

Identification common bond

1. Addictive behavior

As long as there have been people, addiction in the form of habitual recourse has existed. Addiction in the form of chemical dependence to drugs to induce synthetic states of oblivion or awareness become a major health problem as modern technology has made available not only the drugs themselves, but also the stresses and demands that bring out the potential for addiction, and help to activate it as with one member, although she drank heavily and experimented with drugs in high school, she never really used drugs seriously until she was thirty. She had an unhappy marriage, and she had the usual woes of a young mother. At the insistence of her husband, she sought psychiatric help for her "nerves". She sought help in this manner until she finally fell into N.A.

Another member knew he had an alcohol problem and knew sooner or later he would start drinking alcoholically, little did he know he already was. He felt as though he would be able to drink about fifteen years before before he would be in any trouble. He didn't know he had a disease or know about the progression of the disease. So, within a five year span there was no wife, no kids, no home, no business, no car, no money and no hope.

When one member got to A.A. in 1974, he knew instinctively that staying clean meant staying off all moodchangeind drugs as well. Since A.A. was for staying off booze, he didn't talk about his drug taking very much. He only occasionally mentioned his midnight drive to the padd fields outside Saigon when he was stoned or drunk, and the paranoia he felt the last time he smoked hashish in Algeciras, Spain. His taking of stelazine, a major tranquilizer, ~~out of his mind~~ altogether until when he came to N.A. it enabled him to talk freely about his drug useage.

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Add
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Upon adapting the new patterns of chemical abstinence one day at a time, going to N.A. meetings and ^{the} "HOW" of the program we came to see life in a new light, a whirl of confusion that was slowly spinning itself out. We confessed to be of addictive nature and therefore realized we were addicts. We found furthermore, that an addict using, differs from that of the established norm and is set apart by marked obsession (fixed patterns of thought, seemingly inescapable) and compulsion (a physical craving for the potent drug of our choice or any drug) and physical discomfort when we were away from our drugs for prolonged periods.

In comparing parts of our past with others it would seem that we all reach a point, sooner or later, when we say to ourselves or others "I just don't have a way to go, if I only knew what to do." We do have a common bond to our chemical addiction, of mysteriously twisted personalities. We have experienced that terrifyingly overwhelming urge, that need for something outside ones self. We know the feelings all too well. We share a bond of fear, anxiety, and anger that we are unable to control.

What we have in common is what we have all felt: the loneliness, the selfcenteredness, the misery, the despair, the pain inside us, and the empty numbness that will set us apart from our fellow man. The one thing we all share, the uniting factor, is that we all felt that we were unique, different, better than or worse than, but always separate. We had a very empty place inside us. We felt we were alone. Our pain surrounded us, but didn't fill the empty place inside us.

Old patterns are what got us into so much trouble using. Old patterns are sick patterns, however anything that "works" to help us make it through a day clean and sober is considered a new

Complete abstinence is one of the first patterns we use in our clean and sober lives. Vigilance, integrity, honesty, openmindedness and willingness to try, are all associated with strange and new patterns to the new comer and to clean and sober drug addicts as a whole.

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It all begins with that first surrender and admission. From that point forward each addict is reminded that a day clean is a day won, and any failure is only a temporary set-back rather than a link in an unbreakable chain. Every drug addict is a prisoner in his or her own mind, condemned to slow execution by their own sense of guilt. This the ultimate crime that allows a person to act against their true inner nature and keep doing things they don't really want to do. Not just criminal things but also doing nothing at all, all day long. We don't think a normal person can imagine just how empty a life can become, but if you don't feel like ~~like doing~~ anything, you don't feel like doing anything. We weren't focused on the fulfillment of life but on the emptiness and worthlessness of it all. Failure became a way of life and we could not even deal with success. The fear of loss of control had set in and we were afraid to try our anything different. We knew in our hearts that our foundation was shaky and we didn't want to think about it.

In Narcotics Anonymous, we are more concerned with recovery than plumbing the mysteries of addiction. We seek to change our personalities for the better, and our lives change for the better only after we have become ready to change ourselves. We realize that we are a part of the universe. As we change in our recovery, we are not really changing our basic nature, we need to change our reactions, thoughts, and attitudes. We begin to understand who we are. "Know Thyself" begins to make sense and we understand our basic identity. This gives us a sense of security without forgetting who we are. We become less compulsive in our thoughts and actions.

The lack of being honest in our addictions has led to a large amount of guilt inside of all of us. This guilt would drive us to use, and the using would keep us from going back and making amends all these things together would cause great misery. Being clean and sober we are able to take our inventories and make amends but most important of all we can be honest. we can admit our faults also we we are able to ask for help, neither of which would be possible without honesty.

