

# The Santa Monica Draft of the Basic Text

## Chapter One: Who Is an Addict?

Most of us do not have to think twice about this question. WE KNOW. Our whole life and thinking is centered in drugs in one form or another; the getting and using and finding ways and means to get more. We use to live and live to use. Very simply, an addict is a man or woman whose life is controlled by drugs. We are people in the grip of a continuing and progressive illness, whose ends are always the same; jails, institutions and death.

The following lines were lined through... A drug addict may be unaware that a problem exists until something happens in his life that shows him. A drug addict may be unaware that there is a problem in

As practicing drug addicts, we may be unaware our drug using is a problem for us, until certain things happen to force us into seeing the problem. The drugs run out, and we begin to feel the early stages of with-drawal. We notice that if we try to stop using, we cannot, or we realize that we have lost control over the amount of drugs we use. All these things help to force us to recognize our illness.

One of the major symptoms of the disease of addiction is denial. Many of us were convinced that we were right and the world was wrong, and we used this belief to justify our destructive behavior. We developed a point of view which enabled us to pursue our addiction without concern about our own well-being, or anyone else's. Our point of view becomes focused on the negative aspects of all things. Of course, we realized that our record had not been good, but we blamed circumstances around us, saying that we must be in the wrong places at the wrong times. we accused other people of causing us to use, and we thought that fate was against us. It took a long time for us to realize that our "bad luck" was a direct result of our drug use.

While we were still using, we lived in another world. If we did experience a periodic jolt of reality or self-awareness, it seemed to us as if we were two people instead of one, like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. When we were temporarily clean, we ran around trying to get everything all squared away before our next run. Sometimes, we could do this very well, but later, it seemed less important to us, and at the same time, more impossible.

Some of us were very dependent of people and things outside of ourselves. We tried to make ourselves happy by seeking instant gratification, or perfection in our surroundings and companions. We used people to carry us through life, but usually, these people would disapoint us by finding other interests and other friends . After years of living this way, we found that we were even more unhappy and unsatisfied than we had been at the beginning. And, we found that we were still not mature enough to cope with simple

problems of daily living on our own.

As our addiction caught up with us, some of us found ourselves going in and out of institutions, like hospitals, jails, and treatment centers. We did frightening things, like wrecking cars, embarrassing things, like urinating in public places, silly things that we tried to laugh off. Because of these experiences, we began to realize just how messed up our lives really were. Drugs could no longer hide our pain. We regretted the past; we dreaded the future. For a long time, we searched everywhere for "the answer"--that certain person, place, or thing that would make everything alright. We used phrases like "what if," or "if only," and "just one more time." Part of ourselves could sometimes see what was happening; another part would not accept it. Eventually, we just wanted an easy way out, and suicide was frequently on our minds. Our suicide attempts were usually feeble, and so they only helped to contribute to our feelings of worthlessness.

We remember going through a lot of pain and despair before we made any connection between our drug use and our misery. We used all sorts of drugs, and experienced numerous living problems as a result, and yet, most of us did not consider ourselves addicts. One problem was that most of the information available to us about addiction came to us from misinformed people, and from people who also used heavy drugs, but were probably not addicted. As long as we could periodically stop using, even for short periods of time, we did not consider ourselves addicted. We looked at the stopping, not the using. Of course, as our addiction progressed, we thought about stopping less and less. Only at the point of hopeless deterioration did we finally ask ourselves, "Could it be the drugs that are causing all this?"

Things did not get quite this bad for all of us, at least not on the outside, and so we had trouble accepting our addiction. We had pre-conceived ideas about the nature of addiction which prevented us from seeing ourselves clearly. The term "drug addict" conjured up visions of violence, street life, dirty needles and jail. Even though we had used for years, we looked at the differences rather than the similarities between us and the other addicts. For the young people who come to NA, it may be especially difficult to see our addiction. We strongly suggest that you do not compare yourselves to others. We all have different tolerances for pain. Some addicts needed to go to greater extremes and some of us may find we have had enough when we realize we are getting high too often and it's affecting our daily lives.

Every addict has a few things we can say we never did: Some of us have never used the needle. Some of us have never been in any kind of institution. Some of us have never had any trouble with the law. Many addicts, young and old, have used these things as excuses to deny their addiction and keep using. Whatever our experiences may be, we all have one thing in common: the disease of addiction.

We began to have silent thoughts that maybe the drugs were killing us. In a rare moment of clarity, we were able to see the whole scene in all its insanity. Something inside said "NO MORE".

We realized drugs were enslaving us instead of setting us free. We were prisoners in our own minds, condemned by guilty feelings to slow execution. We gave up on ever getting well. Our previous attempts to stay clean had always failed in the end causing us more pain and misery.

Our futures seemed hopeless until we found clean addicts who were willing to share with us. In the fellowship of NA, the desire to stop using was all that we needed. Our recovery began with our first admission that we needed help. Denial of our addiction was what had kept us sick, and the honest admission of our addiction allowed us to stop using. We were eventually able to open up and ask for help by attending meetings of Narcotics Anonymous. There we found other addicts who were recovering talking about their feelings and experiences. We realized that we had felt and done many of the same things, and we no longer felt alone. We feel that each individual has to answer for themselves the question; "Am I an addict?"

We began to accept ourselves as addicts when we made the connection between our drug use and our problems. More important than any differences that we see are the many similarities.

Addiction is a state of mind which relies on convincing ourselves that drugs are necessary to maintain our sense of well-being. An addict is a person who uses drugs, in any form, to the extent that they can no longer live normally with or without them. We are men and women whose lives were controlled by drugs. We were caught in the cycle of getting and using, and finding ways and means to get more. On one hand we had feelings of superiority, and on the other, we accepted the most intolerable existence on earth.

Our addiction involved more than simple drug abuse. In the beginning, some of the highs felt great, but eventually the things we had to do to support our habits reflected desperation. We were caught in the grip of addiction and were forced to survive anyway we could. We manipulated people and tried to control everything around us. We stole, cheated friends, conned our families, and sold ourselves. We had to have drugs, regardless of the cost. Failure and fear began to invade every area of our lives. Character defects and personality disorders prevented us from making meaningful choices.

We didn't think about the times we had to use but didn't want to. We didn't think about the things we had to do to keep from being sick or going crazy. We didn't think about the times when our lives seemed to be a horrible sequence of all consuming bits and pieces that we couldn't put together, we forgot or simply ignored the reality of our addiction.

If you think you might have a drug problem, you probably do. Addicts come from all levels of society, and from every walk of life. We have a disease that tells us we were not sick. Few of us set out to become addicted. We used drugs to feel good; as a cure-all and as a means of escape. In the beginning drugs were an answer; in the end they were a curse.

Through all of this, we kept telling ourselves, "I can handle it." In the end we avoided

people and places that did not condone our using. We assumed everyone else was crazy, and we were the only sane ones. The thought of running out of drugs left us with a sense of impending doom. Peace of mind was non-existent. The only relief, if any, was a comparatively short-lived "high." We were driven to consume drugs beyond our capacity to control them. Our using defied all rules of common sense. We not only had an abnormal craving for drugs, but we yielded to it at the worst possible times. We did not have sense enough to know when not to begin. We went through stages of dark despair and we were sure that there was something wrong with us. Other times, we were under the illusion that we had things under control. We came to hate ourselves for wasting the talents with which we had been endowed and for the trouble we were causing our families and friends. Frequently, we indulged in self-pity and proclaimed that nothing could help us.

One aspect of our addiction was our inability to deal with life on its own terms. We tried drugs and combinations of drugs in an effort to cope with a seemingly hostile world. We dreamed of finding a magic elixir that would solve our ultimate problem--ourselves. The fact was that we could not successfully use any mind changing or mood altering substance. An addict who only smoked pot or used non-narcotic drugs was in as much danger as the "junkie."

Drugs ceased to make us feel good. We lost the ability to find the euphoria we craved. Our thrills turned on us, almost killing us. When we did seek help, we were really looking for the absence of pain.

Movies, TV, books and songs have made a social anti-hero of the addict. At times, some of us took pride in our addiction and defended our right to use. We were proud of the illegal, criminal and bizarre behavior that typified our using. We fell into a pattern of thinking in which we only remembered our "good" drug experiences, and the times when drugs had made us feel "great" or not at all. We didn't think about the times we sat alone consumed by fear and self-pity. We didn't think about the times when we had to use when we didn't want to. We didn't think about the things we had to do to keep from becoming sick or going crazy. We didn't think about the times when our lives seemed to be a horrible sequence of all consuming bits and pieces that we couldn't put together. We forgot, or simply ignored the reality of our addiction. Addiction isolated us from people except for the getting, using, and finding ways and means to get more. Hostile, resentful, self-centered and self-seeking, we cut off all outside interests from our lives. Anything not completely familiar became alien and dangerous. Our world shrank and isolation became our life.

We used in order to survive, and because it was the only way of life we knew. Non-addicts have great trouble understanding our dilemma. It is often, nearly impossible to make sense of our behavior and the consuming drive to use, even after repeated efforts to stay clean. They may see it as a moral deficiency on our part. They may see it as a lack of "willpower" and think us weak. We may even believe this ourselves. This is not the case.

Addicts are sick people. We have a disease called addiction. It is a treatable disease: as

soon as we begin to treat our addiction by working the Twelve Steps and going to meetings, we experience very positive results. When our addiction is treated as a crime or moral deficiency, we become rebellious and are driven deeper into our isolation.

Addicts who would otherwise waste away in institutions very often respond to the love and fellowship offered in N.A. Ours is a proven program of recovery. We can see a little of ourselves in every addict, and a little bit of them in us. We have no choice except to help one another, for the strength of our own recovery lies in helping of other addicts.

The disease of addiction also has its social aspects. Addiction, in its broadest sense, is a disease of our times. It embraces all our social ills. The development of new drugs in modern times has provided a greater number of potentially addictive drugs than ever before. One of the ancient dreams of man seems to be coming true; the ability of modern drug technology to combat disease and alleviate human suffering. Hidden in this blessing, however, is a cruel reversal of effect which is our addiction.

Our innate susceptibility to addiction and complete knowledge of the sources of our behavior is of little concern in our recovery through N.A. The "why" is not important; the "what to do" is our chief question. We feel it is important to share our experience, strength and hope with others who may suffer from our disease, letting them know what they can do, if they want to recover. We have been addicted to thousands of drugs and know first hand how they feel and what the initial abstinence is like. We can reassure each other and the newcomer that it will get better if they don't use. We know that addiction is chronic, progressive and fatal. The cycle can be broken by not taking that first fix, pill, drink, or toke.

Like other incurable diseases, addiction can be arrested. We agree that there is nothing shameful about being an addict provided we accept our dilemma and honestly take action. We are willing to admit without reservation that we are "allergic" to drugs. Common sense tells us that it would be insane to go back to the source of our "allergy." Our experience indicates that medicine cannot "cure" our illness. We have regained good physical health many times only to relapse. Our track records show that it is impossible for us to use successfully no matter how well we may appear to be in control of our lives. Social adjustments failed to bring about recovery. We thought a suitable job or social relationship could be the answer to our dilemma. Addiction, in its progression, causes us to flounder and fail, consuming us with anger and fear. Higher mental and emotional functions, such as our conscience and our ability to love were sharply affected by our use of drugs. Our living skills were reduced to the animal level. The person within was submerged and the capacity to be human was lost. This seems extreme, but most of us have been in this state. Many of us came into the Fellowship with an attitude of denial, regardless of the fact that we had often been devastated by our disease to the point where denial was futile. Part of the risk run by society in keeping the lid on our addiction is the stigma that prevents the addict who might seek help from seeking it. Many addicts continue to use because of a fear that even if they clean up they will never be able to live down their past.

Addiction is the disease and Narcotics Anonymous is a proven path of on-going recovery. Our experience shows that those who keep coming to meetings regularly, stay clean. We continue in our recovery on a daily basis until we die. In our addiction, we practiced dying. In our recovery, we practice living. We can feel, care, love and be loved. We no longer have to be isolated, and in time, can feel free to go anywhere and do almost anything except use. The program gave us a choice and today we don't use because we don't want to.

Many of us sought answers but failed to find any we could use until we found each other. Most of us have become very grateful in the course of our recovery. We have a disease that we can recover from. Our lives can return to being useful, through abstinence and through working the Twelve Steps of N.A. Who is an addict? All of the medical, psychological and social commentary ever written on this subject has failed to answer this question thoroughly. Rather than enter the area of medical theory and legalities, we feel that it is more worthwhile to discuss the answers we have found. Instead of concentrating on the problem, let's look at the solution.

Narcotics Anonymous concerns itself with recovery. We all know how to use drugs. We know the effect they have had on us. The primary thing we are interested in is how to stay clean, how to cope with life without using, how to handle unpleasant feelings and emotions--in other words, how to recover. It was conceivable in our addictive thinking that something would work for us without any work on our part. That was how the drugs worked. How wrong we were. It has been our experience that the program works as long as we work it, just for today, to the best of our ability.

The mind begins to accept new ideas which lead to a new way of life as the grip of drugs and our past way of thinking and doing begin to relax. Our world constantly expands to include new associations and eventually we become productive members of society. Problems that had no solutions become transparent and insignificant in the light of our new understanding. Old grudges and resentments fade. A warm feeling of belonging replaces the hole in the gut left by our addiction. It is no accident--it's the way the program works. A miracle takes place as the drugs are washed from our bodies and our minds begin to clear from the effects of our using. We come to understand that our recovery is a gift from a power greater than ourselves. We are made aware of this gift in a thousand ways. This power wants only that we realize ourselves as much as possible. The longer we stay clean, the more we will want to clear away the shame and falseness of our lives. It is a great gift to be a human being.

What we have just been describing are some of the benefits involved in recovery. There is only one alternative to recovery and that is the progression of our disease which is comparable to an elevator going down. We have found that we can get clean at any level we want. Unfortunately, the nature of our disease makes us susceptible to rationalizing our addiction instead of dealing with it.

If you are an addict, you can find a new life through the N.A. program that would not otherwise be possible. Although physical and mental tolerance play a role, many drugs

require no extended period of use to trigger allergic reactions. The effect is what counts, not how much we took. Certain things follow as usage continues. Setting aside the physical effects of addiction, as the regularity of usage increases, we become accustomed to the state of mind common to addicts' we forget what it was like before we started using. We forget the social graces, acquire strange habits and mannerisms, forget how to work, forget how to express ourselves and show concern for others. We forget how to feel. We, as recovering addicts, have to relearn the things forgotten and learn from scratch what we have missed, while under the influence.

Addiction is a disease which manifested in us at an inceterminable point in our lives. Some of us believe that the disease was present long before the first pill, fix, drink or toke. Some of us believe that the disease is hereditary, due to parents, grandparents or other relatives who are or were addicted. How we got the disease, however, is of no immediate importance to us. What concerns us at present is how we can continue our own recovery while helping the addict who still suffers.

We value personal freedom highly. Perhaps because we want it so much and experience it so seldom in the progression of our illness. Even in periods of abstinence, freedom is curtailed. In recovery, we can still never be quite sure that our choice of action is based on a conscious desire for continued abstinence or on an unconscious wish to return to using.

We have found through our experiences that our addiction had three major phases. At first we were using in a manner which seemed to be social or at least controllable with little indication of the disaster which the future held for us. This phase varies in duration from addict to addict and we have found that it is vert difficult to help anyone in this phase. We are usually one of the last people who realize that we need help.

At some point, our using became uncontrollable and definitely anti-social. This phase of uncontrollable using usully began when things were going well and we were in situations that allowed us to use as frequently as we wanted. It was marked by a decline and usually the end of good living as we knew it. We went from a state of drugged success and well-being to complete spiritual mental and emotional bankruptcy. This state of decline also vaires in length from addict to addict. We can only say that for some it was a matter of months or even days and for others it was a matter of years. We tried to moderate, substitute, or even stop using. Those of us who didn't die from the disease, went to prison, or were committed to mental institutions as hopelessly insane. Through the grace of a Higher Power, many of us found the N.A. program. It was when we reached a bottom that we became willing to stop using. We were much more motivated to seek help when we were in the latter part of the suffering. It was easier for us to see the destruction, disaster and delusion of our using. It was harder to deny our addiction when the problems caused by drug usage were staring us in the face; when we had reached our bottoms. Incarceration and institutionalization sometimes led us to the reali-zation that the drugs were letting us down. Where drugs had given us the feeling that we could handle whatever situation that might come down, we became aware that these same drugs were largely responsible for our having gotten into our very worse predicaments. Some of

us may spend the rest of our lives in jail for a drug related crime or a crime committed under the influence.

The third major phase is our recovery. we, as recovering addicts in the N.A. Fellowship, live and enjoy life on a day to day basis by following the Twelve Steps. We realize that we are never cured and carry the disease within us to the grave. We are con-vinced that there is only one way for us to live, and that is the N.A. way.

We will die from untreated addiction. But before we die, the disease takes from us our pride, our self-esteem, our families and loved ones. And finally, it takes our very will to live. We of Narcotics Anonymous were raised from hell to find a program and a way of life. We were given a reprieve from our distruction. We have been given a new beginning every day if we want it and don't use. A new place awaits us in the society that, during our using, offered only misgivings. we have come to know success. We have found all this through dependence on a Power greater that ourselves, a group of our fellow addicts, and spiritual principles.

Things did not get quite this bad for all of us, at least not on the outside, and so we had trouble accepting our addiction. We had preconceived ideas about the nature of addiction which prevented us from seeing ourselves clearly. The term "drug addict" conjured up visions of violence, street life, dirty needles, and jail. Even though we used drugs for years, we looked at the differences rather than the similarities between us and other addicts. But, regardless of our using experiences, the things we have in common put us all in the same boat. We all suffer from the disease of addiction.

In a rare moment of clarity, something inside of each of us said, "No more." We were able to look at the whole scene, in all its insanity. We realized drugs were enslaving us instead of setting us free.



# ***The Santa Monica Draft of the Basic Text Chapter Two***

## **WHAT IS THE NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS PROGRAM?**

N.A. is a non-profit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovered 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 honest desire to stop using. There are no musts in N.A. but 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."

There are no stings attached to N.A. We are not affiliated with any other organizations, we have no leaders, no initiation fees or dues, no pledges to sign, no promises to make to anyone. We are not connected with any political, religious, or law enforcement groups, and are under no surveillance at any time. Anyone may join us regardless of age, race, color, creed, religion or lack of religion.

We are not interested in what or how much you used or who your connections were, what you have done in the past, how much or how little you have, but only in what you want to do about your problem and how we can help. The newcomer is the most important person at any meeting, because we can only keep what we have by giving it away. We have learned from our group experience that those who keep coming to our meetings regularly stay clean.

Narcotics Anonymous is quite unlike any health or welfare agency known to meetings regularly stay clean. N.A. groups vary in format from place to place. However, the services that N.A. provides are all voluntary and without cost. N.A. does not accept money for its service, is not funded by any public or private sources or agencies and accepts no outside contributions.

Addicts respond to honest sharing and judge for themselves about the message revealed in the stories of our members. They realize that at last there might be hope for them. The newcomer loses his fear when he discovers that N.A. members give away the message of recovery in order to stay clean themselves. We of Narcotics Anonymous are currently trying to bring about more communication between N.A. and professional people who work with addicts—so that more and more addicts may be referred to us. With local groups in most communities, we are part of an international fellowship of recovering addicts.

In the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous we make use of things that have worked for those who have gone before us: the 12 Steps, are positive tools that enable us to make recovery possible. We have one primary purpose—to stay clean and to help others who come to us with a desire to stop using. We are united by our common problem, addiction. By meeting, talking

with, and helping other addicts, we are somehow able to stay clean and to lose the compulsion to use.

We are grateful when we see new people coming to our meetings. They improve our chances of staying clean. There is nothing that compares to a new person freely talking about the pain and the endless hustle that goes on out there. If we forgot where we came from, we may someday have to return there. As a result, Narcotics Anonymous has many years of experience, face-to-face, with literally hundreds of thousands of addicts. This mass of intensive, firsthand experience with all kinds of problem drug users, in all phases of illness and recovery, is unparalleled in therapeutic value. Narcotics Anonymous is here to share recovery freely with any addicts who wants it.

Narcotics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We had become so physically, mentally and spiritually ill that most of us were crazed, depressed or terrified most of the time. We were sick people. The growing fellowship of N.A. supports us in our recovery. It gives us new friends who understand where we have been and the tools we need to live without drugs.

Our message of recovery is based on our own experience. Before coming to the Fellowship, we exhausted ourselves trying to "use" successfully, or trying to find out what was wrong with us. After coming to the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship, we found our-selves among a very special group of people: addicts, many of whom had suffered much more than we had, who had found recovery. In their experiences, freely shared, we found hope for ourselves. If the Narcotics Anonymous program worked for them, it may work for us. We began to ask questions and listened a little more closely to the suggestions. After all, there was now a little hope.

We do know that the N.A. program works for us. We have seen it work for everyone who honestly and sincerely wanted to stop using and was willing to go to any lengths to stay clean. The main point is that we met people, addicts like ourselves, who are clean and have been for months or even years. We watch and listen to them and realize that these people have found a way to live and be happy without drugs.

In all honesty, the most we can do for the newcomer is to share our experience, strength and hope and be ready to help when asked. If we go beyond this we risk becoming caretakers. Most of us can remember doing nothing as long as we could get someone else to take care of us. We don't want the help we offer to rob the new person of that essential ingredient of living which putting their own life in order can bring. We must help one another because by helping others, we help ourselves recover. We are really talking about survival in a world where we had ceased to function. This program has given us a belief in a power greater than ourselves that works through people. We don't claim to have all the answers. All we can do is share our experience about the things that work for us.

We don't have to settle for the limitations of the past. We can examine and re-examine all our old ideas, and constantly improve on them or replace them with new ones. We are men and women who have discovered and admitted that we are powerless' over our addiction. We have learned that we must stop using drugs if we are to avoid the disaster we created for ourselves and those close to us.

The consequences of our addictive using, and the thinking that went with it, also varied. Some of our members literally became derelicts before turning to N.A. for help. Some lost families, possessions and self respect. Some committed many offenses—against society, against their families, and against employers. On the other hand some of them never were jailed or hospitalized, some never lost jobs or families because of using. However, each and every one of us finally came to the point where we realized that using interfered with normal living. When we discovered that we could not live without drugs, we sought help through N.A., rather than prolong our pain. The program works a miracle in our lives. We become new people. The Steps and abstinence give us daily reprieves from our self-imposed life sentences. We become free to move about without compulsion or guilt.

Communication is a very important part of our program. Without it we would not have the chance to share ideas and new aspects of the program with each other. What one member or group learns is shared with others. This is how the Fellowship of N.A. has grown and spread in the past. We need each other.

