

Emotional balance

"Emotional balance is one of the first results of meditation, and our experience bears this out."

Basic Text, p. 45

Though each of us defines "emotional balance" a little differently, all of us must find it. Emotional balance can mean finding and maintaining a positive outlook on life, regardless of what may be happening around us. To some, it might mean an understanding of our emotions that allows us to respond, not react, to our feelings. It can mean that we experience our feelings as intensely as we can, while also moderating their excessive expression.

Emotional balance comes with practice in prayer and meditation. We get quiet and share our thoughts and hopes and concerns with the God of our understanding. Then we listen for guidance, awaiting the power to act on that direction.

Eventually, our skills in maintaining near-balance get better, and the wild up-and-down emotional swings we used to experience begin to settle down. We develop an ability to let others feel their feelings; we have no need to judge them. And we fully embrace our own personal range of emotions.

JUST FOR TODAY: Through regular prayer and meditation, I will discover what emotional balance means to me.

Walls

"Reaching out is the beginning of the struggle that will set us free. It will break down the walls that imprison us."

Basic Text, p. 80

I came to N.A. emotionally shattered. Years of using people and allowing them to use me had taken their toll on my ability to trust anyone, myself included. But the love and acceptance I found in Narcotics Anonymous encouraged me to reach out and get close to others.

The longer I stayed clean, the more I began to long for greater intimacy with my loved ones. I began reaching out in deeper, more meaningful ways, even though I might get hurt. Despite my fears of rejection, I decided to risk exposing myself, my beliefs, and my needs. I decided to let down my defensive walls.

The freedom I've found has been worth the risk involved. I know there is still work to do before I will be completely free of the barriers built by years of active addiction. But by reaching out to other addicts and allowing them to reach out to me, despite my human failings, I have come to know that I have a great capacity for love and intimacy. When set free of its restraining walls, my heart holds great power.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will let down my personal walls and reach out to others. I will allow my heart the freedom to love and be loved.

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Remorse2 *"The Eighth Step offers a big change from a life dominated by guilt and remorse."*

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Basic Text, p. 38

4 Remorse was one of the feelings that kept us using. We had stumbled our
5 way through our using, leaving a trail of heartbreak and devastation too painful to
6 consider. Our remorse was often intensified by our perception that we couldn't
7 do anything about the damage we had caused; there was no way to make it right.

8 We remove some of the power of remorse when we face it squarely. We
9 begin the Eighth Step by actually making a list of all the people we have harmed.
10 We own our part in our painful past.

11 But the Eighth Step does not ask us to make right all of our mistakes, merely
12 to become *willing* to make amends to all those people. As we become willing to
13 clean up the damage we've caused, we acknowledge our readiness to change.
14 We affirm the healing process of recovery.

15 Remorse is no longer an instrument we use to torture ourselves. Remorse
16 has become a tool we can use to achieve self-forgiveness.

17 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will use any feelings of remorse I may have as a stepping-
18 stone to healing through the Twelve Steps.

"Good" and "bad" feelings

"A lot happens in one day, both negative and positive. If we do not take time to appreciate both, perhaps we will miss something that will help us grow."

I.P. #8, "Just for Today"

Most of us seem to unconsciously judge what happens in our lives each day as good or bad, success or failure. We tend to feel happy about the "good" and angry, frustrated, or guilty about the "bad." Good and bad feelings, though, often have little to do with what's truly good or bad for us. We may learn more from our failures than our successes, especially if failure has come from taking a risk.

Attaching value judgments to our emotional reactions ties us to our old ways of thinking. We can change the way we think about the incidents of everyday life, viewing them as opportunities for growth, not as good or bad. We can search for lessons rather than assigning value. When we do this, we learn something from each day. Our daily Tenth Step is an excellent tool for evaluating the day's events and learning from both success and failure.

JUST FOR TODAY: I am offered an opportunity to apply the principles of recovery so that I will learn and grow. When I learn from life's events, I succeed.

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"The Truth"

2 *"Everything we know is subject to revision, especially what we know about the*
3 *truth."*

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Basic Text, p. 91

5 I thought I could recognize "The Truth." I believed the truth was one thing,
6 certain and unchanging, which I could grasp easily and without question. The
7 *real* truth, however, was that I couldn't see the truth if it hit me square in the face.
8 My disease colored everything in my life, especially my perception of the truth--in
9 fact, what I "knew" about the truth nearly killed me. Before I could begin to
10 recognize truth, I had to switch my allegiance from my addiction to a Higher
11 Power, the source of all that is good and true.

12 The truth for me has changed as my faith in a Higher Power has grown. As
13 I've worked the steps, my entire life has begun to change through the healing
14 power of the principles of recovery. In order to open the door for that change, I
15 have had to surrender my attachment to an unchanging and rigid truth.

16 The truth becomes purer and simpler each time I encounter it. And just as the
17 steps work in my life every day--if I allow them--my understanding of the truth may
18 change each day as I grow.

19 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will open my eyes and my heart to the changes brought
20 about by the steps. With an open mind, I can understand the truth in my life
21 today.

Using our "using dreams"

"Do we fully accept the fact that our every attempt to stop using or to control our using failed?"

Basic Text, p. 18

The room is dark. Your forehead is bathed in cold sweat. Your heart is racing. You open your eyes, sure that you've just blown your clean time. You've had a "using dream," and it was just like being there--the people, the places, the routine, the sick feeling in your stomach, everything. It takes a few moments to realize it was just a nightmare, that it didn't actually happen. Slowly you settle down and return to sleep.

The next morning is the time to examine what really happened the night before. You didn't use last night--but how close are you to using today? Do you have any illusions about your ability to control your using? Do you know, without a doubt, what would happen once you took the first drug? What stands between you and a real, live relapse? How strong is your program? Your relationships with your sponsor, your home group, and your Higher Power?

Using dreams don't necessarily indicate a hole in our program; for a drug addict, there's nothing more natural than to dream of using drugs. Some of us think of using dreams as gifts from our Higher Power, vividly reminding us of the insanity of active addiction and encouraging us to strengthen our recovery. Seen in that light, we can be grateful for using dreams. Frightening as they are, they can prove to be great blessings--if we use them to reinforce our recovery.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will examine my personal program. I will talk with my sponsor about what I find, and seek ways to strengthen my recovery.

The Power in the group

"Our understanding of a Higher Power is up to us.... We can call it the group, the program, or we can call it God."

Basic Text, p. 24

Many of us have a hard time with the idea of a Higher Power until we fully accept the depth of our own powerlessness over addiction. Once we do, most of us are at least willing to consider seeking the help of some Power greater than our disease. Since the first practical exposure many of us have to that kind of Power is in the N.A. group, perhaps that's where we should start in developing our own understanding of God.

One evidence of the Power in the group is the unconditional love shown when N.A. members help one another without expectation of reward. The group's collective experience in recovery is itself a Power greater than our own, for the group has practical knowledge of what works and what doesn't; we don't. And the fact that addicts keep coming to N.A. meetings, day after day, is a demonstration of the presence of a Higher Power, some attractive, compelling force at work that helps addicts stay clean and grow.

