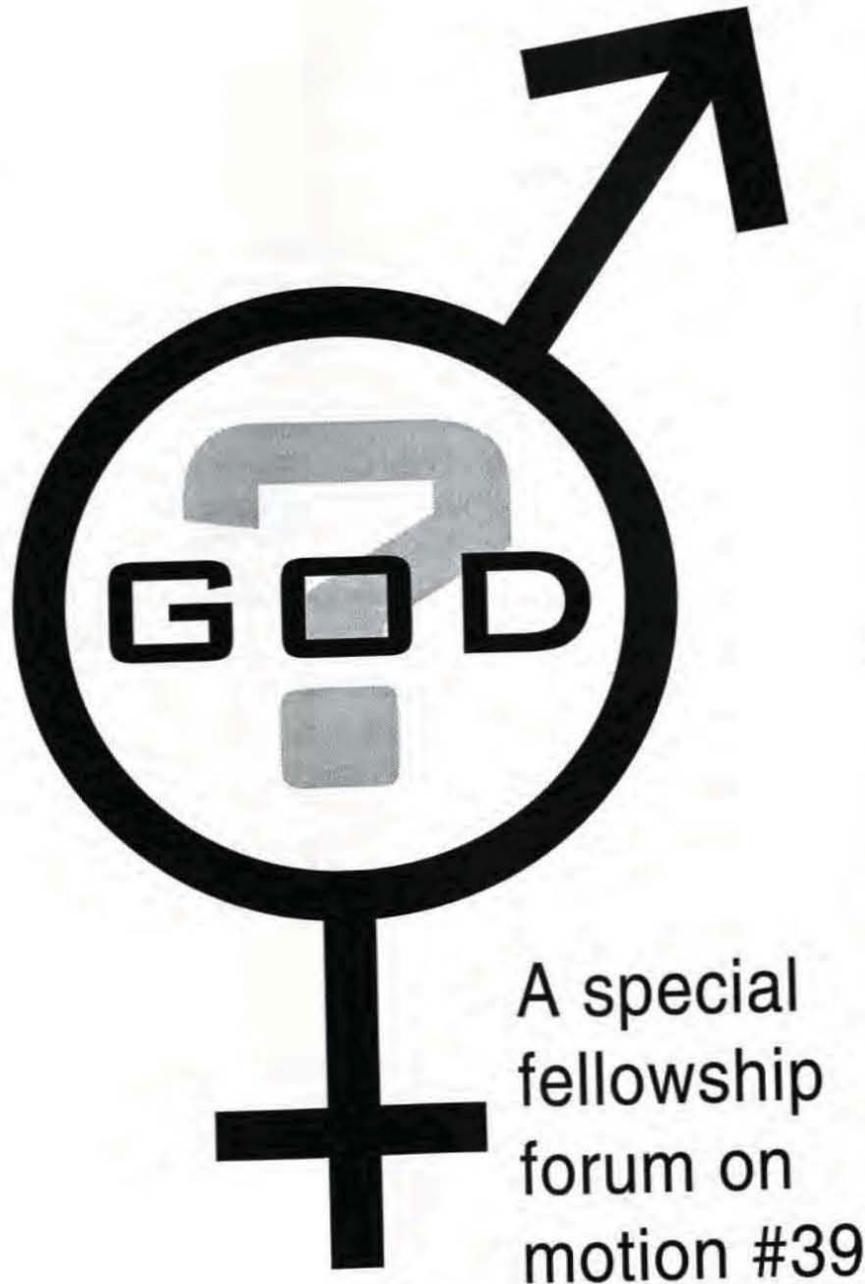
tainly not desert me, for He took me from the sewer and cleaned me up. I don't believe He's going to leave me on the curb.

Each and every addict in recovery belongs to a Higher Power. Our Higher Power uses other addicts in NA to reach out to us. We are the hands, feet, and mouth that are used to bring recovery. Since recovery is vital to the very lives of addicts and our Higher Power does everything to use us as instruments to spread this help, He must view us as "His children," once lost but now returned to Him. And what father would not view his formerly lost children as treasure? Why else would our disease want us to think that we're trash? We are really treasure. Why else would a Higher Power and a Lower Power exert so much time and effort to battle for us?

Anonymous

Oops!

