

THE
NA
Way.
MAGAZINE

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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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From the editor



When addicts read *The NA Way*, they suddenly feel better informed and more in touch with their fellowship. That's precisely why we publish *The NA Way*.

But we need your help to get *The NA Way* into the hands of more NA members. And right now is the perfect time to order a gift subscription.

The NA Way is an exceptionally thoughtful gift. It reflects the interest in recovery you share with other addicts. And our magazine is a joy to read! It's full of personal sharing, fellowship news, thought-provoking opinion forums, and more. We're

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Overcoming prejudice

When I came to this program, one of my character defects was hatred for African-Americans. Soon after I started coming to meetings, an addict named R was introduced to me. He hugged me and told me he was glad I was there. In spite of my coldness, he always had words of support and encouragement. His acceptance of me taught me that it was not a person's race that mattered, but rather how that person acted.

He and I had many conflicts, but he always let me know that he loved me; he was always there if I needed him. For many years we hardly spoke because of my character defects. But he persevered, and I began to recover. His devotion to the principles of this program showed me the way to love the addict and hate the disease. His own story of a black youth kicked around by a white society inspired me, because for many years he was the only African-American member of Narcotics Anonymous in Iowa.

R worked these steps and helped many of us to remain clean for another day. Through his devotion, along with some other addicts, our region was formed. R was one of the

few faces that have always been there when my life was in turmoil. He was always there at the conventions and functions; he was one of the few constants for me in my recovery. He took these steps into his life, became educated, and earned a commission in the military, an accomplishment he was very proud of. As a vet, I can tell you that he could have led me into hell and I would have followed, because of his courage.

He always respected my recovery in spite of our disagreements. R loved me, even when all I could see was the color of his skin. He taught me to understand that the whole point to working a recovery program is to live every last minute clean. The greatest victory for a spiritual warrior is to stand before HP clean and of sound moral standing.

This morning R died with sixteen years clean. Today he stands before his Higher Power clean and of sound moral standing. Today is a very hard day for me as I grieve the loss of a wonderful gift, the gift of a devoted and caring friend.

I share this victory with you so that we can learn to feel the pain, but know there is a victory awaiting us.

Thank you, R, for all the love and understanding, for being human and honest about your own character defects and shortcomings. Thank you for the long hours of listening to my drivel and telling me I am worth the time. Thank you for showing me the way to an education and self-love.

Thank you most for the days you kept me clean until I could learn to do it myself. You will be greatly missed, but your victory and courage will

PRINCIPLES



continue to inspire addicts to give it five more minutes.

As I grieve my loss, I am reminded that an addict alone is in bad company. I am not alone today. My HP has his arms around me. There is a lot of sadness for me right now, but I am grateful to be clean today. Life

goes forward, God willing, to our own victories over the disease of addiction. R is in my prayers today. I am grateful for people like him who have helped me to find a new way of life. So long as I follow that way, I have nothing to fear.

MC, Iowa

An addict's adventure with surgery

Having surgery didn't come as a surprise. I had plenty of time to prepare myself and get honest with how I felt about the questions of taking medication and dealing with the pain. But in thinking about it now, having extra time didn't really help very much. I mean, I had time to work on accepting my NA friends as a support group, and accept the fact that there is no way I can have pain medications in my house and not abuse them, but my addiction also had time to work its way back into my head.

And my disease told me that there was no way I could handle the pain of having surgery without narcotics. It told me that, sure, I could take pain pills the way I'm directed to by the doctor. And, most cunning of all, it told me that it would be okay even if I abused the drugs. It would only be for a little while; nobody but me would know, and I'd get right back into the program. What the hell! I had damn near a year clean. How could a couple of bottles of stupid pain pills send me back out into the

nightmare of active addiction? There was no way I'd let that happen. I'd had too much "progress" in my recovery. I was in control! I could handle it!

After an episode like that, I'd get scared and get to a meeting or talk to my sponsor. And the denial that was growing and threatening to steal my sanity would shrink away like shadows hiding from the light. I would remember once again that it wasn't will power that was keeping me clean. It was the grace of my Higher Power, with whom I've learned to have a relationship since I was introduced to the Twelve Steps of the NA program.

The cycle of denial and acceptance lasted right up until two days before my surgery. I filled my recovery "bank account" with a lot of meetings, talking to other recovering addicts, and reading "More Will Be Revealed" in the Basic Text. I was ready. I went into the hospital feeling pretty serene. I would not touch narcotics.

Then I felt the first needle go into my vein for the anesthesia. Then they put another one in. And I changed my mind again! By the time I was actually on the operating table, I wanted some of every drug they had.

When I woke up in the recovery room, I was in pain. All the medical staff knew I was an addict, so no one had yet given me any narcotics. The more clear my mind got, the more it hurt. Then I think my Higher Power stepped in because instead of making me want to use, the pain cleared my mind and made me remember who I

am. I am an addict, and I am powerless over my addiction. I ended up accepting a non-narcotic pain reliever. The surgeon asked if it was working for me and I said no. But the pain really did decrease. I realized later that I had been expecting to have a buzz, and if I didn't, the pain killer couldn't possibly be working. My disease speaks again!

On my way home from the hospital, I was expecting to feel good about what I had done for my recovery. My disease had other ideas. I actually felt stupid. I turned down a free ticket to get high. I blew a perfect opportunity. How could I do such a thing? I could have gotten high without having to change my clean date. What a moron I was! I crawled into bed feeling miserable and sorry for myself.

The first thing that happened the next morning was, I got a call from another recovering addict. She told me about her experience with a broken leg early in recovery and gave me a lot of positive guidance and support. I really needed to hear her words. Then she told me about another addict who was in the hospital recovering from surgery. She gave me his number; I called him, and by the end of the conversation, I was feeling much better.

The next day another recovering addict picked me up and took me to a meeting, where I got a lot of care and support. I know now that I was dangerously close to a deadly relapse. I know because I've talked to two people who were lucky enough to survive a relapse and brave enough to come back to NA. The things their

disease told them right before they went out were exactly the things my disease had been telling me. I could see that my addiction would have taken the same course. The only thing I don't know is if I would have lived through it and, if so, been courageous enough to come back to NA.

I've learned that relapse is only one drug away for everyone, no matter what your disease tells you. The road to relapse may look attractive, with all its instant gratification, but at the end of the road lies death disguised as dreamlike sleep. The journey that is recovery follows a difficult road, with no places to stop and rest along the way, but the journey is profound in its beauty and brings life to the addict who chooses it.