Our meetings have an atmosphere of empathy. We understand the feeling which all addicts have in common. we feel very much at home with people who have also admitted they are addicts. The unconditional love we find at meetings makes it possible for us to relax and to review the assumptions we made about ourselves and reality. We are able to start living a new way of life. Working the Steps gives us a relationship with a Power greater than ourselves, corrects old defects, rights old wrongs, and leads us to help others. As we begin the process of change by honestly listening to the stories of people we meet in an N.A. meeting or in private fellowship, we want to try out some of the solutions that have worked for them. Maybe their solution is part of our solution. We begin to come out of our fog, the layers of phoniness peel off like the skin of an onion. when the layers are gone, our real selves remain.

As we attend meetings and hear the experience, strength, and hope of others, we notice that we are not the only ones with problems. We eventually hear someone who makes us feel fortunate by comparison. We grow to know gratitude, to see where we came from and how far we have progressed. We had tried many ways to over come our addictions and sometimes temporary abstinence was possible, only to be followed by an even deeper obsession to use than before. Now we let new ideas flow into us. We ask questions. The principles of living incorporated in the Twelve Steps often seem strange to us, yet they work. This program works for those who are willing to work it.

We find that trying to help another addict is good for us, whether the addict uses what we have to offer or not. For this reason, N.A. groups concentrate on person-to-person service, without getting involved in any outside enterprise no matter how worthwhile. We feel safer with each other when we are thinking negatively than by ourselves. Good comes from being with others; loneliness and negativity fall by the wayside. We feel loved. Something memorable, precious, and beneficial stems from clean togetherness. There is a security in having friends on the road to recovery. We no longer need to pretend that we can make it alone. In N.A. we recover together.

The only requirement to be a member of Narcotics Anonymous is a desire to stop using. We don't have to be clean when we get here, although after the first meeting, we are advised to keep coming back to the meetings clean. We don't have to wait for an overdose or jail sentence to get help from N.A.; nor is addiction a hopeless condition from which there is no recovery. We do lose the desire to use with the help of the Twelve Step program of N.A. and the Fellowship of recovering addicts in N.A. we are convinced that if you think you have a drug problem, it is very likely that you do; and that our program has something special to offer you.

We suggest you don't bring drugs. We want the place where addicts recover to be a safe place, free from outside influences. We feel safe at our meetings, everyone is an addict. We feel totally free to express ourselves because no law enforcement agencies are involved. No one is there to judge, stereotype or moralize us. We are not recruited and it doesn't cost anything. N.A. does not provide counseling or social services. The rooms are filled with men and women from all walks of life.

Our program is in fact a way of life. We learn the value of principles such as humility, surrender, and service. The idea that we have to do it alone is obsolete. It helps things go more smoothly when we find sponsors to confide in and let them help us. We learn the art of helping others appropriately, without creating resentments.

We, of Narcotics Anonymous, do not promise to have all the answers. We find that our lives steadily improve if we don't use drugs and learn to use the tools of the program to maintain our spiritual growth. We meet other addicts seeking recovery and discover ourselves able to respond to their needs. We give others what we found. The truth is that the more we give in this way, the more we have to offer. Our own needs are met when we learn to give to others. By striving for honesty, open mindedness, and willingness to try, we develop humility, tolerance and patience. We are able to love the unlovable and discover self acceptance. We become less likely to create problems in our daily living. We finally realize that we have a choice in the matter of our lives.

The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous, our new friends, and our sponsors help us to deal with our feelings. In N.A. our joys are multiplied by sharing our good days with our fellows, and our sorrows are lessened by

sharing our bad days. For the first time in our lives, we don't have to experience anything alone. Not only do we have the group, hopefully as time passes, we develop a relationship with a God of our own understand that is always with us.

We learn to experience feelings and realize that the feelings themselves can do us no harm, unless we react to them. We learn to call someone if we have a feeling we cannot handle. Chances are that our friend has had a similar experience and can relate what worked for him. By sharing our feelings, we learn to work through them.

By close work with a sponsor, we learn to utilize the Twelves Steps of the program as a guide to dealing with situations we have not dealt with in the past. Sponsorship is a give and take situation. Both people gaining strength from the relationship. We look for a sponsor as soon as we become acquainted with members in our area. We look for someone who has been down a path similar to ours who understand where we are coming from, and who has worked the steps themselves. We share with others in order to maintain our progress in our recovery and our ability to function without drugs. Asking someone to sponsor us and being asked to be a sponsor are privileges. So we don't hesitate. We are all here to help and to be helped. Get phone numbers and use them. Ask questions about the program and get acquainted with the people. We learn how to work the steps; we learn how to live.

# The Santa Monica Draft of the Basic Text

## Chapter Three: Why Are We Here?

Before coming to the fellowship Of N.A., we could not manage our own lives, we could not live and enjoy life as other people do. We had to have something different and we thought we had found it in drugs. We placed their use ahead of the welfare of our families, our wives, husbands, and our children. We had to have drugs at all costs. We did many people great harm but most of all we harmed ourselves. Through our inability to accept personal responsibilities we were actually creating our own problems. We seemed to be incapable of facing life on its own terms.

Most of us realized that in our addictions, we were slowly committing suicide, but such cunning enemies of life are narcotics and sedation that we had lost the power to do anything about it. Jail did not help us at all. Medicine, religion and Psychiatry seemed to have no answers for us that we could use. All these methods having failed for us, in desperation, we sought help from each other from Narcotics Anonymous.

After coming to N.A. we realized we were sick people who suffered from a disease like Alcoholism, Diabetes or Tuberculosis. There is no known "Cure" for these-all, however, can be arrested at some point and "recovery" is then possible. In N.A. we follow a program borrowed from Alcoholics Anonymous. In the last forty years more than one million people have recovered in A.A., most of them just as hopelessly addicted to alcohol as we were to drugs. We are deeply grateful to the A.A. Fellowship for pointing the way for us to a new way of life.

Before coming to the fellowship of N.A., we were irresponsible with our lives. We used drugs to cover up our feelings of humiliation, guilt, inferiority and inadequacy.

Many Of us woke up sick, unable to make it to work or went to work loaded. Many of us Stole to Support our habit. We hurt the ones we loved. We did whatever it took to get that fix, pill, drink or joint. We denied all these things and told ourselves we could handle it. We were looking for something new in life. Eventually we started looking for a way out. We couldn't face life on life's terms. In the beginning, using was fun. It became a habit and then it was necessary for survival. The progression of the disease was not apparent to us. We continued on the path of destruction, unaware of where it was leading us. We had the disease and did not know it. we avoided reality through the use of drugs. The pain and misery were postponed. When we came down, our problems came back, and were compounded with additional problems that had built up. We felt the need to use more often as our disease had progressed.

We needed help and had nowhere to go. Most of us explored different alternatives. Doctors didn't understand our dilemma. Usually they helped our disease by giving us prescription. Our husbands, wives and loved ones gave us anything they had and drained themselves in the hope that we would stop using. We tried substituting one drug for another and this only created a vicious cycle. We tried limiting our usage to "social" amounts, and our success with this was short-lived or non-existent. Some of us thought spiritual guidance through churches, different religions, meditation and cultism. Some of us sought cure by geographical change, blaming our surroundings and living situations for our problem. This attempt just gave us a chance to take advantage of new people. Some of us sought approval through sexual activities and change of peers. This approval seeking got us back where started from or worse. Some of us tried marriage, divorce and desertion of our families. Many tried psychiatrists and institutions. All our attempts at controlled usage or abstinence were futile.

We had reached a point in our lives where we had become a lost cause to society. our worth to our jobs, families and friends was little or none. Some of us became unemployed and unemployable. Success was scary and unfamiliar. We didn't know what to do about it. As the self-loathing grew, we had to use more and more to mask our feelings of hate. We were sick and tired of pain and trouble. We were frightened and ran from the fear. No matter how far we ran we always bought the fear with us. We were hopeless, useless, and lost. Feelings of worthlessness overcame us. Failure had become our way of life and self esteem was non-existent. Perhaps the most painful of those failures was the desperation of loneliness. The particular inertia that keeps an addict going the way they are, acted on us. To some, of us, our appearance didn't matter. We had no pride in anything we did. We didn't care how we looked. For some, personal hygiene became a thing of the past. For others, it became an obsession. We tried to cover up our inner-pain with outside appearances. Any hope of being anything different disappeared. Helplessness, emptiness and fear became a way of life. We were complete failures. Personality changes was what we really needed. Changes from a self-destructive pattern of living was imperative. We started experiencing how powerless we really were. Nothing seemed to relieve the paranoia and fear. We hit bottom and became ready to ask for and accept help.

We were searching for an answer. We reached out and found the hand of Narcotics Anonymous. We came to our first N.A. meeting in utter defeat. We didn't know what to expect. After sitting in a meeting, or several meetings, we began to feel that people cared and were willing to be patient with us. Although our heads told us we would never make it, the people in the fellowship gave us hope by insisting we could. We found that no matter what our thoughts or past actions were, others had done and felt the same. Surrounded by fellow addicts, we realized that we were not alone. We were told that if we put other things ahead of being clean, the program would not work. Nothing happens in our meetings but recovery; everyone's life is at stake. We learned old friends, places and ideas were a threat to our recovery. We had to change our playmates, playgrounds and playthings.

When we came to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous we faced many disturbing realizations. one: we were powerless over our addiction and our lives were

unmanageable; two; we were not responsible for our disease although we are responsible for our recovery; and three; we could no longer blame people, places and things for our addiction. We had to own up to our problems and our feelings.

In N.A., we learned that members concentrated on recovery and how they felt, not what they had done in the past. We found that the ultimate weapon for recovery was the recovering addict. Having realized that we were unable to maintain on our own, some of us immediately began experiencing depression, anxiety, hostility and resentment. We began to feel the emotional pain that we had always been afraid to feel. Due to petty frustrations, minor setbacks and losses, some of us felt that we were not getting any better. However, an honest look was often a grateful one. It was in those times that many of us found out who we were. It allowed us to make important discoveries like "it's O.K. to hurt and feel pain".

Today we experience a full range of feelings. Before the program we were either elated or depressed with very little in between. Our negative sense of self has been replaced by a positive concern for others. Our problems seemed to solve themselves. It is a great gift to be a human being, and the opportunities we seek are determined by our own sense of self-worth. When we lie, cheat, or steal, we degrade ourselves in our own eyes. We have had enough of self-destruction. We want to learn to do the things that will transform us into self-respecting people.

The symptoms of addiction include mental states that aren't normal. Then we get clean, these strange habits of mind pass away and we start to learn to live again. Continued abstinence, belief in a God of our own understanding, and participation in the program will restore us to sanity.

What a change from how we used to be! That's how we know that the N.A. program works. It's the first thing that ever convinced us that we needed to change ourselves, instead of trying to change the people and situations that irritated us. It gave us a Twelve Step blueprint for doing just that. By working the Steps, we came to accept our Higher Power's will, and this acceptance led us up the road of recovery. We lost our fear of the unknown through practice of the Twelve Steps. We were set free to live and enjoy life just for today without the old ghosts of our addiction haunting us. We all have our personal stories of recovery, and everyone has their own way of working this program. This is the way the program works. It is available to each addict seeking recovery. Our personal experiences differ, so our recoveries are variations on a common theme.

Recovery is a beautiful chance that many addicts thought had passed them by until they found the Fellowship of N.A. It's the chance to live again. Recovery from the disease of addiction encompasses many things; carrying the message to the suffering addict; being with people we really love and care about; spiritual principles a Higher Power of our own understanding; a sincere desire for ongoing recovery; open-mindedness; loving service and, of course, the vital spiritual experience that results in and perpetuates our freedom as members of Narcotics Anonymous.



## Chapter Four: How It Works

(Insert) Are we sure that we have no real control over drugs? Do we understand and believe that we have no real control over drugs? Do we recognize that in the long run, we don't use drugs-they use us? Do we fully accept the fact that our every attempt to stop using or control our using failed? Do we know that drugs have the power to change us into liars, thieves, and schemers? Do we know in our guts, that as drug users, we have failed? Have we admitted to ourselves that everytime we hurt someone we were loaded or trying to get loaded.

When we were using, reality became so painful that oblivion was preferable. We had to keep other people from knowing about our pain. We isolated ourselves, and lived in prisons built out of our own loneliness. Through this desperation, we sought out Narcotics Anonymous.

When we came to N.A., we were physically, mentally and spiritually bankrupt. We had hurt long enough and badly enough that we were willing to go to any lengths to stay clean. To live by the example of those who had faced our dilemma, and had found a way out, seemed to be our only hope. Regardless of who we were, where we came from, or what we had done, we were accepted in N.A. Our addiction gave us all a common ground for understanding one another. In our early meetings many of us were still afraid to let others know who we were and how we felt. We often denied our pain and tried to cover up our problems. We may have clung to the old stand-by, "I'm okay. Just leave me alone!" or isolated ourselves from the group. Some of us resented the outstretched hand and honest suggestions members offered us.

After attending more meetings, we began to feel comfortable, like we finally belonged somewhere. It was in these meetings that we finally belonged somewhere. It was in these meetings that we were first introduced to the Twelve Steps of N.A. We learned to work them in the order they were written, and use them on a daily basis. They are our solutions. They have become our survival kit, for addiction is a deadly disease. Our Steps are suggested only, but they are the principles that made our recovery possible.

### **STEP ONE**

**We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction, that our lives had become unmanageable.**

The bottom line of Narcotics Anonymous is staying clean. We realize that we cannot use drugs and live. When we admit our powerlessness and inability to manage our own lives, we open the door to a power greater than ourselves. Addiction is an incurable, chronic, progressive, fatal disease characterized by loss of control over mood-altering chemicals. It doesn't matter whether we just took a few pills, fixed eight times a day, sucked on a pipe, drank bottles of cough remedy or had one tranquilizer with our first martini each

day-we have certain things in common, no matter to what degree or what kind of addict we are.

When we hit bottom, we were searching for an answer-looking for a way out. We reached out and there was an answer. Until we took Step One, we were full of fear and doubt. We felt different. Upon working Step One, we affirmed our surrender to the principles of N.A., and only then did we begin to overcome the alienation of drug addiction and become a part of society.

Where did we find help? How did we get it? What was it? We went to meeting of Narcotics Anonymous. We were inclined to be skeptical. We needed proof. In that N.A. meeting was our proof. There we found people like ourselves with the same, or similar, patterns of drug dependency and failure, yet they were clean. They smiled. Their eyes were clear. They cared for each other. They introduced themselves to us and made us feel welcome. During the meeting, we heard a little bit about ourselves. We began to understand and believe that we had no real control over drugs. We began to accept the fact that every attempt we had made to control our using had failed. We came to know in our hearts that drugs had the power to change us into something we didn't want to be. We, of all people, have surely had enough of self-destruction.

We had to take Step One. We must admit that we are powerless and we had to continue going to meetings to hear other addicts talk about their powerlessness. Step One means that we don't have to make excuses for the way we are, and this is a great freedom. Surrender means not having to fight anymore. For some of us, it took a while to realize how unmanageable our lives had become. For others, this was about the only thing of which we could be sure. In a way, we were like gamblers and we didn't like the odds against us. We must surrender or die. When we hit bottom and admit our complete defeat, it's like the merry-go-round has stopped and we can finally get off.

After struggling through the daily burden with the monkey on our backs, we reached despair. When we were beaten, we became willing. The pain of working the program does not seem as great as the pain of addiction; so we surrender. The hole in our gut is filled with a new understanding of our place in the world and love for others. As we get clean and work this Step, we are released from our chains. We are now free people. However, none of the Steps work by magic. We do not just say the words of the Steps; we must live them.

Some of us found getting clean a battle. The program is simple, but no one ever said it was easy. Recovery is a contact process. We don't have to hug each other, but it helps. We read this book and attend N.A. meetings. We see for ourselves that the Fellowship has something to offer us. It is not where we were that counts, but where we are now.

None of us stumbled into this Fellowship brimming with love, honesty or open-minded willingness. We had all reached the point where it seemed we could no longer continue living in pain: physical, mental and spiritual. However, life was not unbearable; it only seemed unbearable because of our old familiar ways and our thinking. We found that we

had no choice but to change, or go back to using. All that was required was willingness. When we gave it our best shot, it worked for us as it had worked for others. When we could not stand our old ways any longer, we began to change. All that was required was that we try. Only under attack by severe and unyielding pain did the walls begin to crumble. We began to see just how much we had rationalized in order to justify the mess we had made of our lives. We could admit that we were truly powerless over our addiction and that our lives were unmanageable. We could admit complete defeat, and then the help came.

This was a great paradox for us-that we had to surrender to win. We had been so proud of our self-sufficiency and will power, but life had brought us little happiness. The more we had exerted our will, the worse things got. Often, when things got really bad, we had said, "This time, I have got to get my act together." Many of us had tried to clean up on sheer will power, but this turned out to be only a temporary solution. We ended up with a problem that was just as bad as before-or worse. When we began to see that will power alone wasn't going to pull us through anymore, we tried countless other remedies-counselors, psychiatrists, hospitals, lovers, new towns, new jobs-- everything we tried, failed. We quit for a day, a week or a month perhaps, but sooner or later we took that first pill, fix, drink or toke and we were gone again-worse than ever. None of our best efforts got anywhere in the long run. When we came to Narcotics Anonymous, most of us literally had nothing left to lose, except our lives. We gave up-quit struggling-surrendered, completely and unconditionally. Then and only then did we begin to recover from the disease of addiction. Recovery begins with the first admission of powerlessness. From that point forward, we can see that every clean day is a successful day, and that any seeming failure is only a temporary setback.

We quit fighting. We accept our addiction and life the way it is. We become willing to do whatever is necessary to stay clean, even those things we don't like doing. We had been beaten by our addictions, and left miserable and desperate. We were addicts. Drugs would no longer do for us what they had once done. We had been beaten into a corner by our own actions, and we were in the grip of an overwhelming addiction. Then we found hope. We began to see that the Steps of the program would be our source of strength and that the obsession for drugs could eventually disappear, and that we could be rescued from insanity, depravity and death.

Until we let go of all our reservations, there was a wall between us and others on the program. These reservations, no matter what they are, are only self-centeredness keeping us from obtaining all the benefits this program has to offer. The way to get rid of this is total surrender to the fact that the very best thing we ever did only got us to the doors of N.A. All of us who have worked this Step have had to admit, accept and believe truly that we could do nothing; we were powerless over everything. We don't have any power. This is hard to swallow all at once but, remember, we have found that until we have completed this step, we are stuck at one level of recovery.

## **STEP TWO**

## **We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.**

It can't be over-emphasized that what separates us from others is our disease. This is something that we have no control over from the day we are born. Most of us had strange thoughts or behavior before we used any type of drugs. It never became evident really that we might have a disease until we used. This was the act that manifested our disease. Once the disease was released, there was no control. Most of us found no way to do this until we came to the Fellowship of N.A. Here we found answers to some of those unasked questions. How did it happen? What do I do now?

After accepting the First Step, we need to believe that something outside ourselves could help us recover. Belief is the beginning. When we approach it with an open mind, and talk and listen to others, we begin to see evidence of some power that cannot be fully explained. Confronted with this, most of us will at least admit to the possibility of a greater power. Eventually, we will come to some kind of personal understanding we can use.

The Power can be the group itself or it can follow a religious tradition. The only thing we want to emphasize is that you should feel comfortable with your Higher Power and be able to make the statement that your Higher Power cares about you. If you can accept the fact that, a large number of addicts like yourself have found a way, in the program of Narcotics Anonymous, to live clean, then you only have to believe what you see in order to experience Step Two.

N.A. has many members. This collective Spiritual Power is certainly greater than that of any individual member. What is impossible for one alone is often light work for the many, because the many are a greater power than the one alone. You don't have to be religious to accept the idea of a power greater than yourself. Just look around with an open mind and you will see a positive Power all around N.A. You can call it love, or harmony or peace, or cleanness or good, or you can call it God. It doesn't matter and by looking and listening as openly as you can, you find that N.A. has the Power to help addicts.

The Higher Power we use in N.A. is a lot like this: We begin by simply admitting to the possibility of a power greater than ourselves. From the beginning, we discover that power in our lives and that Power lives in the Fellowship. After realizing you addiction had become a destructive power greater than ourselves, it logically followed that there can also be a constructive power greater than ourselves.

When drugs are washed from our bodies through daily abstinence and our minds begin to clear from the effects, a miracle takes place. Many fortunate things occur mysteriously, but there are no accidents. We come to understand that our recoveries are a gift from a Power greater than ourselves. There is a spirit that is guiding all living things. Call it Higher Power or whatever you like. If you choose, call it nothing at all, but find it, and learn to benefit from its power. You will gain a new life-free from drugs and the pain they have caused.

We have begun to see only recently how much a Higher Power has to offer. Living clean is only the beginning of a new life. Life without fear is a gift we receive for the price of acceptance.

Gradually some order returns to our lives. We feel that this comes from some power outside of us that has begun to relieve our obsession to use. This is the sanity that we are first restored to.

The second step is important in that it must happen for us to achieve any sort of ongoing recovery. The First Step leaves us where we need to come to believe in something that can help us with our powerlessness and sense of helplessness. Belief becomes the most important thing for us to work on. We all believe in something and unless we examine our beliefs and seek to improve them. They may be insufficient to give us recovery. Certainly our belief didn't help us with our active addiction. In N.A. we develop a workable idea of a higher power.

In the beginning, some of us may say, "I need help with my drug problem and I can see that N.A. has that alright, but the Second Step says this Power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity, and I'm not crazy. I just can't handle drugs." Many of us started out with this attitude. Our first instinct is to say, "No way." But when we approach it with an open mind, and talk and listen to others, we begin to see evidence of some power that cannot be fully explained. Confronted with this, most of us will at least admit to the possibility of a Higher Power. Eventually, we will come to some kind of personal understanding we can use. (Belief is the beginning. It is helpful to stop at this point to review our old ideas in this respect. We should not take the chance that our understanding of a Power greater than ourselves is sufficient. The power can be the group itself or it can follow a religious tradition.) All x'd

We gradually begin to find some order in the universe, and accept that "some power was supplying us with a conscience we had never had before, and was somehow giving us the power to overcome the compulsion to use. It certainly wasn't us, individually. Many of us have come to believe that the forces of life know what our real needs are and will take care of us when undisturbed by self will. We have only recently begun to see how much a Higher Power really has to offer. Clean living is only the beginning of a new life. Life without fear is a gift we receive for the price of acceptance.

We learn to keep a watchful eye on our daily maintenance: We eat when Hungry; we talk with a recovering addict when Angry or Lonely; we rest when Tired; and when we begin to take ourselves too Seriously, we get to an N.A. meeting and share. Sanity is having our priorities in order. We don't use drugs; we go to meetings, and through the N.A. program, we learn to rely on God on a daily basis. We have been restored to sanity as far as the obsession to use is concerned.