The editor of *The Bottom Line* newsletter, published by the Gold Coast, Florida area, recently made us aware that we had mistakenly attributed two stories to that newsletter. After checking, we found that another newsletter called *The Bottom Line*, published by the Maui, Hawaii area, was the source for those two stories. The stories were: "What is happening?" published in the October issue and "What are we doing it for?" published in the November issue. We extend our apologies to both newsletters.



What is motion #39?

What has come to be known as "motion #39" is, in actuality, an entire set of complex issues surrounding the wording in our steps and traditions where God is referred to as "He" or "Him."

Motion #39 itself was presented by the Australia Region and discussed at last year's World Service Conference. It stated:

"To make the following changes to our steps and traditions: *Step Three:* We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of a God of our understanding. *Step Seven:* We humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings. *Step Eleven:* We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with a God of our understanding, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out. *Tradition Two:* For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as may be expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern."

As you can see, what has been suggested in motion #39 is that where God is referred to as "He," we instead just say "God."

After some discussion by a conference working group, it was decided that the issues expressed in motion #39 are bigger than the language used in motion #39 and should be discussed in depth by the fellowship for a period of time. Conference participants decided to send both the motion and the working group's recommendations out to the fellowship, hoping to encourage the fellowship to talk about this motion and the issues surrounding it.

The working group recommended that the fellowship consider the following questions when talking about motion #39:

1. Does the language of the steps and traditions truly reflect the principles of the program?
2. If not, what language does the fellowship feel would better reflect those principles?

The NA Way Magazine wants to know how you feel about this entire issue. We will publish your thoughts and feelings on the specific wording in motion #39, other suggestions for changing the steps and traditions, or opinions that the steps and traditions should not be changed at all. Please share with other *NA Way* readers your views on this very important matter.

A God of our own understanding

The other night at a meeting there was a woman sharing that the God of her understanding is a female. Then someone else said that God is a male. And so went the debate about God's gender for the rest of the meeting.

I think the classification of God as "Him" comes from the Bible. I think God is spirit and every time God manifested himself in the Bible, it was in the form of a man (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost). We cannot perceive God with our five senses. We can't see Him or touch Him. In order for God to communicate with people, He had to take a physical form. So if God is female, why did He always take the form of a man? The answer to this question is in the creation story. When God made man

He made him in the likeness of Himself and from man God created woman. If God were female He would have made woman first.

Understand that everything I've said so far is strictly my own opinion. Our Basic Text gives us the right to a God of our own understanding.

In this year's *Conference Agenda Report* there was a motion to amend the steps for a more general reference to God. In places where it says "Him" it would simply say "God." For instance, Step Seven could read: We humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.

I must say that I am in full support of this motion. If addicts are dying because our steps say God is a Him, we should change them. Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the still-suffering addict so that no addict seeking recovery need ever die from the horrors of addiction. Newcomers deserve a God of their own understanding no matter what the gender is. If a simple thing such as a word change can save someone the misery of addiction, I think it's worth it.

LB, Texas

God is probably laughing at us

In the August 1993 issue of *NA Way* you asked us to write about how we feel about the use of the masculine form when we refer to our Higher Power.

For years my home group has chuckled at my use of "she" and "her" when I talk about the God of my understanding. I, for one, am not comfortable with the male-dominant image of God. I lived for ages with

the mental picture of a punishing, judging God. My experience with male authority figures was one of anger, judgment, and violence. Early on, my spiritual advisor suggested that I recall a time when I felt safe and loved. She then suggested that I use this memory when I meditate to try to find a new understanding of God. The memory I used was my grandmother rocking me to sleep after having bathed me in the kitchen sink. For me, God is a saintly little old woman named Ozell, who smells of lavender cachet and wraps me in an old patchwork quilt that carries the odor of cedar and moth balls.

Personally, I believe that God gets a big laugh out of our efforts to ascribe gender to our Higher Power.

DM, Louisiana

Curb the dogma

I was raised in a religion where God was constantly portrayed as "He," "He" being an elderly, white man with a flowing white beard and a scorecard. The scorecard kept track, I was told, of all my "sins" and "indiscretions" so that on the "day of reckoning" I would face "Him" and beg for mercy.

This image carries particularly bad memories for me because I was sexually abused by a minister from the time I was seven until I was eleven. The minister threatened me with "His" vengeance if I ever revealed what had happened. Needless to say, I grew up with an overwhelming fear of what "He" would do to me; I had a "gonna-getcha God."