This is the beauty of NA, folks—caring and sharing with other addicts, and the love and care of a Higher Power. With your help I'm still clean, and my desire to stay clean is stronger than ever.

PS: This was written about eighteen months ago, and I have had surgery again since I wrote it. I'm still clean, and the second time was much easier than the first. I guess I didn't have quite as much denial to swim in.

DZ, Pennsylvania

The charge for the demolition process

I am a recovering addict, and I am truly grateful for this precious gift of recovery today. It wasn't always this way.

After over seven years of bouncing in and out, I finally got it. The miracle happened for me just after New Year's Eve in 1985. I spent the first nine days of my recovery in detox, and it was only by the grace of my Higher Power that I lived and began a journey of recovery. I went to over ninety meetings in ninety days; got a sponsor; used that sponsor; started working the steps; changed playmates, playthings, and playpens; and began developing a working relationship with God as I understand Him. My life really opened up in a way that I never imagined in my wildest dreams.

I began speaking at prisons, treatment centers, schools, various other institutions, and meetings (both home and away from home). I began sponsoring people. I got involved in service work as group secretary and

treasurer. I was in recovery, my life was getting better, and I was happier than I imagined could be possible.

That is, until I began being complacent. I started "forgetting" to seek a conscious contact with my Higher Power. Then I missed a few meetings here and there. I no longer had the time, interest, or concern for the people I was sponsoring. I began holding on to my resentments, holding on to my fears, and keeping my thoughts a secret. I was ripe for relapse.

As I look back, I can see that the first thing to go was spirituality. The next things to go were my mental and emotional health. Finally came the physical act of using again. After seven years, eight months, and ten days of life without drugs, I began my self-destruction once again. I wanted, once again, just to stop the pain. I did not use any of the tools I had learned about in recovery. I didn't share my pain and fear with anyone before my relapse, nor did I ask God for help. I am grateful that He gave me help anyway. I am loved more than I am able to comprehend. All of us are!

I no longer question my relapse. I know that everything happens for a reason, and I do not have to know the reason today. My Higher Power does not have to consult me about anything, including my life. And today I know that I am one of the worst higher powers I can have. I am also the worst possible sponsor for myself. So today I have a sponsor who I contact on a regular basis, at least every other day. And I am following

direction and doing step work once again.

In fact, tomorrow I have an appointment with my sponsor to do my Fifth Step. I am very ready to let go of the wreckage of my past, look at my thoughts, feelings, motives, actions, and patterns. I am ready to look at my disease of addiction, see my character defects, and find out what I want to replace them with.

Carrying the message of recovery and doing service work are very important to my recovery. They were when I first got clean and they still are today. It is important for me to care about others, to listen to them, to help them, to offer them what has so freely been given to me, and to love them to the best of my ability. Because of this, God has seen fit to use me and my husband to start an NA meeting close to our home. This is the only NA meeting in our county.

I am doing "official" service work once again, too. I was elected as the secretary of this particular meeting, and it is really helping me get out of myself. I am doing footwork, and as a result I am beginning to feel alive again.

Today I have a much better understanding of people who use again after several years of recovery. I no longer believe I am better than people who relapse, nor am I willing to judge them. I have a much deeper understanding of what our Basic Text is talking about when it says: "Relapse is a reality. It can and does happen. Experience shows that those who do not work our program of recovery on a daily basis may relapse. . . . In our daily lives, we are

subject to emotional and spiritual lapses, causing us to become defenseless against the physical relapse of drug use. Because addiction is an incurable disease, addicts are subject to relapse."

Thank you, my precious NA family, for loving me, caring about me, and for welcoming me back. Thank you for loving me unconditionally. I am so grateful for this extra chance at life. How can I not show my gratitude by reaching out and giving it away? Thank you for allowing me to share my experience, strength, and hope with you in *The NA Way*.

Anonymous



It's so simple!

Okay, for years I have been wanting to write about something—anything—to send to *The NA Way*. I keep writing, and end up putting everything I produce in the drawer. I wrote an article about the first three steps, but have not sent it in because I feel I have not been living these steps in my life.

I read the article about oldtimer's disease, and it was all about me. That's good, because I have been so closed-minded that I never saw myself as being at fault for anything. In fact, I am amazed I am still clean because I have gotten so far away from true spiritual principles. I am confused about what exactly it takes to stay clean. I don't have a sponsor. I have not been able to figure out what it is about me that keeps me from sharing with someone and following directions.

It's interesting to me that I used to read *The NA Way* and feel nothing—they were just stories about someone else. They didn't make an impact on me until recently, when I went through surgery and needed something to help me get through the physical pain. I read the magazine

when I was hurting and feeling, and it helped me get through some hard times.

I learned that I have been stagnant in my recovery, not doing what I used to do when I was new in recovery. You know the old patterns: not going to many meetings, not having a sponsor, not sharing with anyone, isolating, etc. Rather than beat myself up for what I am not doing, I chose to look at what has been happening to me spiritually since I became stagnant.

First, when I had five years clean, I was in so much spiritual pain I wanted to die. I left my husband, who is also in recovery, and my son. I left for three months and didn't get any relief. I missed my baby. When I was using, I thought I could leave my children without looking back so I could go out and get loaded. I never had the opportunity. I know God has changed me, because my children are very important to me today.

I came back and got a sponsor and started working the Sixth Step. This sponsor was brutally honest with me, and I couldn't handle that. I wanted the kid-glove treatment I got when I was a newcomer. So I quit calling her.

Now it's been six months and I am beginning to get into the same spiritual pain. Thank God that I have a strong desire to stay clean today, because I have been calling people and going to meetings and praying. I understand completely the way newcomers feel when oldtimers quit going to meetings, and I had promised myself I wouldn't do that. However, I did exactly that. I only know for



sure that since I didn't go back out and use, I have a chance to change. God has been working in my life for six-and-a-half years now, and I feel ready to begin to work the steps again. I guess the message for me is that even though we relapse spiritually and emotionally, we can always start over with the steps and get back into recovery. If we wait until we relapse physically, we might die before we get the chance to recover.

The experience of an addict whom I had been sponsoring brought home this fact when she went back out and overdosed and nearly died. She got a second chance, but I realize how lucky she was. I feel I have had so many chances to choose spiritual principles over my disease, but I

seem to keep choosing my disease in the form of character defects, complacency, and pain.