Its Differences

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Prescription addicts are usually the last to find out, so we will put them first here. Legal doses of prescribed medication can addict a person because of unknown side effects, combination with other drugs or an inborn susceptibility to become addicted. The individual is usually unaware that any real problem exists until a prescription lapses or they begin to experience failure in their living.

They start losing their jobs, become divorced, find themselves without friends and are unable to account for those changes. They can in this condition indefinitely increase their dosages or types of drugs by various means. If at any point they make the basic connection between their use of drugs and the way things have been going for them,

they can begin their recovery by seeking help. If they persist in their use of drugs and the way things have been going for them, they can begin their recovery by seeking help. If they persist in their usage, they become insane by degrees. Denial can overcome the most obvious evidence of addiction and is the only way out. Well meaning family members can enable them to continue using by compensating for their inadequacies by getting them out of jams, giving them money and accepting their rationalizations. The addict is usually very effective in encouraging this sort of special treatment. It can in fact become their way of life. Recovery depends on ability to provide them with enough pain to where they want to recover. Prescription addiction is every bit as painful and horrible as the more notorious forms of addiction.

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Although we had used, misused, and abused medications for half of our lives, we never considered that we might be addicts. For us, the term "drug addiction" conjured up visions of street crime, fear of the law, and needles. As long as we chose to believe the drug addict lived in a skid environment, and because we did not fit the picture we had imagined, we could not be "drug addicts". We had never been arrested, had no fear of the law, and we were afraid of the needle.

We realize that a real addict is going to resist recovery and will usually find some way to convince us they have defeated us personally. Things we have shared with them will lose their validity, and won't interfere with their using. We put our trust in the group. If a person tells us that they can smoke pot and suffer no ill side effects, there are two ways we can look at it. The first possibility is that they are not an addict. The other is that the disease syndrome hasn't become apparent to them yet. We always try to be careful because we don't want to say or do anything that might prevent them from seeking help if the dope turns on them. We have several friends in the program regarded pot as their drug of choice, and we can relate to their despair and loneliness that drove them to seek help from the program.

We have found from our group experience that rigorous honesty is essential for the new member to surrender completely to the program. We have also found that complete surrender is the easier softer way to recover. Never have we seen a person fail to recover who has surrendered completely to our program and who works the Twelve Steps as a way of life. This fact has proven itself time and time again by the phenomenal growth of Narcotics Anonymous throughout the world.

It has become noticeable as our program has grown that many newcomers seem to come in with a false impression that may need to be corrected. In the instances we are talking about, the new man or woman

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seems to believe that they can barter non-usage for group acceptance. When the group fails to behave in accordance with the newcomers expectations, they seem to feel that it's OK to use. The sad thing about this is that it may take them a while to get the real message of our program; that if they apply the Twelve Steps to their problems with their addiction, they can learn to live drug free lives. If they happen to be addicts they can die never realizing that recovery is possible.

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Some of us had really thought of ourselves as outgoing, happy-go-lucky people, but we were wrong, and after years of depending on drugs and other people to make our decisions, we lost almost all ability to socialize and to be comfortable with ourselves.

At the end of our addictions we are consumed with terror and despair. We know for sure that we are dying and many of our friends are usually dead. No one can explain the incredible fact that addicts confirmed beyond hope in their addiction can and do reach for and receive help in Narcotics Anonymous.

II

UNDESIRABLE ALTERNATIVES Obsession & Compulsion

Over a period of years, old habit patterns become familiar, and many times the comfortable mode of our existence. Our egos were all blown out of whack. Then we became uncomfortable due to the progression of the obsessive and compulsive nature of our illness, chemical addiction. The old comfort associated with addiction was lost. Life was addiction - a lonely, miserable prison.

The way we understand insanity is poisoning one's self for no other apparent reason except that a compulsion or obsession drives the addict to desire his or her drug of choice so badly that there are not many things we would not do to procure that drug and mainly, ingest or inhale it. Insanity for us seems to occur in tragic cycles, much like Russian roulette, ~~that~~ ^{roulette} We are more or less forced to play because we have ~~tried~~ ^r and couldn't stop, or wouldn't. The wouldn't is simply the insanity. Insanity is standing in a bathroom with blood spattered all over trying to find a vein to fix that dime bag that wouldn't even get us well - - - Hopeless and Helpless.