All these things are evidence of a Power that can be found in N.A. groups. When we look around with an open mind, each of us will be able to identify other signs of that Power. It doesn't matter if we call it God, a Higher Power, or anything else--just as long as we find a way to incorporate that Power into our daily lives.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will open my eyes and my mind to signs of a Power that exists in my N.A. group. I will call upon that Power to help me stay clean.

The principle of self-support

"In our addiction, we were dependent upon people, places, and things. We looked to them to support us and supply the things we found lacking in ourselves."

Basic Text, p. 67

In the animal kingdom, there is a creature that thrives on others. It is called a leech. It attaches itself to people and takes what it needs. When one victim brushes the leech off, it simply goes to the next.

In our active addiction, we behaved similarly. We drained our families, our friends, and our communities. Consciously or unconsciously, we sought to get something for nothing from virtually everyone we encountered.

When we saw the basket passed at our first meeting we may have thought, "Self-support! Now what kind of odd notion is this?" As we watched, we noticed something. These self-supporting addicts were free. By paying their own way, they had earned the privilege of making their own decisions.

By applying the principle of self-support in our personal lives, we gain for ourselves the same kind of freedom. No longer does anyone have the right to tell us where to live, because we pay our own rent. We can eat, wear, or drive whatever we choose, because we provide it for ourselves.

Unlike the leech, we don't have to depend on others for our sustenance. The more responsibility we assume, the more freedom we'll gain.

JUST FOR TODAY: There are no limits to the freedom I can earn by supporting myself. I will accept personal responsibility and pay my own way today.

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JUST FOR TODAY: My Higher Power has not brought me all this way in recovery only to abandon me! When anxiety strikes, I will take specific steps to seek God's continuing care and guidance.

Priority: meetings

"I initially felt that it would be impossible to attend more than one or two meetings a week. It just wouldn't fit in with my busy schedule. I later learned that my priorities were [180] degrees reversed. It was the everything else that would have to fit into my meeting schedule."

Basic Text, page 204

When I first came to Narcotics Anonymous, I attended meetings infrequently and wondered why I couldn't stay clean. What I soon learned was that if I wanted to stay clean, I had to make meeting attendance my priority.

So I began again. Following my sponsor's suggestion, I made a commitment to attend ninety meetings in ninety days. I identified myself as a newcomer for my first thirty days so that others could get to know me. At my sponsor's direction, I stopped talking long enough to learn to listen. I soon began to look forward to meetings. And, wonder of wonders, I began to stay clean.

Today, I attend meetings for a variety of reasons. Sometimes I go to meetings to share my experience, strength, and hope with newer members. Sometimes I go to see my friends. And sometimes I go just because I need a hug. Occasionally I leave a meeting and realize that I haven't really heard a word that's been said--but I still *feel* better. The atmosphere of love and joy that fills our meetings has kept me clean another day. No matter how hectic my schedule, I make meeting attendance my priority.

JUST FOR TODAY: In my heart, I know that meetings benefit me in all kinds of ways. Today, I want what's good for me. I will attend a meeting.

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1 **Principles before personalities**

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

4 **Twelfth Tradition**

5 "Principles before personalities." Many of us chant these words along with the
6 reader whenever the Twelve Traditions are read. The fact that these words have
7 become a cliché of sorts doesn't make them any less important, either in service
8 or in our lives. These words are an affirmation: "We listen to our conscience and
9 do what's right, no matter who's involved." And that principle serves as one of the
10 cornerstones of recovery as well as our traditions.

11 What does "principles before personalities" really mean? It means we practice
12 honesty with everyone, whether we like them or not--and humility, compassion,
13 tolerance, and patience, too. Putting principles before personalities teaches us to
14 treat everyone equally. The Twelfth Step asks us to apply principles in *all* our
15 affairs; the Twelfth Tradition suggests we apply them to our relations with
16 *everyone*.

17 Practicing principles doesn't stop with our friends or when we leave a meeting.
18 It's for every day, for everyone... in all areas of our lives.

19 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will listen to my conscience and do what's right. My focus
20 will be on principles, not on people's personalities.

1 **Facing feelings**

2 *"We may fear that being in touch with our feelings will trigger an overwhelming*
3 *chain reaction of pain and panic."*

4 **Basic Text, p. 29**

5 While we were using, many of us were unable or unwilling to feel many
6 emotions. If we were happy, we used to make us happier. If we were angry or
7 depressed, we used to mask those feelings. In continuing this pattern throughout
8 our active addiction, we became so emotionally confused that we weren't sure
9 what normal emotions were anymore.

10 After being in recovery for some time, we find that the emotions we had
11 suppressed suddenly begin to surface. We may find that we do not know how to
12 identify our feelings. What we may be feeling as rage may only be frustration.
13 What we perceive as suicidal depression may be simple sadness. These are the
14 times when we need to seek the assistance of our sponsor or other members of
15 N.A. Going to a meeting and talking about what is happening in our lives can help
16 us to face our feelings instead of running from them in fear.

17 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will not run from the uncomfortable emotions I may
18 experience. I will use the support of my friends in recovery to help me face my
19 emotions.

True courage

"Those who make it through these times show a courage not their own."

Basic Text, p. 82

Before coming to N.A., many of us thought we were brave simply because we had never experienced fear. We had drugged all our feelings, fear among them, until we had convinced ourselves that we were tough, courageous people who wouldn't crack under any circumstances.

But finding our courage in drugs has nothing to do with the way we live our lives today. Clean and in recovery, we are bound to feel frightened at times. When we first realize we are feeling frightened, we may think we are cowards. We're afraid to pick up the phone because the person on the other end might not understand. We're afraid to ask someone to sponsor us because they might say no. We're afraid to look for a job. We're afraid to be honest with our friends. But all of these fears are natural, even healthy. What's not healthy is allowing fear to paralyze us.

True cowardice is when we permit our fear to stop our growth. True courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the willingness to walk through it.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will be courageous today. When I'm afraid, I'll do what I need to do anyway.

The end of loneliness

"With the love that I am shown in Narcotics Anonymous I have no excuse for loneliness."

Basic Text, p. 262

Addiction is a lonely disease. We may be surrounded by people but, sooner or later, our addiction drives a wedge between us and even our closest loved ones. Many of us are driven to Narcotics Anonymous by a desperate loneliness.

Though we may approach the rooms of N.A. with caution and suspicion, we are welcomed with a hug, a smile, and a warm "keep coming back." This may be the first place where we have felt welcome in a long, long while. We watch other members talking and laughing, leaving the meeting in groups for more talk at the local coffee shop. We wonder if we, too, could become a part of this loving bunch.

Our pattern of isolation can make it difficult for us to join in. Over time, however, we begin to feel "a part of" rather than "apart from." Soon, when we walk into the rooms, we feel at home. We begin to make friends and our lives start to change.