I love NA. I came into the fellowship in a lot of pain and confusion and total hopelessness. NA gave me hope, and when I am in pain, it never seems to be the same kind of pain as when I was using. I have some tools today. If I choose to use the tools I have, I can walk through the pain. My disease wants me to stay sick, but recovery compels me to go forward—even if it's just abstinence. I guess I am not as confused about what I need to do, because in the time it took to write this, I have seen the answer! Get a sponsor, work the steps, and go to meetings. How simple.

HP, New Mexico

Restoration

Until I developed an acceptance of the First Step, I had no desire for sanity. I got off on insanity, even when it was making my life worse. But after admitting my powerlessness and unmanageability, I realized I needed something to help me get back my life.

NA became the power greater than me that I believed would restore me to sanity. I believed in NA because I had heard what it had done for other addicts—people who had hit bottoms worse than my own. I saw in them a restoration to sanity, and listened to them attribute that restoration to NA. NA seemed very powerful to me. It changed people's lives—their personalities, their beliefs, their actions—for the better.

I believed right away that NA could help people, but it took a little while to accept that it could help *me*. I struggled with the question of whether or not NA could restore me to sanity. At first, I didn't think it would work for me. I wasn't the kind of guy to go around hugging people. But still, I decided to do what I could to follow suggestions and the principles of the program, and see what happened.

Gradually and progressively, I began to believe that NA could help.

It started with the way I felt better at a meeting. Then, I saw myself doing positive, productive things outside the rooms. I was learning not to choose instant gratification, to be patient and enjoy the calm of life. The slogans and the principles of NA became a part of my thinking patterns. They made me feel better, more hopeful, more willing to accept hardships or disappointments. I found the more I believed in NA's principles, namely the steps, the better I felt. In time, I thoroughly came to believe in NA as a power greater than myself that could restore me to sanity.

Today, I believe in NA more deeply than I've ever believed in anything in my life. And I keep that belief by putting that feeling into action. I attend meetings regularly. I reach out to newcomers. I make commitments.

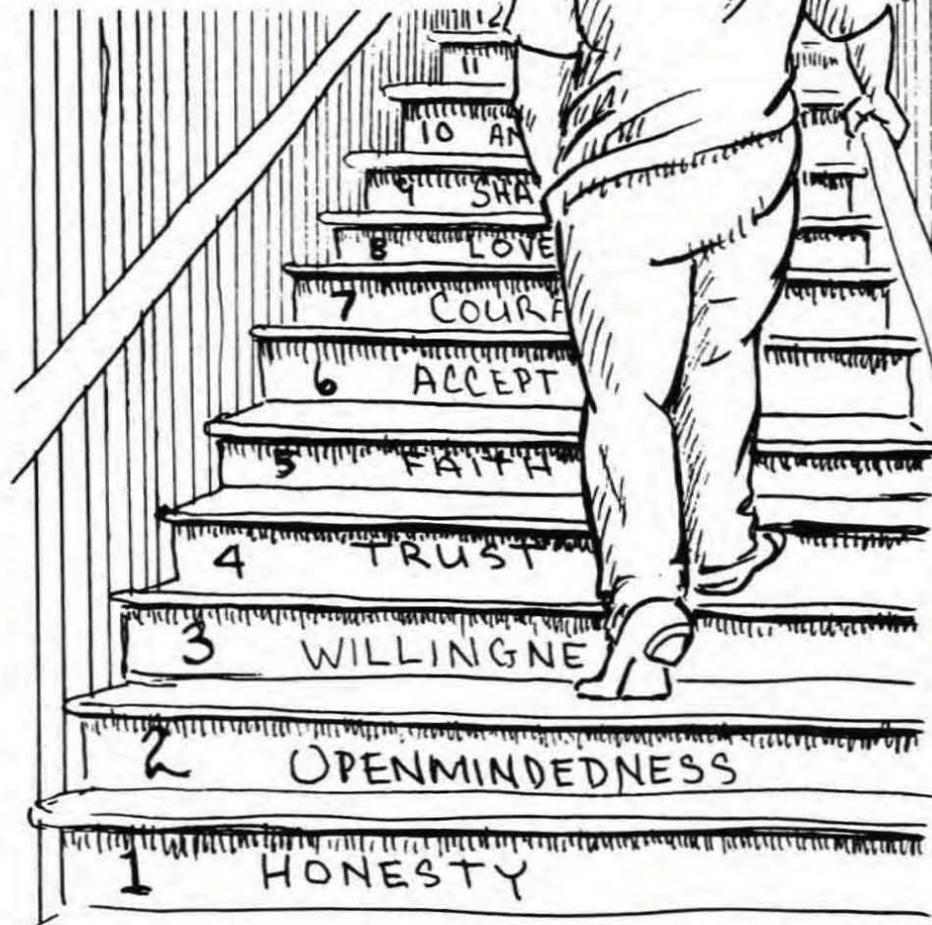
NA also suggests that I find a God of my understanding. That, too, is part of my Second Step. In my understanding, God embodies the principles of NA. God's about unconditional love and goodwill. My God wants me to care for others unconditionally. My God wants me to worship at the temple of life, in my daily affairs.

I pray every morning to this God, and that helps me move toward sanity. I ask God to remind me that I'm an addict and cannot use successfully. I ask my God to take my will and my life. I ask my God to help me avoid hurting other people. And I ask my God to help sick and suffering addicts.

I believe in my prayers, especially when someone I pray for returns to the rooms. That becomes part of my process of being restored to sanity. It reinforces my beliefs and the comfort of prayer. I remember that when I was young, prayer made me feel good. Eventually, it became an act of desperation. Now, prayer is an exercise in faith, hope, and humility.

I believe that prayer, coupled with a life based on the principles of NA, can restore me to sanity.

JM, New Jersey



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At last! A place to find character defects without having to do a Sixth Step. Words appear diagonally, horizontally, and vertically. See how many you can find, Answers appear on page 18.

V A N S D S B Y T I P G I F N E A R S
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| APATHY | JEALOUSY | RIGIDITY |
| ARROGANCE | INTOLERANCE | SELFISHNESS |
| CAUSTICITY | IRRESPONSIBLE | SELF OBSESSION |
| CONTROL | LAZINESS | SELF PITY |
| DEFIANCE | LUST | SLOTH |
| DENIAL | NARROWMINDEDNESS | STUBBORNNESS |
| DESTRUCTIVE | PREJUDICE | UNFORGIVING |
| DISHONESTY | PRIDE | VENGEFUL |
| FEAR | PROCRASTINATION | WILLFUL |
| GREED | RAGE | |

Home Group

So this guy asked me out... I'm scared to go... what if we end up really liking each other?... what if we fall in love?!...