One important thing to remember is that when the urge to use occurs, it is that just because the mind is asking for drugs, it doesn't mean the body needs to get loaded. We are so into denial and overcontrolling our emotions that the occasional thought of drugs

may be the only way our mind knows to get our attention. Our minds often signal drugs when our bodies actually are asking for vitamins, food, rest or companionship.

This step is not to be brushed over lightly. Those of us who-have gotten no further in the steps have earnestly worked hard in coming to a belief sufficient to withstand anything life can throw our way. So that when we work Step Three, we will be sure that God, as we understand Him, will take care of us no matter what. We rely now on a Greater Power than ourselves. Now we are able to work Step Three.

When we asked about it, we were told that our understanding of a power greater than ourselves was up to us. No one was going to decide that for us. We could call it whatever we wanted. Some of us have given it proper names. It could be as large or small as we wanted. It could look like whomever or whatever we wanted. The only suggested guidelines were that it be communicative by intelligent, loving and a power greater than ourselves. The point is that we open our minds and become willing to believe in whatever can give us relief from the obsession, compulsion and insanity of addiction.

Most addicts have strong feeling about their Higher Power and vigorously defend their right to their own understanding. The strength to move into action comes from our Higher Power. Asking for help usually precedes getting that help. By opening the gates of our hearts, we become ready to receive the help we need. We need to accept this step to continue our road to recovery. When our belief has grown to some point of trust, we are ready for Step Three.

### **STEP THREE**

**We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.**

As practicing addicts, our will and our lives were controlled by drugs. Our choices were determined by drugs. We were trapped by our need for connections and cash. Then, when we got the drugs, the search was over for a few hours or maybe a few days. During that time, our total being, the body mind and soul was dominated by the drugs.

For a time it was pleasurable, at least in the early stages of addiction. Ultimately, the effect began to wear off and then the drug showed its ugly side. Often we found that the higher our drugs took us, the lower they brought us. When our nerves were jangling like a fire alarm, we faced two choices. Either we suffered withdrawal, or we took more drugs. For all addicts, the day comes when there is no longer a choice. We must have more drugs. Whether we are under the influence or not, our will, our lives and every single action is directly controlled by drugs.

Obviously, our way did not work. In utter desperation, we looked for another way. In Narcotics Anonymous, we are told that we can turn our will and our lives over to the care of a God of our own understanding. This is a giant step, but anyone can take it. We don't have to be religious. All that is required is a willingness to believe. We had to be willing

to do anything to get that next fix. What have we got to lose?

We have only to believe what we see with our own eyes in the transformed lives of other N.A. Members. That's all it takes-an open mind. If the word God bothers you, as it did many of us in the beginning, substitute Recovery, Good, Love, Spirit, N.A., Peace or anything positive, just so you mean it.

None of these Steps work by magic. They work when they are lived. The Steps of N.A. are easier to live by than the law of the needle, bottle, pill or joint. If you want to stay clean and are willing to do a few simple things and are honest with yourself, we guarantee that you can stay clean.

We found that all we needed to do was try. When we gave our best effort to the program, it worked for us as it has worked for countless others. The Third Step does not say "we turned our will and our lives over to the care of God." It says, "We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understand Him." We Made the decision; it was not made for us by the drugs, our families, a probation officer, judge, therapist or doctor. For the first time since that first high, we have made a decision for ourselves. If we understand God to be simply whatever keeps the rest of us clean, that's fine. We ask that Power to take care of us as it takes care of others-even if it makes us feel stupid. We go off by ourselves or get with our sponsor and say, "God, I've made a mess of my life. I can't solve my problems and I ask you to take care of me and show me how to live." When we honestly try, it will work. Many of us start our day with this prayer or a similar plea: "Thy will, not mine, be done."

In the third Step, we simply recognize that there is a force for good in the world and we cooperate with that force. The release by letting go and letting God helps us develop what works here and now. We can experience this release daily by using the N.A. program. We let good things happen to us. Every action we took in regard to drugs was an effort to get comfortable. It did not work, or we wouldn't be where we are today. When we turn to a God of our own understanding for care and direction and guidance, we learn the real meaning of freedom.

If we have come this far in the N.A. program, we have already noticed some change in our lives. However, the change may not be as fast nor as dramatic as we wish. We turned to drugs because we are people who demand instant gratification and drugs gave us that instant satisfaction. We are impatient people. It is one of life's great problems for us. Just because we stop taking drugs, this problem doesn't immediately go away.

We find that we will continue to have living problems. There are bills to be paid. We still have to function in society. Most of us still have families. We still have many of the same fears, doubts, and insecurities. In fact, because we are now facing life without drugs, the problems may appear to be more difficult and painful than ever. Do not lose heart. At these times, in our recovery, the Third Step is our greatest source of strength and courage. We are no longer bogged down by addiction. We have surrendered our will and our lives to the care of a power greater than ourselves. We are now a part of something which has

brought order out of Chaos. We are no longer fighting fear, anger, guilt, remorse, self-pity, anxiety, depression and a thousand other ills by ourselves.

Day by day, we discover the magnitude of the Third Step. This is the Step when we come into contact with the sanity we are promised in Step Two. Reliance on a spiritual way of life is now possible for us. We are slowly beginning to lose the paralyzing feeling of hopelessness. We who have lived in darkness and horror for so long begin to walk freely in the sunlight of reality. We find that our mood swings become less dramatic. We have natural highs followed by occasional lows. We are beginning to gain balance and harmony. We have learned to stop fighting and are learning to live. The only price is to quit fighting, surrender quietly and let the God of our own understanding take care of us.

We have come to enjoy clean living and want more of the good things that the N.A. Fellowship holds for us. We know now that we cannot pause in our spiritual program; we want all we can get. We are now ready for our first honest self-appraisal, and we begin with Step Four.

#### **STEP FOUR WE MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL INVENTORY OF OURSELVES.**

Step four helps us see exactly what our problems are and shows us our strengths. Let's face it. When we were using, we weren't very honest with ourselves. We are finally beginning to become honest when we admit our addiction has whipped us and that we need help. For some of us it took a long time to admit we were beaten. We found that we do not recover- physically, mentally, or emotionally--overnight. Step Four is going to help us toward recovery more than we can imagine.

Some people make the mistake of approaching the Fourth Step as if it were a confession of how horrible they are-what a bad person they had been. This is not the purpose of this step. We are trying to free ourselves of living in old, useless patterns. We take the Fourth Step to gain the necessary strength and insight to enable us to grow in this new way of life. A binge of emotional sorrow over real or imagined wrongs will not help us. In fact, it can be quite harmful.

Our purpose is to be rid of guilt-not wallow in it! We must be done with the past, not cling to it. We want to look our past in the face and see it for what it really was-and then to release it so that we can live today. The past, for most of us, has been a ghost in the closet/ We have been afraid to open that closet for fear of what that ghost may do to us.

We don't have to do this alone. Our will and our life is now in the hands of the source of all strength-we tap into the Source! Writing a thorough and honest inventory looked impossible to most of us. It was-as long as we were operating under our own power. We take a few quiet moments before writing and pray for the power to carry it out.



We may approach the Fourth Step in a number of ways. It is advisable that before we start, we go over the first three Steps with our sponsor. We get comfortable with our understanding of these steps. We allow ourselves the privilege of feeling good about what we are doing. We have been thrashing about for a long time and have gotten nowhere. Now, we are going to take it easy and not let things frighten us.

We don't write the inventory with any particular person in mind. If we do that, we may wind up slanting what we write in order to please them. Only time will tell, and the Fifth Step will take care of itself. We stay here in the Now-- we are on step Four. We cannot work Step Five until we have completed step Four.

With pen and paper, we begin our moral inventory. If the word "moral" bothers us, we call it a positive/negative inventory, or a good/bad inventory. The way to write an inventory is to write it! Thinking about it, theorizing about it, talking about it will not get it written. We sit down with a notebook, pray, pick our pen and start writing. All we seek to do is find out which things about us need changing. If we were grocers we would not hesitate to separate the rotten fruit from the good and throw out the rotten. It is important to remember where we came from so that we don't return. We had to go through what we did to get to where we are now.

A basic rule of thumb is that we can write too little, but we can never write too much. The inventory will fit the individual, so we simply write until the brain is emptied. Anything we think about is possibly inventory material. We realize how little we have to lose and how much we have to gain. We plunge into this step with no reservations.

We sit down with paper and pen and pray for God's help in revealing the defects that are causing pain and suffering. We pray for courage to be fearless and thorough so that this inventory may help us put our lives in order. When we pray and take action it always goes better for us.

### **INVENTORY TOPICS:**

1 Resentments write about all people, places, things, institutions, ideas, or principles that we resent, or feel threatened by--past and present. Make a list of all these things first, then write about each, telling:

A) What Happened? (Be specific!)

B) How did it make us feel? (Examples: Was my pride or self respect hurt? Were our ambitions or security threatened in any way? Was our livelihood endangered? Was a personal or sexual relationship hurt or threatened? ) Do this for each item, leaving some space after each. After you've done this with everything on your list, then go back and answer:

C) Where was I at fault? Where was I selfish, dishonest, self-seeking or frightened? Though I might not have been all wrong, in what way was I to blame for the situation? Answer these questions for each item--be honest and thorough!

2. Fear: Write about your fears, even though they might not have any relation to your

resentments. Answer these questions about each: Why do I have this fear?

Am I afraid because I cannot depend on myself?

3) Sex: Write about your experience or problems with sex, whether deep relationships, short affairs, or individual problems that seemed to have nothing to do with others. (Be specific!)

then answer these questions about each item:

Where have I been selfish ?

Where have I been dishonest?

Where have I been inconsiderate?

Whom did I hurt?

Did I create jealousy or suspicion or cause bitterness?

Was the relationship a selfish one?

Where was I at fault?

What might I have done instead?

4) Miscellaneous :Basically, any negative thoughts or feelings you may have should appear somewhere in your inventory. If you have anything left over after writing about resentments fears, and sex, here is the place to put it. Any guilt, shame, regret, embarrassment, etc. that you've not already written about.

When we were active in our addiction we lived under a regime of fear. In attaining our new life, we want to be free of unreasonable fear. A lot of times we try to look good in front of other people, but deep down inside we are often afraid of who we are and where we came from.

We write down our fears, our resentments and our guilts. We examine in depth our relationships with people, places and situations asking ourselves what we have demanded of these relationships. Often the answers will show that we are placing unreasonable demands on reality. We often find we are demanding that other people stop being who they are.

Most of us find we were neither so terrible nor so wonderful as we supposed. We are surprised to find that we have many good points in our inventory. Anyone who has some time in the program and who has worked these steps will tell us that the Fourth Step was a turning point in our lives. ultimately we find out that we are just human, with the same fears, longings and troubles as everyone else. One of the greatest benefits of the NA program is discovering that we need never be alone again. Others have felt as we feel. Others have failed where we failed. They are here now in the strength of the fellowship, ready and eager to help us.

This Fourth Step can be a wonderful adventure, reviewing our past performance and our present behavior to see what we want to keep and what we want to be rid of. This Step has the reputation of being difficult. In reality, it's quite simple.

As recovering addicts, we now have the right to reach for levels of greater comfort and we can reach them by getting a handle on what we've been doing wrong. If we want to feel good, we have to stop doing the things that make us feel bad.

We are not going to be perfect. If we were perfect, we would not be human. The important thing is that we do our best. We use the tools available to us, and because we do not want to lose any of what we have gained, we want to continue in the program. It is our experience that no matter how searching and thorough, no inventory is of any lasting effect unless it is promptly followed by an equally thorough Fifth Step.

## **STEP FIVE**

### **WE ADMITTED TO GOD, TO OURSELVES, AND TO ANOTHER HUMAN BEING THE EXACT NATURE OF OUR WRONGS.**

After taking a thorough inventory, we have to deal with what we have found. We have learned what our defects are, but we still don't know how to deal with them. We are told that if we keep these defects inside us, they could lead us to using again. We have to beware of half-measures on this step. Holding on to our own "garbage" will eventually sicken us and hold us back from really taking part in this new way of life. If we take a Fifth Step, but we really don't get honest, we will have the same negative results that dishonesty brought us in the past.

Our Higher Power will be with us when we do this, and will help to free the fear of facing ourselves and another human being. Many of us, before we take Step Five, fear that God will turn away from us when we reveal ourselves to Him. It seemed unnecessary to some of us to admit the exact nature of our wrongs to God. "God already does that stuff," we rationalized. True, God already does know all that, but until we face God with it, we will never really believe that he does. The admission must come from our own lips to truly free us from ourselves.

For years, we have avoided seeing ourselves as we really are. We were ashamed of ourselves and felt isolated from the rest of the world. Now, we've got this shameful past trapped on paper. We can sweep it out of our lives, if we face it and admit it. It would be a tragic mistake to have it all written down and then just shove it into a drawer.

We have feared that if we ever revealed ourselves as we really were, we would surely be rejected. Maybe this was because we had already rejected ourselves. We were so self-centered that we didn't realize just how much we had in common with our fellow addicts. Before coming to Narcotics Anonymous, we had felt that no one could ever relate to us or understand the reasons behind the things we had done. We quickly realized that we had been unrealistic in feeling this way. The people in NA do understand us. They've been where we have been.

We must carefully choose the person who is to hear our Fifth Step. Although there is no hard fast rule about what kind of person we should choose, it is important that we trust that person. Only complete confidence in the person's integrity and closed mouth can make us willing to be thorough in this step. Some of us take our Fifth Step with a total stranger, but most of us feel most comfortable choosing a fellow member of NA. We know

that a fellow addict would be less likely to judge us with malice. Some of us select clergymen, or members of the medical profession, because these people are accustomed to keeping confidences in their word. Whoever we select, we make certain that they know what we are attempting to do and why we are doing it. We are often amazed at how willing most people are to help us. We never knew that people actually cared enough about us to want to help in our recovery.

Once we make up our minds and are actually alone with the person we have chosen to accept our confidence, we usually proceed with enthusiasm. We want to get it over with. We want to be very definite and thorough. We realize that this is a life and death matter.

There is a danger that we will exaggerate our wrongs, and an equal danger that we will minimize or rationalize away our part in situations. If we are anything like we were when we first entered the NA fellowship, we will still tend to want to "sound good." This is a luxury we can't afford. This Step must cut into our character defects and expose our motives and our actions for what they really are. We have no right to expect these things to reveal themselves. It isn't easy, but it is simple. We need to tell the truth, as quickly as possible. We cannot afford to procrastinate.

We will never be able to remember all of our past mistakes, so we need not expect our first inventory to be perfect. If we choose, we can continue the process of self-assessment for the rest of our lives. For now we will get most of the "garbage" out in the first session.

For many years, we have covered up our low self-esteem by hiding behind phony images that we hoped would fool people. Unfortunately, we ended up fooling ourselves more than anyone. Although we often appeared attractive and confident on the outside, we were really hiding a shaky, insecure person on the inside. One thing we can't hide is when we're crippled inside. The masks have to go.

Once we have taken this step, we feel lightened and refreshed. We are finally free to be ourselves, because we were not trying to cover anything up. It is a great relief to be rid of all our secrets, to share the burden of past guilts. Usually, as we share this Step, the listener will share some of his story also, and we find out that the things about ourselves that we thought were so awful or different aren't all that unusual. We see, by the acceptance in the eyes of our confidant, that we can be forgiven, even loved, just the way we are. Even though our examination of ourselves usually reveals some things about ourselves that we don't particularly like, facing these things and bringing them out in the open makes it possible for us to deal with them constructively. And, now that they are out of the closet, ready to be faced and dealt with, we realize that these things about ourselves can be changed. We cannot make these changes alone. We need our Higher Powers help, and the help of the Narcotics Anonymous fellowship.

## **STEP SIX**

**We were entirely ready to have God remove these defects of character.**

Let us go back to the First Step for a minute. Remember that we had to surrender completely to obtain relief. We had to admit we were powerless. In examining ourselves as honestly as possible, we have discovered some things about ourselves that we don't like. Perhaps we call them defects. Whatever we call them, we recognize that we must change if we are to grow. The Sixth Step is the same situation; we can't do it ourselves; but we know that God as we understand Him can do it for us.

Do we really want to be rid of our resentment, our anger, our fear? Do we really understand that they are a deadly poison in the heart of an addict? Many of us cling to our fears, doubts, and self-loathing or resentment of others, because there is a certain distorted security in familiar pain. It seems safer to hold on to the old familiar pain than to let go of it for the unknown. Letting go of character defects should be done with love. Fear, hate, and resentment cannot give us new lives. We should approach old defects with patience and understanding, for they have served us well in days past. They have kept us from situations we couldn't handle before we found the program and a source of power. When we see how our defects exist in our lives and accept them, we can let go of them and get on with our new way of life. We look to the Fellowship for the kind of life we want for ourselves. We ask our friends, "Did you let go?" Without exception the answer is, "Yes, to the best of our ability."

When we are working Step Six, it is important to remember that we are human and should not place great expectations on ourselves. We should be serious when we say "entirely ready to have all these defects removed." This is a step of willingness. That is the spiritual principle of Step Six. It is as if to say that we are now willing to move along spiritual lines toward a destination we couldn't imagine.

We will still get mad and still feel hurt, especially if we are too hungry, angry, lonely, tired, or too serious (H.A.L.T.S.). We are trying to achieve progress not perfection. Progress is possible, but perfection is not. The breakdown of old ideas and old way seems to be beyond our conscious control. The areas we change in, how fast we change, and in what order change occurs are determined by a power greater than ourselves. If we accept God's will, we will be able to follow the necessary path to a better life.

The willingness to change is what we strive for in Step Six. The tools we use to maintain our willingness are practice and prayer. How sincerely we work Step Six depends on the strength of our desire for change. We often feel that we will never be ready to have all our defects removed, but we remember that we are on a journey, and the destination isn't what matters. Willingness to serve is what we strive for. We feel that the Sixth Step is the honest willingness to let go of our defects of character. We become ready to part with the fears and doubts which plague us. We learn that we are growing when we make new mistakes instead of repeating old ones. We decide what our priorities are and envision life free from defects. We recognize our defects and surrender to the simple suggestions that the program offers us. We may continue to try to manage our lives at times and will need to come back to Step Six to renew our readiness to have our defects removed.

## **STEP SEVEN**

### **We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.**

Having decided we want God, as we understood Him, to relieve us of the useless or destructive aspects of our personalities, we have arrived at the Seventh Step. We have all spent much of our lives being anything but humble. We have been humiliated by many of the things that happened to us while using, but most of us avoided true humility until we worked the First Step. Then again, in the Third Step, we asked God to direct our will and our lives. Now, in the Seventh Step, we humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings.

The key to this Step is an understanding of the word humility. Humility has a lot to do with honesty. The Steps, thus far, have been a path to humility. We accepted our addiction and powerlessness. We found a strength beyond ourselves and learned to rely on it. We examined our lives and discovered who we really were. We became entirely ready to have God remove our defects of character. To be truly humble is to accept, and honestly try to be, who we really are. We are not Saints or demons. We are neither perfectly good nor perfectly bad. We are people who have assets and liabilities; and most important of all, we are human.

Humility is a part of staying clean, as food and water are to staying alive. As we struggled along in our addiction, we devoted our energy towards satisfying our material needs. We always had to have a satisfaction of our basic desires, such as power and prestige. We never thought of spiritual growth or asking a Higher Power for direction. Drugs were our Higher Power. We couldn't handle the trials and tribulations of life all by ourselves. It wasn't until we made a real mess of our lives that we realized that we couldn't do it alone. By admitting this we achieved our first glimpse of humility.

If the shortcomings we have discovered are real and we have a chance to be rid of them, we will surely experience a sense of well being when we rid ourselves of them. Some will want to get on their knees for this Step. Some will be very quiet or put forth a great mental effort to show intense willingness. The word humble applies because we approach this Power greater than ourselves to ask for the most wonderful gift of the program; the freedom to live without the limitations of our past ways. However we want to handle it, we go all the way. Think of what we have to lose! As soon as we feel ourselves willing, we should go ahead and ask God To remove our shortcomings.

When we were using, our spiritual and emotional growth came to a halt. We did not mature and grow like a normal person. Now that we are clean, there are many situations in our daily lives that are difficult to understand. By practicing the virtue of humility and asking for help, we can get through even the toughest times. "I can't, we can!" It is a sign of growth. We have to realize that people can give us direction and that our way of thinking is not the only way. We must puncture our egos and realize that we have much more work to do. When someone points out a shortcoming, our first reaction is usually one of defensiveness. If we truly want to grow, we will take a good look at what is pointed out. We must realize we are not perfect and there are things we must change.

We have noticed that humility plays a big part in this program and our new way of life. We take our inventory; we become ready to let God remove our defects of character; we humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings. This is our road to spiritual growth, to change our character, day by day, to gradually, carefully and simply pull ourselves out of the isolation and loneliness of addiction into the mainstream of useful Fellowship. This comes not from wishing, but from action and prayer. The main objective of Step Seven is to get out of ourselves and strive for achieving the will of our Higher Power. Our will didn't work.

Our shortcomings are the symptoms of our defects. We are powerless over our defects of character; they are the things about ourselves we cannot change. The word "shortcoming" on the other hand, implies the possibility of change. A shortcoming is a part of ourselves where we fall short of our potential. In humbly asking God to remove our shortcomings, we are also asking for a better life and for the courage to change the things we can.

If we are careless and fail to grasp the spiritual meaning of this step, it will seem an unbearable chore, impossible to complete and unlikely to do anything but stir up old troubles. Like all the Steps, the point of this one is freedom. None of these Steps work by magic. They work when they are lived. We are trying to achieve adequacy, not perfection; for perfection is a divine quality.

## **STEP EIGHT**

**We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.**

The last five Steps of Narcotics Anonymous, the Eighth through the Twelfth, are the "get out and live" Steps. Just as the First, Second, and Third Steps give us the necessary tools to begin a clean life, and the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Steps complete the process of self-forgiveness and the beginning of new attitudes. The Eighth Step starts the procedure of forgiving other people, being forgiven by them, and learning how to live in the world as a drug-free human being.

The preceding Seven Steps looked pretty rough until we took the plunge and got into them. This one is no different. It seems hard now, but once we've done it, we'll wonder why we didn't do it long ago.

The point of the Eighth Step is willingness. Are we willing, if it is possible and practical, to make amends; once and for all, to clear away the shadows of fear that our past holds for us? The Eighth Step is not easy; it demands a new kind of honesty about our relations with other people. We have to feel better internally before we can even bear to think about those we harmed and how we harmed them.