N.A. teaches us how to overcome our isolation. Through our first tentative friendships formed in our home group, we start to find that making friends isn't that hard. For a member of Narcotics Anonymous, there is no excuse for loneliness.

JUST FOR TODAY: I am thankful for the friendships my Higher Power has given me in N.A. Through them, I have escaped from loneliness.

Over time, not overnight

"We found that we do not recover physically, mentally or spiritually overnight."

Basic Text, p. 27

Have you ever approached an anniversary with the feeling that you should be further along in your recovery than you are? Maybe you have listened to newcomers sharing in meetings, members with much less clean time, and thought, "But I'm just barely beginning to understand what they're talking about!"

It's odd that we should come into recovery thinking that we will feel wonderful right away, or that we will no longer have any difficulty handling life's twists and turns. We expect our physical problems to correct themselves, our thinking to become rational, and a spiritual life to manifest itself, fully developed, overnight. We forget that we spent years abusing our bodies, anesthetizing our minds, and suppressing our awareness of a Higher Power. We cannot undo the damage in a day. We can, however, apply the next step, go to the next meeting, help the next newcomer. We heal and recover bit by bit--not overnight, but over time.

JUST FOR TODAY: My body will heal a little, my mind will become a little clearer, and my relationship with my Higher Power will strengthen.

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Facing death

"Often we have to face some type of crisis during our recovery, such as the death of a loved one..."

Basic Text, page 98

Every life has a beginning and an end. However, when someone we love a great deal reaches the end of their life, we may have a very hard time accepting their sudden, final absence. Our grief may be so powerful that we fear it will completely overwhelm us--but it will not. Our sorrow may hurt more than anything we can remember, but it will pass.

We need not run from the emotions that may arise from the death of a loved one. Death and grieving are parts of the fullness of living "life on life's terms." By allowing ourselves the freedom to experience these feelings, we partake more deeply of both our recovery and our human nature.

Sometimes the reality of another's death makes our own mortality that much more pronounced. We reevaluate our priorities, appreciating the loved ones still with us all the more. Our life, and our life with them, will not go on forever. We want to make the most of what's most important while it lasts.

We might find that the death of someone we love helps strengthen our conscious contact with our Higher Power. If we remember that we can always turn to that source of Power when we are troubled, we will be able to stay focused on that Power no matter what may be going on around us.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will accept the loss of one I love and turn to my Higher Power for the strength to accept my feelings. I will make the most of my love for those in my life today.

Friends and amends--keeping it simple

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

Step Nine

In every relationship, we don't always handle things the way we would have hoped. But friendships don't have to end when we make mistakes; instead, we can make amends. If we are sincerely willing to accept the responsibilities involved in friendship and make the amends we owe, those friendships can become stronger and richer than ever.

Making amends is simple. We approach the person we have harmed and say, "I was wrong." Sometimes we avoid getting to the point, evading an admission of our own part in the affair. But that misses the point of the Ninth Step. To make effective amends, we have to keep it simple: we admit our part, and leave it at that.

There will be times when our friends won't accept our amends. Perhaps they need time to process what has happened. If that is the case, we must give them that time. After all, we were the ones in the wrong, not them. We have done our part; the rest is out of our hands.

JUST FOR TODAY: I want to be a responsible friend. I will strive to keep it simple when making amends.

Faithful feelings

"When we refuse to accept the reality of today, we are denying faith in our Higher Power. This can only bring more suffering."

I.P. #8, "Just for Today"

Some days just aren't the way we wish they would be. Our problems may be as simple as a broken shoelace or having to stand in line at the supermarket. Or we may experience something far more serious such as the loss of a job, a home, or a loved one. Either way, we often end up looking for a way to avoid our feelings instead of simply acknowledging that those feelings are painful.

No one promises us that everything will go our way when we stop using. In fact, we can be sure that life will go on whether we're using or not. We will face good days and bad days, comfortable feelings and painful feelings. But we don't have to run from any of them any longer.

We can experience pain, grief, sadness, anger, frustration--all those feelings we once avoided with drugs. We find that we can get through those emotions clean. We won't die and the world won't come to an end just because we have uncomfortable feelings. We learn to trust that we can survive what each day brings.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will demonstrate my trust in God by experiencing this day just as it is.

Service motives

"Everything that occurs in the course of N.A. service must be motivated by the desire to more successfully carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers."

Basic Text, p. xvi

My motives are often a surprise to me. In my early days of recovery, they were *always* a surprise! I've learned how to check my motives through prayer, meditation, the steps, and talking to my sponsor or another addict. When I find myself with an especially strong urge to do or have something, it's particularly important for me to check my motives to find out what I *really* want.

In my early recovery, I threw myself into service with great fervor before I had started the regular practice of motive-checking. It took awhile before I became aware of the real reasons for my zeal. I wanted to impress others, to show off my talents, to be recognized and important. Now, those desires may not be harmful in another setting, expressed through another outlet. In N.A. service, however, they can do serious damage.

When we decide to serve N.A., we make a decision to help addicts find and maintain recovery. We have to carefully check our motives in service, remembering that it's much easier to frighten away using addicts than to convince them to stay. When we show them game-playing, manipulation, or pomposity, we present an unattractive picture of recovery. However, the unselfish desire to serve others creates an atmosphere that is attractive to the addict who still suffers.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will check my motives for the true spirit of service.

Our relationship with a Higher Power

"Ongoing recovery is dependent on our relationship with a loving God who cares for us and will do for us what we find impossible to do for ourselves."

Basic Text, p. 96

Working the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous gives us a fresh start in life and some guidance for living in the world. But the steps are more than a fresh start. When we do our best to work the steps, we develop a relationship with our personal Higher Power.

In the Third Step, we decide to allow a loving God to influence our lives. Much of the courage and trust and willingness we need to continue through the succeeding steps comes from this decision. In the Seventh Step, we go even further by *asking* this Higher Power to change our lives. The Eleventh Step is a way for us to improve the relationship.

Recovery is a process of growth and change in which our lives are renewed. The Twelve Steps are the roadmap, the specific directions we take in order to continue in recovery. But the support we need to proceed with each step comes from our faith in a Higher Power, the belief that all will be well. Faith gives us courage to act. Each step we make is supported by our relationship with a loving God.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will remember that the source of my courage and my willingness is in my relationship with my Higher Power.

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Accepting life

2 *"Some things we must accept, others we can change. The wisdom to know the*
3 *difference comes with growth in our spiritual program."*

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Basic Text, p. 92

5 It's relatively easy to accept the things we like--it's the things we *don't* like that
6 are hard to accept. But remaking the world and everyone in it to suit our tastes
7 would solve nothing. After all, the idea that the world was to blame for all our
8 problems was the attitude that kept us using--and that attitude nearly killed us.