When I came into the Fellowship of NA I had a very difficult time with

the literature—especially the Twelve Steps and Traditions—due to the reference to God as "He." I heard two very contradictory messages:

1. "Anyone may join us regardless of . . . religion or lack of religion," and "many of us . . . sought help through medicine, religion, and psychiatry. None of these methods was sufficient for us," and "Ours is a spiritual, not religious program."

2. "God as we understood *Him*," or a meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer, or someone at a meeting saying, "my Higher Power, whom I choose to call Jesus Christ," (or Buddha, or Mohammed or whatever).

I was confused; I sometimes still am. While church and religion may work for some addicts, it hasn't worked for me. I am not opposed to religious organizations; I think they can serve a valuable purpose in the lives of many addicts. I simply do not see NA meetings as an appropriate place to espouse religious views.

I came into this fellowship with a lot of baggage concerning a personal relationship with "God." I was fortunate that my first sponsor spent a lot of time helping me to accept an HP into my life. For my first year I used the group; a group that was made up of women and men addicts. This group did not fall into the categorization and limits the word "He" implies. I was fortunate. Some addicts are not so lucky. I have personally seen addicts (newcomers and oldtimers alike) leave the fellowship because of the religious overtones in our meetings and literature.

I would ask that "NA as a whole"

consider the following:

1. Is our message diluted because of newcomer and oldtimer reaction to the use of "He" in our steps and traditions?

2. Are we truly practicing spiritual principles, or perpetuating Judeo-Christian theology?

3. Are we considering the addicts in our fellowship who have had damaging experiences with "God" or religious organizations?

4. Have we considered the addict who does not practice a religion (outside of the program) where "He" is acceptable terminology?

5. Are we truly acting as a "spiritual, not religious," program?

6. Are we as a fellowship willing to change?

The point may be moot to even raise, considering the WSC decision to not make any changes in the NA Basic Text, Fifth Edition, for five years. Perhaps this will give our fellowship time to curb its dogma and be more open to other possibilities.

I write this not to be inflammatory or to cause controversy; I write this in the spirit of "disagreeing without being disagreeable." One of my biggest attractions to NA was the truly all-inclusive nature of the fellowship, and the willingness of NA to move forward and change.

I truly love this program, the fellowship, and recovering addicts. I thank you for letting me voice my views on this sensitive matter. Thanks for letting me share!

FA, New Mexico



Viewpoint

Any addict seeking recovery

In the past year I have gotten involved in a part of service that I didn't even know existed until recently. It's called "additional needs." This concerns itself with equal accessibility in our meetings and our literature.

Additional needs subcommittees throughout our fellowship deal with several types of accessibility, but the group that I am most involved with is the deaf population. I am not deaf, but I am a professional interpreter for the deaf and have found myself advocating for their right to become involved in our fellowship and in recovery from the disease of addiction.

I think the thing that saddened me the most in my work this past year was meeting quite a few deaf

recovering people and hearing them say "Well, I'd like to go to NA but their meetings are not accessible so I go to ___ instead." That really broke my heart and opened my eyes all at the same time.

This is the main reason I am writing this article. If we want to say NA will offer recovery to *any* addict seeking recovery, then we have some serious work to do! And I, for one, feel strongly enough about this issue to do what I, as an individual, can do to make that statement true.

I hope you're asking yourself, "What can I do?" Well, I have some suggestions, not all-inclusive of course, but I believe they are a start.

First of all, we can be more accepting of sign-language interpreters in our meetings. If they are professional interpreters they are bound to confidentiality through their code of ethics. If they break our anonymity it could cost them their jobs. That's not true of the rest of the people in our rooms. Not to mention the fact that without those interpreters deaf addicts will never get what we have to offer (recovery). Which is more important: the possibility that the interpreter might go out and tell someone something I said or the still-suffering addict who can't "hear" our message without that interpreter?

One more thing about interpreters: Because they are professionals,

we should not expect them to volunteer their services. I realize their rates are more than some of our groups can pay, but there is always a way. Most states have programs that will pay for interpreting services. What that means is that the deaf person is responsible for getting in touch with those agencies. We as individual members may assist with this process in the beginning if necessary but the ultimate responsibility belongs to the deaf addict. If, however, we as a fellowship ask for the services then we are responsible for payment. As I've heard it from several different additional needs subcommittees, allowing the state to pay for these services, at the deaf person's request, can be looked at as "cooperation, not affiliation." I see it as carrying our message, which to certain people cannot be carried any other way.

