

THE NA Way[®] MAGAZINE

May 1996
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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 had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean. This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only one requirement for membership, the desire to stop using. We suggest that you keep an open mind and give yourself a break. Our program is a set of principles written so simply that we can follow them in our daily lives. The most important thing about them is that they work.



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

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The NA Way Magazine welcomes the participation of its readers. You are invited to share with the 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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From the editor



A variety of views

It's just as I suspected. There's a lot of great recovery out there—perspectives that challenge the opinions we've formed, new insights that enrich the pages of this magazine month after month.

The articles featured this month are no exception. From RH's story of commitment beyond the basics to BG's hilarious take on the same subject, we've got some great stuff this month.

A big thank you to those who contributed to this issue. To those who haven't yet written, what's stopping you? As this issue should clearly show, there's room for a wide variety of views on any given subject. We look forward to receiving yours. (Don't forget to include a signed copyright release form.)

A reminder about "Comin' Up"

The NA Way is happy to run announcements for your upcoming NA events.

We must have a minimum of two-and-a-half month's notice in order to print your event announcement in the monthly issue of the magazine that corresponds with your event. In other words, if your event is in June, we need to know about it by 15 March in order to get it into the June issue of *The NA Way*.

If you want your event to run in more than one issue, we need even more notice. We do our absolute best to run the information as far in advance as possible. Your best bet is to let us know about your event as soon as you've set dates for it, booked a location, and established contact phone numbers and/or an address. It's never too early to let us know.

CT, Editor

Commitment: living as my word

When you think of an addict, words like integrity and commitment don't usually spring immediately to mind. In fact, we addicts are known for our difficulties with commitment. How many times have you sat in a coffee shop waiting for someone in NA to show up, only to be blown off entirely or left waiting for a half-hour? (A good time to have an *NA Way* handy!)

How many times have you elected a trusted servant who simply never showed up to handle the commitment, or who flaked out after a short time in the position? How many times have you been the flaky one? These things are common, right? Therefore, addicts are people who can't handle commitment, right?

Well, let's challenge that for a minute. In fact, thinking back to our using days, I don't think that a more committed bunch of people exists on this planet than addicts. I was singularly focused on my one important commitment in life, and I was willing to go to any lengths to fulfill it. As my disease progressed, I was willing to

pay greater and greater prices in humiliation, degradation, loss of relationships, and on and on to fulfill my commitment. So even on that very basic level, the problem was never that I lacked commitment; it was simply that my sense of commitment was misplaced.

Then in early recovery, when I really started to love NA and got hooked in, I could be seen at almost every meeting in town, every NA function, every coffee shop gathering. I had shifted my commitment from something life-draining to something life-giving. That was good, and in fact it's how NA works on many levels: we begin to pursue recovery in much the same way we pursued drugs.

Drugs were once my method of shifting my perception of reality so that I could deal with it, and now NA is my method of doing that. And isn't that the basic element of spirituality shifting our perception of reality and, therefore, changing our relationship to it? But that's another article. For purposes of this one, my point is the one we often hear at meetings: "If you pursue this program with even half the commitment you gave to using, you'll do fine."

Still, as I soon began to discover, this was a pretty primitive form of commitment. It served its purpose well, but eventually more refinement in my approach to commitment became necessary. Growth has always been like that for me. Just when I reach a new plateau and start to get comfortable on it, a higher one begins to materialize out of the mist, and I get less comfortable settling for

the one I'm on. "Grow or go," as they say. It's one of those predictable cycles in recovery.

With good sponsorship, I began to see that I needed to get committed to a few basic things in NA if I was ever going to learn about commitment in general. It wasn't enough to just show up places. I needed to select a home group and start coming early and staying late, being there every single week, helping out with the set-up and the clean-up, giving the newcomers another familiar face they could count on to be there for them. I needed to take on service commitments and learn to follow through to the end. I needed to show up places on time, and keep a pocket calendar if necessary to show some basic respect for my fellow members by being where I said I would be when I said I would be there. I needed to commit to building a relationship with my sponsor, and later with sponsees, getting together regularly, working steps, following through on direction. All within the arena of NA, I had many building blocks to use to learn the basics of commitment.

I think the next plateau with commitment came out of the mist when I started to apply these same principles outside the program. Having learned the basics of commitment in NA, I could now apply them in other areas of my life.

I had a real crisis around developing a meaningful commitment to a woman, for example. I had never been faithful in my life, and that pattern didn't change just because I quit using drugs. I had to hit a painful

wall and dig a lot deeper for the commitment needed there.

And jobs, man, I had some very basic things to learn about commitment in this area. Just showing up for work on time, sticking out the hard times, being willing to follow through with the less interesting work, not calling in sick because I didn't feel like going to work, the list of lessons in commitment goes on and on.

In recovery, I completed a college degree, which I started when I was using, but what I learned in college about living pales in comparison to what I learned in the NA recovery and service arenas. By being willing to keep my eyes open to the next plateau, and by stepping up to it when "grow or go" became obvious, I learned enough about commitment to start to achieve some success in all areas of my life.

After some time in recovery, I had a much subtler realization about commitment. It took some time for the haze to lift on this one. If you had asked me at ten years clean what I was truly committed to in life, I would have given you a very appropriate-sounding list, like my marriage, my service to God, service to NA, my kids, etc. (not necessarily in that order). It wouldn't have occurred to me to say, "I'm committed to being *right* about things, to looking *good* in other people's eyes, to avoiding embarrassment at all costs." This kind of list wasn't on my radar screen.

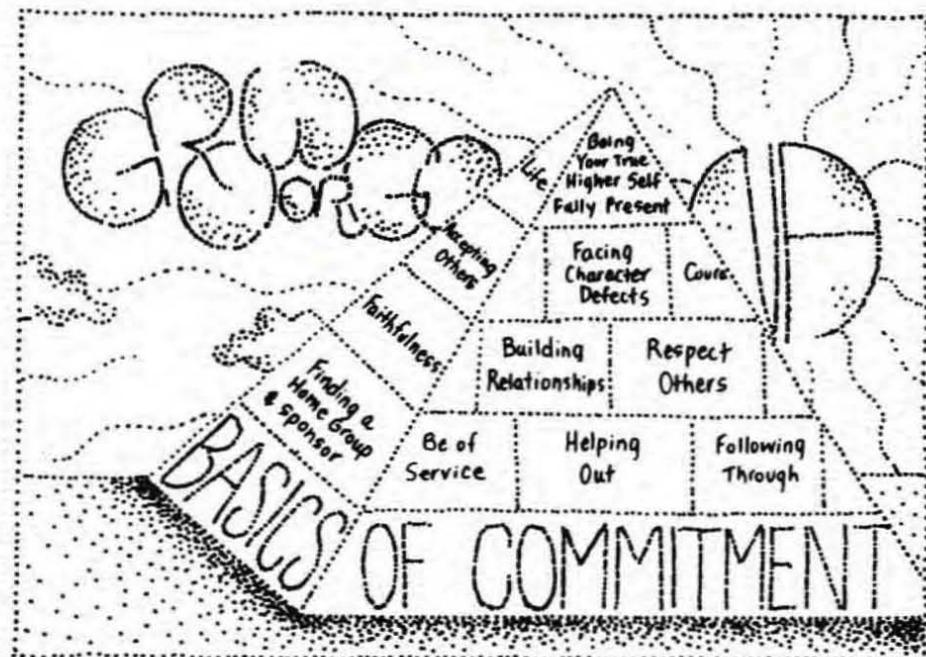
Yet those were some of the most strongly held commitments I had. Only through ongoing commitment

to the steps and to a spiritual awakening did those patterns start to emerge in my consciousness. I could see that I still had a fundamental lack of courage when it came to allowing myself to simply feel embarrassed because I took a risk and was left a little exposed. I was too committed to looking good to take many risks, so I was still seriously limiting my potential. The disharmony that existed in my marriage or my friendships was often due to the fact that I was more committed to being right than to being loving and forgiving and accepting of people.

This was really an interesting twist on the concept of commitment. I had come full circle. Once again, just as in active addiction, it wasn't that I lacked commitment, it was that some of my primary commitments were misplaced.

I began to consciously strive to live from a commitment to being loving and accepting and respectful, rather than to being right. I began to strive to live from a commitment to being a vulnerable, open human being out in the light where I could be seen (even when making mistakes), rather than to being guarded and protected from embarrassment. The Tenth Step was invaluable there. There is great freedom in being able to "promptly" admit when I'm acting like a fool rather than being so committed to looking good that I'm the only one who can't see I look like a fool.

Now, at sixteen years clean, I am in another kind of dance with the concept of commitment. It is a little harder to put clearly into words, but it has something to do with answering the question, "What, ultimately, *am I?*" Or maybe, what aspect of



myself do I most deeply identify with?

Am I my feelings? At some stage of recovery, most of us act like we are. When I am my feelings, I bounce all over the place, taking myself way too seriously. If I *am* this loneliness, or this sadness, or this anger, then I just surge in whatever direction my fickle emotions thrust me.

Or how about, "I am my history." Then my future is destined to be a continuation of my past, and I can only talk about life's situations in terms of my history. This is a setup for living as a victim rather than learning to be responsible. This list of aspects of myself that I might identify with most deeply could go on and on.

Today I prefer to think of myself as being my commitment. I am my word. If I am my commitment, then feelings can come and go, serving me rather than being my master. My history can sit back there where I left it, and my life can be shaped and colored by my committed actions today.