We hopefully see that we are powerless over the situation of having an illness, an illness which is terminal, progressive and fatal. We cannot deal with the ^s obsession and ^v compulsion that comes with the illness. The only alternative is to stop using completely, to abstain from even the smallest quantity of drugs in any form. If we are willing to follow this course and to take advantage of the help available to us a whole new life can open up. No one can explain the incredible fact that addicts confirmed beyond hope in their addiction can and do reach for and receive help in Narcotics Anonymous.

N. A. is not a religious but spiritual program. The spiritual basis within is strong enough to support a person with our illness. As we re-enter society the 12 Steps are the roadmap to successful completion of the journey.

II.

ALTERNATIVES
TOTAL ABSTINENCE/DECIDING TO LIVE

When we ^{came} ~~came~~ ^{to} ~~to~~ the program, it was a life line; then it ^{became} ~~became~~ something we enjoyed. We need the spiritual comfort and fellowship that we find at all N.A. gatherings. We love being with people who understand us and whom we can easily understand. We have reached the point where we can't see life without N.A. Where else for an hour and a cup of coffee can you get a new life. When the drug goes and the addict works the program, strange and wonderful things begin to happen. Medical and legal problems often resolve themselves if only we avoid the next pill, ^{drug} ~~fix~~ and ^{do a} ~~toke~~. It is crucial that we maintain the memory of what the last ~~fix~~ ^{do a} did to us.

Through fright, desperation and god's grace, one member had been chemically abstinent for almost a year when he came into N.A. His problems had snowballed during that year and he had developed some severe emotional problems. The truth of the matter was that he didn't know how to live clean with no props. All he had going for him was that he wanted to learn how.

It all begins with that first admission and surrender. From that point forward each addict is reminded that a day clean is a day won and any failure is only a ^{temporary} ~~temporary~~ set back rather than a link in an unbreakable chain.

Any drug addict, who is clean and sober and without a compulsion to use, is a miracle. To keep the miracle alive is an ongoing recovery process involving personal growth in attitudes and awareness. It is important to remember that recovery is an abnormal state for us. We have to learn to live clean and sober. Making a clean decision is a very growing experience. Really being honest with ourselves, and thinking of both the negative and positive sides to things - Can I handle it ?, Am I realistic?, Decision-making is a little rough at first, especially when you have time to change your mind. Sticking to, succeeding at, and seeing that you have made the right decision is the reward. Before we got clean all our decisions were made on impulse. We never gave any thought to anything; even if we did, we would say to hell with it and carry through with the negative anyway. But It is getting better for us with practice and the help of our sponsors and our other N.A. friends.

We also learn mind control. We change from external to internal modes of orientation and behavior. We realize that we are responsible for the way we feel. We are no longer able to shift the blame, and we are aware that we create the world in which we live. We are the products of our own thoughts.

We have found it essential to accept reality. Since that time we have not found it necessary to ^atake anything mind-altering, and every day has been a beautiful adventure. Reality, as it is, is just fine with ^{us}~~me~~. Without drugs and ^calcohol, we have found that we can function like normal human

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beings, which means accepting ourselves and the world around us, exactly as it is. We learn that conflicts are a part of reality and learn to be grateful for them. We learn new ways to resolve conflicts instead of running from them. We begin to simplify them and we actually look upon them with gratitude and opportunities for progress. They are a part of the real world. We learn to handle problems, not to solve them. Everyone has situations, we have tended to make them problems. We really don't have any brilliant answers or solutions but we can honestly say that this program works! We can stay clean and even enjoy life, remembering "One Day At A Time" and not to pick up that first fix, pill, drink or toke.

The rewards of cleanliness are endless. We used to think that life would be so boring, a real drag without our highs, which gave us only superficial happiness. We were really screwed up in our addictions and our concept of what life was really about. Now that everything is changing and forever getting better, we give thanks to the N.A. program, for giving us a shot at the real thing.

When One member shares that reality^{it} is the biggest trip of all.

ONGOING RECOVERY
MENTAL
DEALING WITH NEW FEELINGS
EMOTIONAL STABILITY

III.

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We become aware that many of our feelings about sex and society were immature and based upon pride and ego. As we become more comfortable with our sexuality we appreciate more fully the meaning of living one day at a time. We get over the guilt of the past and worry of the future. We enjoy the now, we learn to survive both pain and pleasure. We endure frustration for we know that this too shall pass. We rid ourselves of absolutes, such as success or failure and begin to enjoy doing for the fun of it rather than shying away because we are not perfect.