Second, we need to be willing to work with these people one-on-one, to sponsor them, and show them the unconditional love that exists in our fellowship. Don't be afraid to go up to them, hug them, write back and forth, communicate in any way you can. And most importantly, don't feel sorry for them, they are very capable people, as much as any suffering addict can be anyway. Don't assume you know what they need; ask them "What can we do to help you understand what NA and recovery are all about?" Treat them as you would any other addict coming in to the rooms because that's what they are: addicts seeking recovery.

There are many other things we can do: making sure our phonelines are connected to our state's relay

system (operators in each state who make it possible for a deaf person with a TTY to call a hearing person, or a phoneline), putting our literature into American Sign Language (which is totally distinct from English) on videotape (work has already begun but it is slow), creating additional needs subcommittees in our regions and areas, etc. If you need help and/or direction, call the WSO and they can put you in touch with people who can share their experience, strength, and hope.

In closing I would like to make a request. I am sure that within our fellowship there are some deaf recovering addicts. I would really like to hear from them. Like I said, I am not deaf myself and do not presume to know what it is like for them to try to recover in a mostly hearing fellowship. I would love to see an article written for this magazine by a deaf person.

I love you all!

SP, North Carolina

Accepting life

I'm an addict, and I've been clean since 1 October 1985. I am clean just for today. This is my first letter to *The NA Way Magazine*. I was getting a subscription in 1989, but I was disabled and moved without changing my address.

I am writing this letter to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous to express my gratitude and my concerns.

I was just reading the October 1992 issue of *The NA Way*. I have some concerns. AIDS is not an outside issue to me. It is as much an outside issue as losing a job, being burglarized, having cancer, or losing a house in a fire are outside issues to those addicts to whom these things have happened. I can't think of a reason that AIDS is considered an outside issue by some. If I had a crisis in my life and could not talk about it in a meeting, I might as well just return to active addiction.

Narcotics Anonymous was and is the only place where I can talk freely about real life and learn to live a life of constant recovery. Our Basic Text says, "The progression of recovery is a continuous, uphill journey." Since I got clean, I have been travelling uphill in my recovery. The road gets less steep with time in recovery.

I must also remember the Twelfth Tradition of Narcotics Anonymous. We must pay attention to the principle being practiced, not the personality expressing it. There are no big shots in NA, just recovering addicts. Most of the people I know can only put some pocket change in the Seventh Tradition basket. I have no right to be judgmental. That is where they are at.

I consider myself a "hard-core addict" in recovery when it comes to the Twelve Traditions. The steps help keep me clean, the traditions help keep us together. If it wasn't for those principles, I believe we would need to rent stadiums and arenas to

hold our meetings in. Attraction rather than promotion is a much-needed principle for us.

I must remember a phrase I heard in the Army: "Mine is not to question why. Mine is but to do or die." It is not so important to know why the sun shines or why the sky is blue. I must simply accept these things as facts.

I needed to accept that I am an addict. To use is to lose. I need to hear the message of recovery, not be the judge, jury, and executioner. NA is a simple program for complicated junkies like me. "We" have made my recovery possible.

I can't drive due to my disability. Other addicts take me to meetings to which I can't walk or visit on the bus. Other addicts have been tolerant of my bad habits and nobody has told me I am unwelcome in NA.

I am grateful that I am in the rooms of recovery. I am grateful for the people who have been my sponsors. I am grateful for the WSO in Van Nuys, California. I am grateful I have stayed clean today. I am grateful for the newcomer and the fellowship. With gratitude,

JF, Pennsylvania

From our readers



Got a life, thanks to NA

I celebrated forty months clean last Saturday and ever since my first month clean I have subscribed to *The NA Way Magazine*. As I read the different stories in the most recent issue, tears kept coming to my eyes. So many things that I'm experiencing in my life today have been touched on in stories by others in your magazine.