For this model of living, I have found it important to work on a strong vision for myself and my life. What do I dream about? What do I yearn most deeply to be? What do I most deeply value and aspire to as a husband and father, as a sponsor and friend, as a member of NA, as the servant of and co-creator with a loving God, as a professional? In fact, I have written a personal vision statement for myself which clearly spells out what I'm shooting for in all these areas. I use it regularly to focus myself on what I'm most deeply com-

mitted to, and seek to live from there. This is a very enriching exercise, and I recommend it to anyone.

Today, to the best of my ability, I strive to stay in touch with the fact that my life is very largely shaped by what I am committed to. And by "committed to," I mean commitments that actually drive my actions. It requires great vigilance to stay conscious of my true commitments, not falling back into acting from a commitment to looking good or being right, but acting on a commitment to being a fully present, honest, loving, courageous human being in all the different roles I play in life. Of course, my success in actually living up to all of this is mixed. That's why there are the Tenth, Eleventh, and Twelfth Steps, to help me readjust, refocus, recommit.

I don't know what the next plateau coming out of the mist will be on the subject of commitment, but I have my hands completely full with this one for right now. I see no ceiling on the growth potential for any of us pursuing the NA way of life. For today, I'm committed to living vulnerably, openly, courageously, and with great love. The formula for all of that is right in the steps and the NA lifestyle available to us all. As long as I continue to pursue that, I fully expect to keep reaping the restoration to sanity and the spiritual awakening that the steps promise.

RH, New Mexico

Committed to recovery

The meeting begins at 8:00 pm, but it was ten after. The coffee was ready, the literature was set out, but there was no one to read it except me. Okay, I knew that three members of our group were out of town, and another had a really bad case of the flu, but where were the other six or eight people who normally show up on Thursday nights?

One of my sponsees dashed in at 8:15, still in her bedroom slippers, apologizing for having fallen asleep while studying. She said the phone woke her up. It was a friend who wanted her to go listen to a band, and didn't understand that my sponsee's commitment to recovery made it more important to get to her home group than to go out and have fun. So, the topic was commitment.

We talked about the "normal" commitments: showing up to your home group every week, showing up for the meeting on time and staying till it's over. One day, a long time ago, when I was the only one at a meeting, I learned just how important it is to show up and stay the whole time. After hanging out in the meeting room for forty-five minutes, a newcomer walked in. It was her first

meeting, and it was the only one in town that day. Five-and-a-half years later, that newcomer is still clean.

We discussed accepting service positions only if you are fairly certain you will be able to fulfill the commitment of time and resources required. We talked about my service resume, which I had been joking about earlier with my sponsor. I had fulfilled my commitments in all but two of more than twenty service positions. One I had to resign when my work schedule changed; the other when my home group chose to use non-NA literature in a literature study meeting.

I learned about the importance of commitment to service while I was still in treatment. On Thanksgiving night, three men who believed that recovery and carrying the message were more important than turkey and football brought a meeting into the treatment center. That night I made a commitment to do for others what those men did for me, and have gratefully carried meetings into hospitals on a regular basis, but with special gratitude on every major holiday for the last six years.

We talked about an event that seems to sum up my commitment to service in Narcotics Anonymous. A few years ago, my husband was arrested for a debt. I was able to make arrangements for funds sufficient to cover the debt to be released from a trust account in another state, but it was Wednesday and the money wouldn't arrive until Saturday morning. Meanwhile, it was regional service weekend and I was supposed to be sitting in a subcommittee meeting at 9 am on Saturday, in a town

that was five hours away. I had been planning to leave Friday morning to get there in time to check into my room and go to a recovery meeting before RSC started. Now what?

There was no question in my mind. I told my husband I would be leaving on Friday for RSC as planned, and would be back on Monday to get him out of jail. My commitment to Narcotics Anonymous took precedence over my husband's comfort for a couple of days. He was not really surprised because he is as committed to service as I am. That night, he attended an H&I meeting in jail and told the members bringing in the meeting that I was going to the regional meeting, instead of hanging around town waiting to get him out of jail. They all got a big laugh out of the reason I had to go: I was the secretary of the regional H&I subcommittee!

As it turned out, there was a major flood on the west coast of Florida that night, and the regional meeting was postponed until the hotel could get all the water out of its rooms. The money came in on Saturday, my husband got out of jail, and we went together to RSC the next weekend.

The whole point of this story is that today I am committed to my recovery far more than I am committed to anything else. Everything I have today, and everything I hope to be in the future, is dependent on my recovery. I owe it to myself and to Narcotics Anonymous to be faithful to my commitments—all of them. That includes commitments I make to my family and friends, to my employers, and to my creditors. I spent most of

my life avoiding commitment, but today it is a necessary part of my life. I owe my life to NA, and I will never be able to give back as much as I have been given.

No one else showed up tonight, but my sponsee and I talked about commitment. We read from the Basic Text, shared lots of recovery stuff until the meeting was supposed to end, then stayed around a little while longer just in case a newcomer showed up—late and frightened.

MT, California

Letting go

As a newcomer, I heard someone say that the odds of a relationship surviving recovery were not good. My first thought? Not *my* marriage! Saving our marriage was the reason I came to NA in the first place. I knew our marriage would be okay if I could just stop using drugs. We would live happily ever after.

He didn't quit using. He said he had, but he hadn't. For the past three years, I have been finding drugs and paraphernalia in my house. He avoids me. Whenever I talk about meetings, conventions, or anything resembling recovery, his eyes glaze over.

I kept ignoring all the signs. Reality didn't belong in my fantasy. This worked until a few weeks ago. Then he dropped his bomb. Casually he said, "I don't think I love you anymore. You want me to be honest, don't you?"

Was he crazy? Of course I didn't want him to be honest. Christmas and the fifteenth anniversary of our marriage were only a few weeks away. We had dinner reservations for New Year's Eve. I had bought a new dress. I planned to bake cookies, decorate the house, and hang the new Christmas wall-hanging I had painstakingly stitched together. I love my husband very much. I love my dream—and it's dying.

Today I'm going on with preparing for Christmas—baking, shopping, decorating, and doing the best I can, but his words won't go away. "I don't love you" echoes in my mind. Slowly, my wall of denial is giving way to reality. I can't ignore this anymore. It's time to change.

I don't want this. It would be easier to be miserable than face life on life's terms. I no longer feel safe. I'm afraid of change, and I wonder what will happen to me. I feel a tremendous sense of failure. My pride tells me that I have been rejected and humiliated.

Like it or not, want it or not, I am learning. I thought my will was my Higher Power's will. I chose a self-serving Higher Power. It never occurred to me that Her plans might be different from mine.

Thank God for my friends in NA. In the past, I pushed people away in an attempt to avoid pain. This is no

longer an option. I can't do this one alone. The only way I'll survive this is to acknowledge and accept the pain. I need your love and support as I walk through the pain. At last, I have become willing.

I sense that part of the plan is to bring my fear into the light where it will die. Perhaps I am moving closer to freedom and a new way of life. Without knowing the meaning I have prayed, "Take my will and my life..."

The Third Step I took came from my heart. I wrote without understanding, relying on faith to guide me. The time has come for surrender and acceptance of a will that is not my own. Now I understand why my Fourth Step has been such a struggle; I didn't get the Third Step.

Through your love and the love of a power greater than myself, I will survive this. I will let you support me, and I will rely on hope and faith. Perhaps I will become a better person.

Tomorrow I will share this in a meeting. Until now I was afraid to. I didn't want anyone to see me cry. Thank you, NA. Together we will do what I could never do alone.

KJ, Washington

Committed

Commitment. Commitment. Commitment.

Make one. Keep one. To service, to a relationship, it hardly matters. NA just wants us to learn how to keep a damned promise, that's all. Yep, that's the whole point of all this commitment hype our sponsors and other assorted old-timers keep harping on.

Well, I've tried them all, and after the cumulative effects of hours and hours of selfless service, joyfully shouldering responsibility for everything from the suffering addicts on the street to renewed nuclear testing in the Pacific, I think that right now I'm ready for a new commitment—to an institution.

Yes, I'm going bonkers, and I'm having the time of my life with it. I've heard so many people share about this, and having walked down the path of recovery-inspired madness, pioneering for the rest of you, I'd like to share with you how to go crazy with style.

Service meetings

Don't just sit there having fantasies about where to hide the plastique. Make faces. That's right, silly faces. Get the chairperson. Start small. Raise one eyebrow and one side of your upper lip. Go back to neutral when the chair starts to react and everyone turns around to look at you. (You have to sit in the back of the room for this to work.) After everyone has turned back around and resumed whatever hideously boring discussion they were having, wait a few seconds and do it again. This time, plant one finger up your nose, too, and wiggle the other fingers. Back to neutral. Don't get caught! Keep doing this, slowly adding wilder and more fiendish expressions to your repertoire until the chairperson begins chewing on the dais in frustration. Deny making faces. Lovingly suggest a doctor for the chairperson.

Before you start this, cultivate an expression of innocent bewilderment and learn to look at people as if you suspect *they* might be going bonkers.



NA Picnics

Eat weird food, and offer it to others. Blue food coloring can do wonders for almost anything. A small bag of kitty litter into which you've placed a few small chocolate bars before leaving your house will also raise a few eyebrows (at the very least).

NA Meetings

Share in Pig Latin. Swear words may be unacceptable to most these days, but in Pig Latin, they're almost fit for high society. Even the ucking-fay oring-bay stories you've told fifty billion times might get interesting again. At least recite the Serenity Prayer—Od-gay, rant-gay e-may e-thay erenity-say oo-tay cept-acay... Learn to do it fast, as fast as everyone else is saying it normally. It may catch on. After all, the "Keep coming back, it works if you work it, and it won't if you don't, so work it today, and don't go away, and..." chant has been parroted by hundreds of thousands and is now circling the globe, gaining popularity in every language spoken by our worldwide fellowship.

