

The Miracle of Freedom

Thank God I am here-clean, alive, and with you.

When I review my childhood, the first thing I remember is fear. I used to live in constant anxiety and stress all the time.

At six, I knew completely the meanings of three words: divorce, isolation, and suicide. I was nine when I started to read serious psychological books, searching for studies on children who suffered as I did. I wanted to know how to heal the pain I felt. At that time, I did not know why I was the way I was. I would think it was because of my parents' constant fighting. I blamed my parents for whatever unhappiness came to me. Later on, I would even accuse them of being the cause of my addiction.

I felt an emptiness and insecurity deep inside. Like every other child, I had nightmares sometimes, but mine would affect me in a really bad way. I used to analyze them and then go into a long-term depression.

When I entered into my teenage years, I filled the emptiness I felt inside with whatever I found at hand. One day, I would grasp onto religion, which I understood at that time; the next day, it would be politics. Sometimes it was sports, and sometimes arts. One day, I thought that I would feel differently about myself if I became famous, so I started writing short stories just to become a famous writer. I was talented in many fields, but as soon as I started making any progress I would become fearful, shut down, and step backward.

I had an idea of being like a hippie and reaching peace; however, the only thing that was hippie-like about me was my appearance! I learned different methods of meditation and grasped onto eastern philosophies. Finally I came to the conclusion that only love could help me find peace.

So, I fell in love. Actually, I fell in love with love. The love I knew at that time was different from what I know today, but at that time it was a real love to me. I got married to an intellectual addict with whom I was in love. He meant everything to me. I did not know that I was a sick person with all the signs of addiction: dependency on something outside me, lack of self-confidence, selfish and self-centered, too sensitive, easily annoyed, deciding quickly without thinking, denying and dreaming instead of coping with reality.

Anyway, I started using heroin with my husband. The first time I used it, I thought I had finally found God. The feeling was great, a sort of peace and indifference mixed with loving everything and everyone. Actually, I had already started using alcohol and tranquilizers a few months earlier to kill the pain I felt from watching my husband drown in his own addiction.

I started to think that I could relieve all the pains of life by using drugs. For one year it worked for me. After that, the "dark age" of my addiction began and pushed me into a nonstop nightmare that lasted for five years.

I started telling lies to avoid my responsibilities. I had a job, and three days a week I would tell them a lie so as not to go to the office. I started to sell my things, even my clothes. Naturally, that did not get me the money I needed, since my heroin use was increasing, so I lied to everyone to get cash from them.

During the weekends I would go to sleep at midnight-well, honestly, it was not really sleeping, it was a coma-and wake up eighteen or nineteen hours later when it was dark again. At these times, I would be scared to death. I would lose any sense of time, and sometimes I could not recognize where I was, so I would start crying uncontrollably.

Every night I had terrible nightmares about Satan. I would wake up terrified, shouting and crying. I was scared of dying, and I believed that God had especially hard punishment waiting for me when I did.

Sometimes I felt like my heart would skip a beat, and my stomach was on fire. I had a bad overdose experience once and lost four days.

There were times when my mother would come to visit me, but even though I loved her, I could not wait for her to leave so that I could use again. She was not aware of my heroin addiction.

I lost her one year later. She had a heart attack, and I was sure it was because of the big pressure of my life on her shoulders, since she had supported me financially and emotionally.

After her death I became totally miserable. I could not see the sky or tell you what the weather was like. My window curtains were always closed. It did not matter if it was cold or warm, snowy or rainy, or even if there was an earthquake or a war happening. I had become a numb, selfish person. I lost my job. I did not have any money.

Day after day I woke up thinking how I could get my drugs for that day. I begged people for money. I could see people watching me in a strange way. I knew I had a problem, but I did not accept or admit to myself that I was an addict. Funny thing was that I used to "sniff," and I thought that only those who fixed heroin were the *real* addicts.

My family pushed me to get divorced, and so I did. I do not even remember the day my husband and I got divorced. After that, I was totally alone, and I felt so lonely. I cried a lot, whether I used drugs or not. Each night I asked God to let me die; when I woke up the next day I would curse Him for opening my eyes.

I tried a number of ways to quit using or substitute other drugs for heroin. For example, I went on a trip abroad so that I could be far away from heroin, but from the first day on the road I started drinking a lot, and as soon as I got back home I rushed to my heroin again.

I substituted with many other drugs, but always came back to my favorite one. I did not know of another way, and I grew so weary of asking God to save me. I started, instead, asking Him to let me just die.

During the worst days of my loneliness, I could not even eat or bathe. I was unconscious most of the time, and I could not look in the mirror without seeing the beast named Atussa. Then, all of a sudden, my neighbor called me to see someone.

The "someone" was an NA member, and he gave me the recovery message. I was high when he was talking to me, and I remember thinking that he was not an addict like me because I could not believe an addict could be so happy and energetic!

The next day I went to buy enough drugs to kill myself. As soon as I put the lines down to sniff, the doorbell rang. I was selling the rest of my stuff, and one of my neighbors was interested in buying something. I had to put down everything so that I could deal with my neighbor. When I got back, I noticed that another neighbor had removed all my drugs after the NA member had called and asked her to do so.

Well, I realized that this may be the time to give up, so I gave up. That NA friend became my sponsor, and I came to the program and into recovery.

I started to work my First Step. It was long, and I thought the more I wrote, the more I would understand the program. I was about two months clean when I started to see my ex-husband. I stopped going to the meetings,

saying that I had trouble hearing the people sharing, the meetings were boring, and I knew basically everything there was to know about NA.

Needless to say, at two months clean, I relapsed. That relapse opened my eyes, and I came to understand that our program is not a joke. I admitted that I was powerless over my addiction. I started taking small steps forward by working the steps, going to meetings, sharing in the meetings, contacting my sponsor and other NA friends, and not using for the first time, just for today.

I was again two months clean when I found a good job in a good atmosphere;

I still work there. I rented a flat for myself in which I now feel great peace. I made many friends inside and outside NA who really trust me.

The word *trust* had become alien to me. No one trusted me, and I did not trust anyone either. But after a while in recovery, people started to trust me again. My family-my only brother and his family-welcomed me back to their home.

I came to understand my God and love in a new way. As my relationship with God grew stronger, I saw many miracles happening in my life. I could see the signs. After I got clean, it seemed like every single person was put in my life by God, and they were like angels for me.

My second sponsor, from the farthest part of the world, appeared in my life through a miracle. I learned that I should share all my experiences with NA and non-NA friends to guarantee my recovery. I became aware of, for the first time, those spiritual principles I had been searching for my whole life-honesty, acceptance, surrender, willingness, hope, patience, open-mindedness, love and, finally, freedom.

Today I am free. I am not doomed to do things that are not good for me. Today I am not compelled to tell lies, and I am not afraid of who I am. I have come to know myself better through the steps.

Today my surrender is not only to my powerlessness over my addiction; I am surrendering my defects of character. Many defects that would have bothered me for a lifetime are fading as my willingness to surrender them increases.

I believe the most valuable gift NA has given me is the ability to focus my awareness on the moment I am living now I am no longer nostalgic, rewinding and replaying my past, feeling guilt or self-pity, nor am I looking at my future with stress and anxiety.

I have learned to live in the present and do my best, just for today. Now I can experience the peace I had been chasing my whole life. Today I can look in the mirror and smile, thanks to God and the NA program.

Atussa G, Tehran, Iran

The NA Way Magazine

October 2004

Volume Twenty One, Number Four

If you have additional information on NA Iran / NA in the Persian language, please e-mail us at address below.