What if we get married- I'd have to meet his family- what if they don't like me... I'm a nice person but you never know.



And kids! I'm not ready to be a mom- I don't know a thing about babies! I'd definitely need help-how could I afford child care? I'd need a better job!



Um - Marge- what's this guys name?

Er... what Guy?



Feature

A report from the World Service Board on the steps and traditions language issue

The following is the report from the World Service Board of Trustees on the steps and traditions language issue, formerly known as Motion 39. We are printing it here to update our readers who followed the "Motion 39 Forum" running in The NA Way from December 1993 to April 1995. -Ed.

At the 1993 World Service Conference, the Australia Region made a motion to remove gender specificity from the wording of the steps and traditions (Motion 39). This motion, along with recommendations from a work group, began to be discussed throughout the fellowship. Based on the recommendations from a work group at the 1994 conference, the fellowship was further asked (Motion 88) to explore whether the wording of the steps and traditions reflected the spiritual principles of our program, and if the proposed changes of Motion 39 adequately addressed members' concerns.

For the past three years, we have all been encouraged to discuss whether to make specific changes to the wording of our steps and traditions. Unfortunately, the discussion on this issue has become defocused and unclear over this three-year period. Discussing the gender specificity issue in a broader context has offered the opportunity for a healthy exchange of viewpoints. We believe, however, that we have all become somewhat confused about what the precise question we are being asked is, and how it can be answered.

Primarily because of this lack of clarity, Motion 47 was passed during the 1995 World Service Conference. The motion states: *In order to clarify exactly what the fellowship is being asked to decide and to define how a decision would be reached, we propose the following: To set aside all previous conference actions of WSC 1993 Motion 39 and the recommendations from the work group from WSC'93 and WSC 1994 Motion 88. This would allow the WSB to develop a paper on the issues and present it to the fellowship by August 1995. Further, the WSB will provide a recommendation to the fellowship in the 1996 CAR on how to resolve these issues.*

This paper addresses the first part of Motion 47. Its intent is to clarify what the groups need to decide, and to provide a framework with which to focus discussion on the issues related to the language used in the wording of our steps and traditions.

What are we ready to make a decision about?

The discussions held throughout the fellowship over the last three years were important. Not only did we have an opportunity to explore removal of gender from the wording of the steps and traditions, but we also began to discuss the larger issue of whether the word "God" adequately allows for

individual interpretation of our Higher Power. Some suggestions were offered to replace the word "God" with "Higher Power" or to change "God" to "god." While this stimulated much discussion and controversy, no motion to propose changing the word "God" in the steps and traditions accordingly came forward. It appears that, at this time, the only question before the fellowship is whether to remove gender-specific language from our steps and traditions.

Some of the main arguments made by those who support the language change are that individuals' beliefs are excluded by the current wording of our steps and traditions, that the use of "Him" and "His" in reference to God implies specific religious beliefs or shapes and defines one's understanding of a Higher Power. This is seen to be in conflict with our philosophy, which encourages us to develop and establish a relationship with a Higher Power of our own understanding. Many of these members believe that this wording may lead newcomers or professionals, who might refer addicts to NA meetings, to perceive us as a religious, not spiritual, program. As a result, addicts may not feel attracted to NA or out of place in our meetings; they may either not get to our program at all, or leave before the spiritual nature of the NA program is understood. In addition, supporters often believe that the

current wording of the steps and traditions fails to reflect the multicultural, global nature of today's NA community. These members suggest that making such changes to the wording may help us further our primary purpose. Some state that non-gender specific language has been used in the text of new literature (e.g., *It Works, Just for Today*) and should be changed in the wording of the steps and traditions for consistency.

Some of the major arguments made by those who oppose the change are that the steps have worked the way they are written for years; it is the individual who needs to change, not the wording. Many of these members say that they, too, had some difficulty with the wording at first, but that the literature and other members helped them to overcome their difficulties. Some argue that it is impossible to remove gender references and retain the meaning of those steps and traditions affected. Some state that moving gender-specific language is based on consideration of political correctness. There are others who state that they support, in concept, the proposed changes in the wording of the steps and traditions; however, they would not support actually changing the wording for fear of the effect on the fellowship. These members often point to the disunity which resulted from the changes made

to the White Booklet or the Fourth Edition of the Basic Text. Many have offered the suggestion that there be a footnote or a separate page added to our literature explaining that Narcotics Anonymous espouses no specific beliefs about a Power greater than ourselves, and leaves this to the interpretation of the individual member.

Where do we go from here?

Any action as significant as changing the steps and traditions would, of course, require a significant percentage of our groups to participate in making the decision. Members must also have a strong voice in accepting and implementing a decision-making process that directly includes our groups. At this time, we have no defined process in place to receive a direct conscience from each NA group. The process we develop to allow us to hear the voices of groups regarding this issue will serve us to receive consciences from groups on any similarly significant issues in the future.

In the 1996 Conference Agenda Report, the second part of Motion 47, a decision-making process, will be proposed. In the meantime, in order to move forward on this issue, the fellowship should consider the following questions and begin discussing them at the group level.

1. Are you willing to make any specific changes to the wording of the steps and traditions? (Yes or No)
2. If the wording of the steps and traditions is altered to eliminate references to gender, would the following wording be acceptable?

Step Three: "We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God."

Step Seven: "We humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings."

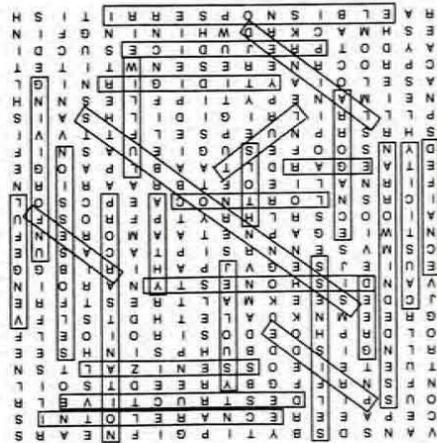
Step Eleven: "We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God, praying only for the knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out."

Tradition Two: "For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—that of a loving God as may be expressed in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern."

The Board of Trustees has scheduled time at its next meeting to further discuss this issue. We will keep you updated on our discussions and any other recommendations we may have.

If you have any questions or comments about this article or

wish to receive supplementary material (e.g., material from the Motion 88 panel presentation at WSC'95 or the Motion 39/88 issue statement and guidelines for workshops, which was distributed last year, please contact the trustees through their coordinator at the World Service Office.