Od-gay, rant-gay e-may
e-thay erenity-say
oo-tay cept-acay



MERCHANDISE



NA Conventions

Get hold of a walkie-talkie and find out the names of the people who are supposed to have walkie-talkies. At intervals, identify yourself by one or another of these names and report various crises like speakers not showing, and a riot in the hospitality room because the coffee pot ran dry. If those fail to cause a stir, just announce, in serious tones, a high stakes poker game to be held in the hospitality room at 2:00 am. If you can't get hold of a walkie-talkie, don't worry. There's still plenty of opportunity for acting out. You could always put decaf in the hospitality room's coffee pot. Or maybe that's going too far.

BG, California

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| AIRPORT | FUN | REGISTRATION |
| BADGE | HOSPITALITY ROOM | SERVICE |
| BANNER | HOTEL | SHARING |
| BANQUET | JACUZZI | SHUTTLE |
| BUS | LOBBY | SIGHTSEEING |
| CELEBRATION | MAIN MEETINGS | SIGNED SHEET |
| CLEAN TIME COUNTDOWN | MARATHON | SPEAKERS |
| COFFEE POT | MERCHANDISE | TAPES |
| COMEDY SHOW | PACKAGE | THEME |
| COMMITTEE | PARKING | TRAVEL |
| DAIS | POOL | UNITY |
| DANCE | PROGRAM | WALKIE TALKIE |
| ENTERTAINMENT | PUBLIC INFORMATION | WORKSHOP |
| FELLOWSHIP | RECOVERY | |

Home Group

SO, I OFFERED MY HONORED SERVICE TO MY AREA'S CONVENTION COMMITTEE -



I KNEW, WITH MY FABULOUS ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS, KEEN FORESIGHT, GREAT LEADERSHIP ABILITY, AND A METICULOUS ATTENTION TO DETAIL... MY PARTICIPATION WOULD PROVE INVALUABLE.



THE COMMITTEE AGREED, AND SAID THEY HAD A VERY IMPORTANT JOB THAT MY TALENTS WERE PERFECT FOR.



Newsletters



How about service?

From *The New Life Messenger*, the Ottawa, Ontario area newsletter

In the past several months, I have attended NA meetings all over this great city of ours. I have been attentive and have participated regularly. It hurts me to have discovered a couple of disturbing conclusions about the "Fellowship" of NA.

The NA Fellowship is always in need of trusted servants at every level. When I first committed to NA, I made a recovery plan. My plan included the basics for clean survival: plenty of NA meetings, finding and working with a sponsor, conscious contact with my Higher Power, and service to the NA program. It was explained to me that without the help of the people at the group, NA would not be the fellowship it is today.

At every NA meeting, the chairperson asks for announcements and the GSR gives an update of the minutes from the previous ASC meeting. Participation at business meetings gives me a chance to get involved in NA. This is my opportunity to "do" and "say" where it counts, not while sharing at meetings, or during fellowship. I have since attended these meetings and have learned that I do have a say in how the program is and can be. My opinion is heard, and it counts, but only if I am there. My opinion of how the program is and should be doesn't count during a gripe session over coffee at the local hangout after a meeting.

I have chosen our newsletter to be part of my service to NA, the program that has given me a life. I also volunteer at the group level on a regular basis. When I hear the GSRs asking for help, I wonder if some recovering addicts are becoming complacent. Are they expecting everyone else to do the service while they collect the benefits? Isn't that like getting something "fronted" to you? I have to be aware of old behavior. I'm still in debt from my past. Through service work, I am beginning to break even, and I look forward to prospering. If you're feeling like there is something "not right" about the NA program, perhaps it's time you looked at your

program. It could be that you're ready for service, especially at your home group.

Try getting to a business meeting, make some coffee at your next meeting, or ask the secretary where you can help. The program needs people, and we are all the people it needs.

JM

What does "100% NA" mean to you?

From *What's Happening*,
Winnipeg area newsletter

Recovery, unconditional love, and acceptance

I found out about Narcotics Anonymous when I was in a treatment center. I am eternally grateful to those people who were in treatment with me, because they brought me to my first NA meeting. A few months ago, I was feeling a lot of confusion about my recovery. I was feeling somewhat uncomfortable and unsafe in my home of NA, with my family of choice.

When I walked through the doors of NA two years and five months ago, I found a group of loving and caring addicts who welcomed me with open arms, open hearts, and open minds. These were people who loved me and

accepted me just the way I was, until I started learning how to love and accept myself; people who listened to me share what was on my mind, what was in my heart, and, most importantly, what I was experiencing in my life. You know about the awful, excruciating, empty, desperate, lonely, unbearable, black, bleak pain of that huge void or hole I felt inside myself. They knew what it felt like.

When I first arrived, I was absolutely terrified and overwhelmed by anger, resentment, and rage. I had no idea what was going on in these meetings, what the readings and sharing meant, and I hadn't a clue about the Twelve Steps. The Twelve Traditions sounded like they were written in a foreign language.

I had no idea how to "walk the walk" or even "talk the talk." And yet, when I came into these rooms, for the first time in life, I felt safe; I felt like I finally belonged somewhere; I felt like I had come home.

I found a fellowship of people who felt like I did, and, thank God, they shared about it. I found a group of addicts who told me, "It doesn't matter what you did or how you got here; it doesn't matter what you say or how you say it. You'll be okay. Just keep coming back!"

They told me all these things by their actions: by giving me all those hugs. The unconditional love and acceptance that I felt when I walked into the rooms of NA was what attracted me to this program—and it keeps me coming back.

Eventually, I found a sponsor, a woman who has always loved me and cared about me; who has never

Continued on page 25

26TH
WORLD CONVENTION
OF NA



Show Me
How To Live

St. Louis, Missouri, USA
August 29, 30, 31 & September 1, 1996

An Open Letter to All Members...

Well, we suppose you've heard by now. NA is growing... growing at a rate and in ways we hardly imagined a few years ago. And if you ever want to see the evidence of all this growth in one place, all you have to do is come to a world convention. A world convention also seems to have all the things that challenge NA as a whole—plus a few of its own. There's a variety of languages spoken in NA; our members with special needs must be accommodated; getting to the convention site must somehow be managed; registration should be accomplished without having to stand in line for hours; and there should be enough merchandise. Most of all, we want our members who come to the world convention to enjoy our fellowship's celebration of recovery.

Making sure this happens requires that we take definite steps to ensure that our fellowship's diversity is properly supported. Last year, at WCNA-25, members from over twenty countries attended the convention. Anticipating such attendance, we translated the convention flyer into seven languages. While English was the official language of the convention, simultaneous translations in six languages were provided in the main meeting room throughout the weekend. Several bilingual meetings took place. Multilingual staff and volunteers were placed in key areas to help convention-goers find their way around and get their questions answered. We provided discount travel packages to the convention from as many places as possible. We had greeters stationed at the airports on the heavy arrival dates to assist travel-weary and bewildered members. The result was that we had the most diverse worldwide celebration of recovery in our history.

It is in this spirit that we would like to plan for all world conventions. We plan to translate the registration flyer from now on. We plan to continue to provide simultaneous translations equipment at all world conventions. We will make any accommodation possible for members with special needs. We plan to negotiate discount travel packages wherever possible.

We need your help. Don't wait until you register to tell us if you require translations assistance or have special needs. Please contact us as soon as possible so that we can arrange for the things you need. We also need your ideas. We are committed to making every world convention a special celebration of recovery for all who attend. Any input you have that will help us achieve this goal is more than welcome.

Please direct all questions, requests, and input to the World Service Office, (818) 773-9999, extension #172.

Thank you,
Board of Directors
World Convention Corporation

WCNA XXVI Registration

PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION CLEARLY

Last Name _____ First Name _____
Address _____
City _____ Province/State/Country _____
Zip/Postal Code _____ Telephone () _____
Additional Registrants _____

"Confirmation notices will not be mailed to you for any registration received after August 1st."

EVENT	PRICE	QUANTITY	TOTAL
Registration (before 7/1/96)	\$30.00 X	_____ = \$	_____
Late Registration (after 7/1/96)	\$40.00 X	_____ = \$	_____
**Stand-Up Comedy Show	\$15.00 X	_____ = \$	_____
**Live Concert	\$30.00 X	_____ = \$	_____
**Saturday Jazz Breakfast	\$15.00 X	_____ = \$	_____
*11oz. Coffee Mug	\$7.00 X	_____ = \$	_____
*Heavy Embroidered Tee-shirt	\$15.00 X	M _____ L _____ XL _____ XXL _____ = \$	_____

*Limited to one of each per registrant paid before 7/1/96.

See "SPECIAL MERCHANDISE OFFER" on back page.

**Limited seats available.

Newcomer Donation: \$ _____

Total Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

METHOD OF PAYMENT: U.S. Check Money Order Credit Card

Enclosed \$ _____ or charge my: AMEX VISA MasterCard Discover Diners Club

Charge Card # _____

Signature _____ Expiration Date _____

Do you need translations? If yes, what language? _____

Please specify any special needs: _____

Please fax credit card registrations to the WSO at (818) 700-0700

or

Make checks payable to WCNA XXVI and mail to:

WCNA XXVI

c/o World Service Office, Inc.

PO Box 9999

Van Nuys, CA 91409-9099, USA

For more registration information, please call 818-773-9999 ext. 200.