Interpersonal relationships improve and we become less sensitive and suspicious. Our dependency upon acceptance and approval from others diminishes. We begin to understand the meaning of love. We recognize that we are growing from an immature need for love to a more mature giving of love. We begin to care about others. Our inappropriate emotional explosions decrease.

Entering a relationship, we have learned that we have to put our recovery first. If ever our feelings threaten our recovery we will have to pull back, if you feel another person is threatening your sobriety then you should make that person aware of it and the same goes for that person if you are threatening his or her sobriety. In our lives today we don't want to screen ourselves off from reality. If we're not perfectly happy, we want to change things to suit us or at least be able to face things as they are and accept them. We shouldn't want to live behind a smoke screen.

III. O B. Spiritual

We have no responsibility for our disease. Our ability to respond seems to lie in the area of our recovery. We can seek help from others afflicted with our disease who are enjoying lives free from having to use. In time we find that much more is possible in recovery than we could possibly conceive in the earlier stages of our recoveries. Our teachability hinges on our ability to admit our need for help. This humiliating admission is the beginning of the basic learning experience that gives us information on our disease and recovery. As we begin to apply what we have learned, our lives begin to change for the better. No one completely understands this process, but thank God we do not have to understand it for it to work for us. We learn not to question the ways of God. Instead, we look into our own actions and feelings. Writing down our belief has always helped many of us examine our belief. if we have trouble expressing our belief or writing it down, it is helpful to make sure we have worked step one. The ego deflation of step one generally opens minds because we feel bad and don't want to go on with the kinds of things we have been putting up with. Belief is the key. ^{like the second step says "We} It takes a firm belief in a loving God before we can possibly turn our life and will over ~~to~~ ~~with~~ with recovery in mind.

III On-Going Recovery 3 spiritual ①¹⁵

In Narcotics Anonymous, we have found that a spiritual experience is necessary to arrest our drug addiction. This happens as a result of applying the Twelve Step recovery program to our living situation, and upon a reliance in God, as we understand Him. The Twelve Steps chart the course to individual recovery; from the hazy days of powerlessness and unmanageability, to the various levels of spiritual awakening.

We get comfortable with the Twelve Steps, as one is with trusted friends. We love them and believe in the promise and hope that they offer. Following the Steps, living one day at a time, we can maintain an attitude that is essential in order for us to grow. We move forward in the Program, and we are comforted by the Steps. They are suggested only, but they are the principals that made our recovery possible. All of the Twelve Steps are essential to the spiritual maintenance of the recovery process, simply because they help us to participate in our own recovery. And, by the Grace of God, our actual participation in recovery provides the health we need to respond to life and to arrest the disease of drug addiction. We are grateful that the Twelve Steps and a reliance on a Higher Power have been proven as a means to arrest the disease of addiction.

If we find ourselves in trouble with our recovery after some time clean and sober, we have usually stopped doing one or more of the things that helped us in the earlier stages of our recovery. This can show up as an unexplainable depression or disorientation. But, it is really related to a poor spiritual condition, and can usually be remedied by a renewed application of the Twelve Recovery Steps.

III - On-Going Recovery. Spiritual (continued)

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Our own will and self-knowledge has proven useless against the power of addiction over our lives. We must have the help of a Higher Power, in order to arrest the illness and maintain cleanliness.

~~If you have calmness in your heart, you will find peace in your~~
~~our.~~ It is one of our basic beliefs that the best hope for any addict is the practice of personal freedom, through abstinence from drugs and the maintenance of a simple spiritual program. We believe in the power of a loving God to handle all that we cannot. We hope that by drawing this concept out of the shadows, all of our members can find a way to address and cope with all areas of our lives, so that we can better carry the message to the addict who still suffers. We find NA well equipped to provide the ongoing recovery we need for a new life, which we learn to enjoy, a day at a time. There is no need or opportunity for growth that the Program does not cover. Admission of powerlessness over our addiction and that our lives had become unmanageable is the First Step in recovery. It is hard for us, because, for years, we have been rationalizing our addiction and blaming other people, places and things for our difficulties. Through the miracle of this Program, we learn to look inward for the roots of our difficulties. We have found that, through changing ourselves, we automatically change our relationship to the whole. The recovery process begins with the admission of complete defeat. If there is any reservation in this admission, it leaves open the door to self-will, and can threaten our recovery and our lives, by limiting the sincerity of our desire for recovery and for a new way of life. This limitation can make us less willing to try out things which have worked for others in our condition. It can make us unteachable, and force us to repeat past errors, for an indefinite period of time.