Recently there have been a lot of discussions (some very heated) about spirituality vs. religion, anonymity, using the word "clean" not "sober," and using other "correct" NA terms, etc. Service meetings are not going as well as they used to and my idea of "pure" NA topics—structure, spirit, etc.—is being questioned by newcomers and oldtimers alike. Am I right, am I wrong, who knows? In addition, I'm trying to learn to be a sponsor (one of my girls is twenty years my junior and does not think a lot like I do). But thanks to HO from New York and "Coming Back to Basics" and the other articles in the May issue, I believe that I (and NA) will not only survive but be just fine.

I'm also going through growing pains in a relationship. I've taken care of all the men in my life, two of whom have left me emotionally and financially bankrupt. But the man in my life now is a recovering addict. Part of the reason I was attracted to

him was the fact that he worked (from what I could see) a program to the best of his ability. Financially, however, he does not think like I do. Without going into details, suffice it to say that he does not work the job I think he should or make the amount of money I think he should. I have proof that my Higher Power is watching out for us through odd jobs offered out of the blue. We have, for the last four months, paid rent and utility bills, put food on the table, and even spent some money on fun stuff. My point is that I have, finally, after months of worry and suffering caused through my old behaviors and character defects, had enough of a spiritual awakening to let it go to God. Today I'm okay with letting him be who he is and trusting him to do what's right. Trust—what a concept!

Before I go, I want to thank all those people who took the time to write to *The NA Way* and who have touched my heart so deeply. Sometimes I get so wrapped up in my life that I forget how I came to have a life. I forget how grateful I am for it and I forget "that God is good and I am truly better than blessed."

DW, Ohio

Comin' up

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ARKANSAS: Mar. 12-14, 1994; 1st Northwest Arkansas Area Convention; Fort Smith, AR; info (501) 783-2766; rsvns. (800) 356-7046; Convention Committee, PO Box 23, Lowell, AR 72745

CALIFORNIA: Dec. 31, 1993; Southern California Regional New Year's Eve Meeting and Dance; San Bernardino; info (818) 357-9258

2) Feb. 11-13, 1994; 3rd San Diego/Imperial Regional Learning Conference; info (619) 469-6490; SDIRLCNA, PO Box 16505, San Diego, CA 92176

3) Feb. 11-13, 1994; 2nd Annual Central California Regional Convention; info (805) 566-1261; CCRCNA 2, 1409 Kuehner Dr #116, Simi Valley, CA 93063

CONNECTICUT: Dec. 31 - Jan. 2, 1994; 9th Annual Connecticut Regional Convention; Forestville, CT; info (203) 585 1704 or (203) 585-7033; CRCNA, PO Box 9615, Forestville, CT 06010-9615

FLORIDA: Jan. 21-23, 1994; 5th Annual Palm Coast Area Spiritual Retreat; West Palm Beach; info (407) 966-6113; Spiritual Retreat, 2148 Sherwood Forest #3, W Palm Beach, FL 33415

GEORGIA: Jan. 14-16, 1994; 6th Georgia State Regional Anniversary; Augusta, GA; info (800) 282-2419; rsvns. (800) 325-3535; CSRA, PO Box 15863, Augusta, GA 30919

HAWAII: Mar. 25-27, 1994; 10th Annual Gathering of the Fellowship on Oahu; info (808) 676-7763; Oahu Gathering Committee, PO Box 75271, Honolulu, HI 96836

ILLINOIS: Feb. 18-20, 1994; 3rd Rock River Area Convention; Rochelle, IL; info (815) 967-9010 or (815) 626-7210; RRCNA 3, PO Box 1891, Rockford, IL 61110

INDIA: Jan. 21-23, 1994; 2nd Bombay, India Convention; Madh Island; Malad (west), Bombay; BACNA 2, PO Box 16489, Mahim, Bombay, India, 400 016

INDIANA: Feb. 26, 1994; Multiregional Service Learning Day; Fort Wayne; info (219) 422-0825; NEIASC, PO Box 12737, Fort Wayne, IN 46864

2) Mar. 4-6, 1994; Indiana State Convention; Indianapolis; info; ISNAC, PO Box 17106, Indianapolis, IN 46217-0106

KANSAS: Apr. 8-10, 1994; 11th Mid-America Regional Convention; Great Bend, info (316) 343-7740 or (913) 823-3854; MARCNA 11, PO Box 242, Salina, KS 67402-0242