Ground Transportation

- The Lambert International Airport is approximately a thirty minute drive to downtown St. Louis.
 - The MetroLink Rail is located on the upper level of the Main Terminal. The cost is \$1 each way.
 - Taxi cabs are available outside the baggage claim area. The approximate fare is \$18-\$21 one-way.
 - Shuttle transportation via Airport Express is located on the lower level of the Main Terminal at exits 7 & 13, and on the lower level of the East Terminal. The fare is \$8 one-way, \$14 round-trip.
- From Amtrak St. Louis Station and the Greyhound Bus Station take the MetroLink.
- If you are driving to St. Louis, parking is approximately \$10 per day.

Hotels

WCNA XXVI will be held at the America's Convention Center

- 1 Adam's Mark** — This deluxe hotel serves as headquarters for the convention and is located six blocks from the Convention Center. Rooms are \$99.00/night.
- 2 Missouri Athletic Club** — This private executive athletic club boasts very comfortable historic sleeping rooms located two blocks from the Convention Center. Room rate includes continental breakfast and full use of the all athletic facilities. Rooms are \$85.00/night (no triple or quad accommodations). Suites with one queen bed are \$99.00/night.
- 3 Doubletree Downtown Suites** — This quaint European-style boutique hotel offers beautifully decorated suites and is located immediately across the street from the Convention Center. Suites with one or two beds are \$99.00/night.
- 4 Drury Inn Convention Center** — This moderately priced hotel situated in a historic building located two blocks from the Convention Center offers free Quickstart breakfast, coffee, and parking for all guests. Rooms are \$89.00/night.
- 5 Drury Inn Union Station*** — This economy hotel is located seventeen blocks from the Convention Center along the Metrolink line. Rooms include free Quickstart breakfast, coffee, and parking for all guests. Rooms are \$89.00/night.
- 6 Hampton Inn Union Station*** — This economy hotel is located nineteen blocks from the Convention Center and is accessible to the Metrolink line. Rooms include free Quickstart breakfast, coffee, and parking for all guests. Rooms are \$85.00/night.
- 7 Holiday Inn Convention Center** — This moderately priced hotel is located on the west side of the Convention Center. Guests are offered free coffee in the morning, and free cribs for children are available upon request. Rooms are \$79.00/night.
- 8 Holiday Inn Riverfront** — This budget hotel is located five blocks from the Convention Center. Suites include kitchens, and pots and pans are available for a small deposit. Rooms are \$69.00/night. Suites with one or two beds are \$79.00/night.
- 9 Hyatt Regency*** — This deluxe hotel situated in historic Union Station is among the most beautiful Hyatts in the USA. It is attached to the old train station which offers many shops and eateries. The hotel is located fifteen blocks from the Convention Center along the Metrolink line. Rooms are \$99.00/night.
- 10 Marriott's Pavillion** — This moderately priced hotel, offering free cribs upon request, is located ten blocks from the Convention Center. Rooms are \$85.00/night.

* Limited Bus Shuttles between these hotels and the Convention Center will be available between 11:00pm and 3:00am when the Metrolink is not running.

WCNA XXVI Hotel Reservation

PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION CLEARLY

IMPORTANT NOTE: It is very important that your reservations are made BEFORE the August 1st cut-off date. Convention rates may not apply and rooms may not be available after above cut-off date.

READ CAREFULLY: Confirmation will be sent by the hotel to the individual named in Part I. If more than one room is required, this form may be photocopied. If confirmation has not been received within thirty days following your acknowledgement from the Housing Bureau, contact assigned hotel directly.

Send To:
WCNA Housing Bureau
 c/o St. Louis Convention & Visitors Commission
 10 South Broadway, Suite 1000
 St. Louis, MO 63102 USA

or Fax to (314) 621-9467

No telephone reservations will be accepted

PART I

Last Name _____ First Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ Province/State/Country _____
 Zip/Postal Code _____ Telephone () _____

PART II

NOTE: Rooms are assigned on a first-come/first-serve basis in the order received. If your first choice is not available, assignment will be made at next available choice. An acknowledgment of your room assignment will be mailed to you by the Housing Bureau. All changes and cancellations must be made directly with the hotel.

Select four choices from participating hotels. Enter name below:

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____
 (first choice) (second choice) (third choice) (fourth choice)

Arrival date _____ Departure date _____

Please check:	Names of additional occupants:		Check room type:	
	<input type="checkbox"/> smoking	1. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Single—One Bed/One Person	
	<input type="checkbox"/> non-smoking	2. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Double—One Bed/Two Persons	
		3. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Double/Double—Two Bed/Two Persons	
			<input type="checkbox"/> Triple—Two Bed/Three Persons	
			<input type="checkbox"/> Quad—Two Bed/Four Persons	
			<input type="checkbox"/> *Suite—One Bed/One or Two Persons	
			<input type="checkbox"/> *Suite—Two Bed/Two to Four Persons	

Special Request (i.e., handicapped room, etc.) _____

*Suite accommodations refer only to hotels #2, #3, and #8 as described on the previous page.

PART III

An advance deposit of \$100 is required for each room. Forms will be returned to sender if received without deposit. Checks should be made payable to the **WCNA Housing Bureau**. The **WCNA Housing Bureau** accepts no liability once deposits are transferred to the assigned hotel. Deposits will be forfeited for any cancellation not made in writing directly with the hotel at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled arrival.

Enclosed \$ _____ or charge my: AMEX VISA MasterCard Discover Diners Club

Charge Card # _____

Signature _____ Expiration Date _____

St. Louis, Missouri • 21



↑ METROLINK ↓

↑ METROLINK ↓

↑ METROLINK ↓



● ATTRACTIONS

- A America's Convention Center
- B Union Station
- C Greyhound Bus Terminal

■ HOTELS

- 1 Adam's Mark
- 2 Missouri Athletic Club
- 3 Doubletree Downtown Suites
- 4 Drury Inn Convention Center
- 5 Drury Inn Union Station
- 6 Hampton Inn Union Station
- 7 Holiday Inn Convention Center
- 8 Holiday Inn Riverfront
- 9 Hyatt Regency
- 10 Marriott's Pavillion

METROLINK

Station

Route

Airport

Discount Airfare

Special discounted airfare is available on American Airlines as follows:

- A discount is being offered to St. Louis from all American airline cities in the United States; Canada; San Juan, Puerto Rico; St. Thomas; St. Croix; Bermuda; and the Bahamas. Reservations can be made directly with American Airlines by calling (800) 433-1790 and refer them to **Star file #S3086PA**.

You must give them the Star file number in order to receive the discount.

- For international flights from Europe, Central and South America, special rates are available for travel no more than seven days and six nights. To purchase tickets, please call your local American Airlines office. Ask for the international congress desk and give them the **Star file #S3086PA**.

You must give them the Star file number in order to receive the discount.

Additional discounts to St. Louis from all international cities are available for groups of ten or more traveling together to the convention. For more information, please contact the WSO at 19-1(818)773-9999, extension #172.

Special Convention Merchandise Offer

For the first time, you can now purchase a convention tee-shirt and mug with your registration. In our effort to assist registrants in obtaining convention merchandise, a special seven-ounce heavyweight embroidered tee-shirt and a large eleven-ounce coffee mug can now be purchased if you register before the July 1, 1996 general registration cut-off date.

This merchandise is limited to one of each item per paid registration. Please refer to the registration form to place your order.

All purchased merchandise will be available to be picked up on-site at the convention.

Wish to Speak?

Speakers must be at least eight years clean for main meetings, and at least five years clean for workshops. If you would like to be considered as a speaker or would like to recommend someone for consideration, please submit a tape along with the speaker's name, address, telephone number, and clean date.

Consideration will also be given to individuals without a tape if they are recommended by their area or regional service committee. This recommendation should also be accompanied by the speaker's name, address, telephone number, and clean date.

All tapes and speaker recommendations must be received by May 1, 1996.

All submissions should be sent to the:

WCNA XXVI Program Committee

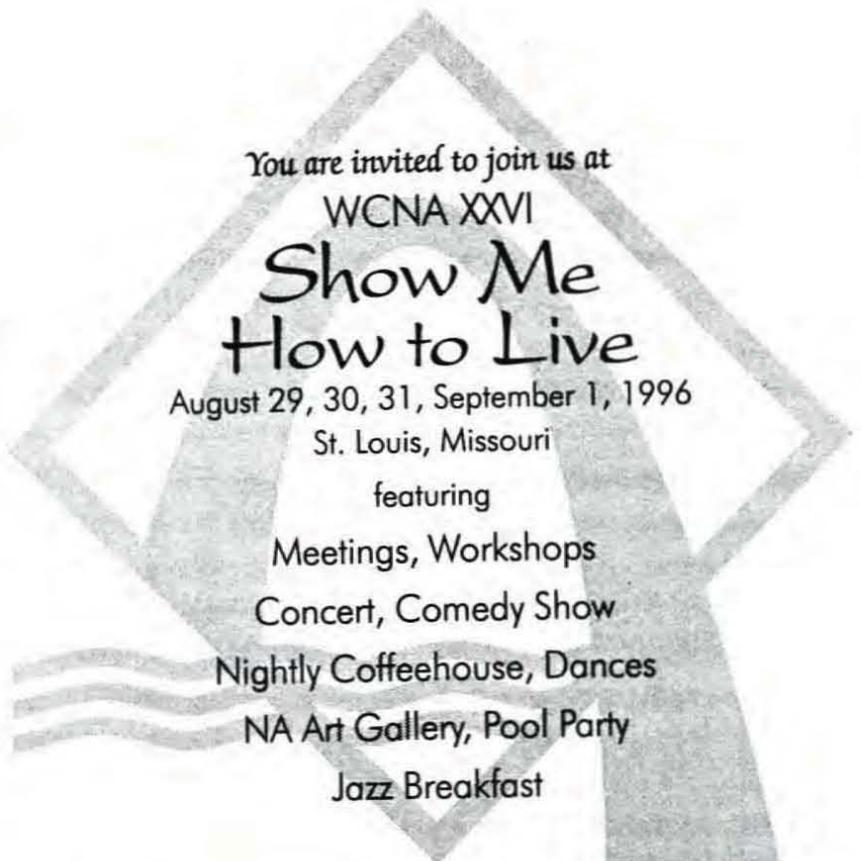
c/o World Service Office, Inc.