This Step is a good test of our new found humility, we consult with our sponsors in this

matter. Again, as in the Fourth Step, we do not want to become entangled in useless and dangerous self-loathing. our purpose is to achieve freedom from the guilt we have carried so far, with so much pain, so that we can look the world in the eye with neither aggressiveness nor fear. We admit we are at fault regardless of what the other person did to arouse our hostility. we admit that we hurt them, directly or indirectly, through some action, some lie, some broken promise, neglect or whatever. It will not make us better persons to judge the faults of another. The thing that will make us better is to clean up our lives by relieving ourselves of guilt. The Eighth Step is a mighty stride away from a life dominated by guilt and remorse. We need some real honesty before we can make an accurate list. In preparing to make the Eighth Step list, it is helpful to define harm. One definition of harm is physical or mental damage. Another definition is inflicting pain, suffering or loss. The damage may be caused by something that is said or done, and the harm resulting from these words or actions may be either intentional or unintentional. The degrees of harm can run from making someone feel mentally uncomfortable to inflicting bodily injury or even death. We make our list, or take it from our Fourth Step and add any additional people we can think of, and then we face this list honestly and openly examine our faults. Are we willing to make amends? In many cases we cannot do it, it is neither possible nor practical. We may not know who it was we wronged. In other instances we might run the risk of involving a third person. We do not have the right nor the need, to endanger that person.

Just about anyone that comes into contact with an addict risks being harmed. Many members mention their parents, spouses, children, boyfriends, girlfriends, other addicts, casual acquaintances, co-workers, employers, teachers, landlords, and total strangers.

A problem many of us seem to have with the Eighth Step and the admission of the harm is the belief that we were victims, not victimizers, in our addiction. Avoiding this rationalization is crucial to the Eighth Step. We must separate what was done to us and what we did. We cut away all our justifications and all our ideas of being a victim.

The final difficulty in working the Eighth Step is separating it from the Ninth Step. Projecting about actually making these amends can be a major obstacle both in making the list and in becoming willing. We do not even think about making amends, but just concentrate on exactly what the Eighth Step says which is to make a list and to become willing. We try and work this Step as if there were no Ninth Step. The Eighth Step is actually an action Step. And like all the action Steps it offers immediate benefits. The main thing this Step does for us is to help build an awareness that, little by little, we are gaining new attitudes about ourselves and how we deal with other people.

## **STEP NINE**

**We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.**

We want to get free of our fear, but we don't wish to do so at the expense of anyone else. We might run the risk of involving a third person, some companions of our days of using



who do not wish to be exposed. We do not have the right nor do we need for any moral reason, to endanger that person. In some cases we cannot do it, it is not possible nor practical in some instances. It is very important that we take guidance from our sponsors or spiritual advisors in this matter. We recommend turning over our legal problems to lawyers. Professionals are available to help us with our financial and medical problems. Part of learning to live is not to take on problems and responsibilities that we are not equipped to handle. In some cases we may be beyond our means. If we are, we can only proceed with direction.

Timing is an essential part of this Step. We should make amends when the opportunity presents itself, as long as to do so will not cause more harm. When it gets to the point that we cannot hurt any longer, amends will be made. In some old relationships an unresolved conflict still exists. We enter the old conflict and resolve it by making our amends. We step away from future antagonisms and ongoing resentments. In many instances we will need to go somewhere and humbly ask forgiveness for past wrongs. These are the old tapes that would keep playing back as long as we live. Sometimes this will be a joyous occasion when some old friend or relative proves very willing to let bygones be bygones and welcomes us back to the land of the living. However, some people are not so willing to let go of their bitterness. We can only make our amends to the best of our ability and they can either accept it or deny it. We try to remember that when we make amends we are doing it for ourselves, not for them. We feel relieved, instead of feeling knocked down and drained about our past lives. We accept that it was our addiction that caused others to have a negative attitude about us. Step Nine helps us with our guilt and others with their anger.

This Step should not be avoided. If we avoid this Step we are simply reserving a place in our program to get loaded. Pride, fear, and procrastination often seem an impossible barrier, they stand in the way of progress and growth through the Ninth Step. The important thing is to take action and be ready to accept the reactions of those those persons we have harmed. We make amends to the best of our ability.

There are some things we can make direct amends for; some we can only make partial amends for; and some that we remember nothing about. We can make amends by our actions. They don't always have to be verbal. Staying clean is also an amend because we're no longer part of the problem. Now we're part of the solution.

In the progress of our recovery we were restored to sanity and part of sanity is effectively relating to others. We will less often view people as a threat to our security. Real security in our gut and in our recovery will replace the physical ache and mental confusion. We address ourselves to these people with love and patience. Fear of relapse will make many of our most sincere well-wishers reluctant to accept our recovery as real. We must remember the pain they have known. In time, many seeming miracles will occur. Many of us that were separated from our children succeed in establishing relationships with them. (However, estranged mates can be dangerous to our recovery if they don't learn something about our program. If the relationship is real it will survive.) Eventually it became easier for our family to accept the change in US. Clean time speaks for itself.

Patience is an important part of the Fellowship. The unconditional love we experience will rejuvenate our will to live and each positive move on our part will be matched by an unexpected opportunity.

The benefit of this Step is to be able to face people we have harmed with a clear conscience. By discovering and admitting our faults, we experience a miracle.

## **STEP TEN**

**We continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.**

Step Ten is a continuation of a fearless and searching look within ourselves in order to repair the disorder that fear, pride, jealousy, and our other defects cause. It helps us avoid relapse due to other problems which we may be reluctant to look at. If you take the drugs away from a drug-crazed maniac, you still have a maniac. Since our problems entail much more than using, we cannot recover until we recognize the need for taking a good look at our attitudes and motives.

Now that we are clean, we have recognized the advantage of getting our own house in order. We can recognize ourselves as the heart of the problem. Negativity has been our way for many years and we are not able to change it overnight. Any thought that we are going to be perfect has to be smashed. We must remain teachable if we are going to stay clean in this program. The smart ones who argue a lot usually die. The open-minded ones survive. We do not entertain the thought of ever achieving perfection. However, we must strive for stability in our lives so that we can live and be at peace with ourselves. Step Ten helps us to do this. The process of learning about the good and the bad in ourselves, is essential. As addicts, we are prone to fear, anger, vanity, complacency, and doing the wrong thing at the wrong time. If we are not aware of our defects and shortcomings they may drive us into a corner that we cannot get out of clean.

Are we doing our best? Are we staying honest? Are we still growing, or are we slipping back into the old fears and resentments? It is the purpose of the Tenth Step to answer these and similar questions. Those defects of character which we found in the Fourth Step are deeply ingrained in us. One of the things we do is check for the surfacing of our defects by working Step Ten daily.

How to take a daily inventory that is effective will depend on the severity of the particular trouble we are having. We may review our actions during the day to see what we did right, where we went wrong, what we could have done differently, and what amends we need to make. We can also pause and take stock when we run into trouble during the course of the day. We write about our resentment, explaining how we feel and how we became angry, and the part we played. By looking at our feelings we may be able to avoid repeating the actions that make us feel bad.

We try to remember that God is responsible for our growth. We do not take credit for our

progress. The line between where God does and does not help us is absolutely irrelevant. All credit to our Higher power is our attitude. We find when we practice this, we benefit; for when our pride creeps in we fall into the role of the hero, and when our self-centeredness takes over, we find ourselves in trouble again.

In step Ten we strive for genuine humility. In this humility we can better interact with others. We are not readily angered, frightened, or maddened. We remember our part in the divine partnership with our Higher Power and we are more tolerant and patient with other people.

Step Ten is worked while the day's ups and downs are fresh in our heads. We list wrongs we have done. We do not rationalize our actions. Rationalization has killed more of us than anything else. At times, our motives are obscured by clouded thinking. We pray for humility and use it as a light to examine our real motives. When we get our own house in order, we feel more room to grow. The mess gets cleaned up. We know ourselves better and are better able to live life on a daily basis.

Continuing to take personal inventory means that we form a habit of looking at ourselves, our actions, our attitudes and our relationships on a regular basis. We try to come up with honest evaluations and to put out more or less energy in certain areas with which we are concerned.

It is very important to keep sharing with other people so that when we come up with a rationalization for negative behavior, we can be told about it. This highlights the preventative side of the Tenth Step. You ask yourself as you go through the day, "Am I being drawn in by some old pattern of fear or resentment?", "Am I too tired?", "Am I too hungry?", "Is my thinking getting cloudy?" It's a vaccination against insanity on a continuing basis.

## **STEP ELEVEN**

### **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 IT OUT.**

We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him; we renew this commitment daily in the eleventh step. Most of us rebelled against this in the beginning. The first time we hear someone say, "Let go and let God", it sounds idiotic. "No," we answer, "If I let go I'll disappear or get taken advantage of." What happens instead is, the more we improve our conscious contact with God through prayer and meditation, the more often we pause when doubtful and say, "God, I don't know what to do. Please teach me." It's a fact. When we finally get our own selfish motives out of the way, we begin to find a peace we never imagined. We begin to experience true awareness and feel empathy for other people.

The underlying principle of this step is God-consciousness. We try to avoid asking for specific things. It's hard because we usually think that we know what's right for us. We now know if we pray to do God's will, we will receive what's really best for us, regardless of what we think is best for us. Our deepest longings and recurring images of the kinds of people we'd like to be are but fleeting glimpses of God's will for us. Our outlooks are so limited we can only see our immediate wants and needs through a loving God. It is our own real dreams that come true. When we pray a remarkable thing happens; we find the means, the ways, the energies to perform tasks far beyond our capabilities. By the surrender of control, we gain a far greater power that will see us through. It is important we keep faith and renew it through daily prayer. It is easy to slip back into our old ways. We have to learn to maintain our new lives on a spiritually sound basis to insure our continued growth and recovery. God will not force his goodness on us, but we will receive it if we ask. This is not cruelty. Enforced morality lacks the power that comes to us when we choose to live a spiritually oriented life.

Many times, by living this way we found feelings of peace and serenity that we never knew before. By doing God's will, our lives will be fulfilled.

## **STEP TWELVE**

**Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of those steps, we sought to carry this message to addicts and to practice these principles in all our affairs.**

We experience our spiritual awakenings in many different ways however, these awakenings do have some things in common. Life takes on a new meaning, a new joy, and a quality of being and feeling worthwhile. We become spiritually refreshed and are glad to be alive. Our suffering cleanses us of some of our illusions. We have been guided to a new life, and a new place in the world. The prerequisite for this step is working Steps One through Eleven. There are those of us who try to stay clean without "having had a spiritual awakening" and they are no longer with us. The ones who continue to "practice these principles in all their affairs," tell us that this is the most wonderful thing they have ever experienced. The journey is a feeling of gratitude. Usually, by the time we achieve this state of mind, no one has to tell us to share our new life with the still suffering addict. We are more than willing to help that person because we realize that helping others—giving away that which has been given to us—is our best possible insurance against relapse. We call it "carrying the message" and we do it in a number of ways.

The first way in which we carry the message is by staying clean. Our new way of living speaks for itself better than our words ever could. People see us on the street and remember us as furtive frightened loners. They notice the grayness and fear leaving our faces. They see us gradually come alive. A spring comes into our step and a twinkle into our eyes. The message is meaningless unless we live it. If we do live it, we give it more meaning with our lives than any words can express.

Learning the art of helping others when it is appropriate, without creating resentments, is a marvelous benefit of the N.A. program. Remarkably, the Twelve Steps guide us from a

state of humiliation and despair to a state where we are able to act as instruments of God's will. We receive the gift of being able to help fellow suffering addicts when no one else can. No greater change of personality is possible; it is God's love present in our lives. We see it happening among us every day. This miraculous one hundred and eighty degree change is evidence of our spiritual awakening.

We attend N.A. meetings and make ourselves visible and available to serve the Fellowship. We give freely and gratefully of our time, service and our experience to help fellow addicts. Do not hesitate when called upon to practice these principles; know that the more eagerly we Nu&cdr\* to stay clean, the richer our spiritual awakening will be. Helping others works. We do these things because they are the things that grant the new lives we are enjoying.

In the Twelfth Step, we practice the spiritual principle of giving away the N.A. message of recovery in order to keep it. This is like reaping what we sow. The old habit of using drugs is replaced by the new habit of not using, and helping others to get clean. Even a member with one week in the N.A. Fellowship can turn to a newcomer and say, "Live Just For Today" or "An Addict Alone Is In Bad Company".

When we share with someone, we may pray, "God make me an instrument of Thy Will." We don't do it alone, and we don't have to. It is just a matter of getting another N.A. member to go with us on the Twelve Step call. It is a privilege to go on such a call. We get to be an instrument of God's grace in action; those of us who do service work are the luckiest people on earth! We who have been in the pits of despair, now strive to help other people to find a new and better way to live.

We help newcomers, whether they are detoxing or just beginning to learn the principles of N.A. We do what we can to make them aware of what the program offers and try to make them feel at home. Experience shows the best way to accomplish these ends is to listen carefully to what they want to do about their problem. Next we share our experience, strength, and hope and accompany them to their first meeting.

This program was given to us, we now have the opportunity to share this gift with others. We make ourselves available; we are the tools. God works through us to provide the addict with what is needed to find recovery. One Twelve Step call of this nature can make a life worthwhile. There are plenty of such calls for those of us in N.A. This program is a way of life—an all-encompassing approach to living. At first most of us applied these principles to our drug addiction only. As we grow; we begin to work the steps in more and more areas. Eventually, we begin to practice these principles in every area of our lives. We begin to grow as a whole person. This program is a "package deal". We have the choice of accepting or rejecting the package. For us, half-a-program isn't much better than none at all—bits and pieces won't work in the long run.

The Twelfth Step also suggests that we practice these principles in all of our affairs. This program is a way of life --- an all encompassing approach to living. At first most of us applied these principles to our drug addiction only. As we grow, we begin to work the

steps in more and more areas. Eventually, we begin to practice these principles in every area of our lives. We begin to grow as a whole person. This program is a "package deal". we have the choice of accepting or rejecting the package. For us, half-a-program isn't much better than none at all --- bits and pieces won't work in the long run. As long as we stay clean and live these Principles, we are working the Twelfth Step. We are attracting people to us and the N.A. Fellowship by our example of being clean. We no longer participate in the problem; we now serve God. In this manner of service, we renew our decision to turn our will and lives over to the care of God. Even if we have not yet gained this understanding, we will acquire it through seeing others recover. These recoveries show us that we have a God who truly loves us and who has given us a life free of drugs that we never dreamed possible. The Steps do not end here, they are a new beginning.

## Chapter Five: What Can I do?

Begin your own program to taking Step One from the previous chapter "How it Works.". When we fully concede to our innermost selves that were powerless over our addiction, we have taken a big step in our recovery many of us have had some reservations at this point, so give yourself a break and be as thorough as possible at the start. Go to Step two, and so forth and as you go on you will come to an understanding of the program for yourself. If you are in an institution of any kind, you have gone through complete withdrawal and have stopped using for the present. Now, with a clear mind, try this way of life. Upon release, continue your daily program and contact a member of N.A. Do this by mail, by phone, or in person. Better yet come to our meetings. Here you will find the answers to some of the things that may be disturbing you now.

If you are not in an institution, the same holds true. Stop using or today. Most of us can do for eight or twelve hours what seems impossible for a longer period of time. If the obsession or compulsion becomes too great, put yourself on a five minute basis of not using. minutes will grow to hours and hours to days and so you will break the habit and gain some peace of mind. The real miracle happens when you realize that the need for drugs has in some way been lifted from you. You have stopped using and have started to live.

It all begins with our first admission and surrender. From that point, each addict is reminded that a day clean is a day won. At first we can do little more than attend meetings. Probably we cannot remember even a single name, word or thought from our first meeting. What we do remember is the feeling we got. No matter what we had done or what course our addiction had taken, we could relax and enjoy the love that filled the room at every meeting. Meetings strengthened our grip on recovery.

Having began attending meetings regularly, we were introduced to the Twelve Steps. Working the Steps got us out of our old attitudes. When we admitted that our lives had become unmanageable, we didn't have to argue our point of view. We didn't have to be right all of the time. We found a new source of energy to put the wreckage of our lives back in working order. Things that we did to hide our illness no longer seemed important we were free to open our minds to new ideas. Destructive behavior could start being corrected as soon as we loosened our grip on our old ways. We found that the fear of change was replaced by a sense of wonder and adventure. Freedom to change seems to come mainly after we accept ourselves.

By recognizing the defects in our characters, and letting go of them spiritually, we become ready to have sanity restored to us. In applying these spiritual principals to our lives, we keep an open mind. Patience, humility and tolerance are well worth any price that we must pay for them. The path to spiritual recovery involves spiritual principals. Spiritual indifference surely leads to relapse.

As we go to meetings regularly, we learned the basic value of talking to other addicts who shared our problems and goals. As we became responsible for our own recovery, we became responsible to our fellow addicts. As recovering addicts we share what we have found with other addicts, because we know how important it is for one addict to talk with another. We often miss what we are looking for because it isn't hidden. Most addicts have insights and abilities that offset their weaknesses. Gratitude for our assets doesn't keep us from growing in areas where we are weak. Being grateful begins when we realize that something greater than ourselves has blessed us with what we have.

Facing problems is an ability we need to stay clean. If we have had problems in the past, it is unlikely that simple abstinence will eliminate the defense mechanisms and emotional walls that enabled us to live in the past in searching for the end we often miss the journey. These old ways have to go if we are to find new lives. We can successfully face the days to come if we take advantage of the help the program of Narcotics Anonymous has to offer. Help from one addict to another; help that says, "I had something like that happen to me and I tried so and so." Not preaching or judging, rather sharing experience strength, and hope. The willingness to try new ideas and possible solutions help open the door to our recovery. One discovery leads to another, and soon we begin our new way of life; people places and things begin to fall back into their proper perspective.

We have learned that we can, and must, go to our Higher Power for help in solving problems. Fortunately, many problems can wait. The program doesn't work when we try to adopt it to our life, we must learn to adapt our life to the program. When we can feel the program beginning to work we don't freak out. Personality change is a natural progression 'let in motion by our surrender to the program. The slogans are the sayings that seemed to help us most when we first came to the Fellowship They apply to the little, dangerous daily situations that seemed so heavy at first. Things go smoother if the newcomer finds a sponsor to confide in, someone whose judgement he can trust. We do not think it weak to put a little faith and trust in a person with more experience on the program.

At times we may still feel that we cannot have a happy life without drugs. We may suffer from the fear that there is no escape from using than insanity and depression. We may fear the rejection of our old friends if we continue cleaning up our act. This is common. We suffer from an overly sensitive ego and there are many things within us that we used drugs to escape from. Just as we went to any length to get drugs, so must we go to any lengths to get clean and stay clean. This involves the honesty to admit our need for help from others who have been where we have been . and have learned to live without drugs. One of our problems is that we found it easier to change our perception of reality than change the reality we perceive. We must give up this old idea and accept the fact that reality and life go on whether we choose to participate or not. We can't do anything about the forces around us, we can only change the way we react and the way we see ourselves.

As newcomers, we begin to learn how to change our reaction to reality. We are encouraged to avoid making any major decisions on our own until we replace our old



ideas with the new principles we find in N.A.. Terminal hipness" and "fatal cool" are symptoms of our addictive personality. We have learned that old ideas and street games won't help us to stay clean or live a better life. Only after we've established our desire to live clean and acquainted ourselves with the tools which have helped other addicts to recover, can we then proceed with the business of living.

We suggest at least one meeting a day for ninety days for our newcomers. There is a special calm that settles over a person with our disease when they find out there are many others who share their difficulties past and present. We begin to work the Steps in earnest, as soon as possible. Reading our literature, talking over the implication of each Step with our new friends and our sponsors, and asking God's help improves our understanding of the program. The willingness to change a meeting a day, getting and using phone numbers, reading our literature, and not using time between meetings are the lengths we all have to go to to stay clean.

When we became acquainted with this Fellowship and its principals, and begin to put them into action, we start to grow. We apply our efforts to our most obvious problems and let the rest go. We do the job at hand and as we progress new opportunities for improvement present themselves. Recovery is an ongoing process; opportunities for growth which are now in sight may not even have existed in the past. Life what we always wished it to be ??? a continuing state of awakening and spiritual progress.

Recovery will provide for our re-entry into society. We find many addicts who have had difficulties similar to our own and who have succeeded. It is difficult to get rid of the notion that we must be great or do great to be O.K. As we recover we often find ourselves saying and doing things that suddenly make no sense to us, even if we've been doing them for years. We see our mistakes. This is necessary for our recovery. Self condemnation has little place here. We see our errors and we try to correct them.

In our addiction, we feared change because we had lost control of our lives and most changes were for the worst. Clean, we had to learn to face an old enemy? procrastination. If we allow ourselves to stagnate and cling to our old ways of desperation and fear, our chances of a real and lasting recovery decrease. As we go about the task of changing our lives, we are confronted with our character defects. We have to reach out and accept the love and understanding the Fellowship has to offer. Clean, we face the world together. We no longer feel backed into a corner and at the mercy of events and circumstances. We can expect to succeed in many areas of our lives where we have only known failure and despair. Our new friends and the tools for living in the program of Narcotics Anonymous enable us to experience these changes. Working the Steps and practicing the principles broadens our horizons and simplifies our lives. Our new friends and awakened spirits help us in our common efforts to recover.

Being clean we eventually have to learn to cope with success. Success scares us because in the past it preceded failure. We could not afford to feel good because we remembered the pain of disappointment. It was better, we concluded, to keep moving on and holding back. Actually this made a great deal of sense when we were using. Now, it takes no

sense at all. Personal problems will be resolved when we are willing to accept responsibility for them. Service will get us out of ourselves, and our concern for others will be reflected in our ability to accept concern from others. When we find ourselves opening up and facing difficulties that used to have us on the run, we experience periodic urges of good feeling that give us the desire to seek God's will.

By the time we get to N.A. we have ceased to feel as if we are participating in the human race. Our tenuous grasp on reality is invaded by fears and self-hatred, which lead to paranoia, and away from the rest of humanity as a whole. When we finally become desperate enough to seek help, we, once again, seek out fellow addicts, but this time the addicts are clean. The acceptance we find in the Fellowship amazes us, since we once knew only loneliness. N.A. reawakens old memories of what it felt like to be member of the human family. Slowly we open up, reach out, warm up, let ourselves love and be loved. These actions become tools for us. The response we get to our original desire to be clean gives us the desire to continue the chain by helping others.

As we clean our bodies by daily abstinence we clean our minds of preconceptions based on past experiences. Guilt and worry keep us from living in the here and now. The denial of our disease and reservations keep us sick. Those who don't use no matter what happens or how they feel, stay clean. We must remember that we are just one fix, pill, drink or toke away from total disaster. It's amazing the power that total abstinence has in changing our lives. The bottom line of Narcotics anonymous is staying clean. We realize that we can't use drugs in any form and live. As addicts we are allergic to all drugs. The effect of any amount of usage is usually immediate and devastating.