9 In the course of working the steps, we begin to ask ourselves hard questions
10 about the roles we ourselves have played in creating the unacceptable lives we've
11 lived. In most cases, we've found that what needed changing was our own
12 attitude and our own actions, not the people, places, and things around us.

13 In recovery, we pray for wisdom to know the difference between what can and
14 can't be changed. Then, once we see the truth of our situation, we pray for the
15 willingness to change ourselves.

16 **JUST FOR TODAY:** Higher Power, grant me the wisdom to know the difference
17 between what can be changed and what I must accept. Please help me gratefully
18 accept the life I've been given.

Something valuable to share

"A simple, honest message of recovery from addiction rings true."

Basic Text, p. 50

You're in a meeting. The sharing has been going on for some time. One or two members have described their spiritual experiences in an especially meaningful way. Another has had us all rolling in the aisles with entertaining stories. And then the leader calls on you... *gulp*. You shyly introduce yourself, apologetically stammer out a few lines, thank everyone for listening, and sit out the rest of the meeting in embarrassed silence. Sound familiar? Well, you're not alone.

We've all had times when we've felt that what we had to share wasn't spiritual enough, wasn't entertaining enough, wasn't *something* enough. But sharing is not a competitive sport. The meat of our meetings is identification and experience, something all of us have in abundance. When we share from our hearts the truth of our experience, other addicts feel they can trust us because they know we're just like them. When we simply share what's been effective in our lives, we can be sure that our message will be helpful to others.

Our sharing doesn't have to be either fancy or funny to ring true. Every addict working an honest program that brings meaningful recovery has something of immense value to share, something no one else can give: his or her own experience.

JUST FOR TODAY: I have something valuable to share. I will attend a meeting today and share my experience in recovery from addiction.

The joy of sharing

"There is a spiritual principle of giving away what we have been given in Narcotics Anonymous in order to keep it. By helping others to stay clean, we enjoy the benefit of the spiritual wealth that we have found."

Basic Text, p. 47

Time and again in our recovery, others have freely shared with us what was freely shared with them. Perhaps we were the recipients of a Twelfth Step call. Maybe someone picked us up and took us to our first meeting. It could be that someone bought us dinner when we were new. All of us have been given time, attention, and love by our fellow members. We may have asked someone, "What can I do to repay you?" And the answer we received was probably a suggestion that we do the same for a newer member when we were able.

As we maintain our clean time and recovery, we find ourselves wanting to do for others the things that someone did for us, and happy that we can. If we heard the message while in a hospital or institution, we can join our local H&I subcommittee. Perhaps we can volunteer on the N.A. helpline. Or we can buy dinner and a Basic Text for a newcomer we are trying to help.

We've been given much in our recovery. One of the greatest of these gifts is the privilege of sharing with others what's been shared with us, with no expectation of reward. It's a joy to find we have something that can be of use to others, and a double joy to share it. Today we can do so, freely and gratefully.

JUST FOR TODAY: I have been given much in my recovery, and I am deeply grateful for it. I will take joy in being able to share it with others as freely as it was shared with me.

Secrets are reservations

"Eventually we are shown that we must get honest, or we will use again."

Basic Text, p. 82

Everyone has secrets, right? Some of us have little secrets, items that would cause only minor embarrassment if found out. Others have big secrets, whole areas of our lives cloaked in thick, murky darkness. Big secrets may represent a more obvious, immediate danger to our recovery. But the little secrets do their own kind of damage, the more insidious perhaps because we think they're "harmless."

Big or little, our secrets represent spiritual territory we are unwilling to surrender to the principles of recovery. The longer we reserve pieces of our lives to be ruled by self-will, and the more vigorously we defend our "right" to hold onto them, the more damage we do. Gradually, the unsundered territories of our lives tend to expand, taking more and more ground.

Whether the secrets in our lives are big or little, sooner or later they bring us to the same place. We must choose--either we surrender *everything* to our program, or we will lose our recovery.

JUST FOR TODAY: I want the kind of recovery that comes from total surrender to the program. *Today*, I will talk with my sponsor and disclose my secrets, big or small.

1 **Make that call!**

2 *"We feared that if we ever revealed ourselves as we were, we would surely be*
3 *rejected.... [But] our fellow members do understand us."*

4 **Basic Text, p. 31**

5 We need our fellow N.A. members--their experience, their friendship, their
6 laughter, their guidance, and much, much more. Yet many of us hesitate to call
7 our sponsors or visit our N.A. friends. We don't want to impose on them. We
8 think about phoning someone, but we don't feel worthy of their time. We fear that
9 if they ever got to know us--really *know* us--they'd surely reject us.

10 We forget that our fellow N.A. members are just like us. There's nothing we've
11 done, no place we've been, no feeling we've felt that other recovering addicts
12 won't be able to identify with. The more we let others get to know us, the more
13 we'll hear, "You're in the right place. You're among friends. You belong.
14 Welcome!"

15 We also forget that, just as we need others, they need us. We're not the only
16 ones who want to feel like we belong, who want to experience the warmth of
17 friendship, who want someone to share with. If we isolate ourselves from our
18 fellow members, we deprive them of something they need, something only we
19 can give them: our time, our company, our true selves.

20 In Narcotics Anonymous, recovering addicts care for one another. What waits
21 at the other end of the telephone is not rejection, but the love and warmth and
22 identification of the N.A. Fellowship. Make that call!

23 **JUST FOR TODAY:** In N.A., I am among friends. I will reach out to others, giving
24 and receiving in fellowship.

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Self-centeredness

2 *"The spiritual part of our disease is our total self-centeredness."*

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Basic Text, p. 20

4 What is self-centeredness? It is our belief that the world revolves around us.
5 Our wishes, our demands are the only ones worth consideration. Our self-
6 centered minds believe they are capable of getting everything they want, if only
7 they would be left to their own devices. Self-centeredness assumes total self-
8 sufficiency.

9 We say that self-centeredness is the spiritual part of our disease because the
10 self-centered mind cannot conceive of anything greater or more important than
11 itself. But there is a spiritual solution to our spiritual malady: the Twelve Steps of
12 Narcotics Anonymous. The steps lead us away from self-centeredness and
13 toward God-centeredness.

14 We strip away our delusion of self-sufficiency by admitting our own
15 powerlessness and seeking the aid of a Power greater than ourselves. We
16 acknowledge the bankruptcy of our self-righteousness by admitting we've been
17 wrong, making amends, and seeking knowledge of what's right from the God our
18 understanding. And we deflate our overwhelming sense of self-importance by
19 seeking to serve others, not only ourselves.

20 The self-centeredness afflicting our spirit can be treated with a spiritual
21 solution: the Twelve Steps.

22 **JUST FOR TODAY:** My guidance and my strength comes from a Higher Power,
23 not from my own self. I will practice the Twelve Steps to become more God-
24 centered and less self-centered.

Choices

"We did not choose to become addicts."