PO Box 9999

Van Nuys, CA 91409-9099 USA

Volunteering to Help?

If you would like to volunteer to help at the convention, or would like to chair a marathon meeting, please report to the convention information booth located in the Convention Center beginning Wednesday, August 28, 1996.



You are invited to join us at
WCNA XXVI
**Show Me
How to Live**
August 29, 30, 31, September 1, 1996
St. Louis, Missouri
featuring
Meetings, Workshops
Concert, Comedy Show
Nightly Coffeehouse, Dances
NA Art Gallery, Pool Party
Jazz Breakfast

This year's Host Committee welcomes you to enjoy the wide scope of restaurants, bistros, delis and shops. From shopping at Union Station or the St. Louis Center, to strolling the cobblestone streets of Laclades Landing, or attending a Cardinals Baseball game, St. Louis has something for everyone. Forest Park, and the coffee shops and restaurants of the Central West End, are just a short trip away.

Take a horse drawn carriage ride or attend the annual St. Louis Blues Festival being held the same weekend.

So meet us in St. Louis, the Gateway City, and
Show Me How to Live!

judged me for how I feel or the way I do things; who has watched me stumble along, making all kinds of mistakes along the way, and has helped me get back on my feet; who has never rejected me for the things I did before I got here and who never rejects me for the things I do today; who has shown me how to live life on life's terms; who has helped me learn about who I am through the principles in the Twelve Steps; who has helped me learn how I can live comfortably with other people through the principles in the Twelve Steps; who has guided and directed me to the spiritual awakening our program talks about as we make our way down the road of recovery from active addiction; a wonderful lady who has shown me how two addicts can share and care, the NA way.

Before I came to NA, I didn't trust anyone because, in active addiction, I always felt less than and I covered that up by acting better than. I always wore a mask and put on a good front.

Just for today, I know who I am; I can be honest about how I'm really feeling and I can speak my own truth (hopefully without hurting other people in the process). I can accept myself and love myself today, just as I am, with all my human limitations, weaknesses, and strengths.

When I walked through the doors of NA, you people promised me one thing: freedom from active addiction. I never dreamed that I would find freedom within myself from the awful, excruciating, empty, desperate, lonely, unbearable, black, bleak pain of that huge hole or void I felt when I

came into the program of NA. I have a loving, caring Higher Power guiding me and giving me strength today. You helped me find that spiritual being that has always been there for me. I just never knew it before.

For me, friends, that's what "100% NA" is all about. It's recovery from the disease of addiction. It's about unconditional love and acceptance. It's about being alive! So keep coming back!

EB

Putting in a hundred percent, feeling a hundred percent

When I first saw this question in the editor's column, I was concerned that it may become a contentious issue and create disunity within our fellowship. But my heart told me that anyone who read the question with an open mind would understand that it was not presented in a confrontational or vindictive manner. It was a simple question put forward in order to encourage the readers of *What's Happening* to contribute their personal experience, strength, and hope in living the NA way of life.

To answer this question I turned to the Basic Text, Chapter Two, "What is the Narcotics Anonymous Program?" The first thing that caught my attention was our dual primary purposes: to stay clean, and to carry the message.

Although these are both included in the same sentence, they are prioritized in a clear and specific order. The first priority for a recovering addict is to stay clean by all means available through the NA program of

recovery: attending meetings, getting and using a sponsor, working the Twelve Steps, and doing some service work.

For me, "100% NA" means that I attend only Narcotics Anonymous recovery meetings, that I have a Narcotics Anonymous sponsor, that I work the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous, and that my service work is committed to giving back, through the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship, that which has been so freely given to me.

"This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs." The NA program does not address the issue of a specific drug or substance. For me, "complete abstinence" means one-hundred percent drug-free. Other programs address specific substances. Narcotics Anonymous speaks directly to the disease of addiction: the self-centered thinking, self-concerned attitudes, and self-willed behavior, the compulsive, obsessive, and impulsive nature of my personality.

The Narcotics Anonymous Twelve Step program of recovery specifically states in Step One: "We admitted that we were powerless over our *addiction*, that our lives had become unmanageable." (Emphasis added.) It does not say that we were or are powerless over a certain drug or substance. The rest of our literature proceeds to speak about recovery from the disease of addiction, which we suffered from long before we picked up that first drug. It does not address the results or consequences of using any specific substance. With this in mind, taking responsibility

for my recovery demands that I focus one-hundred percent of my attention on the real problem: me—my thinking, my attitudes, and my behavior.

In my early recovery, when I was going to NA and another Twelve Step program, I struggled with being powerless over only the substance. At that time, the substance was the issue. Recovery was simply not using the substance. As I attended more Narcotics Anonymous meetings and became more familiar with the NA recovery program, I came to see that the problem went deeper than how the substances I used affected me or how I behaved when I used a specific substance. In NA I was able to understand and accept that I was the problem, and then admit one-hundred percent, complete, total, and absolute defeat to my addiction.

So, for me, Narcotics Anonymous recovery is looking at my whole life: one-hundred percent of it, before, during, and after my using career.

The message of recovery offered to me through Narcotics Anonymous is based upon the experience of hundreds of thousands of addicts who have proved that the lie is dead. It is no longer true that once one is an addict, one is always an addict. The message I heard was this: An addict, any addict, can stay clean, find a new way of life, and help other addicts find recovery.

It is a message of hope for the still-suffering addict isolated and alone in his or her own brand of insanity (for those who remain enslaved to their own obsessive thinking, negative attitudes, and impulsive behavior). The heart of NA beats when two ad-

dicts share their recovery to help each other stay clean.

Narcotics Anonymous has become a way of life for me. It replaced the desperation, degradation, jails, institutions, and death offered by my old self-centered, self-willed ways. I had to change one-hundred percent and give myself one-hundred percent to Narcotics Anonymous. I believe that if I lose touch with NA, I lose my life. Narcotics Anonymous is the only thing that has been able to reach through the insanity of my addiction and reawaken the deadened spirit within me. I tried many different things in the past: psychiatrists, religion, relationships, diets, occult practices, self-imposed and forced isolation. In Narcotics Anonymous I have found one-hundred percent freedom from the need or desire to use drugs.

I don't feel I have to defend or protect Narcotics Anonymous from some imagined threat from outside. I've made Narcotics Anonymous my home. For myself, the longer I stay around these rooms, the more important NA becomes. The more I practice the spiritual principle of honesty, strive to be open to God's will, and remain willing to change and grow within this fellowship, the more it means to me as a way of thinking, living, and being.

When I think about being one-hundred percent NA, I think of the spiritual principles of surrender, acceptance, unity, fellowship, and gratitude. Surrender and acceptance of the NA way of life open the door to an attitude of unity, fellowship, and gratitude. Surrender al-

lows me to be a part of, instead of trying to impose my will upon others. Acceptance is the gift I receive when I recognize the difference between what I want and what I get. Unity offers me the opportunity to experience and express unconditional love. The NA Fellowship offers me a place to learn and grow to my full potential as an expression of God's unconditional love. Gratitude is my hundred-percent commitment to Narcotics Anonymous as a way of life.

I might have developed these same principles and found the same growth in another Twelve Step program, but I didn't. I made the decision to change my old way of life and commit myself to the NA way of life. To me, to live one-hundred percent NA is simply a personal choice.

I believe the answer to the original question lies within the heart of each individual member in our fellowship who has the desire to stop using. The answer is a combination of each person's experience, strength, and hope and his or her commitment to this new way of life in recovery. I've heard it said that we only get out as much as we put in. It's true. If I hold any reservations and put only a limited commitment into my recovery efforts, I will receive only the equivalent amount of gratitude, which in turn limits my service efforts as an expression of gratitude.

Being the good little addict that I am, I want all I can get. Therefore, I live, eat, sleep, and breathe NA recovery. I try to put in a hundred percent so I can feel a hundred percent.

A grateful addict

Viewpoint



More on gender-specific language

I've been following the process of the "language" motions with great interest. Some of the most eloquent arguments on both sides have been printed in *The NA Way*, and have caused me to spend much more time thinking about and praying over the issue than I expected. I've wavered back and forth as various individuals shared their viewpoints. Many of the letters on either side presented very deeply felt and well thought out reasons for deciding yes or no on the final questions.

I've seen one viewpoint expressed repeatedly, and it disturbs me because it seems shortsighted. That is the comment, in various guises, that, "I had trouble with God or Him when

I first got here, too, but over time, I've come to accept . . . " I've experienced that same change in my outlook and opinion, over time, and most of us probably have. But what about those addicts who hear God referred to as a He, jump to the conclusion that we're talking Judeo-Christian doctrine, and never come back? They don't get the chance to be changed by the miracle of NA recovery; their assumptions—coupled with one simple word that we have a chance to change—sent them back out to the hell of active addiction.

It's great that those of us already here have found a new life through applying the steps and traditions as they were when we got here. But it would be selfish of us to insist that, just because *we* were able to get around our uncertainties over a particular word, others should be able to do as much. Our task in carrying the message is to make it as easy as possible for addicts to feel a sense of belonging; to eliminate as many excuses as we can for the suffering addict to reject recovery.