From "day one", the Twelve Steps started becoming a part of our lives. At first, we were filled with negativity, and we only allowed the First Step to take hold. But, today, we have no fear of going insane or getting high, as we once did. We realize that those old

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feelings and fears were a product of our disease and that real freedom is possible for us now, if we want it. We learn to communicate our thoughts and feelings. In time, we lose most of the fear that had us completely within its grasp when we were still using. We even learn to let go of old guilt feelings about the past.

III Ongoing Recovery

3 Spiritual

The flood of old emotions and memories surfaced. It was time to deal with them or use. The only door open to us at this point was the third step. At this time we turned our will and our lives over to the care of our higher power as we understood him.

Our ways were so self destructive and egocentric, we hurt ourselves and those we love the most along the way. Learning a new way of living is a blessing from our higher power, giving us the ability to explore and experience through feelings. We thanked our higher power for the love that we receive and asked for his will for us, and the power to carry that out. We find the road sometimes long and weary, but we kept on, finding miracles when we stop^{ped} to smell the flowers as we go. Easy does it, but do it!

IV 1. Making meetings

At first we can do little more than attend meetings and that is plenty. We probably won't even remember a single name, word or thought from our first meeting. What we do remember is the feelings every human being craves, the feeling that we belong someplace.

In the first stages of our active withdrawal from drugs we used meetings, new friends, and sponsors to help us learn to feel good and deal with daily events without returning to drugs. We learned the importance of living only one day at a time. We don't have to make a commitment to stay clean for the rest of our lives. We only have to make the commitment for one twenty-four hour period. For all of us, meetings are our primary source of recovery.

By keeping it simple and sharing our experience of the disease concept with new people, we can give them knowledge that may save their lives. Most people just don't know about the progressive and incurable aspects of our disease until they come to the program and sit through a few meetings. Until they have their own understanding of the disease and how it has affected their lives they have little hope of ongoing recovery.

Our common experience shows us that when we first come into N.A. we fill the emptiness with meetings. The fellowship of recovering addicts who share with us begins to make us feel less lonely. We see Hope in the shining grounds around

III. Making meetings

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in the shining faces around us. For the first time in a long time we feel a glimmer of hope inside. Where before there was only despair. Narcotics Anonymous is a safe haven for addicts to seek help. Our program rests strongly in the accumulated experiences of those who have gone before so that we may avoid their errors, and benefit from their successes. How can we overcome our addictions? The answer is we will never overcome our addiction. We can deal with it by growing positively through meetings in N.A., talking sharing with people and best of all working the steps.

I ✓ Living Clean And Sober
2. Being Responsible Linda

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In working the second part of the first step, slowly a dramatic realization occurs. We've always had a lot of responsibilities, but we have never learned to take care of them. The daily routines that are necessary to maintain and manage a person's life, the ability to anticipate and respond to the demands of keeping a job, being a good mate, paying bills and generally taking care of business on time. Not just mechanically, but with love and concern.

Each day has been a living and learning experience and a lot of days have been a struggle. After years of being blinded from reality and struggling to survive, we are finally learning how to really live. Today we feel like we are becoming aware of everything that is around us for the first time. We are learning things about life, and finding out through asking. So many things we have learned by being clean, how to open a checking account, how to work with effort, and be honest. It's like we all have to learn how to live again.

The program recommends that we withdraw the addict from enough demands so that they have a better chance of meeting the demands that remain. That way we experience success at a basic and acceptable level. It is also recommended that we don't go overboard and swamp ourselves with a bunch of new responsibilities just because we succeeded in handling a few basics. We need a basis for living that is stronger than a physical or mental basis.

IV Living Clean + Serene
3 Freedom of Choice
A. Personal Freedom

Now that we are in N. A., we have a new outlook on being clean. We enjoy a feeling of release and freedom from even the desire to use. We find that everyone we meet has something to offer that we can receive,, and also needs something we can offer. Opening these doors and entering them can become a new adventure in living. Letting go of old ideas and entertaining the new ones can bring us a new way of life. We will know happiness, joy, and freedom.

The acceptance of spiritual principles allows us to experience our Higher Power and to let Him guide us. For all this we feel a deep feeling of gratitude for N.A. and the people. Automatically we may be grateful for having been given the grace to survive it all. Gratefully, we are surviving the insanity of the compulsion to use. Gratefully, the N.A. program works, ~~gratefully~~ we have each other and our Higher Power granting us fellowship together since "I can't, we can".