LOUISIANA: May 27-29, 1994; 12th Annual Louisiana Regional Convention; Alexandria; rsvns. (318) 442-9000 (Out of State), (800) 523-9724 (In LA only); LRCNA 12, Program Committee, PO Box 762, Montgomery, LA 71454

MARYLAND: Apr. 8-10, 1994; 8th Annual Chesapeake/Potomac Regional Convention; Ocean City, MD

2) Sep. 1-4, 1994; WCNA 24; Need main speakers, clean time requirement—5 years, deadline—Jan. 31, 1994; workshop speakers needed, deadline—Apr. 1, 1994; submit tapes to; WCNA 24, c/o WSO Inc., PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409

MASSACHUSETTS: Jan. 7-9, 1994; 2nd Boston Area Convention; Boston, MA; info (617) 424-7868; rsvns. (617) 445-0930; BACNA 2, 398 Columbus Avenue, Suite 278, Boston, MA 02116

2) Mar. 4-6, 1994; Just For Today Group Cape Cod Convention; Hyannis, MA; info (508) 540-4505 or (508) 563-5715; JFTCC, PO Box 590, N Falmouth, MA 02556

MICHIGAN: Dec. 30 - Jan. 2, 1994; 2nd Annual Urban Retreat; info (313) 730-4550; rsvns. (800) 333-3333; MSO, 407 E 9 Mile Road, Ferndale, MI 48220

2) Mar. 31 - Apr. 3, 1994; 2nd Detroit Area Convention; Detroit; info (313) 361-4214; rsvns. (800) 228-3000; DACNA, Tickets and Registrations, PO Box 241221, Detroit, MI 48224

MINNESOTA: Apr. 22-24, 1994; 1st Minnesota Regional Convention; Saint Paul; info (612) 926-7341; MNNAC I, PO Box 14152, Minneapolis, MN 55414-0152

MISSOURI: Feb. 18-20, 1994; Cabin Fever Prevention Convention; Hosted by Mid-Missouri Area; info (314) 496-3752 or (314) 642-0175; Looking for speaker tapes; Cabin Fever Convention, PO Box 7114, Jefferson City, MO 65109

NEW JERSEY: Dec. 31, - Jan. 2, 1994; 7th Annual New Years Eve Convention; Hasbrouck Heights, NJ; info (201) 340-4238 or (201) 807-1082; Convention, PO Box 918, Garfield, NJ 07026-0918

NORTH CAROLINA: Mar. 18-21, 1994; 7th NCCAFRNA; Raleigh, NC; info (919) 231-8104; rsvns. (919) 872-2323; NCCAFRNA 7, PO Box 818, Carrboro, NC 27510

OHIO: Jan. 7-9, 1994; 5th Central Ohio Area Convention; Columbus, Ohio; info (614) 888-7615 or (614) 252-2501; rsvns. (800) 405-4329; COACNA 5, PO Box 8013, Columbus, OH 43201

2) May 27-19, 1994; 12th Annual Ohio Convention; The Ohio convention is in Kentucky, five minutes from downtown Cincinnati; info (513) 820-2947; OCNA 12, PO Box 0541, Cincinnati, OH 42501-0541

OKLAHOMA: Jan. 14-16, 1994; 4th Norman Winter Convention; Norman, OK; info (405) 631-8649 or (405) 521-8531; Norman Winter Convention, PO Box 1455, Norman, OK 73070

PENNSYLVANIA: Feb. 4-6, 1994; 10th Mid-Atlantic Regional Learning Conference of NA; Redding; info (215) 375-9724; rsvns. (800) 383-9713; MARLCNA 10, PO Box 6233, Wyomissing, PA 19610

SOUTH CAROLINA: Jan. 28-30, 1994; 14th Annual Upper South Carolina Anniversary Convention; info (803) 282-0109; USCANA 14, PO Box 4407, Greenville, SC 29608

VIRGINIA: Jan. 7-9, 1994; 12th Annual AVCNA; info (804) 385-8774; AVCNA 12, PO Box 28, Lynchburg, VA 24505

WISCONSIN: Apr. 15-17, 1994; 9th Mid-Coast Convention; Delavan; info; MCC 9, PO Box 1621, Janesville, WI 53545

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Stephan Lantos

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.

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**My Gratitude Speaks
When I Care
and When I Share with Others
The NA Way**

What is Narcotics Anonymous?

NA is a nonprofit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs has 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.