Group Services Corner

Each month The NA Way Magazine brings its subscribers the shared recovery of members around the world, a thought-provoking viewpoint section, and a variety of other features. It also happens that each month, the World Service Office gets dozens of letters from groups, individuals, area service committees, and subcommittees. Well, it got us thinking... there's tremendous interest out there about issues that concern groups—maybe there's some way we at The NA Way can spread this information around and solicit our readers' experience as well.

So here's our effort—a new column. We'll feature an actual letter received in the group services department at the WSO as well as the response. In keeping with our desire to share with you the "real deal" in communication between world services and members of the fellowship, the letters featured in this column will receive only very light editing, such as punctuation and spelling, and will be printed in their entirety. You can look forward to seeing this column every other month. We hope you enjoy it.

On fellowship behavior at meetings and conventions

Dear Sir or Madam,

It never ceases to amaze me the longer we are clean the awakening that this program's simple suggestions are still the same and work just as they did years ago.

Recently, I have been quite disturbed by something I have seen in various parts of this area and another I attend meetings in. There has sprung up a division of people who, when they speak, stand up, yell extremely loud, and many times quote scripture, parables, and quotations from everything but NA. I was in a meeting recently where the speaker started by standing up, and when he began to share he was screaming so loud that the group meeting in a different room had to send someone in and ask our speaker to keep it down, as the atmosphere of recovery was being disturbed in the other room. The speaker totally ignored the request and continued.

From time to time at conventions, this same faction, if speaking, yell, scream, and pace back and forth in a manner representative of an evangelist. If perchance another member shares, and they relate, they start screaming, "Praise the Lord," and shouting, "God is good all of the time," as well as whooping and hollering.

Mind you, I believe in a Higher Power and have been clean for a number of years. However, I find this offensive, and I have noticed the separation among various ethnic

groups as well. The newcomer may truly become confused.

I am extremely offended by this and ask, is this in keeping with the NA traditions? Has the "preacher concept" now been accepted at NA conventions? Must the message (sometimes mixed by religious zeal) be tolerated in meetings as well as conventions?

I am requesting an answer to the above questions. Thank you for expediting this matter.

*Yours in fellowship,
Anonymous*

Dear Anonymous,

I have received your letter of 20 March, expressing your views on people sharing other than Narcotics Anonymous messages in NA meetings, and a current trend of "shouting" in your area. It would not be an easy task to tell individuals what they could or could not share about. Each one of us has issues that we feel are important to our recovery that someone else might not agree with. Our Third Tradition guarantees us that the only requirement for membership in NA is a desire to stop using. Therefore, we try to be as tolerant as possible regarding others' sharing at meetings and/or conventions. Of course, when and if something becomes disruptive, then the group must decide on the course of action to take.

Because the Third Tradition is so encompassing, it might seem at times as if we have abdicated all control over who comes to NA and what they may do (or not do) once they

have arrived. This is not entirely true. What belief in a power greater than ourselves tells us, and what experience bears out, is that trends, people, and customs that survive in Narcotics Anonymous are the ones that *should* survive. Things that are not good for Narcotics Anonymous do not survive the test of time. So, on one level it comes down to faith. On a much more immediate note, however, if a group decided that it did not care for this practice of "testifying" while sharing, it could put a sentence or two in its meeting format indicating that sharing in the meeting should not take on a "religious zeal." If this were done, members would have the opportunity to abide by the group conscience or else perhaps attend a different meeting where the type of sharing they enjoyed was encouraged.

The questions you have posed such as, "Does this type of sharing have to be tolerated at the meeting level?" are ones that have to be dealt with, ultimately, at the local level where the autonomy of the group and the authority of the area and region are best suited to make the appropriate decision.

I would request that you keep us informed as to how this situation develops so that your experience may aid others in the future. Thanks for taking the time to write to us regarding this matter. If we can be of any further help, please contact us at any time.

*In fellowship,
Group Services*

Newsletters



Attention NA Newsletter Committees:

We need to update the list of NA newsletters that we keep on hand at the World Service Office. We try to keep records of your newsletter's title, contact name (usually the editor), and phone number, and a mailing address. This is helpful to us when we need to contact you regarding the publication of a story from your newsletter. It's also helpful to other NA newsletter editors and committees who want to establish exchange programs or share information. If your area or region is publishing a newsletter and you're not sure if we have your current information, please write to us as soon as possible. And if you're not already sending us your newsletter, please add us to your mailing list.

As you know if you're reading this, we get some wonderful material from local NA newsletters. We couldn't run this column without you. So please keep in touch. -Ed.

The light within

From: *The Recoverer*, the Washington/Northern Idaho regional newsletter:

Today, when I think of light, I think of warmth and clarity. But when I was eight years old, I thought of light as deception: a cold, muddled fabrication. I would sneak down the stairs and see the light emanating from the crack in the doorway, and the smell of burning opium would assault my senses.

I knew my parents and their "friends" were behind that door and behind the sinuous smoke that slithered through the open door. The smoke would reach out to surround me and invite me into the den. And, although I knew my parents would not disapprove, I could not bring myself to enter. My adventurous explorations of the past led me to believe that carefree ambiance within was but a varnish of fraudulence, an artifice. Even at eight, I knew a high price was being paid for a moment of surrender.

My parents were not abusive. They appeared to have ample love to give, ever more amplified by their frequent binges. They always seemed to want to cuddle when their speech was slowed and their eyes opaque. They were notably less tolerant when the opacity cleared and the euphoria dwindled away. I wanted so much to touch them when the clouds of opium had dissipated, but they were so edgy and removed that I could only get their attention through acts of defiance and rebellion. I remained just one arm's reach beyond their grasp, and whether I placed myself there or they kept me there, I was never quite sure.

When I turned twelve, my parents were quite popular with my friends. Their myopic generosity often yielded pot and acid, for which we were grateful—until we left the house. We would scorn them as we consumed their gifts. And as they sat in the den and smothered their minds, remarking on how cool they were, my friends and I would trip along and ridicule them.

It was early that summer that my parents took my friend B and I into the city and into Golden Gate Park. It was the "Summer of Love," and I had found my "Never-Never Land." The meadow was littered with hundreds of hippies smoking pot, drinking wine, and dropping acid. One could hear the "Plane," the "Dead," or "Big Brother" playing on the stage, and a precarious lightheartedness prevailed over the crowd. I could see that no one dared crack this delicate, hand-painted egg, for inside was the

dragon, waiting to hatch and destroy us all.