Some of the most common excuses for using are loneliness, self-pity and fear. Dishonesty, closed-mindedness, and unwillingness, are three of our greatest enemies. Self-obsession is at the core of our insanity. These are old thinking patterns and they can kill us. Our immediate and devastating experience shows that we do recover from these old patterns. We live "just for today" without drugs. We believe the solution for the problems of having drug-fogged minds, sick bodies and tormented emotions is in a spiritual way of life. This is why we use the Twelve Steps as a program of recovery and ultimately a method of trusting in a Higher Power that we can have faith in.

## **Chapter Six: The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous**

We keep what we have only with vigilance and just as freedom for the individual comes from the Twelve Steps so freedom for the groups springs from our Traditions, As long as the ties that bind us together are stronger than those that would tear us apart, all will be well.

- 1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.**
- 2. For our Group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our Group conscience, our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.**
- 3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.**
- 4. Each Group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other Groups, or N.A., as a whole.**
- 5. Each Group has but one primary purpose: to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.**
- 6. An N.A. Group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.**
- 7. Every N.A. Group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.**
- 8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our Service Centers may employ special workers.**
- 9. N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.**
- 10. Left out of this draft**
- 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.**

We come to this program from homes and apartments, offices and schools, treatment centers and jails, parks and gutters. We come from many different places, but they're all called loneliness, pain, and fear. Somehow addiction draws us together in Narcotics Anonymous. We come to this program for many different reasons. Those of us who stay, do so for the same reasons ??? to stop using and stay clean. After we've actually stopped, and the fog has cleared a bit, most of us take a look around to see what this program is all about. We start trying to do the things we see those around us doing. Eventually we come to the Twelve Steps and try to work them as best we can. The result is a degree of freedom that we have never known before. We find freedom from drugs and the obsession to use them and in time a bit of freedom from that part of ourselves that has been destroying us.

We're taught that we can only keep what we have by giving it away. So we work with other addicts who have problems like ours and want help. Usually one of the first things we try to do when we're working with a newcomer is to get them to a meeting. After all, that's what worked for us.

Why is this so? What is it about our meetings that's so special? Usually,, about all we can say is that there is a feeling there of strength, hope, love and an atmosphere of recovery. Our meetings are very special to most of us. They're a place where we feel safe; a place where we fit in. But, what keeps it that way? one would think that any time people like us get together the results would be chaos. Groups of self?centered, self?willed, isolated individuals just can't meet together peacefully and safely, nonetheless we do. The reason that we can is that we have Twelve Traditions that help to keep our groups "safe" and free.

By following these principles in our dealings with others in N.A. and society at large, we avoid many problems. That isn't to say that our Traditions eliminate all problems. We still have to face difficulties as they arise: communication problems, differences of opinion, internal controversies, problems with individuals and groups outside the fellowship. However, when we apply these principles we avoid some of the pitfalls.

Many of our problems are much like those our predecessors had to face. Their hard won experience gave birth to the Traditions; and our own experience has shown that these principles are just as valid today as they were yesterday. Our Traditions are what protect us from the internal and external forces which could destroy us. They are truly the ties that bind us together, but they don't work automatically. It is only through understanding and application that they have power.

### **TRADITION ONE**

**Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N. A. Unity.**

It makes sense that our First Tradition concerns unity and our common welfare. One of the most important things about our new way of life is being a part of a group of addicts also seeking recovery. Our survival is directly related to the survival of our group and of our fellowship.

Before coming to N.A., most of us tried to get clean or stay clean on our own. Many of us sought treatment or professional help. These efforts were unsuccessful for us; it wasn't until we came to Narcotics Anonymous that recovery seemed possible. This program can do for us what we could not do for ourselves. We came and saw this program work in the lives of other addicts. Their recovery gave us hope for ourselves. We became part of a group and found that we could make it, too. We also learned that those who did not continue being an active part of the Fellowship faced a rough road and often relapsed. Most of us agree that without N.A. we would be in real trouble. We know we can't do it alone, and nothing else ever worked for us. For our own good we try to do what is best for the group.

This isn't to say that the group is shoved down the individual's throat. Most of us had never experienced the kind of attention and personal care that we found in the program. We are accepted and loved for what we are, instead of "in spite" of what we are. The individual is precious to the group, and the group is precious to the individual. No one can revoke our membership or punish us. No one can make us do anything we don't choose to do. We are taught this way of life by example rather than direction. We share our experiences and learn from each other. In our addiction we consistently placed our personal welfare before anything else. Here we found that in the long run what's best for the group was usually good for us. We chose to conform to the common good because that's what works for us.

Our personal experiences while using differed from member to member. However, as a group we have found many common themes in our addiction. One of these shared symptoms was our need to prove our self-sufficiency. We convinced ourselves that we could make it alone and proceeded to live life on that basis. The results were disastrous, and in the end each of us had to admit that our self-sufficiency was a lie. We found that we could neither control our using, nor manage our own lives. This surrender was the starting point of our recovery, and is a primary point of unity for the Fellowship.

Not only are these common themes in our addiction, but we find that in recovery we also have much in common. We share a common desire to stay clean. Each of us has learned to depend upon a Power greater than ourselves, which is our source of strength. Our purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. We have our Traditions, the rules that protect us from ourselves. We share many personal experiences and each is a point of unity for us.

Unity is a reality in Narcotics Anonymous. This isn't to say that we don't have our disagreements~ and conflicts; we do. Whenever people get together there are differences of opinion. However, when the chips are down we pull together. Time and time again we've seen this; in times of crisis or trouble we set aside our differences and work for the common good. How often have we seen two members, who usually don't get along very well, working together with a newcomer? How often have we seen a group doing menial tasks to pay the rent for their meeting hall? How often have we seen members drive hundreds of miles to help support a new group? These activities and many others are commonplace in our fellowship. They must be, because without these things N.A. could not have survived. Without N.A. few of us would have survived, and fewer still would have found recovery.

## **TRADITION TWO**

**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.**

In N.A. we have a great concern in protecting ourselves from ourselves. our Second Tradition is another example of this. By nature we seem to be strong-willed, self-centered people, seeking self-gratification in the realms of money, power and sex. An important

part of our recovery is learning how to live with these drives; how to realign our misguided instincts, how to stop acting out our insanities, how to disarm our self-destruct mechanisms, and how to channel our energies toward constructive ends. In other words, we have to replace our "dying program" with a "living program".

Early in our recovery we learned that we did a pretty good job with our lives. One of our sayings is "Our best ideas got us here". This seems apt as we look back and see how many times our schemes and plans got us into trouble despite their original intent. We were powerless over our addiction and could not manage our own lives. Now we find ourselves thrust together in N.A., mis-managers all, not one of us capable of making consistently good decisions. When we realize this and relate it to our new way of life we obtain experience a sort of gut-level panicky feeling.

At this point our old timers usually come forward to reassure us. They say: "Don't worry, God takes care of fools and addicts; This is a spiritual program and He won't let us screw it up". They go on to explain that in N.A. we rely on a loving God as He expresses Himself in our Group conscience rather than on personal opinion or ego. In working the Steps we learn to depend on a Power greater than ourselves. We continue this relationship and utilize it for our Group purposes. If we each turn our will and our lives over to His care and seek to do His will, He will surely express Himself at the group level. When a decision needs to be made for a group, each of the members should take the time to meditate on what is most beneficial to our common welfare. If we do this, then the results will truly be an expression of the spiritual concept of our Group.

We know that this is a fact for our Fellowship, but sometimes we are confused when it seems our decisions don't work out very well. We forget that we are not perfect, and that we are only experiencing spiritual progress. When personalities and self will creep into our efforts then the results suffer. We must be constantly on guard that our decisions are truly an expression of God's will. There is often a vast difference between Group conscience and Group opinion, powerful personalities, or popularity. Some of our most painful growing pains have come as a result of decisions made in the name of "group conscience"

We took a Group conscience and decided that .... Wait a minute ! We don't take Group conscience, we take votes. One group decided that members must be graduates of a specific treatment program. Another felt that only heroin addicts should attend. Another accepted only Christians. Another decided that residents of a halfway house could attend if they promised not to talk. Another let others sit in on their group only if they would contribute to the collection. Another decided to pay its officers wages. One group promised that anyone who attended their meetings would be able to get a job at a local counseling center, and so on and so on. We've made a lot of bad decisions and pawned them off as Group conscience. This worries many of us. How can we tell if our decisions are really Group conscience or not, and how do we prevent painful mistakes?

There is one truth which helps guide us. True spiritual principals are never in conflict they always complement each other. The true spiritual conscience of a group will never

contradict any of our principals. Whenever we are faced with a group decision, we first try to eliminate personalities, prejudices, and self-centeredness. Then we review our decisions to make sure they are not in violation of any of our other Traditions. If so we take another look at our decision and try to resolve it. This approach isn't foolproof, but it has helped to prevent problems many times.

The second Tradition also concerns the nature of leadership in N.A.. We have seen that we try to vest authority in the spiritual conscience of the group. In keeping with this, we make a special point of trying to prevent authoritarian leadership. We have learned that for our Fellowship, leadership by example and by selfless service works, and that directions and manipulation fails. We choose not to have presidents, masters, or directors. Instead we have secretaries, treasurers, and representatives. These titles in themselves imply service rather than control. Our experience shows that if a group becomes an extension of the personality of a leader or a certain member, then it loses its effectiveness. Newcomers don't stay, and members stop coming. The group must then change or die. This is sometimes a difficult and agonizing process. Those who stay grow through the experience; but what happens to those who leave? An atmosphere of recovery in our groups is one of our most precious assets; and we must guard it carefully lest we lose it to politics and personalities.

Those of us who have been involved in long time or in getting a group started and keeping the doors open through the hard early days sometimes have a hard time letting go of the reins. Sometimes our egos get in the way, sometimes ungrounded fears get in the way, and sometimes the group gets in the way. Most of us come with a poor self-image and low self-worth. With time and some successes we begin to recover somewhat and develop healthier attitudes. We enjoy these feelings and they are healthy for us. We like recognition and attention and we often deserve them. However this sometimes gets out of hand. We may begin to pursue these things as ends in themselves and find ourselves in trouble. With more time and maturity we grow in humility and learn to deal with these new feeling in a more realistic and spiritual way. Another situation which often causes us problems is fear. We sometimes fear that there is no one else who can serve the group as well as we. We are afraid that if we turn over the responsibility to new members, something terrible is going to happen. We may even have tried to get others involved before without success. It doesn't matter, whenever we are unwilling to take a chance to let the group grow on its own, or when we become afraid of change, we are playing God. Our friends may tell us to let go and work the Third Step. Sometimes we are deaf to their love. Although these cases eventually resolve themselves; what about those we lose in the process? still another situation which causes leadership problems is when senior members are thrust into positions of power. Sometimes a group or part of a group will be afraid to let their leaders step down gracefully. The members, time and time again, may draft the same leaders; demanding that they perform, demanding that they rule the roost. In these cases change is especially hard because it seems that only a crisis will do the job. Usually, the leader himself must refuse to serve. This goes against the grain because we've learned never to refuse an N.A. request, and this has been a valuable part of our personal program. To refuse to lead because it's not what's best for the group requires a lot of maturity and humility. Most of those involved with service sooner or later have to

deal with these problems. At first they are unaware. They run on good feelings, the notoriety, and the attention. After a while, they may begin having mixed feelings. Part of them enjoys being the spotlight, while another part is very uncomfortable because they know they are really just another member. This period is often followed by a period in which they deny their leadership and value to the group. Eventually and gratefully they find a degree of humility which allows them to accept themselves and their places in the Fellowship. They accept that they are truly just a part of a greater whole, that they in themselves are not indispensable. Along with this they also accept that they do have special and valuable experience which can benefit the group. They become a resource for the group; seeking neither to control the group, nor to set themselves apart. It is at this time that their long service truly contributes the most. They encourage us, inspire us, and teach us by example. Even though their services are less dramatic than when their group was struggling to survive, they provide a foundation of stability, strength, and experience upon which our Fellowship can grow.

### **TRADITION THREE**

#### **The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.**

This Tradition is very important for both the individual and the group. It relates directly to many of the basic ideas of our program. Desire is the key word in this Tradition and desire is the basis of our recovery. In our own stories and in our experience of trying to carry the message of recovery to addicts who still suffer, one painful fact of life has emerged again and again. An addict who does not want to stop using will not stop using. They can be analyzed, counseled, reasoned with, prayed over, threatened, beaten, locked up or whatever; but they won't stop using until they want to. The only thing we ask of our members is that they have this desire. Without it, they are doomed, but with it miracles have happened.

Desire is our only requirement, and rightly so. Addiction does not discriminate, so why should recovery? Our disease does not recognize race, religion, sex, age, occupation, economics, or any of the other lines people draw to separate themselves. "An addict is a man or woman whose life is controlled by drugs". The newcomer is the lifeblood of N.A. and when one comes to us seeking help we welcome them with open arms. We don't care who or what they are or even what they used. As long as they want to stop using there is for them in N.A., and this Tradition guarantees them that place. Every clean member of N.A. could have been rejected by some kind of membership requirement or another. Many of us would not be alive today if we hadn't found a program which accepted us when we wanted help. We originally came to this program for many reasons, but those of us who have stayed have done so for the same reason—the desire to stop using. Many of us didn't even know that addiction was our problem. Many of us could not visualize a life without drugs, let alone want it. Many of us had reached the point in our addiction where we felt there was no hope for us, we only wanted a little relief. It wasn't until after we came to N.A. that we found out that we had a disease and that recovery was possible for us. Membership in N.A. isn't automatic when someone walks in the door or when the newcomer has a desire to stop using. The decision to become a part of our Fellowship



rests with the individual. Any addict who has a desire to stop using can become a member of N.A.

We are Narcotics Anonymous and our problem is addiction, other fellowships deal with other problems. Most newcomers are led to the fellowship which best suits their needs. Some individuals come with a problem that expressed itself in various ways. They don't clearly fit into just one fellowship with which they are most comfortable. our primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers; where they find recovery is not our basic concern. We know of members with a history of drug abuse who have found recovery in other fellowships. We support these members and rejoice in their recovery. An addict who has found freedom and recovery anywhere is a friend of ours. Although we would welcome them in our groups, we do not seek them out or try to force them to join N.A. . This would not be in keeping with our spiritual aims.

The Twelve Steps Fellowships do not compete. We are mutually supportive and cooperate to the common good. For us recovery is more important than membership. However, some newcomers seem to have trouble finding the fellowship or fellowships in which they fit. We encourage them to shop around, to attend various meetings and find out where they most fully identify. We suggest that they ask themselves: "Where do I hear about problems most like my problems? Where are there members who are living the kind of life I would like to live? Where am I most comfortable?" The choice of membership rests with the individual. We feel the ideal state for our fellowship exists when an addict can openly and freely come to an N.A. meeting; wherever and whenever they choose and leave just as freely if they want. We realize that there is nothing we can do to make an addict stop using. However, we have learned that recovery is a reality and that life without drugs is better than we ever imagined. We open our doors to addicts hoping that they can find what we have found; but knowing that only those who have a desire to stop using and want what we have to offer will join us in our new way of life.

#### **TRADITION FOUR**

**Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups, or N.A. as a whole.**

The autonomy of our groups is one of our most precious possessions. This sounds great but what does it mean? What is it to be autonomous? Webster's defines autonomous as "having the right or power of self government", "if undertaken or carried on without outside control", "existing or capable of existing independently", "responding, reaction or developing independently of the whole." Autonomy is all these things to us and more. Our groups are truly self-governing and are not subject to outside control. Each group can exist on its own if it must. Each group has had to grow on its own and stand on its own two feet. one might ask: Is this really true, are we truly autonomous, what about our service committees, our offices, our activities, our hotlines, and all the other things that go on in N.A. ? The answer, of course, is that these things are not N.A. They are services that we can utilize to help us in our recovery and to further the primary purpose of our groups. Narcotics Anonymous is a Fellowship of men and women, addicts meeting

together in groups, and using a given set of spiritual principles to find freedom from addiction and a new way to live.

All else is not N.A. Those other things we mentioned are the result of members caring enough to reach out and offer their help and experience so that our road may be easier. Whether or not we choose to utilize these services for the benefit of a group is up to us, they are not thrust down our throats. Some have taken offense to this, they said that when they started out in the program they were told they had to register their group. This may be true, but many groups exist that have never registered. We ask groups to register because we can't recognize them unless we know that they exist. Once a group registers they are sent a starter kit. This contains many suggestions and is one of the ways we share our experience to help the group. Whether or not they take our suggestion is their decision. In the starter kit it says that we must abide by the Twelve Traditions in order to call ourselves Narcotics Anonymous. These Traditions are part of the set of spiritual principles that are N.A. Without the traditions, N.A. does not exist. It really is up to the group, in the end they must choose for themselves ... They are autonomous.

But we said that for N.A. autonomy was more than this, and it is. For us in Narcotics Anonymous autonomy is also creative freedom. It gives our groups the freedom to act on their own to establish their atmosphere of recovery, to serve their members, and to fulfill their primary purpose. It is this aspect of autonomy that makes it one of our most precious principles. It is for this reason that we guard our autonomy so carefully.

We are autonomous; and from what we have said it would seem that we, in our groups, can do whatever we decide to do, regardless of what anybody says. This is partly true. Each group does have complete freedom except when their actions become a threat to other groups and the rest of N.A. This is the other half of Tradition Four, and the way we use our autonomy is just as important as autonomy itself. Like group conscience, autonomy can be a two-edged sword. In the past group autonomy has been used to justify violation of other traditions. This should never be allowed to happen as we have said before, spiritual principles are never in conflict with other spiritual principles. If a conflict or contradiction does exist that means that somewhere along the line we have somehow slipped away from the true principles.

When we use our autonomy for the good of the group we must be careful that our actions do not hurt other groups or NA as a whole. Again we are given a simple rule of thumb. If we check to make sure that our actions are clearly within the bounds of our Traditions, if we can't represent anyone but ourselves, if we don't dictate to other groups or force anything upon them, and if we take the time to consider the consequences of our actions ahead of time, then all will be well.

**TRADITION FIVE  
OUR PRIMARY PURPOSE IS TO CARRY THE MESSAGE TO THE ADDICT  
WHO STILL SUFFERS.**

"You mean to say that our primary purpose is to carry the message? I thought we were

here to get clean. I thought that our primary purpose was to recover from drug addiction?" For the individual this is certainly true, our members are here to find freedom from addiction, and a new way of life. However, groups aren't addicted and don't recover. All our groups can do is plant the seed for recovery and bring addicts together so that the magic of empathy, honesty, caring, sharing and service can do its thing. The purpose of this Tradition is to insure that this atmosphere of recovery is maintained. This can only be achieved by keeping our groups newcomer and service oriented. The fact that we require each and every group to focus on carrying the message provides consistency. An addict can count on us if they want help. Unity of action and unity of purpose make possible what seemed impossible for us-recovery. The twelfth step of our personal program also says that we should carry the message to the addict who still suffers. This is no coincidence/ Working with others is one of our most powerful tools. "The therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel." For the newcomer this is how they find out about NA and how they learn to stay clean; and for the members, this reaffirms and clarifies what they have learned. The group is the most perfect vehicle we have for carrying the message to the addict who still suffers. When a member carries the message, he is somewhat bound by his interpretation and personality. The problem with literature is language; the feelings, the intensity, and the strengths are sometimes lost. In our groups, with many different personalities, the message of recovery is a recurring theme; an underlying reality.

What would happen if our groups had other primary purposes? We feel our message would be diluted and then lost. If we concentrated on making money many might get rich. If we were a social club we'd find many friends and lovers. If we specialized in education we'd end up with many smart addicts. If our specialty was medical help many would get healthy. If our group purpose was anything other than carrying the message, many would die and few would find recovery.

What is our message? We hear this question answered many ways. In our groups we share our experience, strength and hope and this is our message-that an addict, any addict, can stop using drugs; lose the desire to use again; and find a new way to live. Our message is hope and the promise of freedom. When it's all said and done, our primary group purpose can only be to carry the message to the addict who still suffers because this is all we really have to give.

#### **TRADITION SIX**

**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.**

Our fifth tradition defines our primary purpose and our sixth tradition tells us some of the things we must do to preserve and protect this spiritual aim. We are warned what can happen if we ignore this advice. This Tradition is the basis for our policy of nonaffiliation and is extremely important to the continuation and growth of NA. Unfortunately, this Tradition has also been a point of controversy within our fellowship. Let's take a closer

look at what this Tradition really says. The first thing a group ought never do is endorse. To endorse is to sanction, approve, or recommend. Endorsements can either be direct or implied. We see direct endorsements everyday in TV commercials. Direct endorsements can also be in writing and often appear in proposals and promotional sales material. A direct endorsement is often used to try to persuade someone to do something. An implied endorsement is one that is not specifically stated. Although we don't usually recognize it as such, implied endorsements occur in our stories. We often hear things like: "All of my friends used drugs, it had to be OK

The next thing we ought never do is finance. This is more obvious; to finance means to supply funds or to help support financially. The third thing warned against is lending the NA name for something that is not Narcotics Anonymous. It also means letting an outsider mention or utilize our name for their own purposes. Several times other programs have tried to use Narcotics Anonymous as part of their "services offered" to help justify a funding proposal. Had we allowed this, we would have been letting them use our name. These are the "ought nevers" in our sixth tradition.

This tradition also tells us "who". A related facility is any other facility or place that involves NA members. It might be a halfway house, a detox center, a counseling center, a clubhouse or any one of a number of such places. Oftentimes, people are easily confused by what is NA and what are the related facilities. Recover houses which have been started or staffed by NA members have to take special care that the differentiation is clear. Perhaps the most confusion exists when it involves a clubhouse situation. Newcomers and even older members often identify the clubhouse with NA and NA with the clubhouse. We should make a special effort to let these people know that there is a difference. The second "who" are outside enterprises. An outside enterprise is any agency, any business venture, any religion, any society, any organization, any unrelated activity, or any other fellowship. Most of these are pretty straightforward, except for other fellowships. Most of us would not confuse NA with something like a specific religious fellowship, but when it comes to other twelve-step fellowships, we sometimes have problems. Narcotics Anonymous is not Alcoholics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Emotional health anonymous, Smokers Anonymous, Parents Anonymous or any other anonymous. Narcotics Anonymous is a separate and distinct fellowship in its own right. Our problem is addiction. The other twelve step fellowships specialize in other problems, and our relationship with them is one of "cooperation not affiliation". The use of the literature of another fellowship in our meetings constitutes an implied endorsement of an outside enterprise.

The Sixth Tradition goes on to warn us what may happen if we do what we ought never do: "... lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose." If you say this quickly, it might sound like " money, power, and sex;" our old enemies. If you say this real quickly, it almost sounds like " people, places and things;" our old resentments and fantasies. Even if you don't say it quickly, they have much in common. They often become obsessions and shut us off from our spiritual aim. They are the sort of things we get involved with and run with until we are consumed. For the individual, this type of abuse can be devastating, for the group, even the slightest can be disastrous. When

we as a group waver from our primary purpose, addicts die who might have found recovery.