Basic Text, p. 3

When we were growing up, all of us had dreams. Every child has heard a relative or neighbor ask, "What do *you* want to be when you grow up?" Even if some of us didn't have elaborate dreams of success, most of us dreamed of work, families, a future of dignity and respect. But no one asked, "Do you want to be a drug addict when you grow up?"

We didn't choose to become addicts, and we cannot choose to stop being addicts. We have the disease of addiction. We are not responsible for having it, but we are responsible for our recovery. Having learned that we are sick people, and that there is a way of recovery, we can move away from blaming circumstances--or ourselves--and into living the solution. We didn't choose addiction, but we can choose recovery.

JUST FOR TODAY: I choose recovery.

1 **Tell the truth**

2 *"A symptom of our disease is alienation, and honest sharing will free us to*
3 *recover."*

4 **Basic Text, p. 80**

5 Truth connects us to life while fear, isolation, and dishonesty alienate us from
6 it. As using addicts, we hid as much of the truth about ourselves from as much of
7 the world as we possibly could. As long as our fear kept us from self-disclosure,
8 our vulnerability was shielded. But our fear also kept us from connecting with our
9 world. We lived like alien beings on our own planet, always alone and getting
10 lonelier by the minute.

11 The Twelve Steps and the fellowship of recovering addicts give people like us
12 a safe way to tell the truth about ourselves. We are able to honestly admit our
13 frustrating, humbling powerlessness over addiction because we meet dozens of
14 others who've been in the same situation--we're safe among them. And we keep
15 on telling more of the truth about ourselves as we continue to work the steps.
16 The more we do, the more truly connected we feel to the world around us.

17 Today, we need not hide from the reality of our relations with the people,
18 places, and things in our lives. We accept those relationships just as they are,
19 and we own our part in them. We take time every day to ask, "Am I telling the
20 truth about myself?" And each time we do this, we draw that much further away
21 from the alienation that characterizes our addiction, and that much closer to the
22 freedom recovery can bring us.

23 **JUST FOR TODAY:** Truth is my connection to reality. Today, I will take time to
24 ask myself, "Am I telling the truth?"

Maintaining our faith

"If we maintain our spiritual condition daily, we find it easier to deal with the pain and confusion."

Basic Text, p. 92

When we first began searching for a Power greater than ourselves, many of us got stuck in old beliefs or ideas. These ranged from the fear of a punishing or vengeful Higher Power to no belief at all. Some of us felt we had done such terrible things that a loving Power would never have anything to do with us. Others were convinced that the "bad" things that happened to us would not have occurred if a loving Power had actually existed. It took time, effort, open-mindedness, and faith to acquire a working belief in a loving Higher Power that would guide us through life's challenges.

Even after we come to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, our old ideas can come back to haunt us. Major setbacks in our lives, and the insecurity such events can trigger, may give rise to the return of our old, inadequate ideas about God. When this happens, we need to assure ourselves that our Higher Power has not abandoned us; instead, that Power is waiting to help us make it through the hard times in our recovery, if we will only call upon it. No matter how painful our loss may be, we will survive our setback and continue to grow if we maintain the faith our program has given us.

JUST FOR TODAY: I have worked hard to build my faith in a loving, caring Higher Power that will guide me through life's challenges. Today, I will trust that Power.

1 **Living in the moment**

2 *"We regretted the past, dreaded the future, and we weren't too thrilled about the*
3 *present."*

4 **Basic Text, p. 7**

5 Until we experience the healing that happens when we work the Twelve Steps,
6 it is doubtful that we can find a statement more true than the quote above. Most
7 of us come to N.A. hanging our heads in shame, thinking about the past and
8 wishing we could go back and change it. Our fantasies and expectations about
9 the future may be so extreme that, on our first date with someone, we find
10 ourselves wondering which lawyer we'll use for the divorce. Almost every
11 experience causes us to remember something from the past, or to begin
12 projecting into the future.

13 At first, it's difficult to stay in the moment. It seems as though our minds won't
14 stop. We have a hard time just enjoying ourselves. Each time we realize that our
15 thoughts are not focused on what's happening right now, we can pray and ask a
16 loving God to help us get out of ourselves. If we regret the past, we make
17 amends by living differently today; if we dread the future, we work on living
18 responsibly today.

19 When we work the steps and pray each time we discover we're not living in the
20 present, we'll notice that those times aren't occurring as much as they used to.
21 Our faith will help us live just for today. We'll have hours, even days, when our full
22 attention is focused on the current moment in time, not the regrettable past or
23 fearful future.

24 **JUST FOR TODAY:** When I live fully in each moment, I open myself to joys that
25 might otherwise escape me. If I am having trouble, I will ask a loving God for help.

Membership

"There is only one requirement for membership, the desire to stop using."

Basic Text, p. 9

We all know people who could benefit from Narcotics Anonymous. Many people we encounter from all walks of life--our family members, old friends, and co-workers--could really use a program of recovery in their lives. Sadly, though, those who need us don't always find their way to our rooms.

N.A. is a program of attraction, not promotion. We are only members when we say we are. We can bring our friends and loved ones to a meeting if they are willing, but we cannot force them to embrace the way of life that has given us freedom from active addiction.

Membership in Narcotics Anonymous is a highly personal decision. The choice to become a member is made in the heart of each individual addict. In the long run, coerced meeting attendance doesn't keep too many addicts in our rooms. Only addicts who are still suffering, if given the opportunity, can decide if they are powerless over their addiction. We can carry the message, but we can't carry the addict.

JUST FOR TODAY: I am grateful for my decision to become a member of Narcotics Anonymous.

1

New horizons

2 *"My life is well-rounded and I am becoming a more comfortable version of myself,*
3 *not the neurotic, boring person that I thought I'd be without drugs."*

4

Basic Text, p. 262

5 Is there *really* life without drugs? Newcomers are sure that they are destined
6 to lead a humdrum existence once they quit using. That fear is far from reality.

7 Narcotics Anonymous opens the door to a new way of life for our members.
8 The only thing we lose in N.A. is our slavery to drugs. We gain a host of new
9 friends, time to pursue hobbies, the ability to be stably employed, even the
10 capability to pursue an education if we so desire. We are able to start projects
11 and see them through to completion. We can go to a dance and feel comfortable,
12 even if we have two left feet. We start to budget money to travel, even if it's only
13 with a tent to a nearby campsite. In recovery, we find out what interests us and
14 pursue new pastimes. We dare to dream.

15 Life is certainly different when we have the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous to
16 return to. Through the love we find in N.A., we begin to believe in ourselves.
17 Equipped with this belief, we venture forth into the world to discover new
18 horizons. Many times, the world is a better place because an N.A. member has
19 been there.

20 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I can live a well-rounded, comfortable life--a life I never
21 dreamt existed. Recovery has opened new horizons to me, and has equipped me
22 to explore them.

An "inside job"

"Social acceptability does not equal recovery."

Basic Text, p. 21

One of the first things that happens to many of us in recovery is that we start to look better. We get healthier; we bathe; we dress more appropriately. And without the goading of active addiction, many of us finally stop stealing, lying, and hustling. We start to look *normal*--just by removing the drugs.