Sure, lots of us got the message in spite of a few difficult words. But we're the lucky ones. Let's not forget that others may not be as willing at first contact. Let's keep them coming back long enough to understand

their freedom to a Higher Power of their own understanding.

If the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous decides not to make this small change, I will still be a member. I will support—with as much humility as I can muster—the decision of our worldwide fellowship. And I will continue to do my best to defuse potential misunderstanding in newcomers by sharing about my own experience in coming to terms with a Higher Power who is neither male nor Judeo-Christian. I'm grateful to know that so many of us are examining this issue in a thoughtful, prayerful attitude, and I trust that our collective Higher Power will guide us, as always happens.

Anonymous

"This other disease"

Recently, a woman in our local NA community died. She had been clean for some years and contributed to the lives and recovery of countless addicts. As it happens, she died of AIDS. Needless to say, many people were sad, as was I. To our area's further misfortune was added an apparent confusion about how to address or accept the death of our members who succumb to the virus.

In this instance, some who shared their grief have used the words, "died as a direct result of this disease." This phrase is as unfortunate as it is incorrect. Death from AIDS is not death as a "direct result of addiction." In some instances it is an indirect result, but more correctly put, it is another disease entirely.

Did Jerry Garcia die as a direct result of the disease of addiction? He was, after all, in a drug rehab at the time of his death. Wasn't his general state of health affected by his addiction? Certainly it was. But the fact is that Garcia died of a heart attack. This is clearly recognized in the medical community as a disease in its own right—heart disease.

There is no doubt that we all pay a price for our time spent in active addiction. The responsibility for the damage this disease has done in our lives must be assumed. Whether that damage was to our finances, families, or health, some of it is irreparable and that's just life on life's terms. But it can be a life that on a daily basis begins to reap the benefits of being clean, the primary benefit being dignity. There is dignity in living and dying clean. We are all going to die someday, and if we're careful and lucky we will die clean and in recovery. Though admittedly of religious origins, a phrase in common usage to describe this phenomenon is "state of grace."

In agreement with this sentiment, NA has produced the eternity medalion, which is sometimes presented to our members at the time of their death. NA recognizes and celebrates clean time. This celebration is sig-

nificantly diminished, as is the dignity of the departed, if when someone dies of AIDS we refer to this as being a direct result of addiction.

At meetings, I have heard people who are infected with the virus refer to it as "this other disease," a useful and correct phrase. Clearly, a person with the virus does not necessarily have the disease of addiction, just as a person with the disease of addiction does not necessarily have the AIDS virus. Regardless of the method of infection, be it IV drug use, sexual contact, blood transfusion, or whatever, it is plainly a separate disease.

At a time when misconceptions and prejudices about the virus run rampant throughout our society as a whole, we in NA have a particular responsibility to get this right.

BB, New Jersey

Editorial reply

To a letter to the editor in the May 1995 issue:

I have been receiving *The NA Way Magazine* for about two-and-a-half years and have loved every issue. I usually sit down with the latest issue and read it from cover to cover, but in this issue I stopped at the editorial section. I am writing in response to the letter submitted by ML in New

York. I must have reread the letter five times, trying to absorb what the writer was trying to say.

The letter was basically about the Tenth Tradition and how *The NA Way* is supposedly violating it. I was especially disturbed when the author mentioned HIV, and that being tested is an outside issue.

How can an NA member's suffering over a virus as horrible as HIV be an outside issue? How can we tell addicts struggling to fight the most exhausting battle of their lives that their struggle should take place "outside"? How can we tell someone that they can't share their fears, feelings, frustrations, and successes on *any* given topic or disease?

Are we going to extend this "outside issue" definition to losing jobs or relationships? Don't mention the economy! Don't mention divorce! Those are outside issues. Don't share about how anything is affecting your life! Whatever it is, it's an outside issue.

I know many people in my home town that are infected with HIV, and I have seen the devastating effects of this virus both in and outside the rooms. It says in our readings that our goal is to become acceptable, responsible, productive members of society. Isn't it responsible to get tested? Even if that's an outside issue, isn't it okay to share about our personal experience with becoming responsible, including showing up for work, paying bills, and getting tested for HIV?

I have learned a great deal about the traditions by serving on our area's PI Committee for the past two

years. The Tenth Tradition states, "NA has no opinion on outside issues, hence the NA name ought never be drawn into public controversy." This tradition says that NA as a whole, meaning we as a fellowship, don't comment on or stand for or against any outside issues such as politics, politicians, abortion, animal rights, welfare, etc. But I as a human being have the right to express such opinions even in a meeting or in our fellowship's meeting in print.

I subscribe to this magazine to read about other addicts' recovery. It gives me hope and strengthens my faith. I believe that to censor one addict's opinion on a particular experience is ludicrous. This is not what the Tenth Tradition is about. Kudos to the staff and particularly to all of the authors and contributors of *The NA Way*. Keep up the great work and please don't change a thing.

Anonymous

Editorial reply

In response to "Recovering Youths or Recovering Addicts," January 1995:

My name is Nili and I'm an addict. I'm also a college student in New York. Recently I read this article,

and I could really identify with the author.

I, too, came to Narcotics Anonymous at a young age. I came in six months ago at the age of nineteen. At my first meeting, I remember feeling like I didn't belong there because everyone was so much older than me. I was about to leave when I heard someone read from the Basic Text, "Anyone may join us regardless of age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion, or lack of religion." That one sentence made it okay to stay. It told me that I did not have to justify being there. It made me feel welcome for the first time in my life.

Since that first meeting, I've gone back every night. People do not judge me because of my age. They give me the same unconditional love and support that they give people older than me. The first thing I learned in recovery is that age is just a number. A person twenty-five years older than me can help me as much as I can help him or her.

I sometimes get called "kid," but I've learned not to be insulted by it because it is just a loving nickname. The "nicknames" I had when I was using were so offensive that it makes me smile to be called something as innocuous as "kid."

Narcotics Anonymous is for anyone who wants to do something about their drug problem. If I didn't start coming to meetings, I would never have lived to be forty. NA has given me a life worth living. I feel lucky that I came into recovery young because now I have more years to live clean.

NM, New York

From our readers



Freedom today

I came into recovery at the age of forty, believing that I just needed to stop using for a little while so I could get my act together. I didn't believe there was anything seriously wrong with me, nothing I should change except the way I used.

The miracle started happening with a phone call on my first day clean and hasn't stopped since.

I became aware that I had to change. I was being exposed to recovering addicts who were striving to live with spirituality in their lives, and then spirituality began to appear in me. What a surprise!

I began to see that I had a choice. I could act and feel a different way. Old dogs do learn new tricks. I started to trust what I was seeing and hearing in Narcotics Anonymous.

I started to get honest with you and then with me. I started to feel respect for you and then for myself. I started to have unconditional love for you and then for myself. I started to have tolerance for you and then for myself. I saw you had a God of your own understanding, and I got one too.

I began to see life not as a punishment, but as a gift. I began to trust the process you talked about in meet-

ings. I began to like being hugged, noticed, cared about.

I became a different woman, a different wife, a different mom, a different friend.

My whole recovery has been in NA. I owe my last five years to NA. I have hope today because of NA. I have freedom today because of NA.

Anonymous

Thank God for the light

The article, "Overcoming Prejudice," in the November 1995 *NA Way* was an astounding example of one addict's experience with the principles of recovery. I was moved to tears by MC of Iowa. His words rejuvenated my waning spirit of recovery.

I'm African-American. I've been clean for six-and-a-half years. I've been losing ground to prejudice in my region. There have been conflicts and dissension both overt and subtle. It's frightening! It appeared as though everyone was wearing blinders, all refusing to address even the most obvious transgressions.

I first encountered this problem when I had about six months clean at my home group. Because of issues involving race, my group decided to move to another area. I was angered, appalled, and truly disappointed. I

almost left the fellowship. I felt the deepest pain of disappointment I'd ever felt. Somehow, recovery kicked in, and I kept hearing this voice in my head saying, "People will fail you, but God won't." So I continued to go to meetings.

I wish I could say that prejudice and racism have disappeared. I have experienced recovery from El Paso, Texas to New York City. For the most part, recovery is alive and thriving and spirituality is spreading around the globe, but yet, the specter of racism is still materializing, wearing the cloak of our disease.

Thank God for the light MC was able to see. Pass it on! I'll do what I can.

DW, Pennsylvania

An effort at unity

On 27 January, at an H&I and PI learning day in the Sun City area of coastal South Carolina, the topic of one of the workshops was NA writing. Several topics were presented, including the Loner Group, literature review and development committees, and *The NA Way Magazine*.

The group activity of the workshop was to collectively write an essay on the topic of the importance of unity in Narcotics Anonymous. More than twenty addicts participated. Each addict wrote his or her thoughts in one or two sentences. Then pairs were formed and the sentences combined. When the pairs had completed the combination of their writing, the pairs were then combined with other pairs into groups of four, then eight, each time digesting and combining the group's

product until all the participants' input was included in the product. Finally, all the groups combined into the full group of members. Only one member disagreed with the final product.

Most of the participants shared that the experience of "agreeing" about unity required the "practicing" of unity that they had not accomplished prior to this experience. The following is what the group produced about unity.

Unity

Unity is the common thread that holds us together. We set aside our differences and come together as a whole, in the spirit of cooperation. Unity creates an unconditional bond stronger than individual personalities. Unity helps keep a clear, concise message from being compromised. We gather strength in unity, knowing that we are never alone and have the support of many others.

Unity requires unconditional love and the ability to give and receive. Through this unconditional love, we accept each other and strengthen our unity.

An example of unity in Narcotics Anonymous is how we choose and support a home group. As a group, we carry the message of recovery to the still sick and suffering addicts.