When resentful thoughts come to the surface, we can accept these feelings as an opportunity for spiritual progress. When we let go of the resentment and go with the gratitude, we can enjoy productive lives and provide a heartfelt example of clean recovery, unity and service in society. Today we have learned to associate these good feelings with gratitude. We have had to practice gratitude the way a one legged man snaps on a artificial leg. It would support us, but it has no feeling. In time, by living clean, the feeling comes back. We are grateful for the fact that we no longer have to use drugs to handle our feelings or prevent them. We have come to associate our pain with our addiction. Our gratitude makes every day special and meaningful when we think about the fact that by simply not using, the forces of life have begun to work for us and we are recovering from our addiction. Having others to share the experience with us makes it really great and we are accustomed to feeling good more often than not. We are powerless over drugs and to use would only damage our positive emotions. We still can recover and live drug free, feeling good and being grateful that we don't have to die in the gutter using.

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The attitude of gratitude is important. Without it, life is just a glum lot. With gratitude, cleanliness is happy and joyous. We should remain very grateful for all the beautiful things this program has revealed to us.

When one particular addict came to the program, he had a lot to learn. One area that was very difficult for him was the area of gratitude. He didn't see where he had much to be grateful for, instead of projecting happiness and joy with other people or dwelling on that which had been given him, he would wallow in self-pity and remorse over things in which he had no control. He was irritable and felt he had been unjustly wronged by life. He developed and maintained ~~and maintained~~ a condition of ingratitude so ~~so~~ ^{strong} so that if a few good things came his way, he was unable to accept them or really feel thankful to those who had most likely gone out of their way to help him or show him consideration beyond that which he had really earned. It was difficult for him to really give 100% effort in any area because he had developed the habit of feeling bad and expecting the worst.

Our experience revealed that the things we are not grateful for will be taken from us. Not by any outside agency, but by our own inability to take care of what we have. Where we come ~~from we~~ ^{from we} wanted everything, but we were unable to be grateful for anything that we actually got. As long as we didn't have something, it would seem wonderful and we would often think if we just had so and so, we would be happy. Occasionally, we would have our prayers answered only to find the rich feelings of

satisfaction and comfort beyond our reach.. We can see today that in reality we were taking a lot for granted by failing to be consciously thankful for that which life and God had already provided for us.

In each person, place, or thing, we should be grateful even if just for today. It gives us an opportunity to count our blessings. When we count our blessings, we harvest our gratitude in clean living.

clean and sober is the main purpose of the program of N. A.. Gaining strength and guidance leads us into a new life. When we find ourselves coming into the program, rest assured we will experience many miracles as we progress step by step. The original desire to be clean is the flame that we should feed. It will burn away all of the old ideas that hold us back and prepare us to begin our new way of life.

Today, my life is different. No longer do I get up each morning looking for my next high, nor do I have to recuperate from the night before. Now I look forward to clean days with each day being a learning experience about myself and others around me. This is something new to me because I was so wrapped up in myself and my addiction.

There exists no model of the recovered addict. When the drugs go and the addict works the program, strange and wonderful things happen. New possibilities spring up like flowers in the desert. Lost dreams awaken. The juices of life begin to flow.

IV

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Spiritual progress is necessary and we must want this and be willing to make the necessary effort. This is a very personal and individual area and our higher power reveals itself in many ways if we recognize it. Spiritual progress and spiritual awareness becomes an apparent and integral part of all our affairs. If we take one step toward God he will take seven steps toward us. An attitude of indifference or ~~intolerance toward~~ ^{intolerance toward} spiritual principles will defeat us. It is in fashion these days to institute an inquiry into everything that happens.

To have vital spiritual experience we addicts need to have ~~something~~ something that works all the time. ^{Therefore, no matter} ~~higher power~~ ^{higher power}, it is necessary that our higher power work for us.

A distinction is made between spirituality and religion for the purpose of the program. We offer the benefits of our shared experience to all, regardless of religious beliefs. Without this distinction we would suffer the loss of the free and open atmosphere that characterizes our fellowship. The spiritual wisdom ^{stored} ~~gathered~~ by those who have gone before us on the road to recovery is presented in the course of our meetings. We can take what ever may be of use and put the rest on the shelf. Spiritual principles supply us with the understanding that eluded us so long. It comes in degrees to those ~~of those~~ ^{us} of who seek it. It has been our experience that an atheist can sometimes be more sincere than a person who claims to believe in God, and fails to put their belief into action.

IV Living Clean & Serene

5 Promises

B. Spirituality

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Immediate and terrifying medical and legal problems often resolve themselves, if only we avoid the next pill, fix, toke, or drink. It is crucial that we maintain the memory of what the last fix did to us. When we can see that it was the dope that made us crazy, the revolution has begun. Then, come Hell or high water, we'll keep turning it down, and even avoid the places where it might be offered.