Looking normal is very different than being normal. Acceptability in the eyes of the world is a benefit of recovery; it is not the same thing as recovery. We can enjoy the benefits of recovery, but we must take care to nurture their true source. Lasting recovery isn't found in acceptance from others, but in the inner growth set in motion by the Twelve Steps.

JUST FOR TODAY: I know that looking good isn't enough. Lasting recovery is an inside job.

1 **Keep comin' back**

2 *"We have come to enjoy living clean and want more of the good things that the*
3 *N.A. Fellowship holds for us."*

4 **Basic Text, p. 26**

5 Can you remember a time when you looked at the addicts recovering in N.A.
6 and wondered, "If they aren't using drugs, what on earth do they have to laugh
7 about?" Did you believe that the fun stopped when the using stopped? So many
8 of us did; we were certain that we were leaving the "good life" behind. Today,
9 many of us can laugh at that misconception, because we know how full our life in
10 recovery can be.

11 Many of the things we enjoy so much in recovery are gained by actively
12 participating in the Fellowship of N.A. We begin to find true companionship--
13 friends who understand and care about us just for ourselves. We find a place
14 where we can be useful to others. There are recovery meetings, service activities,
15 and fellowship gatherings to fill our time and occupy our interests. The fellowship
16 can be a mirror to reflect back to us a more accurate image of who we are. We
17 find teachers, helpers, friends, love, care, and support. The fellowship always has
18 more to offer us, as long as we keep coming back.

19 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I know where the "good life" is. I'll keep comin' back.

Teaching and learning

"Sponsorship is a two-way street. It helps both the newcomer and the sponsor."

Basic Text, p. 55

In early recovery, I met a very special woman. Hearing her share at meetings, I admired the way she applied the principles of the Twelve Steps in her life. I asked her to be my sponsor.

The first time we talked on the phone, she admitted she had a confession to make. She said that she was envious of me. I was flabbergasted. What business did she have dumping her personal stuff on *me*? I thought *I* was the one who was supposed to be doing the dumping! But as we talked about her feelings, I found that I was learning about honesty. By sharing her fears with me, my sponsor was teaching me how to be honest. She was showing me that I didn't have to let defects of character stand in the way of my relationship with others.

When I shared my problems with her, she never responded by giving advice. Instead, she shared with me the difficulties she had encountered in her own recovery; then, she focused on the solutions she'd found. The humble honesty she displayed by allowing me to glimpse her vulnerability gave me the courage to be humble and honest with the women I sponsored.

Through her, I learned that sponsorship is a relationship--we both learned and grew and changed. What stronger bond do we have than the magnificent chain of sponsorship--one addict helping another?

JUST FOR TODAY: God, grant me the courage to present myself just as I am to those I sponsor. Help me both to teach and to learn from each of them.

1

Footwork2 *"So many times addicts have sought the rewards of hard work without the labor."*

3

Basic Text, p. 33

4 When I first came to N.A. I wanted everything, and right away. I wanted the
5 serenity, the cars, the happy relationships, the friends, the closeness with my
6 sponsor--all the things other people had gotten after months and years of working
7 the steps and living life on life's terms.

8 I learned the hard way that serenity came only from working the steps. A new
9 car came to me because I showed up for my job every day and tried to "practice
10 these principles in all [of my] affairs," including my employment. A healthy
11 relationship came as a result of lots of hard work and a new willingness to
12 communicate. A friendship with my sponsor came as a result of reaching out
13 during the good times as well as the bad. It also came because sometimes, when
14 she was feeling blue, I offered her support.

15 In Narcotics Anonymous I have found the path to a better way to live. To
16 reach my destination, however, I must do the footwork.

17 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I want a better life. I will make an inventory of what I want,
18 find out how to get it, talk with my sponsor about it, and do the necessary
19 footwork.

An every-day addict

"We can never fully recover, no matter how long we stay clean."

Basic Text, p. 80

The first time I celebrated one year clean, I thought I was cured. I'd learned everything N.A. had to teach me; I'd grown bored with the meetings; and my sponsor kept droning the same old refrain: "The steps--the steps--the *steps!*" I decided it was time to get on with my life, cut way back on meetings, and try to make up for the years I had lost to active addiction. It came as no surprise to my sponsor when, three months later, I relapsed.

When I was able to get back to N.A., I went to as many meetings as I could--at least one every day for several years. It took that long for me to understand that I will always be an addict. I may feel well some days and sick on other days, but I'm an addict *every day*. At any time, I'm subject to delusion, denial, rationalization, justification, insanity--all the hallmarks of the typical addict's way of thinking. If I want to continue living and enjoying life without the use of drugs, I must practice an active program of recovery each day.

JUST FOR TODAY: I am an addict every day, but today I have the choice to be a *recovering* addict. I will make that choice by practicing my program.

1

Self-discovery

2 *"The Tenth Step can help us correct our living problems and prevent their*
3 *recurrence."*

4

Basic Text, p. 41

5 Our identities, how we think and feel, have been shaped by our experiences.
6 Some of our experiences have made us better people; others have caused us
7 shame or embarrassment; all of them have influenced who we are today. We can
8 take advantage of the knowledge gained in examining our mistakes, using this
9 wisdom to guide the decisions we'll make today.

10 Acceptance of ourselves means accepting all the aspects of ourselves--our
11 assets, our defects, our successes, and our failures. Shame and guilt, left
12 unaddressed, can paralyze us, preventing us from moving forward in our lives.
13 Some of the most meaningful amends we can make for the mistakes of our past
14 are made simply by acting differently today. We strive for improvement and
15 measure our success by comparing who we used to be with who we are now.

16 Being human, we will continue making mistakes; however, we need not make
17 the same ones over and over again. By looking over our past and realizing that
18 we have changed and grown, we'll find hope for the future. The best is yet to
19 come.

20 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will do the best I can with what I have today. Each day I'll
21 learn something new that will help me tomorrow.

1 **Filling the emptiness**

2 *"...we think that if we can just get enough food, enough sex, or enough money*
3 *we'll be satisfied and everything will be all right."*

4 **Basic Text, p. 77**

5 In our addiction, we could never get enough drugs, or money, or sex, or
6 anything else. Even too much was never enough! There was a spiritual
7 emptiness inside us. Though we tried as hard as we could to fill that emptiness
8 ourselves, we never succeeded. In the end, we realized that we lacked the power
9 to fill it; it would take a Power greater than ourselves to do that.

10 So we stopped using, and we stopped trying to fill the emptiness in our gut
11 with *things*. We turned to our Higher Power, asking for its care, strength, and
12 direction. We surrendered, and made way for that Power to begin the process of
13 filling our inner void. We stopped grabbing things, and started receiving the free
14 gift of love our Higher Power had for us. Slowly, our inner emptiness was being
15 filled.