Without unity, the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous would not survive.

Anonymous

Prayer writing: a recovery tool

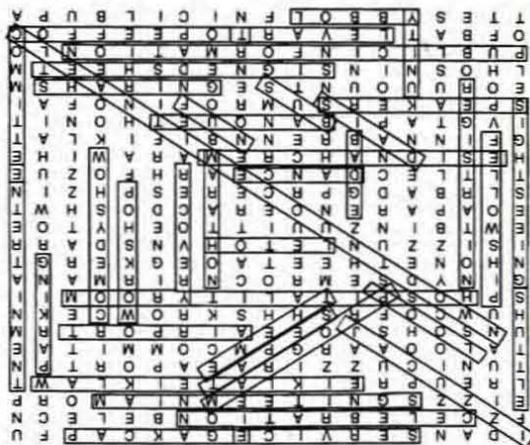
In NA, we have a handful of prayers we use at meetings and in service committees. So often, our prayers either directly or indirectly endorse some outside enterprise. Prayers often tend to present some understanding of God that might push away some members because it differs from their own understanding. It might just be that this will always be the case, and practice of the Eleventh Step will be relegated more and more to the individual rather than being an accepted group activity in NA.

One of the ways I practice the steps is by writing prayers relating to whatever step I am working. While this does not work for everyone, it seems that for me, it is important to write an inventory rather than just tell someone the exact nature of my wrongs. This leads me to believe that there might be some benefit in writing prayers and using them.

My prayers take many forms, but tend to focus on the spiritual principles of the step that I am working. Sometimes it is a formal practice in which I look in *It Works: How and Why* and write a prayer requesting that the spiritual principle contained therein be manifested in my life. Other times, the prayers are a brief expression of gratitude for the spiritual gifts I have already been given from working a particular step. Much of the form I use depends on my current understanding of my higher power, something that constantly changes as my conscious contact improves.

My fantasy is that if enough individuals in NA begin writing prayers, every now and then prayers suitable for our literature and use at meetings will emerge, prayers that have their origins in NA and are inclusive rather than exclusive. Even if my fantasy never comes to be, I get a benefit from being willing to take the action.

CPW, California



Comin' up

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AUSTRALIA

New South Wales: 3-5 May; Australian Regional Convention; Sydney; info: 61-2-3653652

CANADA

Alberta: 28-30 June; 6th Canadian Convention; Highway Motor Inn, Edmonton; rsvns: (800) 661-5193; info: (403) 450-3449; CCNA-6, 1907-36th Street NE, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6L 3N1

British Columbia: 17-20 May; Spring Clean, Gambier Island; info: (604) 527-2066 or (604) 323-1615; Spring Clean, PO Box 78051, Grandview RPO, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V5N 5W1

2) 14-16 June; 2nd Sunshine Coast Campout; info: (604) 885-6572; SCNA Campout, RR #1, S-14 C-39, Gibsons, British Columbia, Canada V0N 1V0

Manitoba: 7-9 June; Winnipeg Area Convention; Robert A. Stein Community Center, Winnipeg; info: (204) 586-4432 or (204) 774-5991; Box 25173, 1650 Main Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R2V 4C8

New Brunswick: 14-16 June; 6th New Brunswick Area Convention; Keddy's Inn and Convention Center, Fredericton; rsvns: (506) 454-4461 or (800) 561-7666; info: (506) 451-8492 or (506) 454-3465; Box 20064, Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada E3B 6Y8

Nova Scotia: 2-4 Aug.; 7th Nova Scotia Area Convention; Truro; info: (902) 477-1983 or (902) 469-1609; Back to the Basics, Box 65, Central Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada B3J 2L4

Ontario: 9 June; Baseball/Dunk Your Sponsor Day; Little Lake Park, Midland; 1-1/2 hours north of Toronto; info: (705) 538-0672; Dunk, Box 29030, Barrie, Ontario, Canada L4N 7W1

2) 12-14 July; North Western Ontario Area Convention; Thunder Bay; info: (807) 345-6936 or (807) 768-0879

3) 20 July; NA Family Recovery Days Boat Cruise; Midland Dock, Midland; 1-1/2 hours north of Toronto; info: (705) 538-0672; Boat Cruise, Box 29030, Barrie, Ontario, Canada L4N 7W1

MEXICO

Baja California Norte: 4-6 Oct.; Baja California Convention, Grand Hotel, Tijuana; rsvns: (800) 472-6385; info: (619) 661-6100, ext. 2123 or 52/66/815248 or 52/66/815242; CBCNA-4, 4492 Camino de la Plaza, Suite TIJ, Box 1080, San Diego, CA 92173

NORWAY

Vest Agder: 16-18 Aug.; Norwegian NA Convention; info: 47/38095521; NA-Kristiansand, Postbox 58, 4601 Kristiansand S., Norway

PORTUGAL

Lisbon: 26-28 July; Unity in Diversity, the 13th European Convention and Conference; Centro Cultural de Belem, Lisbon; rsvns: Hotel da Torre 351/1/3636262, Hotel Atlantico 351/1/4685170, Hotel Estoril Sol 351/1/4868541, Pensao Setubalense 351/1/3636639; info: ECCNA-13, PO Box 526, 2795 Carnaxide Codex, Portugal

SPAIN

Ibiza: 3-5 May; 14th Spanish Regional Convention; Ibiza; info: 34/71/805078; Convention, Apartado 1373, Ibiza, Baleares, Spain 070800

SWEDEN

Kramfors: 21-23 June; 8th Midsummer Regional Convention; Hala Folkhogskola; info: 46/8/61230525; Midsommarkonventionen, Box 5, 87024, Sandoverken

UNITED KINGDOM

Dorset: 28-30 June; 4th Wessex Area Convention; Commodore Hotel and Beaufort Community Centre, Bournemouth; rsvns: 44/1202/423150; info: 44/1202/789789; WANAC, Box 1980, London, England N19 3LS

UNITED STATES

Arizona: 24-26 May; Arizona Regional Conv.; Little America Hotel, Flagstaff; rsvns: (800) 352-4386; info: (520) 323-3001 or e-mail: jdbanks@azstarnet.com; ARCNA Web Site: <http://www.tucson.com/budzine/arcnax.html>

California: 17-19 May; Inland Empire West Area Retreat; Camp Seely, Lake Gregory; info: (909) 628-7808; Box 9413, Ontario, CA 91762

2) 14-16 June; 8th American River Area Campout; Orchard Springs Campground, Rollins Lake; info: Campout Committee, PO Box 823, North Highlands, CA 95660

3) 14-16 June; 4th California Mid-State Regional Convention; Fresno Hilton, Fresno; rsvns: (800) 649-4955; info: (209) 294-8667; CMSRCNA, Box 27253, Fresno, CA 93729

4) 23 June; 4th Annual Blues Fest; West Los Angeles VA Medical Center, Golf Course; info: (310) 822-4034 or (310) 390-0279; 1800 S. Robertson #227, Los Angeles, CA 90034

5) 25-27 Oct.; Southern California Regional Convention; Anaheim Hilton; rsvns: (800) 445-8667; info: (805) 265-8518 or (909) 824-9104 or (818) 342-1411; SCRCNA, Box 60046, Pasadena, CA 91106

Connecticut: 18 May or if rain 19 May; 13th Annual Pig Roast Pig Roast; Quassy Amusement Park; info: (860) 298-8951

2) 27-29 Sep.; United Shoreline Area Spiritual Weekend, Enders Island, Mystic; info: (860) 767-3299; USANA Spiritual Weekend, PO Box 354, Centerbrook, CT 06409

Florida: 16-19 May; Alabama/Northwest Florida Regional Convention; Holiday Inn Okaloosa Island; info: (904) 995-4076

2) 24-27 May; 6th Gold Coast Area Convention; Radisson Inverrary Resort, Ft. Lauderdale; rsvns: (800) 333-3333; info: (954) 961-2876; GCCNA, PO Box 23325, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33307

3) 4-7 July; 15th Florida Regional Convention; Grenelefe Resort, Haines City; rsvns: (813) 422-7511; info: (813) 874-2300; FRCNA, RSO, 2940 W Columbus Dr., Tampa, FL 33607

4) 9-11 Aug.; Uncoast Area Convention; Holiday Inn Sunspree, Daytona Beach; rsvns: (800) 767-4471; info: (352) 338-7929 or (352) 371-7918 or e-mail miked@dkmail.dkeep.com; UCACNA, Box 12151, Gainesville, FL 32604

Georgia: 7-9 June; 14th Piedmont Area Anniversary; Master Inn, Macon; rsvns: (912) 788-8910; info: (912) 746-7712 or (912) 956-5533

2) 8-11 Aug.; Midtown Atlanta Area Convention; Radisson Hotel, Courtland & International Blvds.; rsvns: (800) 333-3333 or (404) 659-6500; info: (404) 753-5206 or (404) 753-1831; Box 17557, Atlanta, GE 30316

Hawaii: 24-27 May; 10th Big Island Gathering; Mauna Kea State Park, Pohakuloa; info: (808) 325-0402 or (808) 967-8518; Gathering, PO Box 5415, Kailua-Kona, HI 96745

3) 14-17 Nov.; Hawaii Regional Convention; Kauai Marriot; info: (808) 821-1038; fax: (808) 245-7255; HRCNA, Box 1854, Kapaa, HI 96746

Idaho: 12-14 July; Southern Idaho Region Serenity in the Wilderness; Chemeketa Campground, Sawtooth Recreational Area, Stanley; info: (208) 467-9910; HDASCNA, Box 9291, Nampa, ID 83652