So we just stumbled along, believing everything we said about free love and expanding our minds. B and I both lost our virginity that summer to men, women, and ideals. I tried everything and everyone, and with each new experiment into greater consciousness my spirit seemed to seep from my body until I was filled with every substance but myself. I was orphaned to the meadow that summer, not going home for weeks at a time. I became a weathered, cynical, worldly old man and I wasn't even a teenager yet.

Three years later, my mother died the day after Janis, with a syringe lying next to her arm. She was a good addict, though, for the syringe was empty. And so was I when I found her. I gathered up her stash and the rest of her works before I called the police—the same police who escorted me to jail four years later for dealing. In prison, I traded what was left of me for dope, cigarettes, and safety.

In 1976, I received a letter from my father, claiming he had been clean for six months and that he had been attending a group called Narcotics Anonymous. I couldn't bring myself to believe him. My father had been such a determined addict, and the thought of him not being so was unimaginable. After all, from my experience, the only time an addict stopped using was when she died. It was implausible, but I was curious. So when I was released a few months later, I paid my father a visit. When I first saw him, I did not recognize him. For one thing, he smiled, some-

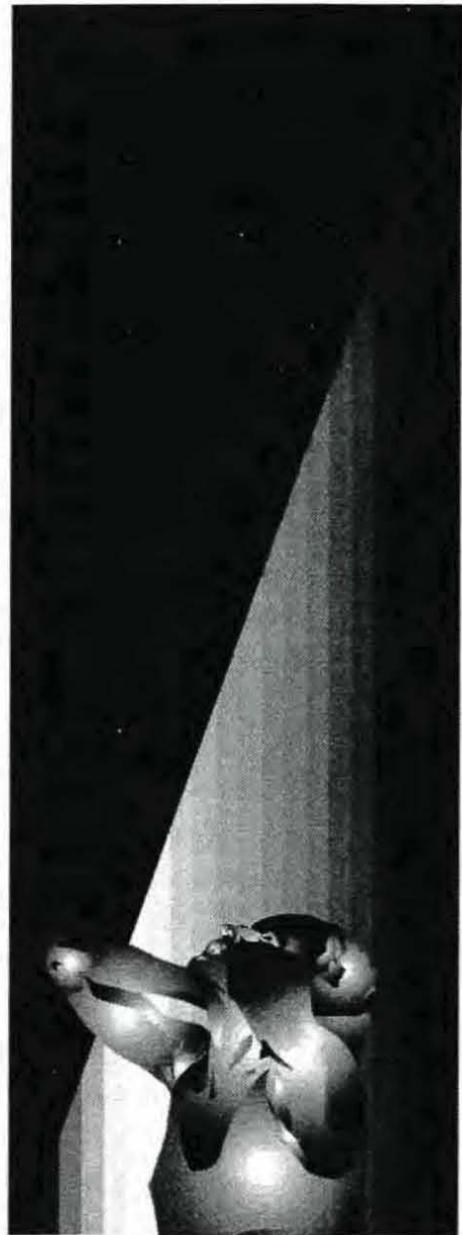
thing I had not seen him do since my mother died. He had gained weight, and talked about things like recovery and spirituality. Who was this man?

I agreed to go to these NA meetings with my father, still quite the unbeliever. The first thing I heard in the meetings was hope, although I didn't recognize it as such until later. I allowed myself to become a part of, in spite of what I thought I comprehended to be similarities between these meetings and the ideals of the people in the meadow almost ten years ago. They spoke of understanding, of free love—an unconditional love. For the first time in ten years, I felt my spirit trying to regain entrance into my being. I shared this feeling with another member, as I had been taught to do, and that member was my father. He said he knew what to do.

So we packed a picnic lunch, grabbed a blanket and a candle, and headed off for Golden Gate Park—to the meadow. We spread the blanket upon the grass and ate our lunch. Afterwards, we lit a candle in remembrance of my mother, and for the first time since her death, I grieved. When I began to cry, my father suggested that I lay flat on my back. I did, and when I asked him what this was all about, he told me it was time to invite my spirit back. I laid there looking up into the wispy, cloud-filtered light and began to feel hope, to feel whole. The diaphanous sunlight bathed me in warmth and comfort. And all was as it was: imperfect, but possible. I have remained clean and my life continues to be bathed in light. Today, when I

think of light, I think of warmth and clarity. I am no loner afraid of the darkness, for I carry the light within me.

DF, Tacoma



Viewpoint



Thoughts on the way we close meetings

NA has become a way of life for me. When I first arrived in the fellowship, I was given some extremely good advice. They told me to go to meetings, pick a home group, and find a sponsor. I did all of that, and I truly believe that all that good advice has shown me the way to my four years clean time.

In addition to all of that, they told me to get involved in service work, so I did. Sometimes I wonder if maybe I took that piece of advice a bit too far! But by doing service work, I have learned something about the Twelve Traditions. I try to follow those Twelve Traditions while doing service work, and that has led me to

follow them to the best of my ability in my daily life as well.

To me, it's not enough to work the Twelve Steps. I need to work the Twelve Traditions, too. I find that following the Twelve Traditions at home, at work, and in the meetings creates a great sense of harmony in my life. Without the Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous, my recovery would not be whole; there would be something missing.

The problem that I am having, and apparently this problem has been around for years, is with the use of the Lord's Prayer to close meetings. In my home group, we choose not to do that. As a matter of fact, it is not used throughout my whole area. I do not understand why it is okay to quote a piece of literature from the Bible, though it is not okay to bring a Bible to an NA meeting and read from it. I see this as a violation of our Twelve Traditions. We have traditions to protect ourselves from ourselves, and if we choose to observe some, but ignore others, then there can be no protection.

I don't have a problem with the Lord's Prayer itself. I feel fine saying that prayer at church or at home, but it has no place in Narcotics Anonymous. My area chooses to use only fellowship-approved NA literature

to close the meetings. We use "Just For Today" or the Gratitude Prayer. These are both from NA literature. Neither one violates any traditions; instead, they keep a sense of unity.

When I do attend a meeting where the Lord's Prayer is used, it ruins the whole experience for me. I then choose not to attend that meeting again. When the circle is formed, I join, because of the unity. I feel unity in NA when we form a circle with our arms around each other. We show unity, and we show love. I will not break that circle, but I will not say the Lord's Prayer. It does not give a unified message.

I am extremely grateful to my home group and my home area because they feel as I do. But it makes it difficult to go on the road and participate in what I believe is a tradition violation.

Tradition Four states, "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or NA as a whole." I believe that the use of the Lord's Prayer is affecting NA as a whole. It affects NA as a whole in the same way it would if an "NA meeting" were using literature from another fellowship.