16 Now that we've been given our Higher Power's gift of love, what do we do with
17 it? If we clasp that gift tightly to ourselves, we will smother it. We must remember
18 that love grows only when it is shared. We can only keep this gift by freely giving
19 it away. The world of addiction is a world of taking and being taken; the world of
20 recovery is a world of giving and being given. In which world do we choose to
21 live?

22 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I choose to live in the fullness of recovery. I will celebrate
23 my conscious contact with the God of my understanding by freely sharing with
24 others that which has been freely shared with me.

1 That's why we call them "defects"

2 "We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character."

3 Step Six

4 After taking my Fifth Step, I spent a few weeks considering "the exact nature of
5 [my] wrongs" and the part they'd played in making me who I was. Then I asked
6 myself, if the God of my understanding were to suddenly announce that those
7 defects of character would be completely removed in five minutes, would that be
8 okay with me?

9 What would my life be like without, say, my arrogance? Sure, arrogance had
10 kept me apart from my fellows, preventing me from enjoying and learning from
11 them. But arrogance had also served me well, propping up my ego in the face of
12 critically low self-esteem. What advantage would be gained if my arrogance were
13 removed, and what support would I be left with?

14 With arrogance gone, I would be one step closer to being restored to my
15 proper place among others. I would become capable of appreciating their
16 company and their wisdom and their challenges as an equal. My support and
17 guidance would come, if I chose, from the care offered me by my Higher Power;
18 "low self-esteem" would cease to be an issue.

19 One by one, I examined my character defects and found them all defective--
20 after all, that's why they're *called* defects. And was I entirely ready to have my
21 God remove all of them? Yes.

22 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will thoroughly consider all my defects of character to
23 discover whether I am ready to have the God of my understanding remove them.

Balancing the scales

"A lot of our chief concerns and major difficulties come from our inexperience with living without drugs. Often when we ask an oldtimer what to do, we are amazed at the simplicity of the answer."

Basic Text, pp. 41-42

Finding balance in recovery is quite a bit like sitting down with a set of scales and a pile of sand. The goal is to have an equal amount of sand on each side of the scales, achieving a balance of weight.

We do the same thing in recovery. We sit down with the foundation of our clean time and the Twelve Steps, then attempt to add employment, household responsibilities, friends, sponsees, relationships, meetings, and service in equal weights so that the scales balance. Our first try may throw our personal scales out of kilter. We may find that, because of our over-involvement in service, we have upset our employer or our family. But when we try to correct this problem by resigning from N.A. service altogether, the other side of the scales go out of balance.

We can ask for help from members who have stabilized their scales. These people are easy to recognize. They appear serene, composed, and self-assured. They'll smile in recognition at our dilemma and share how they slowed down, added only a few grains of sand at a time to either side of the scales, and were rewarded with balance in recovery.

JUST FOR TODAY: I seek balance in my life. Today, I will ask others to share their experience in finding that balance.

1 **Walking through the pain**

2 *"We never have to use again, no matter how we feel. All feelings will eventually*
3 *pass."*

4 **Basic Text, p. 79**

5 It hurts like never before. You get out of bed after a sleepless night, you talk to
6 God, and still you don't feel any better. "It will pass," a little voice tells you.
7 "When?" you wonder, as you pace and mutter and get on with your day.

8 You sob in your car and turn the radio all the way up so you can't hear your
9 own thoughts. But you go straight to work, and don't even think about using
10 drugs.

11 Your insides feel as though they've been torched. Just when the pain
12 becomes unbearable, you go numb and silent. You go to a meeting and wish you
13 were as happy as other members seem to be. But you don't relapse.

14 You cry some more and call your sponsor. You drive to a friend's house and
15 don't even notice the beautiful scenery because your inner landscape is so bleak.
16 You may not feel any better after visiting your friend--but at least you didn't visit
17 the connection instead.

18 You listen to a Fifth Step. You share at a meeting. You look at the calendar
19 and realize that you've gotten through another day clean.

20 Then one day, you wake up, look outside, and realize it's a beautiful day. The
21 sun is shining. The sky is blue. You take a deep breath, smile again, and know
22 that it really does pass.

23 **JUST FOR TODAY:** No matter how I feel today, I'll go on with my recovery.

1

Gratitude

2 *"Hopeless living problems have become joyously changed. Our disease has been*
3 *arrested, and now anything is possible."*

4

Basic Text, p. 102

5 The N.A. program has given us more freedom than we ever dreamed
6 possible. Sometimes, though, in the daily routine, we lose track of how much
7 we've been given. How, exactly, have our lives changed in Narcotics
8 Anonymous?

9 The bottom line of recovery, of course, is freedom from the compulsion to use.
10 No longer must we devote all our resources to feeding our addiction. No longer
11 must we endanger, humiliate, or abuse ourselves or others just to get the next
12 dose. Abstinence itself has brought great freedom to our lives.

13 Narcotics Anonymous has given us much more than simple abstinence--we've
14 been given a whole new life. We've taken our inventory and have identified the
15 defects of character that bound us for so long, keeping us from living and
16 enjoying life. We've surrendered those shortcomings, taken responsibility for
17 them, and sought the direction and power we need to live differently. Our home
18 group has given us the personal warmth and support that helps us continue living
19 in recovery. And topping all this off, we have the love, care, and guidance of the
20 God we've come to understand in N.A.

21 In the course of day-to-day recovery, we sometimes forget how much our lives
22 have changed in Narcotics Anonymous. Do we fully appreciate what our program
23 has given us?

24 **JUST FOR TODAY:** Recovery has given me freedom. I will greet the day with
25 hope, grateful that anything is possible today.

1 **Resistance to change**

2 *"Many of us cling to our fears, doubts, self-loathing or hatred because there is a*
3 *certain distorted security in familiar pain. It seems safer to embrace what we*
4 *know than to let go of it for the unknown."*

5 **Basic Text, p. 33**

6 We have often heard it said that "when the pain of remaining the same
7 becomes greater than the pain of changing, we will change." Our fear can keep
8 us from growing, afraid to end relationships, change careers, attend new
9 meetings, begin new friendships, or attempt anything out of the ordinary. We stay
10 in situations that are no longer working far longer than we have to simply because
11 what is familiar feels safer than the unknown.

12 Any change involves overcoming fear. "What if I'm alone forever?" we might
13 think if we consider leaving our lover. "What if I find out I'm incompetent?" we may
14 wonder when we contemplate changing careers. We may balk at attending new
15 meetings because we will have to reach out. Our minds manufacture a hundred
16 excuses for remaining right where we are, afraid to try something new.

17 We find that most of our pain comes not from change but from *resistance* to
18 change. In N.A., we learn that change is how we move forward in our lives. New
19 friends, new relationships, new interests and challenges will replace the old. With
20 these new things in our lives, we find new joys and loves.

21 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will release the old, embrace the new, and grow.