The Sixth Tradition has been one of those we just sort of read and let go at that. It's hard to understand. But when we really take a look, when we really try to understand, its simplicity amazes us. We can see the danger of endorsement, financial support and letting others use our name; we can see how easily things can lead to abuse of money, property and prestige; and we can foresee the results of this abuse and the heartache it can bring.

**TRADITION SEVEN  
EVERY NA GROUP OUGHT TO BE FULLY SELF SUPPORTING, DECLINING  
OUTSIDE CONTRIBUTIONS.**

Being self-supporting is an important part of our new way of life. For the individual, this is usually quite a change. In our addictions, we were dependent on people, places, and things. We looked to them to support us and supply the things we found lacking in ourselves. As recovering addicts, we find that we are still dependent, but our dependence has shifted from the things around us to a loving god and the inner strength we get in our relationship with him. We who were unable to function as human beings now find anything is possible for us. Those dreams we gave up long ago can now become realities with god's help. Addicts as a group have been, and still are, millstones around society's neck. In NA, our groups of addicts not only try to stand on their own two feet, but demand the right to do so.

Money has always been a problem for us. We could never find enough to support ourselves, our habits and our self gratification. We worked, stole, conned, begged and sold ourselves; there was never enough money to fill the emptiness inside. In our recovery, money is often still a problem. We stop trying to support our habits. We go to work and often find unexpected success. We clean up the wreckage of our past and things seem to be going our way for a change. However, financial security can still seem to run like water through our fingers. We've got a lot of growing up to do and this takes time. Common sense and responsibility are things most of us usually have to learn from scratch. Learning how to live can hurt a lot. For most of us it's a learning experience. NA needs money to run the group; there is rent to pay, supplies and literature to buy. We pass the hat to cover these expenses and whatever is left over goes to support our services and to further our primary purpose. Unfortunately, there's pitifully little left over once a group pays its way. Sometimes members who can afford it kick in a little extra to help. Sometimes a few get together and put on some activity to raise funds. These efforts help a lot and without them, much that we have been given to do would have had to be left undone. NA remains a shoe-string operation, and even though it's sometimes frustrating, we really wouldn't have it any other way; we know the price would be too high to bear.

Our poverty enables us to be much closer to our fellowship. We all have to pull together, and in pulling together we learn that we really are a part of something greater than

ourselves.

Our policy concerning money is clearly stated: We decline any outside contributions, our Fellowship is completely self-supporting. We accept no funding, no endowments, no loans, no gifts, and no handouts because we know that there's no such thing as a free lunch. Everything has its price regardless of intent. Whether the price is money promises, concessions, special recognition, endorsement, favors or anything else; it's just too high for us. Even if those who would help us could guarantee no strings, we still would not accept their aid. The price would still be too high. Now will we charge for our services for to do so would distract from our spiritual purpose. We cannot even afford to let our members contribute more than their fair share., Because for us the price is paid within our groups: it's disunity, controversy, insanity and death. We will not put our freedom on the line again; not for an "easier softer way," not for anything.

**TRADITION EIGHT  
NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS SHOULD REMAIN FOREVER  
NONPROFESSIONAL, BUT OUR SERVICE CENTERS MAY EMPLOY  
SPECIAL WORKERS.**

Some have described NA as a fellowship made up of the failures of other programs. To a great extent this is true; many of our members have unsuccessfully sought recovery in other programs, in other ways. "Jail did not help us at all. Medicine, religion, and psychiatry seemed to have no answers for us that we could use." We ourselves have said, "Give us the ones you can't do anything with; give us your hardest cases. We'll welcome them with open arms." Somehow NA works when other programs and methods fail. What is it about us that makes this so? We don't have any cure-all remedies. We don't really have many of the things that others offer addicts. What is it about NA that makes us the most widespread and successful program for addicts in the world? Perhaps it's something simple. Perhaps it's because we can't have all these things that makes it possible for us to succeed where others have failed. What do we have? We have our steps; we have mobility; we understand and care; we are motivated and we have each other.

The basis of our program is the twelve steps. We got these steps from Alcoholics Anonymous, who thought enough of them to give them freely. AA got the steps from various sources. The steps are based on spiritual principles that have been known and followed for centuries. Most religions or spiritual orders utilize these same principles in some way. These principles are certainly not unique to us, but they are spiritual principles and that makes them special. Spiritual principles are basic truths that do not change with time or place; they simply work in all cases.

This program has been called a "hip pocket program." We don't require any equipment or special facilities. It doesn't take special training to make this program work. We carry this program with us wherever we go. We carry our message to the addict wherever they are when ever they are ready. This program fits every addict because the addict learns to apply our steps to their life in their own way." Our ability to reach addicts anytime,

anywhere has certainly been a great advantage for us.

Perhaps our greatest asset is empathy our ability to understand and identify with the newcomer. We know what it's really like to kick the habit; we've been there. We know what it's really like to face life without drugs, each of us has had to do this. We know the prices of addiction; we've all had to pay them. We can't look down on the addict who comes to us; we've all been newcomers. We can't con each other; we've played all the games. We understand the addict and addiction perhaps better than anyone else can, because this is the life we lived. We care for and love the addict as if he were ourselves, because the addict really is ourself.

Our motivation is simple; this program was freely given to us by addicts who cared. We only do the same. We have learned that we can only keep what we have by giving it away." We know that recovery is a matter of life and death for the new comer and for ourselves.

These are the things we are and how our program works. They are a reality for us. We have our Steps; we have mobility; we really understand and care and we are motivated by survival. All these things are a contradiction to traditional recovery approaches and professionalism. The professional has no place in our Fellowship; our very nature prohibits this. Professionalism as such is not the problem. We recognize and admire the professional and his sphere. Many of our members are professionals, or have become professionals in their own right. It's just that there's no place for the professionalism in NA; for our purpose we have learned that the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is truly without parallel.

Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. We do the best we can, but sometimes we need a little help. Volunteer work is the backbone of our service, but volunteers work only to the best of their abilities, only at their convenience. Some of our services require skills or abilities we are unable to supply as volunteers. Most of us do not have the training or the extra time required to fulfill these functions. Our eighth Tradition also recognizes this and tells us that we may employ special workers in our service centers. Without their help, we might be unable to respond to many of those who reach out to us for help.

### **Tradition Nine**

**NA AS SUCH, OUGHT NEVER BE ORGANIZED, BUT WE MAY CREATE SERVICE BOARDS OR COMMITTEES DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE TO THOSE THEY SERVE.**

This tradition defines the way we run our Fellowship. A lot of confusion has occurred because of misinterpretation of our Ninth Tradition. In order to understand this tradition we must first understand what NA is. NA is members, meetings and principles. Our members are addicts who have the desire to stop using, who want what we have to offer, and who have chosen to join us. Our meetings are a gathering of members for the purpose

of staying clean, and carrying the message of recovery. Our principles are the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions. Anything else is not NA.

Another point of confusion is the term organized, which has several meanings. Our Steps and Traditions are uniform and set down in a specific order. They are numbered, they're not random and unstructured. Certainly they are organized, but this is not the organization of our ninth tradition. For the purpose of this Tradition, organized means having an administrative structure, and this implies management and control. On this basis, the meaning of Tradition Nine is clear. N.A. should never be run by bureaucracy or management nor controlled by individual within an administrative structure. If we were to allow this, N.A. would surely lose the best it has to offer and choke to death on our insanities.

Even without this Tradition, organization such as this would be in opposition to our spiritual principals. A loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience would find no place within an administrative structure. How could a trusted servant manage and control? Service and management are contradictory. Government implies control, but our leaders do not govern. How could autonomy exist in an administrative structure? Specialization and professionalism are the basis of any management scheme. Any administrative structure, by its very nature, eliminated the possibility of autonomy. An organized N.A. is contradiction in principals and any attempt to force organization on us would destroy us.

The Ninth Tradition goes on to define the nature of the things that we can do, outside N.A., to help N.A.. It says that we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve. This is the basis of our service structure. Remember "In mind that although these entities are created to serve our Fellowship they are not, in fact, a part of Narcotics Anonymous. Our service structure consists of our groups in their business sense; our area service committees, regional service committees, World Service Conference, World Service Board of Trustees, and World Service Office. Each of these is directly responsible through the service structure, to the members of Narcotics Anonymous, and to a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.

## **TRADITION TEN**

**N.A. has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.**

In order to achieve our spiritual aim, Narcotics Anonymous must be known and respected. Nowhere is this more obvious than in our history. N.A. was founded in 1953. For twenty years our Fellowship remained small and obscure. In the 1970's, society realized that addiction had become a worldwide epidemic and began to look for answers. Along with this came a change in the way people conceived the addict. This change allowed addicts to seek help more openly. N.A. groups sprang up in many places where we were never tolerated before. Recovering addicts paved the way for more groups and more recoveries. Today, N.A. is a worldwide Fellowship; we are known and respected everywhere. If an addict has never heard of us, he cannot seek us out. If those who work



with addicts are unaware of our existence, they cannot refer them to us. One of the most important things we can do to further our primary purpose is to let people know who, what and where we are. If we do this and keep our reputation good, we will surely grow.

Our recovery speaks for itself. Our Tenth Tradition specifically helps protect our reputation. This Tradition says that N.A. has no opinion on outside issues. We don't take sides. We don't endorse any causes. We don't have any recommendations. N.A., as a Fellowship, does not participate in the politics of society. To do so would be to invite controversy; it would jeopardize our reputation. Those who agree with our opinions might commend us for taking a stand, but some would always disagree. This would affect the way they see us. With a price this high, is it any wonder that we choose not to sides in society's problems? For our own survival we have no opinion on outside issues; we keep ourselves apart so that we will never forget why we are here, and so that others will not mistake our purpose.

### **TRADITION ELEVEN**

**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.**

This Tradition also deals with our relationship to those outside the Fellowship. It tells us how we should relate to the addict who still suffers, and it tells us how to conduct our efforts at the public level. We have learned the value of teaching by example rather than direction. This has worked for us and we utilize this principle in our lives. In this sense we are the message. When working with a newcomer, we try to tell them where we came from and what has happened to us. If they can identify with us and if they want what we have to offer them, they may join us. This is attraction. We never promise anything other than a chance to stop using if they want to. This is all we really have to offer and to make any other promise would be to distract from our primary purpose.

We should never misrepresent what we offer, even if by doing so we might be able to get a few more addicts to attend our meetings. It is easy to make promises. We could tell an addict that we offer all kinds of things other than recovery. Addicts would flock to our doors; they would come for a free meal, or housing, or money, or job, or a lover, or any kind of free ride. How many would have a desire to stop using, and how many would leave as soon as they found out we couldn't keep our promise? How many would never come back? How many would die without ever having a chance to find recovery? Promotion is representing ourselves as something we are not, in order to accomplish something. We don't use promotion to encourage addicts to come to us and we don't use promotion to make ourselves more acceptable to society. Our successes speak for themselves.

Our Eleventh Tradition also tells us we need to maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films. Most of us interpret this to mean that we don't give our names or show our faces publicly as members of N.A. . What would happen if a member publicly declared to be a member of Narcotics Anonymous and let everyone know the

wonderful things that N.A. can do for addicts, and later the member was found dead of an overdose? What would people who had heard this declaration and also knew about the death think about the value of N.A.?

Personal anonymity is really much more. It is a point of freedom, and personal recovery. No member of N.A. should ever place themselves in a position where they have to make a statement for N.A., as a whole. No one member is N.A. and no one member can speak for us. We have no elite class nor special members. Each of us has our story, and our own recovery. Individually, we are powerless but as a Fellowship we can achieve great things.

### **TRADITION TWELVE**

**Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.**

The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous are even more inter-related than our Steps. They compliment each other and are bound together by the principles of anonymity. We've heard "principles before personalities" so often it has become a cliché like "Take it Easy" or "First Things First". What does it mean? What are the principles of anonymity?

Anonymity is the whole basis of the program; it is truly the foundation. In order to survive, we must set aside the differences we live by and become a part of a greater whole. The awakening of anonymity in each of us occurs when we finally give up trying to manage our lives and begin to depend on a power greater than ourselves.

Let us examine anonymity. It is the spiritual foundation of our Traditions. The First Tradition talks about common welfare and N.A. unity. The placing of common welfare before personal welfare in the group setting is a direct application of anonymity. The "I wants, I wills and I shoulds" are replaced by "we" oriented thinking for the common good; the result is unity. Unity is the direct result of the application of the Principles of anonymity within the group and the Fellowship.

Anonymity within the Fellowship is important. Gossip and criticism of our fellow addicts destroys the unity of our Fellowship. Have you ever been told a fellow addict had relapsed, only to find them still clean? Or worse yet, have you ever sat down for coffee after a meeting only to hear a fellow addict's inventory being taken for them? N.A. is a Fellowship of recovering addicts. We are all growing and we all have character defects. Acceptance of our fellow addicts, including their character defects, is love. As recovering addicts we need an atmosphere of love and support to grow in. Members, especially newcomers, need to feel safe within our Fellowship. We can help each other by keeping what is shared in a group or on a one-to-one, to ourselves. Remember, "What you hear here, what you see hear, let it stay here".

The Second Tradition talks about having but one ultimate authority. No single person (no personality) has authority. This is vested in a loving God to whom we turn over our will

and lives. The anonymity of the servant should be typical of our leaders. They themselves are not important; it is only the service which counts.

The Third tradition is a statement of anonymity. We do not define our members. We only insist that they have a desire to stop using. Nothing else should matter. This desire is the one crucial must of our program. We must either come with it or develop it before this program will work for us. Anonymity makes possible the autonomy of our Fourth Tradition. Without the principle of anonymity, each group would set itself up as something different from the rest-something special. Our groups would begin competing with each other for members and for recognition. The resulting loss of unity would eventually destroy N.A.

Our Fifth Tradition says that each group has but one primary purpose. This unity of purpose is the tie that binds our groups together. Our groups are not truly different; each has the same spiritual aim and orientation. This anonymity, and the anonymity of our groups, make it possible for an addict to depend on us for help.

Tradition Six tells us that we ought never finance, endorse, or lend the N.A. name to any facility or outside enterprise. To violate this rule would be to lose our anonymity. With anonymity gone, personalities would take over and problems of money, property and prestige would surely divert us from our primary purpose.

Our Seventh Tradition guarantees each member the right and privilege to share in the financial support of Narcotics Anonymous. Each of us is given the equal opportunity to help anonymously. We uniformly reject outside contributions regardless of their source. We also do not allow a member to contribute more than his fair share; to do so would be to encourage the loss of their anonymity.

In regards to our Eighth Tradition, we do not single out our members as "professionals"; we try to maintain their chance to experience personal recovery and growth. Not forcing power and status on our members is yet another form of anonymity.

The service board and committees of our ninth Tradition are directly responsible to a loving God as expressed in a group conscience. They are not responsible to any particular personality or set of personalities. This is anonymity.

In our Tenth Tradition, we strive to limit the growth of powerful personalities and safeguard anonymity by having no opinion on outside issues. When controversy exists, people take sides, personalities come forward, and as this happens anonymity fades. Here again we find consistency of action, and in its own way this is also anonymity.

In our Eleventh Tradition, we find that the way we relate to the outside world is in fact by using personal anonymity. None of us are singled out, no one of us represents N.A.; to do so would be a violation of our anonymity. In attraction rather than promotion, we give the addict the right to join in our anonymity and find recovery.

Anonymity is everywhere in our Traditions and in our Fellowship. It is one of the basics of recovery. The principle of anonymity protects us from our defects of personality and character. Where anonymity exists, personalities and differences have no power. Anonymity in action makes it impossible for personalities to come before principals.

## Chapter Seven: Recovery and Relapse

For us, to use is to die. We have seen addicts come to our fellowship, try our program, stay clean for a period of time, only to gradually drift away. They lose contact with other recovering addicts and eventually return to active addiction. We have learned that to try is not enough; we must live the program. Although we know nothing about prevention of addiction, we have seen that the determination to stay clean, working the Twelve Steps, reading this book, staying in touch with others, attending meetings on a regular basis, can prevent relapse.

Many of us would have nowhere else to go if we could not trust our N.A. groups and members. At first we were both captivated and intimidated by the fellowship. No longer comfortable with our using friends, we were not yet at home in meetings. Basically we lost our fear through the experience of sharing. We share our fears with other addicts. The more we do this, the more our fear slips away. We accustom ourselves to sharing our problems no matter how angry, scared or hopeless we feel. It surprises us how often another addict has had a similar experience. Helping each other is a two-way street.

Many of us did not come to the fellowship with a sincere desire to stay clean. That came after the fog had lifted and we realized that staying clean was possible. An important part of our recovery is the development of self-esteem. This comes from getting honest with ourselves. We encourage members to tell the truth to the best of their ability and recollection. Our recovery began when we accepted the truth another recovering addict shared with us; even if we did not like it, we tried to trust it.

Trusting our feelings and trusting our fellow addicts in recovery are part of the process of learning how to live. It is worth the effort: when people who came here can later tell us that they now see the point in becoming tolerant and learning about compassion for someone other than themselves. When we find out that we all hurt at times, we become aware that it is natural to hurt and to make mistakes while clean. We become trusting of people whom we are only mildly acquainted with if we sense in them the sincere desire not to use—a desire found in the N.A. fellowship.

Addicts must relearn many things that they have forgotten and develop a new approach to life if they are to survive. This is what Narcotics Anonymous is about. It is about people who can care about desperate dying addicts and who can, in time, teach them how to live again and how to care and love others. Recovery is more than just staying clean. By living the spiritual principles outlined in our steps, many clean addicts have become useful and productive people. At meetings we are repeatedly shown that recovering addicts can be among the most sensitive, responsive and loving of people. But we must change radically. If we are to continue our abstinence we must be responsible and productive, not necessarily in terms of normal definitions, but in terms of spiritual

principles. We must grow.

In recovery it is perfectly alright for us to get in touch with our emotions. We learn that we will not go crazy or be rejected by our fellow N.A. members. We eventually make a one hundred eighty degree turn in growth and in dealing with our emotions. Addiction is a physical, mental, spiritual and emotional disease.

Most of us recover physically reasonably soon. We feel better, look better and act better. The time required for mental recovery varies. Some of us have done extensive damage to ourselves. Many find that their sick mental processes change very slowly through repeated practice of our new and unfamiliar principles, while some of us seem to return to nearly normal mental activity soon after adopting a Twelve Step program of daily living. Spiritual growth is more difficult for most of us. Just the fact that we of all people strive for it is so radical a change that many call it miraculous. Spirituality as a way of life for an addict seems a total contradiction! But many of us found through spirituality what we had been looking for in drugs. By working the steps we are relieved of our obsession to use and many gratefully serve our fellowship for this reason. Growth means change. We must live on a spiritual basis in order to change. Spiritual maintenance usually means ongoing recovery. Isolation is dangerous to spiritual recovery.

From self-centered, angry, frightened, alienated people; we become loving, sharing, self-assured spiritual parts of a greater whole. We change from hopelessly helpless to hopefully helping. From dishonest, self-seeking and sometimes institutionalized users to responsible productive members of society; these are the themes of character changes that take place in the Narcotics Anonymous fellowship.

As we begin to function in society, our creative freedom helps us sort out priorities and do the most basic things first. Daily practice of our Twelve Step program enables us to change from what we were to what our Higher Power would have us become. Gradually, we learn to trust and depend on a Higher Power.

At first, we are oftentimes overwhelmed by the miracles around us, We learn to feel, and find it safe to cry and express love in the atmosphere of recovery found at N.A. meetings. The steps become our framework of daily change. Continuous abstinence requires spiritual growth which leads to emotional recovery in our lives.

Each day we stay clean, by practicing the steps in our lives, our chances of a relapse decrease. Each of us is only a slip away from a painful active addiction, but by living our program through regular honest sharing we increase our chances of uninterrupted clean time. Eventually, we become grateful for problems as well as rewards. Learning to live through changes by practicing the principles of the program helps insure our ongoing recovery. Often we find that when feelings of pain are the strongest we are growing the most. We must give ourselves time and remember that these feelings won't last forever.

Complacency is the enemy of members with substantial clean time. We never fully recover no matter how long we have been clean. Guilt, remorse, fear, lust and pride may

all become unbearable if we fail to invest ourselves totally in the program.

Many of us get clean in a protected atmosphere such as a rehabilitation center or recovery house. When re-entering the outside world we feel lost, confused and vulnerable. Going to meetings once a day, or more often if possible, will reduce the shock of change. Meetings provide a safe place to share with others during this time. Many members whose recoveries have blessed them tell us that they continue to attend meetings on a daily basis even after several years of clean time. We live the program and work the steps daily and this way we learn to apply spiritual principles to our lives. We must use what we learn or we will lose it in a relapse.

Living clean on a daily basis provides valuable experience working the program through many life changes. What we do repeatedly we find easier to do in times of stress. We learn to respond and react differently to situations after a period of time in the program. It is suggested to us not to make any unnecessary major decisions or changes in the early part of our recovery. When we work the program, we are living the steps daily. This gives us experience in applying spiritual principles. The experience we gain with time insures our ongoing recovery. We must use what we learn or we will lose it and probably relapse, no matter how long we have been clean.

We seek solutions rather than dilemmas. Productiveness means being clean, striving to be creative and loving today.

We wanted to be accepted and loved. As a newcomer, some of us travelled the same desperate road of loneliness and lack of recognition and hope. We understand newcomers talk about drugs and the things that brought them to the fellowship, because we have been there. The group that we choose to be our home group will be like a spiritual savings account. The more we invest in it through our care and sharing, the greater the dividends it will pay. Those of us who find the fellowship and begin to work the steps develop some kind of relationship with others. As we grow, we learn to overcome our tendency to run and hide from ourselves and our feelings. Learning to be honest about our feelings helps others identify with us. We find that when we communicate honestly it seems to reach others better. Honesty takes practice and none of us profess to be perfect in this area. Whenever we feel trapped or pressured, sometimes it takes great spiritual and emotional strength to be honest. The sharing of ourselves with others seems to keep us from feeling isolated and alone. We need to create more soul searching with one another. This process is the creative action of the spirit. We listen to ourselves and others in order to recover and stay on that path.

Lack of spiritual quality within our lives leads us down the path to relapse. This part of our recovery is the essence of the program. Spiritual maintenance is indispensable if recovery is what we are after. Our life is the constant efforts of progressing in our spiritual consciousness. Stagnation or just plain old character defects which we re-cultivate rather than let go of send us back to where these defects were conceived. Our illness had us down for the count. Unless spirituality is united with action in our lives, relapse is inevitable. After relapse, recovery may not again be possible. Many have not

returned. We must continue our spiritual growth or die.

In our daily lives, we are subject to emotional, environmental, intellectual, mental, physical and spiritual weaknesses, causing us to be defenseless against relapse to active addiction.