I love Narcotics Anonymous, and because of my love for this fellowship I can write this article. I have learned that my experiences are important, as well as my hopes. My hope for today is that we as a fellowship become unified in all matters, including the closing of meetings.

Anonymous

Change needed, but not in program

My name is C and I'm a grateful member of Narcotics Anonymous. I thank a power greater than me (whom I call God) that I'm alive. Narcotics Anonymous has been my home since 28 May 1986.

The experience, strength, and hope I got from my sponsor and others is a big reason I've kept coming back. When I first heard about Motion 39, I thought, wow... here we go.

Then I really thought about it. My experience in my first days, when I heard the word "God," was frightening and intimidating, until I learned later on in my recovery that this is a spiritual program, not a religious program. We have had the gift of Narcotics Anonymous since 1953, with the same Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions since then. So if it works, don't fix it.

There are hundreds of thousands of recovering addicts in the world. I think it would be sad to change something that works for all these people. I thank God for our Twelve Steps and

Twelve Traditions; they have saved my life many times over just as they are.

Changing the program is not the answer. NA changes addicts—not the other way around! The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions have given me the courage to change myself and the wisdom to know that's what's really needed.

CL, Oregon

Language in steps can limit our understanding

I am a recovering addict, my name is J. Having just read the May 1994 issue of *The NA Way*, I feel compelled to write. You asked for my opinion, and being a good addict, I happen to have one.

First I must say that I agree with "J" in the article, "A Series on Sponsorship." I don't have answers for everyone else either. If I have your answers, then I must take responsibility for the results in your life. I would rather leave results to a power greater than myself—a power I choose to call God.

Since I got clean in June of 1992, there have been two major controversies in the area in which I live.

The first was over the Lord's Prayer. I listened to both sides of this issue. I personally am not offended by this prayer, but I listened to people whose understanding of God was different than mine. After that, I have developed the opinion that if we are a spiritual, not religious, program, this prayer has no place in our meetings. It is a religious prayer, and it does offend some of us.

The second controversy I survived was about reading the "clarity statement" in our meetings. Some people think this statement is trying to tell us what we can and cannot say. In my opinion, it only suggests that we identify as addicts and then goes on to explain why. If newcomers really are important to us, why would we want to confuse them?

Which brings me to my opinion on the God and gender issue. I think language such as "God as we understand God" couldn't possibly be offensive to anyone. I believe that as soon as you add a gender reference you limit who or what my God can be. Who says my God has to be male or female? "God as we understand God" gives us all the freedom to choose.

Please, let's try to remain open-minded and willing to accept change. Let's try to create unity among us instead of distance between us.

JC, California

From our readers



How I came to believe

The room was packed. It was my second meeting, the first being in a detox center where I was staying. I searched the crowd, catching the eyes of the clean-cut people who had introduced me to NA. We nodded and smiled at each other.

I watched as people called out greetings, hugged, laughed. I wished that someday I could be like that.

I didn't get much out of that meeting, or so I thought. The speaker was very moving, and I marveled at how he could pull himself up out of the gutter and accumulate many years clean. Being a little housewife druggie, I found it hard to relate to the bikers and street people, until I started identifying with the feelings. I suppose I expected a lot out of these meetings. Cure me. Love me. Make me feel good about myself. Right now or sooner!

The phrase, "Keep coming back!" seemed to stick in my head, so I did keep coming to meetings, and eventually I got a sponsor.

At first, I was really turned off by the mention of God. After attending more meetings, I began to understand more about the spiritual aspect of the program and my own personal choice in the matter. Reading the Basic Text and talking to my sponsor helped.

I saw that other members had and were using some sort of Higher Power to guide their lives, and it was really making a difference.

I had prayed to God in the past, and came to the realization that he probably heard me fine, but it takes a lot of willingness and patience to hear, understand, take this guidance, and use it.

My sponsor suggested that I sit quietly each day, read a small poem, prayer, or meditation, and just open myself to the possibility that there was something out there—a greater, loving, powerful force, just for me.

I prayed to my God for the willingness to believe and trust. I heard it said that God works through people, places, things, so I asked him to show me.

Turning it over to God was giving me some trouble. Why should he have to deal with my mess? Wasn't it my responsibility? My sponsor convinced me that God really wanted to help me handle things, and I tried hard to believe and let God.

Well, a wonderful and moving coincidence did occur in my life, and it made me the believer I am today. What a wonderful gift to receive! Love this recovery stuff!

BC, British Columbia

Comin'up

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GERMANY

Lower Saxony: 24-26 Nov.; 10 Years in Bremen Convention; info: 0421/50 39 49; 10 Jahre, Burgerzentrum, Am Nonnenberg, 28 239 Bremen/Oslebshause, Germany

INDIA

West Bengal: 12-14 Jan. 1996; First Calcutta Area Convention; Kishore Bharati Krirangen, Jadavpur, Santoshpur, Calcutta; info: please address fax to Sunil J. 0091-033-294948; NA Calcutta, PO Box 16105, Calcutta 700 017 India

Maharashtra: 26-28 Jan. 1996; 4th Bombay Area Convention; St. Xavier's Villa, Khandala; info: (0091) 22-627-1904 or (0091) 22-642-6520; fax: (0091) 22-605-0460; BACNA, PO Box 16489, Mahim, Bombay 400 016 India

PHILIPPINES

Manila: 12-14 Jan. 1996; 1st Philippines Regional Convention; Manila; info: please address fax to Tata 632-8100279; Convention, PO Box 8535, Dasmariñas Village, Makati, Metro Manila, Philippines

UNITED KINGDOM

Greater London: 12-14 Apr. 1996; 7th Annual London Convention; London, England; info: 0171-538-0422; fax: 0171-515-5300

UNITED STATES

Alabama: 24-26 Nov.; Greater Birmingham Area Conv.; rsvns: (205) 324-5000; info: (205) 925-0388; Box 110805, Birmingham, AL 35211

California: 26-28 Jan. 1996; 1st San Fernando Valley Area Conv.; Burbank; rsvns: (800) 840-6540; info: (818) 753-5395

2) 5-7 Apr. 1996; 5th So. California Regional Spring Gathering; Manhattan Beach Radisson Hotel; rsvns: (800) 333-3333; info: (310) 693-5110; Box 2543, Orange, CA 92669

Florida: 23-26 Nov.; Palm Coast Area Conv.; rsvns: (407) 547-0590; info: (407) 471-5993; Box 3151, West Palm Beach, FL 33402