This is crucial.

At that point, we are struck with a moment of clarity. We see the insanity for what it is, and we want no more of it. We take the first three Steps for real, and we know we can not go on using and drinking, and expect our lives to get anything but worse.

Remembering our own past behavior, it is easy to love the still-suffering addict. We know that if we can reach and awaken the force for life within the addict, we can, in turn, do anything, even give ~~it~~ ^a ~~to~~ other addicts.

a new meaning
of life

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Living Clean + Sober
Promises
of spirituality

A meeting of Narcotics Anonymous is a tremendous reservoir of cleanliness. In a meeting the seeds are sown, take root, blossom and harvest. The meetings water our gardens and keep them fresh.

How many times have we heard something over and over again, in a meeting, until it finally takes root and blooms. With each meeting we attend, seeds planted in earlier meetings are watered until we can see the growth. What grows in the garden is harvested by our sharing our experience, strength, and hope in a meeting. While this harvesting is taking place in one of the fields of the garden, other fields in the individual, and group are being sown to to be harvested at more meetings. This harvest is a form of spiritual progress.

By using the negative events as fertilizer, our crop grows through it to the spiritual abundance of the N.A. fellowship. Looking for the gratitude and lesson in an experience helps cultivate the garden.

The twelve steps of N.A. are the very tools we need to weed the garden and keep it growing along spiritual lines. While the garden is the ~~well-being~~ ^{recovery} of the spirit, the Master Gardener cares for all the rest of the garden's needs.

Through listening to the experiences of others and putting the program into action, life has become beautiful, pleasant and sometimes very exciting!! Laughter is a common part of our day. Smiling doesn't hurt anymore, and we can finally look at others in the eye and be glad of who we are, and of what we are not anymore.

IV. S.B.

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Being willing to grow along spiratual lines is the direction that keeps us buoyant today. when we do the action indicated in recovery; the result is a healing of deeper emotional and mental disorders. It is the action that counts; not the result. We leave the results to ^Ggod. This way, the result is not a treasure to be treasured and held onto like a weight that may pull us back into the same old ~~pattern~~ ^{Pattern} when we let go and let ^Ggod, Spiratual Progression then follows.

God presents the opportunity that heals the spiritual malady. the use of drugs and alchol were a symptom of deeper emotional and mental disorders. After clearing up the superficial wreckage of the 12-steps, it is necessary to continue applying the priciples of the program to deal with the causes

Where else have we found such dreams? When we remove the drugs from our bodies and the recovering addict works the program, some incredible, and inconcievable things begin to happen. New possibilities spring up like flowers in the desert, lost selfrespec--t and pride awaken, the juices of life begin to flow. what may seem a terryfing and immediate, medical or legal problem, will resolve and pass as long we stay clean.

Living Clean and Serene

5 Promises

B. Spiritually

For many years, when we got there, we couldn't conceive the recovery that the program of Narcotics Anonymous had to offer. Our old ways kept us suspicious and critical. We had to keep coming back to get the new ideas, about our disease and what our recovery might mean to us who have sunken to the finding and using of drugs in one form or another. We had to learn that what had worked for others, would work for us if it were sought. This new information constantly destroyed our old ideas and beliefs in many areas of thinking and doing. We didn't mind though, because for every old idea lost, a new one took its place. It seemed like a pretty good deal, especially after we found out how well the new ideas could work for us. We had been trying to get results on our own for years before we came to the program and tried a new way of life. At the end, we were ready to try a new way. We found that the new ideas worked for us, whether we believed then or not. It was a fairly gentle process. We didn't have to change all our old ways overnight. We got better through continuous attendance at N.A. meetings and it seemed to us that our lives were getting better gradually with the help of others in the program.

IV Living Clean + serene 32

5 Promises

c. Personality

One of the first things we learn is that we can't work the NA Program for another person. We have to want it for ourselves, for our own lives to get better.

One of the primary reasons we addicts have trouble in the area of relationships with others, romantic or otherwise, is that we were so confused that it was hard for the other person involved with us to tell where we were coming from. Eventually, we settled down.

The better we know and accept ourselves, the better we can know and accept others as they are. We are notorious for forgetting that we can only change ourselves, not others.

We will be at different levels at different times. At one time in our lives, we had ideals, morals, and an image of what role we wished to play in life. During our active addictions, these objectives have been lost. As recovery becomes a reality, and progresses, we realize that we are beginning to be the people we wanted to be.