We have a disease and are subject to relapse. However, relapse is only a symptom. We are never forced into relapse. We have a choice. Relapse is never an accident. Our knowledge of addiction and good intentions are not always enough to stop us from using.

When our friends in the program warn us that we are flirting with relapse, walking on thin ice or doing slippery things in slippery places; we have to make a decision. We may have reservations about anything which did not describe us to a tee and build these up until we thought we could use again. Relapse is a sign that we have reservations about this program. Unaware of the pitfalls ahead, we tread blindly with the belief we could make it on our own. When we continue to fall back into the illusion that drugs will make life easier, it is obvious we are not yet ready for recovery. When we believe that drugs will solve our problems and forget what they can do to us, we are in real trouble. Unless the illusions are shattered that we, in any way, can continue to use or can stop using on our own, we most certainly sign our own death warrants.

If we begin to avoid our new responsibilities; like missing meetings, skipping work, neglecting Twelve Step work or most important??not asking for help, our growth in the program stops. These are the kind of things that lead to relapse. We may sense a change coming over us. Our ability to remain open?minded disappears. We may become angry and resentful toward anyone or anything. We may begin to reject those who were close to us. We become genuinely sick of ourselves in a short time.

When a resentment or any other emotional relapse occurs, failure to practice the steps can result in relapse. Many of our newcomers have difficulty coming into the fellowship because they do not understand that we have a disease called "addiction". We sometimes see our past behavior as part of ourselves and not part of our disease.

As long as we stay clean, no matter what, we enjoy the greatest possible advantage over our disease. For this we should be grateful. The first thing to do is get clean. This makes the other stages of recovery possible. We learn that addiction is a disease. We try to forgive past behavior and realize it was part of our disease. We go to meetings and study the program for our own personal growth.

Obsessive behavior is a common denominator for addictive people. Our egos tell us that we can do it on our own, but loneliness and paranoia often return. We find out that we cannot really do it alone, and when we try to, things get worse. We need to be reminded of where we came from and that it will get progressively worse. This is when we need the fellowship the most. We don't like to be wrong. It is hard to believe that now in recovery self?will still leads us to make decisions based on manipulation, ego, lust or false pride. We don't recover overnight. When we realize that we have made a bad decision or bad



judgement, our inclination is to make an attempt to rationalize it. We often become extreme in our self-obsessive attempts to cover our tracks. We see all the places others go wrong and often think that they caused the problem. As we prolong our denial of being wrong, we feel increasingly guilty. Living with guilt makes us more self-willed. We get sicker progressively. Eventually, we are shown that we must get honest or we will use again. But by this time it is hard to know why we feel bad. We make a list of feelings, people and events - an inventory. Maybe we can see what's gone wrong in our recovery. We share this list with our sponsor, a spiritual advisor or an addict whose recovery we respect. We are counseled through shared experiences. We pray for willingness and humility and finally get honest about our mistaken judgements or bad decisions. We tell those who were hurt that we were to blame, ask them to forgive us and make whatever amends necessary. Now we are in the solution again. We are working the program. It comes easier to work the program now. We know that the Tenth Step helps prevent relapse.

For those of us who have relapsed, the manner in which we returned to our addiction is not important. What is essential to each of us is that we know that we have the choice not to continue using. In fact the knowledge we learn in N.A. plagues us if we try to continue in our self-destruction. God has been gracious to many of us who have relapsed by allowing us to return to the program.

There is something in our self-destructive personalities that cries for failure. Most of us feel that we do not deserve to succeed. This is a common theme with addicts.

Some of us reach a point of complacency in recovery. If we stay at this level for long, the recovery process ceases and we begin to backslide. Clean time in the program acts as insurance. If complacency is not acted upon, the disease begins to manifest apparent symptoms in us. Denial returns along with obsession and compulsion. Soon we reach a point where we stand on the border line. Denial and the First Step conflict in our minds. If we let the obsession of using overcome us, we are doomed to relapse. Only a complete and total acceptance of the First Step can save us.

One of our biggest stumbling blocks seems to be in placing unrealistic expectations on ourselves and others. Relationships are a terribly painful area. We tend to fantasize and project images of what should happen. We pick ourselves apart and decide we are to blame if our fantasies are not fulfilled. It seems the farthest thing from our minds is that we are powerless over other people. The old thinking and feelings of loneliness, despair, helplessness and self-pity creep in.

Thoughts of sponsors, meetings, literature and all other positive input then leave the consciousness. Writing about what we want, what we are asking for and what we get and sharing this with our sponsor or another trusted person helps to work through these feelings; and letting others share with us about their experience gives us hope that it does get better. It seems that being powerless is a huge stumbling block. When a need arises for us to admit our powerlessness, we may first look for ways to exert power against it. Exhausting these ways, we begin sharing with others and find hope. Attending meetings

daily, living a day at a time, and reading the literature seems to send our mental attitude back toward the positive. willingness to try what has worked for others is vital. Meetings are a source of strength and healing for us; even when we feel that we don't want or need to attend.

Another stumbling block we should safeguard against is comparing our addiction and recovery to that of others. For example, one member found himself locked behind the doors of a state mental institution; he never thought it would happen to him. In his earlier comparison to the other addicts was a failure to see the progressive nature of our illness. Forms of this example and countless others support the fact that no matter how long we stay clean, whether it be one month or one year, once we begin to use again our illness picks up exactly as if we had never stopped. We are thrown right back into the old destructive pattern of addiction.

The progression of recovery is a continuous, uphill journey. Without love or effort we start the downhill run again. The progression of the disease is an ongoing process, even during abstinence, no matter how long.

When we forget this or forget the effort and work it took us to get a period of freedom in our lives; ungratefulness sinks in and self-destructive behavior begins again. Unless recognition and action is taken immediately, we run the risk of a relapse that will threaten our very existence. Keeping our illusion of reality, rather than using the tools of the program, will return us to isolation. Loneliness will kill us inside and the drugs which almost always come next, may do the job completely. The symptoms and the feelings we experience at the end of our using will come back even stronger than before. This impact is sure to drown us if we don't surrender ourselves to the program. Relapse can be the destructive force that kills us or leads us to the realization of who and what we really are. The eventual misery of using is not worth the escape it might give us. For us, to use is to die, often in more ways than one. We found this program at the right time or we would not have found it at all. N.A. and its principles are here to help us achieve quality in our lives. If we were worthless, we wouldn't be alive.

Failure to accept the N.A. program and the full implications of our powerlessness has proven for many of us to be a fatal stumbling block in our recovery.

In the mind of a newcomer and even the old-timer, a shadow of doubt can prove to be the spark needed to set off the return of insanity and that first pill, fix, drink, snort or toke. To safeguard against this fatal stumbling block, we should develop a good understanding of the basic principles set down in the Steps of our recovery and apply them in our daily lives.

A young man came to us, eager to learn of this new life. He very quickly became willing to do anything he could. He went to meetings, emptied ashtrays, made coffee, talked to people; all the things that help us to recover. However, something was missing.

Afraid, unable to let go of old ideas, still wanting to "run the show", he found no answer

to what he saw as his problem. Blinded by what he saw as important, unwilling to let go of the old familiar ways, he used again. He took with him some of what he had learned and seen. The seed of recovery had been planted in him.

Although using, he continued to stay in touch with a member; though not on a regular basis. This contact was enough to see that the member was leading a happy and contented life. As he looked at the member's life, then his own, he found his own life lacking what the member's had: peace, serenity, joy and love; all of the things that he thought would make a truly happy, enjoyable life.

After a few more years of misery, the young man came back; he leads a happy, enjoyable life as a member of N.A. He has found some of the things that, to him, make life worthwhile and good.

Recovery often takes place in this manner; we come here powerless and the power we seek comes to us through other people in the Fellowship if we can only reach out for it. Now clean in the Fellowship, we want to keep ourselves surrounded by Fellow members who know us well and who we can count on in a pinch. N.A. is a Fellowship of survival and one of the advantages of the Fellowship is that it places us in intimate regular contact with the very people who can most understand and help us in our quest for recovery. Good ideas and good intentions will not help us at all if we fail to put them into action. Reaching out is the beginning of the struggle that will set us free. It will break down the walls that imprison us. our disease is one of aelienation, and honest sharing will free us to recover.

We are grateful to have stayed clean long enough for the message of total abstinence to take hold. We are grateful that we were made so welcome at meetings that we felt comfortable. Without staying clean and coming to all those meetings, we would surely have had a rougher time working the Steps. Just one fix, pill, drink, snort or toke would have interrupted the process of recovery and cut us off from the Fellowship.

We all find that the feeling we get from helping others motivates us to do better in our own lives. If we are hurting, and most of us do from time to time, we learn to ask for help. We find that pain shared is pain lessened. Members of the Fellowship take great pleasure in helping a relapser recover and have great insight and many useful suggestions to offer when asked. Recovery found in Narcotics Anonymous must come from within and no one stays clean for anyone but themselves.

When someone returns to the Fellowship after a relapse, we stress the importance of living just for today. The past is past. The real shame is in not coming back. What is important is to stay clean today. As long as we live today to the best of our ability and seek improvement not perfection, we can take pride in ourselves. We have been our own worst enemy, and fault for our failures was not in the stars, but in ourselves. we are doing the best we can for today and not living in the past. We can stop being so hard on ourselves. We can begin to live at peace with ourselves.

## Chapter Eight: We Do Recover

Although politics makes strange bedfellows," as the old saying goes, addiction makes us one of a kind. Our personal stories may vary in individual pattern but in the end we all have the same thing in common. This common illness or disorder is addiction. We know well the two things that make up true addiction. Obsession and compulsion. Obsession-that fixed idea that takes us back time and time again to our particular drug or some substitute, to recapture the ease and comfort we once knew.

Compulsion-that once having started the process with one "fix", one pill, or one drink, we cannot stop through our own power of will. Because of our physical sensitivity to drugs we are completely in the grip of a destructive power stronger than ourselves.

When at the end of the road we find that we can no longer function as a human being, either with or without drugs, we all face the same dilemma. What is there left to do? There seems to be these alternatives: either go on as best we can to the bitter ends-jails, institutions, or death; or find a new way to live. In years gone by, very few addicts ever had this last choice. Those who are addicted today, are more fortunate. For the first time in man's entire history, a simple way has been proving itself in the lives of many addicts. It is available to us all. This is a simple spiritual-not religious-program, known as Narcotics Anonymous.

When my addictions brought me to the point of complete powerlessness, uselessness, and surrender some twenty?six years ago, there was no N.A. I found A.A. and in that Fellowship met addicts who had also found the program to be the answer to their problem. However, we knew that many were still going down the road to disillusion, degradation and death, because they were unable to identify with the alcoholic in A.A. Their identification was at the level of apparent symptoms and not at the deeper level of emotions or feelings, where empathy becomes a healing therapy for all addicted people. With several other addicts and some members of A.A. who had great faith in us and the program, we formed, in July of 1953, what we now know as Narcotics Anonymous. We felt that now the addict would find from the start as much identification as each needed to convince himself that he could stay clean, by the example of others who had recovered for many years.

That this was what was principally needed, has proved itself in these passing years. That wordless language of recognition, belief and faith, which we call empathy, created the atmosphere in which we could feel time, touch reality and recognize spiritual values long lost to many of us. In our program of recovery we are growing in numbers and in strength. Never before have so many clean addicts, of their own choice and in free society, been able to meet where they please, to maintain their recovery in complete creative freedom.

Even addicts said it couldn't be done the way we had it planned. We believed in openly scheduled meetings, no more hiding as other groups had. We believe this differed from all other methods tried before by those who advocated long withdrawal from society. We felt that the sooner the addict could face his problem of everyday living, just that much faster would he become a real productive citizen. We eventually have to stand on our own feet and face life on its own terms, so why not from the start. Because of the, of course, many relapsed and many were lost completely. However, many stayed and some came back after their setback. The brighter part, is the fact that those who are now our members, many have long terms of complete abstinence and are better able to help the newcomer. Their attitude, based on the spiritual values of our Steps, and Traditions, is the dynamic force that is bringing increase and unity to our program. Now we know that the time has come when that tired old lie, "Once an addict, always an addict", will no longer be tolerated by either society or the addict himself. We do recover.

As long as there have been people, addiction has existed. Addiction is the obsession and the compulsion to use. Modern technology has made available not only the drugs themselves, but also the stresses and demands that bring out the potential for addiction. In the past, there was no hope for an addict. In sharing with others, we have learned that most of us reached a point when we said to ourselves, "I'm lost, I just don't know what to do." We have all experienced that terrifying overwhelming urge, that need for something outside ourselves. In addiction we share a bond of fear, anxiety, loneliness and anger that we are unable to control.

What we have in common is that we all felt the loneliness, the self-obsession, the misery, the despair, the pain within, the empty numbness and the isolation that set us apart from all others. We felt that we were unique, different, better than, or worse than, but always separate. We felt alone. Our pain surrounded us. We could not fill the empty place inside.

Our old ideas are what got us into trouble. Anything that helps us make it through a day clean is new to us. Complete abstinence is the foundation for our new way of life. Vigilance, integrity, honesty, open-mindedness and willingness to try, are all strange new attitudes to the newcomer and to clean addicts as well.

Recovery 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 setback rather than a link in an unbreakable chain. Every addict is a prisoner in their own mind condemned to slow execution by their own self-image. We are compelled to act against our true inner nature and things we don't really want to do.

We weren't oriented on fulfillment; we focused on the emptiness and worthlessness of it all. We could not deal with success, so failure became a way of life. The fear of loss of control had set in and we were afraid to try anything different.

In Narcotics Anonymous, we seek to change our personalities and our lives for the better. We realize that we are a part of the universe. In recovery, we change our attitudes,

thoughts, and reactions. We begin to understand and accept who we are.

Our dishonesties have caused the guilt most of us carry inside. This guilt, sometimes drives us to use, and using keeps us from going back and making amends. All these things together cause misery. Clean, we learn to take honest inventories. We learn to admit our faults and ask for help. We realize that most addicts resist recovery, and that the things we share with them interfere with their using. We put our trust in the group. If a person tells us that they can smoke pot or drink 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 hasn't become apparent to them and that they are still denying their addiction.

Addiction distorts rational thought and many newcomers seem to focus on differences rather than similarities. They look for ways to disprove the evidence of their addiction or disqualify themselves from recovery. Many of us did the same when we were new; so when we work with newcomers we try not to do or say anything that will give them the excuse to continue using. However, we also know that honesty and empathy are the only real tools we have for working with others. We know that complete surrender is the only road to recovery, and that total abstinence is the only thing that has ever worked for us. No addict who has completely surrendered to this program has ever failed to find recovery. Surrender is a prerequisite for recovery but it's not a guarantee. Even after having experienced a degree of recovery and freedom, some addicts forget where they came from and choose to return to using.

Some of us 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 be comfortable with ourselves. At the end of our using we were consumed with terror and despair. We knew that we were dying and many of our friends were already dead. Addicts, hopeless in their addiction, can reach for and receive help in Narcotics Anonymous.

Over a period of years, old bad habit patterns become a familiar, and sometimes the comfortable mode of existence. We may cling to them because they are familiar. In recovery, we become uncomfortable with the obsessive and compulsive nature of our disease. The old comfort associated with using and using games is lost. For us insanity seems to occur in tragic cycles, much like Russian roulette. We are forced to play because even though we try we can't always stop the merry-go-round.

We know that we are powerless over an illness which is chronic, progressive and fatal. We cannot deal with the obsession and compulsion that comes with the disease. The only alternative is to stop using and start learning how to live. When we are willing to follow this course and take advantage of the help available to us, a whole new life opens up.

Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual, not religious, program. The spiritual basis of the program is strong enough to give a person with the disease a reprieve. As we re-enter society, the Twelve Steps are the roadmap to successful recovery. Every addict who is

clean and who has lost the compulsion to use drugs is a miracle. Keeping the miracle alive is an ongoing process of awareness and growth. It is important for us to remember that not using is an abnormal state for us; we have to learn to live clean. We need to be honest with ourselves and think of both the negative and positive sides of things.

Decision making is a little rough at first. Before we got clean, most of our actions were guided by impulse. We seldom thought constructively, and even when we did, we would as often as not end up saying, "The hell with it," and carry through with the negative anyway. Today, we are not locked into this type of thinking. Life is better for us with principles to practice and the help of our sponsors and N.A. friends.

We now realize that we are responsible for the way we feel. We are no longer able to shift the blame; we are aware that we create the world in which we live. We are products of our own thoughts.

In our recovery, we find it essential to accept reality. Once we can do this, we do not find it necessary to use drugs in an attempt to change our perceptions. Reality, as it is, is just fine with us. Without drugs we can function like useful human beings, which means accepting ourselves and the world around us, exactly as it is. We learn that conflicts are a part of reality and we learn new ways to resolve them instead of running from them. In time, we actually begin to look upon them with gratitude as opportunities for progress. They are a part of the real world. We learn not to become emotionally involved with problems; we deal with them and try not to force the solution. We have learned that if something isn't practical, it isn't spiritual. We tend to make simple situations into problems; like making mountains out of mole hills. We have a saying that "our best ideas got us here." When we were using, our plans and schemes our best ideas, only got us into more trouble. In recovery, we learn to depend on a power greater than ourselves. We turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understand him. We don't have any brilliant answers or solutions, but we know that this program works. We can stay clean and enjoy life if we remember "just for today" and do not take that first fix, pill, drink or joint. The rewards of staying clean are endless. We used to think life would be boring without drugs. We were really miserable in our addiction and so was our concept of what life was all about. Now that everything is changing and getting better, we give thanks to God and the N.A. program. Many of our members agree that reality is the biggest trip of all.

As we become more comfortable with ourselves, we begin to appreciate the meaning of living just for today. We get over our guilt about the past and our worries about the future. We enjoy the now: we learn to cope with both pain and pleasure. We endure frustration for we know that it will pass. We rid ourselves of absolutes, such as success or failure, and begin to enjoy doing things for the fun of it, rather than shying away because we are not perfect. Our interpersonal relationships improve and we become less sensitive and suspicious. We begin to understand the meaning of love, recognizing that we are growing from an immature "need for love" to a mature "giving of love." We are not responsible for our disease; however, we are responsible for our recovery. We can seek help from others who are enjoying lives free from having to use drugs. In time, we find that more is possible in recovery than we could conceive. Our teachability hinges on our

ability to admit our need for help. This surrender is the beginning of our basic learning experience about our disease and our recovery. As we begin to apply what we have learned, our lives begin to change for the better. We do not have to understand this program for it to work. We learn not to question the ways of God. Instead we look into our actions and find out who we are. We write down our feelings and beliefs. We get relief through the Twelve Steps, and sharing with trusted friends. We love them and believe in the promise and hope that they offer. By following the Steps and living just for today we can maintain an attitude that is supportive to our growth. These steps are suggested only, but they are the principles that made our recovery possible. All of the Twelve Steps are essential to the recovery process, because they are a new, spiritual way of life that allows us to participate in our own recovery. 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 addiction. We are grateful for the steps and that they have proven to be successful in arresting our disease.

When we find ourselves in trouble during our recovery, we have usually stopped doing one or more of the things that helped us in the beginning. This often shows up as an unexplainable depression or disorientation. It is directly related to a poor spiritual condition and can be remedied by a continued application of our Twelve Steps.

From "day one" the Twelve Steps start becoming a part of our lives. At first, we may have been filled with negativity, and could only allow the First Step to take hold. Today, we have less fear and can use these tools more fully and to our greater advantage. We realize that old feelings and old fears are a symptom of our disease, and that real freedom is now possible.

Our old ways were so self-destructive and egocentric that we often hurt ourselves and those we loved. A new way of life is a blessing from our Higher Power, it gives us the ability to explore and discover through feelings. We thank our Higher Power for the love that we receive. We find the road sometimes long and weary, but we keep on finding miracles as we go. We try to lower the demands we place on ourselves so that we can achieve our daily goals. We don't go overboard and swamp ourselves with new responsibilities just because we succeed in handling a few basics. This way, we experience in repeated successes at a basic level.

Now that we are in N.A. we have a new outlook on being clean. We enjoy a feeling of release and freedom from the desire to use. we find that everyone we meet has something to offer. We are free to receive as well as to give. Life becomes a new adventure for us. We come to know happiness, joy and freedom. An attitude of gratitude permeates us. With gratitude, life clean is happy and joyous. we remain grateful for all the things this program has given us.

Our experience reveals that the things we are not grateful for are often taken from us. As long as we didn't have something, it seemed wonderful and we would often think if we just had it we would be happy. We were convinced that people, places and things would solve all our problems. Occasionally, we would have our prayers answered only to find



the rich feelings of satisfaction and comfort were still beyond our grasp. Today we can see that we were really taking a lot for granted by failing to be consciously thankful for that which God and life had already provided for us.

There is no model of the recovered addict. When the drugs go and the addict works the program, wonderful things happen. Lost dreams awaken and new possibilities spring. Being willing to grow spiritually is the direction that keeps us buoyant today. When we take the action indicated in the steps, the result is a healing of our distorted personalities. It is the action that is important, not the result. We leave all results to God. God presents the opportunity that heals our disease spiritually. After clearing up the superficial wreckage, it is necessary to continue applying the principles in order to get to the roots of our disease.

With each meeting we attend, seeds planted in earlier meetings are watered until they grow to harvest. This harvest is a form of spiritual growth. Through listening to the experiences of others and putting the program into action, life becomes pleasant and exciting. Laughter becomes a common part of our day. Smiling doesn't hurt anymore.

Recovery becomes a contact process; we lose the fear of touching and of being touched. We learn that a simple loving hug can make all the difference in the world when we feel alone or isolate ourselves again. We experience real love and real friendship. Today, secure in the love of the Fellowship, we can finally look another human being in the eye and be grateful for who we are.

## Chapter Nine: Just For Today

Tell yourself-

JUST FOR TODAY my thoughts will be on my recovery, living and enjoying life without the use of drugs.

JUST FOR TODAY I will have faith in someone in N.A. who believes in me and wants to help me in my recovery.

JUST FOR TODAY I will have a program. I will try to follow it to the best of my ability.

JUST FOR TODAY through N.A. I will try to get better perspective on my life. JUST FOR TODAY I will be unafraid my thoughts will be on my new associations people who are not using and who have found a new way of life. So long as I follow that way, I have nothing to fear.

We knew our lives had become unmanageable, but some of us had a problem admitting the powerlessness over our addiction. When we accept we are addicts it was as though a big weight was lifted from our shoulders, quilt feelings rolled off and a feeling of peace came over us. With our surrender to our Higher Power, came the help we so desperately needed. We also felt the great feeling of warmth and love that came from the group. At last, we were able to relax when we heard that we couldn't control our addiction. The principle of surrender, guides us into a way of life in which all our resources center in God.