Illinois: 3-5 May; 11th Mid-Coast Convention; Ramada-O'Hara Hotel, Rosemont; rsvns: (847) 827-5131; info: (847) 872-2407 or (847) 625-0732 or (847) 263-9169; send speaker tapes to: MCC-11, PO Box 221, Ingleside, IL 60041

2) 10-12 May; South City Area Convention; Holiday Inn Mart Plaza, Chicago; rsvns: (312) 836-5000; info: (312) 387-1127 or (312) 752-6657

3) 24-27 May; 10th Kickapoo River Run Primary Purpose Area Campout; info: (217) 373-2063; PPASC, PO Box 1332, Champaign, IL 61824

4) 28-30 June; Flight to Freedom Campout; Sherwood Campground, Route 37, Ina; info: (618) 244-6027; Flight, PO Box 1561, Mt. Vernon, IL 62864

Indiana: 24-27 May; North Central Indiana Area Convention; Camp Mack, Milford; info: (219) 259-9384 or (219) 234-0550; NCIACC, PO Box 175, Osceola, IN 46561

Iowa: 5-7 July; Iowa Regional Convention; Holiday Inn and Convention Center, Waterloo; rsvns: (319) 233-7560; info: (319) 233-2906 or (515) 454-3026 or (515) 274-4347 or (319) 233-5011; Box 1886, Waterloo, IA 50704

Louisiana: 24-26 May; 14th Louisiana Regional Convention; Baton Rouge Radisson; info: (504) 291-4121

Maine: 7-9 June; Nature of Recovery; Camp Mechuwana, Winthrop; info: (207) 377-6895 or (207) 621-2989; Unwashed Group, PO Box 120, Winthrop, ME 04364

2) 20-22 Sep.; 13th Southern Maine Area Convention; Notre Dame Spiritual Center, Alfred; info: (207) 832-5129; SMASC, Convention Committee, PO Box 5309, Portland, ME 04101

Maryland: 27-30 June; Baltimore Area Convention; Hyatt Hotel Inner Harbor, rsvns: (800) 233-1234; Sheraton Inner Harbor, rsvns: (410) 962-8300; info: BACNA, PO Box 1331, Baltimore, MD 21203

Massachusetts: 19-21 July; Western Massachusetts Area Convention; Springfield Marriott; rsvns: (800) 228-9290 or (413) 781-7111; info: (413) 536-2468 or (413) 746-8306; WMACNA, Box 5914, Springfield, MA 01101

Michigan: 4-7 July; 12th Michigan Regional Convention; Flint Radisson; rsvns: (800) 333-3333 or (810) 239-1234; info: (810) 545-2179; MRCNA-12, PO Box 7116, Novi, MI 48376

Minnesota: 3-5 May; 3rd Minnesota Regional Convention; Radisson Hotel, Bloomington; rsvns: (612) 835-7800; info: (612) 823-4776; MNNAC, 4745 Bryant Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55409

Missouri: 7-9 June; Show-Me Regional Convention; Holiday Inn/Exit 96, Cape Girardeau; rsvns: (314) 334-4491; info: (618) 661-1527; SMRCNA, 320 N

Frederick, PO Box 1226, Cape Girardeau, MO 63702-1226

Montana: 21-23 June; 8th Montana Regional Gathering; Boulder Hot Springs; info: (406) 442-4705 or (406) 933-5723; Gathering, PO Box 133, Jefferson City, MT 59638

Nebraska: 4-6 Oct.; Nebraska Regional Convention; Beatrice; info: (402) 266-5808; NRCNA, Box 83872, Lincoln, NE 68501

Nevada: 19-21 July; 5th California-Arizona-Nevada Area Convention; Riverside Resort, Laughlin; rsvns: (800) 227-3849; info: (520) 763-9734; CANAC-5, PO Box 21975, Bullhead City, AZ 86439

New Hampshire: 21-23 June; Granite State Area's Fellowship in the Field; Bethlehem; info: (603) 645-4777

2) 19-21 July; Seacoast Area Campout, Freedom Under the Stars; Camp Wakuta, Freedom; info: Campout, PO Box 682, Dover, NH 03821

New Jersey: 24-26 May; 11th New Jersey Regional Convention; Berkeley Carteret, Asbury Park; rsvns: (800) 776-6011 or (908) 776-6700; info: (908) 826-2148; NJRCNA-11, PO Box 576, Keyport, NJ 07735

New York: 31 May - 2 June; Awakenings, the ABCD Area Retreat; info: (518) 465-5588 or (518) 462-2384; ABCD Area Retreat, PO Box 13504, Albany, NY 12212

2) 15 June; Clean in Queens Fundraiser; St. Helen's School Cafeteria, 157th Avenue & 84th Street, Howard Beach, Queens; info: (718) 848-4518

North Carolina: 26 May - 1 June; World Service Conference; Greensboro; info: (818) 773-9999; WSO, Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409

2) 19-21 July; 3rd New Hope Area Convention; Omni Durham Hotel; rsvns: (800) THE-OMNI or (919) 683-6664; info: (919) 409-3190 or (919) 405-2370; NHACNA, PO Box 25043, Durham, NC 27702

Ohio: 24-26 May; 14th Ohio Regional Convention; Radisson Airport, Columbus; rsvns: (800) 333-3333; info: (614) 488-1371; OCNA, PO Box 15284, Columbus, OH 43215

2) 12-14 July; 1st Dayton Area Convention; Days Inn South, Dayton; rsvns: (513) 847-8422; info: (513) 274-3380 or (513) 252-5840; DASCNACC, Box 578, 3470 Salem Ave., Dayton, OH 45406

3) 16-18 Aug.; Gateway to Freedom; Holiday Inn, Westlake; rsvns: (800) 762-7416 or (216) 871-6000; info: (216) 486-6644 or (216) 691-1024; Tri-Area Convention, PO Box 999, Shaker Heights, OH 44120

Oklahoma: 28-30 June; 8th Annual Mirror of Miracles Campout; Sycamore Valley Recreation Area, Wyandotte, Oklahoma; info: (918) 542-3471 or (316) 231-0903

Oregon: 24-26 May; Pacific Cascade Regional Convention; Eugene Hilton; rsvns: (800) 937-6660; info: (541) 342-7243 or (541) 929-6855; PCRCNA-4, PO Box 1581, Eugene, OR 97440

Pennsylvania: 2-4 Aug.; Unity Weekend; Brookdale Campground, Meadville; info: (814) 336-3527; CWPASCNA, PO Box 1281, Meadville, PA 16335

Puerto Rico: 26-28 July; Puerto Rico Regional Convention; Condado Plaza Hotel, San Juan; rsvns: (800) 468-8588 or (809) 721-1000; info: (809) 274-0488 or (809) 721-4267; Unidos Podemos, Box 362313, San Juan, PR 00936

South Carolina: 16-18 Aug.; Carolina Regional Awareness Weekend; Ramada Inn, Clemson; rsvns: (800) 288-2828 or (803) 654-7501; info: (704) 566-1974 or (803) 972-9441; Carolina Regional Service Awareness Weekend; CRSRC, 1327 Beeman Pl. #9, Greensboro, NC 27408

Tennessee: 3-5 May; Recovery on the Ridge; Big Ridge State Park, Andersonville; info: (800) 249-0012; Recovery on Ridge, PO Box 864, Knoxville, TN 37901

2) 10-12 May; NA in May in Memphis BBQ and Campout; Meeman-Shelby State Park; info: (901) 274-5071

3) 16-18 Aug.; Unity in the Mountains; Kingsport Inn, Kingsport; rsvns: (423) 247-3133; info: (423) 357-7464; MACNA, PO Box 5609, Johnson City, TN 37603

4) 27 Nov. - 1 Dec.; Volunteer Regional Convention; Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza, Nashville; rsvns: (615) 259-2000; info: (615) 391-3122 or (615) 361-3783; VRC-14, PO Box 731, Madison, TN 37116

Texas: 5-7 July; Houston Area Convention; rsvns: (800) 465-4329; info: (713) 473-7367; HACNA, Box 7649, Houston, TX 77270

Utah: 7-9 June; 10th Celebration of Recovery Convention; American Legion Hall, Vernal; info: (801) 789-6675; HUASC, PO Box 1476, Vernal, UT 84078

2) 19-21 July; Utah Regional Campout; Weber Memorial Park, Ogden; info: (801) 489-1321 or (801) 627-3832; send speaker tapes before 30 May to: URCNA, PO Box 994, Springville, UT 84663

Virginia: 9-11 Aug.; 10th Almost Heaven Area Convention; 4-H Education Center, Front Royal, Virginia; info: (304) 274-1522; CCC, PO Box 3329, Martinsburg, WV 25410

2) 4-6 Oct.; OLANA Unityfest; Virginia Beach; rsvns: (800) 926-4466; info: (804) 488-8056; Box 120484, Newport News, VA 23612

Washington: 18-20 Oct.; Pacific Northwest Convention; Holiday Inn Select, Olympia; rsvns: (360) 943-4000; info: (206) 382-0534; PNWCNA-19, PO Box 841, Kelso, WA 98626

West Virginia: 10-12 May; Serenity on the Lakes, Cedar Lakes, Ripley; info: (304) 372-7860 or (304) 727-9230; Mountaineer RSC, PO Box 2381, Morgantown, WV 26502

Wisconsin: 10-12 May; Never Alone in the Woods Campout; Camp Sinawaw, south of Manitowoc; info: (414) 686-0263

Wyoming: 27-29 Sep.; Convention on Unity; Rawlins; info: (307) 875-5867; CUNA-5, PO Box 325, Green River, WY 82935

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 Phone _____

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 Signature _____

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The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on NA 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 NA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every NA 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. NA, 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 NA 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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