2) 25-28 Apr. 1996; North Atlanta Area 20th Annual Reunion and Fun in the Sun Conv.; Panama City Beach, rsvns: (800) 224-4853 info: (404) 248-9155; 2480 Briarcliff Road, Box 243, Atlanta, GA 30329

Georgia: 12-14 Jan. 1996; 8th Central Savannah River Area Conv.; Augusta; info: (706) 796-2964 or (706) 733-2383; Box 15863, Augusta, GA 30914

2) 15-18 Feb. 1996; 15th Georgia Regional Conv.; Crowne Plaza Ravinia Hotel, Atlanta; rsvns: (770) 395-7700 or (800) HOLIDAY; info: (770) 787-7834; Box 1653, Monroe, GA 30655

Idaho: 12-14 Apr. 1996; 7th Southern Idaho Regional Conv.; Holiday Inn, Pocatello; rsvns: (800) 465-4329 or (208) 237-1400; info: (208) 236-8954; Box 4342, Pocatello, ID 83201

Illinois: 11-12 Nov.; Greater Illinois Regional Mini-Conv.; Holiday Inn, Gurney; rsvns: (708) 336-6300; info: (815) 637-2824

2) 23-25 Feb. 1996; 8th Chicagoland Regional Conv.; Chicago; info: 9 am to 5 pm CST call (708) 848-2211, 7 pm to midnight CST call (708) 891-0759; 212 S Marion, Oak Park, IL 60304

Kansas: 30 Dec. 1995 - 1 Jan. 1996; 2nd United Kansas City Area New Year's Conv.; Lenexa Holiday Inn, rsvns: (800) 465-4329; info: (816) 363-5368; Box 45105, Kansas City, MO 64171

2) 5-7 Apr. 1996; Mid-America Regional Conv.; Ramada Inn, Hutchinson; rsvns: (800) 362-5018; info: (316) 241-6230; Box 3926, Topeka, KS 66604

3) 26-28 Apr. 1996; Living Miracles Conv.; Mount St. Scholastica Conv. Center, Atchison; info: (913) 367-1197 or (913) 367-3867; 714 N 3rd, Atchison, KS 66002

Louisiana: 3-5 Nov.; 3rd New Orleans Area Conv.; New Orleans; rsvns: (800) 824-3359; info: (504) 948-4289

2) 3-5 Nov.; 14th Camp Recovery; Lake Bistineau; info: (504) 262-1664

Maryland: 29-31 Mar. 1996; Chesapeake/Potomac Regional Conv.; rsvns: (800) 654-5440; info: (301) 515-9484; Box 8006, Silver Spring, MD 20907

Missouri: 16-18 Feb. 1996; Cabin Fever Prevention Convention; Lodge of the Four Seasons, Lake of the Ozarks; info: (314) 581-5771; Box 7114, Jefferson City, MO 65109

2) 7-9 June 1996; Show-Me Regional Conv.; send speaker tapes before 31 Dec. to: Box 1226, Cape Girardeau, MO 63702

New Jersey: 30 Dec. 1995 - 1 Jan. 1996; 3rd Bergen County Area Conv.; Saddle Brook; rsvns: (800) 228-9290; info: (201) 791-7984; Box 864, Lodi, NJ 07644

2) 23-25 Feb. 1996; 6th Cape/Atlantic Area Conv.; Seaview Marriott Country Club; rsvns: (800) 432-8000; info: (609) 863-9156; Box 231, Ocean City, NJ 08226

3) 29-31 Mar. 1996; Capital Area Conv.; East Windsor; rsvns: (609) 443-8000; info: (609) 882-5692; Box 741, Trenton, NJ 08604

4) 24-26 May 1996; 11th New Jersey Regional Conv.; Berkeley Carteret, Asbury Park; rsvns: (800) 776-6011 or (908) 776-6700; info: (908) 826-2148; send speaker tapes before 1 Dec. to: Box 576, Keyport, NJ 07735

North Carolina: 12-14 Jan. 1996; Western North Carolina Area Conv.; Asheville; rsvns: (704) 667-4501; info: (704) 253-8789; 59 Pleasant Ridge Drive, Asheville, NC 28805

Ohio: 24-26 Nov.; Greater Cincinnati Area Conv.; rsvns: (513) 931-5712 or (513) 671-4209; info: (513) 542-5195

Oregon: 24-26 Nov.; Mid-Willamette Area Conv.; Wilsonville; info: (503) 390-1457 or (503) 390-5872

Pennsylvania: 9-11 Feb. 1996; Mid-Atlantic Regional Learning Conference; Harrisburg; rsvns: (717) 234-5021; info: (717) 236-1288; MARLCNA, Box 523, Camp Hill, PA 17001

South Carolina: 16-18 Feb. 1996; 7th Central Carolina Area Conv.; Hilton Head Island; rsvns: (800) ISLAND1 or (803) 842-4402; info: (803) 798-5408; Box 23534, Columbia, SC 29224

Tennessee: 22-26 Nov.; Volunteer Regional Conv.; Memphis; rsvns: (800) 228-9290; Box 242135, Memphis, TN 38111

Texas: 8 Nov.; 16th Dallas Area Anniversary; info: (214) 240-7890

2) 23-25 Feb 1996; Texarkana Area Conv.; info: (903) 547-3092 or (903) 793-3421

3) 5-7 Apr. 1996; 11th Lone Star Regional Conv.; Dallas/Ft. Worth Airport Hyatt; rsvns: (214) 453-1234; info: (214) 245-8972; 1510 Randolph #205, Carrollton, TX 75006

Utah: 8-10 Mar. 1996; 3rd Northern Utah Area Conv.; Holiday Inn, Ogden; info: NUACNA, Box 242, Ogden, UT 84401

Vermont: 3-5 Nov.; Champlain Valley Area Conv.; Burlington; rsvns: (802) 658-6500; info: (802) 864-9119

Virginia: 5-7 Jan. 1996; 14th Annual Virginia Conv.; Holiday Inn, Hampton; rsvns: (800) 842-9370 or (804) 838-0200; info: (804) 877-4921; Box 1449, Hampton, VA 23661

West Virginia: 3-5 Nov.; Mountaineer Regional Fall Conv.; Cedar Lakes, Ripley; rsvns: (304) 372-7860; info: (304) 727-9230

Back Issues

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The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous

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

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What is Narcotics Anonymous?

NA is a non-profit 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.

My gratitude speaks
when I say
and when I share with Others
The NA Way