A great many addicts have a hard time with acceptance in recovery. For so long, we have wanted and demanded that things go our way. When we came into the program of Narcotics Anonymous we were asked to learn to be patient and accepting. This is a critical point in our recovery. Not learning to accept is to continue to manage and control. We know from our past experiences that our way of doing things did not work. When we refuse to practice acceptance we are, in effect, denying our Faith in a Higher Power. This can lead to many problems and failures.

Any addict clean, without the compulsion to use, is a miracle. We keep this miracle alive in ongoing recovery with positive attitudes and awareness involving personal growth. If after a period of time we find ourselves in trouble with our recovery, we have probably stopped doing one or more of the things which helped us in the earlier stages of recovery.

Lack of daily maintenance can show up in many ways. As our lives become more comfortable, many of us lapse into spiritual complacency, and we find ourselves in the same horror and loss of purpose from which we came. We forget we are given only a daily reprieve. We ask for help each morning and remember to thank God at night. If we do not maintain our spiritual condition daily, some of us find the resulting pain and confusion lead to a return to drugs and our old way of life. Some have made it back from these relapses . . . many have not.

What are you going to do when you have to face your first crisis? When the time comes we hope you will be well equipped with the tools and the principles of the program of Narcotics Anonymous. The enemy we have to fight is our own self-centeredness and self-destructiveness.

When we begin to work the program, we will learn to like ourselves better. Much of the loneliness and fear will be replaced by the love of the Fellowship and the security of being a part of a new way of life. It is important for us to remember to take it easy.

Surrendering our will and trying it their way, regularly attending meetings, and practicing these principles in all our affairs, a spiritual awakening happens in our lives. Contact with a Higher Power fills the empty place inside that nothing could ever fill before. We know a true peace. Circumstances which used to baffle us no longer do. We come to dwell in the fullness and abundance of life as a direct result of having worked the Steps and maintaining our spiritual condition. We find it necessary to continue to do so on a daily basis.

These are guidelines and suggestions. We have found they work for us. This is how we maintain our spiritual condition. We never have to be lonely again. Our Higher Power is accessible to us at all times. In the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous we have more friends than ever believed possible. Finally, we are fulfilled and have come to know a real peace and a true sense of self-worth. We have that going to working the Twelve Steps, practicing these principles in all our affairs, remembering to ask God for help in the morning, and thanking Him at night, as things we do each day. Sometimes, after a few days of neglecting spiritual maintenance things begin to really get out of hand in our lives. This is, hopefully, when our pain motivates us to renew our daily spiritual maintenance.

We need to be aware that although the spiritual life is the answer to all our problems, we live in today's world. If our spirituality cannot help us today, then we need to reevaluate what we term spiritual. We believe that if it's not practical, it's not spiritual.

As recovering addicts, we have a lot to be grateful for. When things don't work for us, it is a direct result of our self-will. Our new found way of life may have its problems. When we ask for help, the road ahead won't be so rocky. The principle of surrender, is an admission of responsibility when we are at fault, and an example of faith in action.

Even though, by the grace of God, we have been given an answer to our problems, we often take things back into our hands, and begin trying to manage our lives. Again and again, we must ask God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. How many times had we looked at a job well done, and said, "See what a good job I have done?"...forgetting from where the ability really came. When we take back our will the results are often painful.

We begin to see how only our Higher Power can restore us to sanity when the obsession to use self-will and self runs riot. We turn our will and lives over to the care of God

as we understand Him.

We no longer feel alone; we have found a partner in our Higher Power, who is with us all the time. We cease trying to control, and surrender. Gradually, as we become more and more God-centered than self centered, our despair turns to hope. self-pity and resentments are replaced by tolerance and faith. If our surrender to our disease is complete, the rest of our is dependent upon our relationship with a loving God of our own understanding and the way we apply our new principles in our lives. As recovering addicts, our fellow members love us and will not fail to respond to our sincere desire for help. We believe God works the same way. With our Higher Power guiding us, we may never again have to deal with using, we will always have to deal with staying clean.

We find that we receive guidance when we ask for knowledge of God's will for US. This is the emotional stability we so badly need. We are given the freedom, serenity, and happiness we had so desperately sought. Before going to sleep, we take a few moments out of our routine to thank God for keeping us clean that day and for helping us with our living problems.

A lot happens in one day, both negative and positive, and if we do not take the time to appreciate both, chances are we will miss something that will help us grow. As we begin to live in the present, burdens of the past and the anxieties of the future slip away. We are granted the serenity to the things we cannot change, and thus we lose our quickness to anger and sensitivity to criticism.

Productive living is possible The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous are a progressive recovery process established in our daily living. our recovery is dependent on our relationship with a loving God who cares for us, and will do for us whatever we find impossible to do ourselves.

The biggest roadblock to our recovery is our own self will. In the extreme it manifests as violence of one kind or another. Resentments are the reliving of past experiences, again and again, in our minds. Anger is our reaction to and denial of reality. Fear is our response to an unknown future; a fantasy in reverse. These obsessions deaden our spiritual growth. We must let go and ask our God to do for us whatever we find impossible to do ourselves.

Change however, also involves the unknown; the great source of fear. But the same Power that has helped us deal with our addiction can be a guide and source of courage for us if we ask for help. Some things we must accept, and others we can change. The wisdom to know the difference comes with growth in our spiritual program. Regular attendance at meetings and an ongoing program of personal inventory are our best barometers in this respect.

Honesty, the search for the truth, is one of our most difficult and yet most challenging objectives. We may not be able to maintain rigorous honesty, but we must always strive for it. Honesty must start at home. If we are not first honest with ourselves, we can not be

honest with others. The best way to practice honesty is by taking a daily inventory.

It is important that we remember to look at our assets as well as our defects. So often, we get caught up in striving for growth and eliminating our defects, that we forget about our assets. We have found when we focus on our assets, our- defects will also change. our inventory allows us to realize our daily growth. Our life is a diary wherein we mean to write one story, and quite often write another. It is when we compare the two that we have our most humble hour.

Rigorously practicing the few simple guidelines for living in this chapter, we succeed daily. Although daily inventory may have a fair share of red ink, these guide-lines, when practiced, give us sufficient black ink to balance the day's ledger. Our principles for living will guide us in recovery when we learn how to use them. We succeed in life each time we practice them. We no longer need to make excuses for who we are. New ideas are available to us through sharing of our living experiences.

The get-togethers after our meetings are a good opportunities to share things we didn't get to discuss during the meeting. This is also a good time to talk one-on-one with our sponsors things we need to hear will surface and become clearer to us. These initial ventures into the realm of sharing freely are the beginnings of honesty, openmindedness and willingness as a way of life. **JUST FOR TODAY, WE WILL LIVE!!!!**

## Chapter Ten: More Will Be Revealed

As our recoveries progress, we become increasingly more aware of ourselves and our world. Our needs and wants, our assets and liabilities, are revealed to us. We come to realize that we have no power to change the outside world; we can only change ourselves. As recovering addicts, we find that without our drugs, we still have emotions. The Program of Narcotics Anonymous provides an-ep|gertdny-a way for us to deal with these emotions.

N.A. is a healthy environment for growth. As a Fellowship, we love and cherish one another, supporting our new way of life together. We do this because of our shared desire to stay clean.

We are encouraged to work the Twelve Steps, abide by the Twelve Traditions, go to meetings, get a sponsor, find a home group, and ask for help. We place principles before personalities, being careful to remember that no issue and no person is important enough to keep us away from our meetings. We work our own programs, and we do that for ourselves. The Steps are here for us to live by, and the people are here to help us. We use the tools of the Program to shape our inner being. The slogans; Just for Today, An addict alone is in bad company, If it works--don't fix it, The lie is dead, Clean and serene, are simple reminders we use to help keep us on the right track.

While using, we didn't know who we were or where we were going. We were constantly being deceitful, lying to ourselves and to others, and closing people off. We came in here knowing only what we didn't want. By coming to our first meeting, we admitted that our ways of dealing with life didn't work. Chemicals always had the last word. We were unable to deal with life on its own terms. Through working the Program, we are rebuilding our disordered and fractured personalities.

Any addict is welcome in N.A., regardless of our drug of choice or pattern of using. We cannot afford the luxury of arrogance in any form. Within the Fellowship, there is no caste system. We believe that chemical dependency in any form is addiction, and we encourage any addict to seek recovery. We know that sweeping opinions and generalizations based on limited insight are dangerous for us. It takes a while, clean from drugs before we have much insight. Eventually, we find our place in the world and we take it. The ability to accept our place and be grateful for it is very special. Many of us have great opportunities in our lives, but are troubled with a baffling inability to accept them or to make the most of them. But, this tendency passes with time. We find a safe and certain usefulness in our new way of life. Our old rules no longer apply, and now we can live in peace and harmony. In N.A., we new lives. We discover balance. Where we had been excessive, we learn moderation where we had been weak, we grow strong. Balance comes to us gradually, in ways we can accept. Sometimes these ways appear to

be coincidental, and it takes time for us to recognize them gifts from God.

We have learned that going to N.A. meetings acts as a balance. It is what keeps us working the program. If we rely too much on religion, or concentrate on making money, we may neglect meetings. I have to accept my disease is one of righteous indignation, I will try in one area and snub the first of my life. In my own little corner addictions cuts me off from life and any happiness. This is why I need balance I get it from openmindedness honesty, and willingness to try something even when I believe it to be a waste of my "important time." I am obsessive and this break the obsessive I then sigh with relief.

Now, we listen to those hunches and intuitive feelings that we think will benefit ourselves and others, and we act on them spontaneously, We are able to make decisions based on principles that have real value in our lives. When we pray for something, we spiritually prepare ourselves for the realization of our prayers. Knowledge of God's will for us guides us to make wise choices when we pray. If our Higher Power forced His goodness on us, we could never learn to distinguish good from bad, or enjoy the happiness of being a spiritual person.

As we grow, we become more aware of willingness as a key to recovery. Willingness lets us relax and do what we can, just for today, to improve our lives in any area. when we are unwilling, we have to fight ourselves and we constantly deny the need for improvement. This attitude leads to even greater problems. Today, we have learned with God's help, to face each problem as it arises. We that God never gives us more than we can handle in a twenty-four hour period.

We are grateful for a new sense of open-mindedness, which opens the door for new ideas, in all areas of our lives. Through active listening, we can hear things that will stay with us for the future. This ability is God-given, and grows with us. Life takes on new meaning when we leave ourselves open to experience this gift. To be able to receive, we must be willing to give, and more importantly, we must be open to receive in order to have something. Openmindedness is an admirable quality for which we strive.

In recovery, we also strive for gratitude. We feel grateful for ongoing God-consciousness. Whenever we confront a difficulty that we do not think we can handle, we pray that God will do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Humility is vital in our recovery. We see humility as honest acceptance. the good and the bad in us. Since we believe that our cleanliness is a gift from God, we avoid the arrogance of thinking that we alone were responsible for bringing us this far. Anytime we feel as if we deserve more than we are getting, or as if we were handed a raw deal, we remember that our problems were of our own creation.

We are all in this together. None of us is too good or too bad to improve We are riot here to got good. We are here to get better. Help is here only if we reach for it. We only have to get clean, and to open our minds and hearts to be free to live.

Watching others grow in recovery increases our capacity for tolerance. We learn that the utilization of our principles in N.A. will transform us from caterpillars to butterflies, and we try to remember that butterflies are a hidden potential in all of us. We see many personal and seemingly permanent difficulties yield to the Twelve Steps. We do what we can, and God takes care of the rest.

Surrender to the program of Narcotics Anonymous is a continual process. In a sense, the newcomer surrenders to the wisdom of those who have gone before. Members with longer periods of clean time surrender to the spirit and vitality of the new members.

The opportunity to witness the recovery of a suffering addict is one of the greatest experiences that life has to offer us. We are always willing to help. We are willing to go anywhere at any time to help another addict. Having been the same road, we understand the problems of a fellow addict, as no one else can. As we look back at our lives, we come to be grateful for all the events that brought us here.

We try to remember that there are plenty of people ready and able to help, if we have the courage to ask. What we need most is to feel good about ourselves, so we try to be positive and encouraging with each other. We grow to have real feelings of love, joy and friendship--not the old drug induced feelings. Every time we lose faith in another human being, we die a little bit. Now we want to live, and we put a lot of importance on life itself. We realize that any return to our old, self-destructive behavior could be fatal, so we hang onto each other loyally.

For most of us, Narcotics Anonymous was our last hope. Many of us were so afraid of being rejected here that we were reluctant to open up. We were frightened, and reluctant to speak about ourselves. We were shocked to hear other members speak openly about things we had done in our own past that we felt were shameful, embarrassing, and humiliating. At one time, we were closed-minded and unwilling to seek help, but that was just a hold-over from our old addictive ways. We didn't realize at first that we could trust and talk to our Living in a world of insanity is difficult for other people to understand, but not for us.

At times, we may find ourselves caught up in our old ideas, even after we're on the Program. The basics of recovery are important, but in ongoing recovery we need to constantly review our feelings and thinking. The old ideas and our addiction kept us from obtaining a new way of life, and kept us deep in our addiction. Now, we must avoid sick thinking patterns, both the old ideas, and the tendency toward complacency. We must stay in touch with who we are and how we relate to N.A. as a whole. This freshness may often be an important key to continuous growth.

Life has many brick walls for us, even after we get clean. If we can see, these dead-end paths, we don't feel the need to pursue them. Some of our hopes and dreams still end up being self-destructive. We sometimes fall short of our goals, and that may lead us to assume that we are bad people, if bad things happen to us. Of course, that's not true. Other roadblocks in our recovery include our reluctance to pray, our laziness, and



unworked steps. Apathy and procrastination seem to be two of our worst enemies. There are also people we do not see eye to eye with especially when our personality differences get in the way. Some of us use resentments as an excuse to stay away from the Fellowship and return to using. We suffer from a fatal disease and cannot afford to use any to go back to drugs. Even if we think that they are full of hypocrisy, the people in the Fellowship are staying clean and will have a chance to change and grow. What chance did we have before? How could we hope to grow if we couldn't even stay clean?

Roadblocks such as these stop us from growing and lead us to relapse. Unfortunately, some of us never return; some are destined to die using. We realize that an addict cannot do it alone. We begin to look at our brothers and sisters, and become willing to do whatever we can to give them what we have found in N.A. We have hope, for we know that a better way of life is now real for us, and we have love, because it was given to us. Our Fellowship grows and keeps on growing like our belief in our Higher Power.

When a newcomer admits his powerlessness, he opens himself up to the Fellowship. We are responsible for making him feel loved and supported. We all remember the painful feelings of guilt, remorse, shame, and self-loathing, which we brought with us when we came to N.A. We can share our experience that these feelings were gradually removed when we began working the Program to the best of our ability.

When we come into the Fellowship, one of our biggest reservations or fears is the thought of how boring life will be without drugs. Our fears are short lived. We soon find out that living is not only fun but that is excitingly simple.

In N.A., we have feelings we never dreamed of having. We are able to entertain ourselves today. We do things beyond our wildest imaginings. Some of us take on new hobbies, join sports teams, become adventurous, and do things we always wanted to do but couldn't, because of drugs. Free from drugs, we can have good clean fun.

We are busy learning a new way to live. As new things are revealed, we feel renewed. We must, however, be willing to do that one extra thing; go to that one extra meeting, stay on the phone that one extra minute, and help a newcomer stay clean that one extra day. These extras are vital, because the hardest times for us to stay clean are the times when we let go of them. Talking to and sharing our experiences with fellow addicts becomes a pleasure. The simple games and pleasures that life offers, and which we had lost in our using days, are rediscovered. Playing ball, going to parks, hiking, things we just didn't enjoy when we were using are again possible for us. Being clean is anything but dull and boring. Once we give up the right to be closed-minded selfish dishonest, hateful, and generally un-happy, we are able to find happiness. Having fun itid being happy doesn't have to 1)(, for, it surrounds us., here irici now. We have been given the freedom to live clean, have fun, And be happy.

In N.A. we do not mope around crying because we're addicts. As a matter of fact, we seldom mope around anymore,(it's not good for our recovery). We find a friend to lift our spirits. Although God has restored us to sanity doesn't mean we are boring or prudish. We

are a group of life-lovers who tried so hard to have fun that we exhausted ourselves trying to figure out what to do. Now pleasure is natural and spontaneous. We used to be afraid of going insane--now we enjoy ourselves. This is a big change from the wild parties we used to attend while we were using and the "fun" we used to have. It is important for us to have fun in our recovery without relapsing. Many of us would not have continued in N.A. had we now been able to enjoy it.

Many newcomers are amazed by their first dance or party to find member laughing and dancing like high school kids. it helps break the ice of isolation. Many newcomers have the problem of their faces hurting from the unaccustomed smiling. A sense of renewal provades conventions and get-togethers which draw together members and old friends from different areas. Our conceptions of fun have changed drastically since we surrendered to NA. WC can enjoy simple things in life, like fellowship with other where as we isolated ourselves. The benefit of being honest instead of lying allowed us relief. Honesty brought us closer to the ones we love. This was especially true ifter we receive hell) in N.A. and Fellow addicts.

We enjoy sharing from the heart and enjoy not having to lie in order gain acceptance of our fellows-The joy of giving away what was so freely given to us is like no other reward for honestly sharing. Through N.A. and the Twelve Steps, we are able to grasp a now understanding of full. we realize we don't have to create fun. It is a by-product of living the Twelve Steps. It happens to us as a result of not using just for today and from the we share. As we look back we are grateful to enjoy life. At the end of our active addictions our days were filled with suffering Now we are consciously thankful for anything God as we understand Him sees fit to give us. When we used, we thought we had fun and that non-users were deprived of it. Gratitude helps us to live the fullest without forgetting who we are and what our purpose is. Since we've been clean, we have found joy doesn't come from material things but is within us. We find when we lose self-will we lead richer, happier and much fuller jlives. When there are no longer conditions put on our lives everything we need is given to us in order to live. We do not forget to live each day to its fullest, as a gift from our Higher Power.

We hear a lot about caring and sharing living and loving the N.A. way. These things may sound more fantasy than a reality but as we keep coming back and the drugs wash themselves out of our bodies, we can honestly say that these are real things in our lives today.

A day at a time, we have no way of knowing what will happen to us This is why we live in today. However, we are often amazed how things work out for us. If we had written a list of things that we wanted out of life when we came into N.A. we would have been cheating ourselves Areas of our lives that we had given up on were now improving our disease has been arrested and now anything is possible, clean.

Through clean living and working the steps, our dreams have come true We do not mean we become great leaders, champion race drivers or rock stars, Though some of us may have We mean that our deep inner dreams come true for us in recovery.

Addiction is a disease of loneliness. In recovery we must take care not to become complacent or the nature of addiction could take our lives. All our members share on equality. Our first step and our common struggle for recovery chop us down to size. Our disease can trick us into believing that we are right and every one else was wrong. First we get a smug or righteous feeling and then anger or self pity. Complacency is a problem with us, enstrangling us from goodwill, love and compassion. Failure to attend meetings because of inability to let the groups help us is a warning sign. If we do not heed this warning and continue to deceive our self we our going to die.

Surrender is done with an openminded approach to the problem which is self-manifested in different ways. To get recovery we surrender our old ways and our disease. Recovery is a journey riot a destination. Narcotics Anonymous is a life time school. in learning to live clean. Graduates get loaded. We never will know it all. Surrender to the basic mystery that we recover through the simple program of N.A. works in our lives. We can riot afford to become smug or complacent because the disease is with us twenty-fours each day. Ongoing living of these principles just for today can justify ourselves is champions of N.A. and isolate ourselves. We can die this way to. When times of need pop up we must observe the best practice of the Twelve Traditions that we know how. We, at a group level, always strive for what is best for ill concerned. We are headed for trouble if we become cock sure of ourselves here. We learn to become flexible. We are quick to see where others are right and thorough to see where we are wrong. Honesty, prayer, and selfless service are our three corner stones The bottom line is one addict caring for another. Spiritual truths at the heart of our program don't change. What's caristantly growing are their application.

On a pratical level, changes occur because what's appropriate to one phase of our recovery may not fit another phase. So, we're constantly letting go of what's served it's purpose; letting God guide us through the current phase with what works here and now.

Care is needed to maintain the atmosphere of recovery as a small group grows into a large one with several hundred clean and serene addicts. Concern and attention is required on the part of the trusted servants at every meeting, group and service committee to insure our common welfare and unity. Through N.A. and the Twelve Steps, we are able to grasp a new understanding of fun. We realize we don't have to create fun---we just live it. It happens to us as a result of complete abstinence from all drugs. As we look back, we are grateful to enjoy life, because it's so unlike the events in our lives that brought us here. When we used, we thought we had fun and straight people were deprived of it. God helps us to live to the fullest, without forgetting who we are, and what our purpose is. Since we've been clean we have found joy doesn't come from material things but is withen ourselves. We find when we lose self-will we lead richer and happier and much fuller lives. When there are no longer conditions put on our lives, everything that we need is given to us in order to live We do not forget to live each day to its fullest, as a gift from our Higher Power, and just share, care, love, and live the N.A. way. A day at a time, we have no way of knowing what will happen to us. This is why we live in today. However, we are often amazed how things work for us! If we had written a list of

things that we wanted out of life when we came into the program we would have been cheating ourselves.

Through clean living and working the Steps, our dreams have come true. We do not mean we become great leaders, champion race drivers or rock stars, (though some of us may have), What we mean is that our deep inner dreams come true for us in recovery.

Things that we gave up hope on long ago come true. Like being happy most of the time or seeing ourselves succeed in some areas where we had failed miserably before.

The Twelve Steps give us a way of life which does more than keep us off drugs. Not only is this way of life superior to the old using life, it is superior to any life that we have ever known. So, when we say that clean in the program is our dreams come true, we can speak from our experience. Before 1953, addicts did not recover except in special cases. Most people did not even dream that recovery was even possible. Addicts died, went insane or were locked up. Unfortunately too many of us are still being locked up or killed by the disease of addiction. However, recovery is a reality for us in N.A. today. There is a way to escape from the trap of addiction. we have a new member who says to newcomers with a twinkle in his eye, "Just stick around and watch the miracles happen, and they do."

In our recoveries we have witnessed God's healing powers take dying addicts and turn them into new people with a new totally different lives. Things we never dreamed of become true. We find our selves daring to care and love, and with love all things are possible. We find ourselves advancing as human beings along spiritual lines and doing a great service.

We are surrounded by like-minded addicts, who once were at the depths of misery and despair, and now are serious about their own recovery and helping the suffering addict. We are living and enjoying life without drugs. At times we look in the mirror and find it all so hard to believe. The great fact is that it's O.K. It does get better and we never have to be alone again. Today we are free from the obsession to use compulsively even when we are beaten. we are free to live as we see it without drugs. The ability to accept God's will and feeling serene inside is freedom for us. Faith has replaced our fear and has given us freedom from ourselves. Today we have the freedom of choice.

The program of N.A. is truly a program of freedom. N.A. has given us back the freedom that we lost when we turned to drugs.