No matter what we have done, or what course our addiction has taken us, we can relax now and soak up the love that comes and fills the room in the course of every meeting. We are limited in our growth only by our ability to conceive how far we can go.

IV Living Clean & Serene
5 promises
C. personality

(2)

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We become aware of how the pendulum swings in many areas. Extremes of feelings and extremes of reactions become noticeable. We learn to recognize and handle these situations and get back on the path to reality.

As we begin the process of seeking out and stripping ourselves of false ego and pride, we begin to accept the real self. Through group acceptance comes self-confidence and self-acceptance. With confidence and self-acceptance comes self-worth and feelings of self-respect. The "ego" begins to suffer. It becomes less sensitive and there is a decreased desire to impress others. Ego is the cause of our greatest pain.

Needless to say, there were times when our sanity was debatable. Feeling alienated and sensitive, our friends didn't know how to react to us. We learned about self-honesty and honesty with others. It truly does get better and we are growing from all of our experiences. We never imagined we would have changed so much. We've learned how to love ourselves and others.

We can quit apologizing and denying and get to work at being the best we can be. The program will help somebody who wants to be helped. We say that, out of our personal experience, because, when we attended our first meeting, we were in search of help with our drug problems. We are thankful for the many people who took time out to show people like us that they really care.

If you are in the program, and find yourself cultivating feelings of isolation and despair, don't feel alone. Many of us have had similar difficulties at different stages of recovery. Usually they come at a time of great potential growth. In other words, self-destructiveness will make us want to go out and use again, instead of recovering. We can overcome this, if we make a special effort to share our feelings at a meeting, in fellowship, or with a friend or sponsor. By getting it out, we run a better chance of encountering someone who may reach out to help us. Many of us find our own answers dawning on us while we are trying to explain them to someone else.

But the real joy is in the fact that we have learned how to relax and enjoy ourselves; and what's more, we now have friends. We really are a team; and we are positive that we are all in there, cheering each other on, reaching out, and pulling together. At times, other members in the fellowship are our eyes and our ears; when we do something wrong, they help us to help ourselves by showing us what we cannot see.

We had found a group of addicts trying to stay clean and live without drugs outside of an institution. They listened and shared their hopes, agonies, and problems with us. We learned what true friendship and usefulness was. We found we could be honest and didn't have to hide the side we didn't like. They taught us that we suffered from a cunning, baffling, and powerful disease called addiction; and, in order to live, we had to stay clean of all mind-altering drugs and work a program of recovery outlined in the Twelve Steps.

V

The lie is dead

1. The lie "Once an addict, always an addict"

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We, as drug addicts, could not reform. Before the start of N.A. in 1953, addicts did not recover but in rare instances. Powerless to reform, tormented by a disease, many of us died. Many of us in our sister program Alcoholics Anonymous, wished for an answer. We hoped for a life line and a program of living without the use of drugs. We knew that for us a slow suicide was inevitable. If we tried to quit, we found that the loneliness or the old ways of thinking pushed us back into taking the first fix, pill, drink, or toke.

I The lie is dead
2 addicts do recover

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We weren't focused on the fulfillment of life but on the emptiness and worthlessness of it all. Failure became a way of life, and the peculiar inertia that keeps a person going the way they are going, acts on us and success becomes painful. Today many of us are working, have friends and a place to live. Thanks to the N.A. program, now we can love and be loved and share with others this feeling in us that is almost unexpressable. It might be well to recognize that society is not normal, but composed of imperfect human beings who have learned to live with one another in a manner that shares strength and overcomes individual weaknesses and fears. With a new sense of awareness there is a tendency to make mountains out of mole hills. We become more aware of restlessness and conflicts, but gradually we begin to learn the virtues of patience and persistence and begin to make compromises with reality. There is no Utopia, nothing is perfect, but some things are better than others. ^{Cleanliness} ~~Sobriety~~ and reality are better than loneliness and despair.

A day or a minute at a time is the program. As our grip on the old ways of thinking and doing begins to relax, our mind begins to accept new ideas that lead to a new life. In this new life we find ourselves no longer pressed between those who use drugs and those who don't. Our world constantly expands to include new members and eventually members of society at large. Problems that had no solutions become transparent and real in the light of our new understanding. Our old ideas, grudges and resentments, fade as we lose our sick point of view. A warm feeling of belonging replaces the old hole in the gut. It's no accident though! Nothing is free. Loving and sharing ^{with} with one another is the only payment we need make for _{our recovery.}