Tenth Step inventory

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

Step Ten

A daily Tenth Step keeps us on a sound spiritual footing. While each member asks different questions, some questions have been found to be helpful to almost everyone. Two key Tenth Step questions are, "Am I honestly in touch with myself, my actions, and my motives? And have I prayed for God's will for me and the power to carry it out?" These two questions, answered honestly, will lead us into a more thorough look at our day.

When focusing on our relationships with others, we may ask, "Have I harmed anyone today, either directly or indirectly? Do I need to make amends to anyone as a result of my actions today?" We keep it simple in our inventory if we remember to ask, "Where was I wrong? How can I do it better next time?"

N.A. members often find that their inventories include other important questions. "Was I good to myself today? Did I do something for someone else and expect nothing in return? Have I reaffirmed my faith in a loving Higher Power?"

Step Ten is a maintenance step of the N.A. program. The Tenth Step helps us to continue living comfortably in recovery.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will remember to review my day. If I have harmed another, I will make amends. I will think about how I can act differently.

A new influence

"Personality change was what we really needed. Change from self-destructive patterns of life became necessary."

Basic Text, p. 15

In early life, most of us were capable of joy and wonder, of giving and receiving unconditional love. When we started using, we introduced an influence into our lives that slowly drove us away from those things. The further we were pushed down the path of addiction, the further we withdrew from joy, wonder, and love.

That journey was not taken overnight. But however long it took, we arrived at the doors of N.A. with more than just a drug problem. The influence of addiction had warped our whole pattern of living beyond recognition.

The Twelve Steps work miracles, it's true, but not many of them are worked overnight. Our disease slowly influenced our spiritual development for the worse. Recovery introduces a new influence to our lives, a source of fellowship and spiritual strength slowly impelling us into new, healthy patterns of living.

This change, of course, doesn't "just happen." But if we cooperate with the new influence N.A. has brought to our lives, over time we will experience the personality change we call recovery. The Twelve Steps provide us with a program for the kind of cooperation required to restore joy, wonder, and love to our lives.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will cooperate with the new influence of fellowship and spiritual strength N.A. has introduced to my life. I will work the next step in my program.

Fear of the Fourth Step

"As we approach this step, most of us are afraid that there is a monster inside of us that, if released, will destroy us."

Basic Text, p. 27

Most of us are terrified to look at ourselves, to probe our insides. We're afraid that if we examine our actions and motives, we'll find an abysmal black pit of selfishness and hatred. But as we take the Fourth Step, we'll find that those fears were unwarranted. We're human, just like everyone else--no more, no less.

We all have personality traits that we're not especially proud of. On a bad day, we may think that our faults are worse than anyone else's. We'll have moments of self-doubt. We'll question our motives. We may even question our very existence. But if we could read the minds of our fellow members, we'd find the same struggles. We're no better or worse than anyone else.

We can only change what we acknowledge and understand. Rather than continuing to fear what's buried inside us, we can bring it out into the open. We'll no longer be frightened, and our recovery will flourish in the full light of self-awareness.

JUST FOR TODAY: I fear what I don't know. I will expose my fears and allow them to vanish.

An added gift

"We see it happening among us every day. This miraculous turnabout is evidence of a spiritual awakening."

Basic Text, p. 49

We watch them walk in to their first meeting defeated, their spirits broken. Their suffering is obvious, and their desire for help even more apparent. They collect a welcome chip and go back to their seats, shaken by the effort.

We see them again and they seem a little more comfortable. They've found a sponsor and are attending meetings every night. They still won't meet our glance, but they nod their heads in recognition as we share. We notice a spark of hope in their eyes, and they smile uncertainly when we encourage them to keep coming back.

A few months later, they are standing straight. They've learned how to make eye contact. They're working the steps with their sponsors and are healing as a result. We listen to them sharing at meetings. We stack chairs with them afterward.

A few years later, they are speaking at a convention workshop. They've got a wonderful, humorous personality. They smile when they see us, they hug us, and they tell us they could never have done it without us. And they understand when we say, "nor could we, without you."

JUST FOR TODAY: I will find joy in witnessing the recovery of another.

Attitudes

"We can also use the steps to improve our attitudes."

Basic Text, p. 53

Ever have a day when everything seems to be working against you? Do you go through periods when you are so busy taking people's inventories you can barely stand yourself? What about when you find yourself snapping at your co-worker or a loved one for no reason? When we find ourselves in this bleak frame of mind, we need to take action.

At any point in the day, we can set aside a few moments and take a "spot inventory." We examine how we are reacting to outside situations and other people. When we do, we may find that we are suffering from a plain old "bad attitude." A negative outlook can hurt our relationship with our Higher Power and the people in our lives. When we are honest with ourselves, we frequently find that the problem lies with us and our attitude.

We have no control over the challenges life gives us. What we can control is how we react to those challenges. At any point in time, we can change our attitude. The only thing that *really* changes in Narcotics Anonymous is *us*. The Twelve Steps give us the tools to move out of the problem and into the solution.

JUST FOR TODAY: Throughout the day, I will check my attitude. I will apply the steps to improve it.

Encouragement

"We share comfort and encouragement with others."

Basic Text, p. 95

Today I watched as a baby took her first steps. Her mother held her on her feet. Her father knelt nearby with outstretched arms, encouraging her, his face flooded with devotion. The baby took a few small steps toward her father. An older brother and sister cheered her on. She fell down. Her mother, murmuring words of comfort, picked her up and started her off again. This time she stayed up until she was close enough to fall into the safety of her father's arms.

As newcomers, we arrive in the rooms of N.A. much like this small child. Accustomed to living a life crippled by addiction, full of fear and uncertainty, we need help to stand. Just like a child beginning its march toward adulthood, we take our halting first steps toward recovery. We learn to live this new way of life because others who have gone before us encourage and comfort us by telling us what worked--and what didn't work--for them. Our sponsor is there for us when we need a push in the right direction.

Many times we feel like we can't take another step in recovery. Just like a child learning to walk, we sometimes stumble or fall. But our Higher Power always awaits us with outstretched arms. And like the child's brothers and sisters shouting their encouragement, we, too, are supported by other N.A. members as we walk toward a full life in recovery.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will seek encouragement from others. I will encourage others who may need my strength.

A full life

"The program works a miracle in our lives.... We become free to live."

Basic Text, p. 11

Most of us--if we've been in recovery for any length of time at all--have heard some member complaining in a meeting about being terribly overworked, too busy for meetings or sponsorship or other activities. In fact, we may have been the member complaining. The days seem so full: job, family and friends, meetings, activities, sponsorship, step work. "There just aren't enough hours in the day," the member complains, "to get everything done and meet everyone's demands on my time!"

When this happens, usually there's soft laughter from some of the other members--probably members who had planned to grumble about the same sort of thing. The laughter stems from our recognition that we are complaining about the miracle of the life that is ours today. Not so long ago, few of us were capable of having *any* of these "problems" in our life. We devoted all of our energy to maintaining our active addiction. Today we have full lives, complete with all the feelings and problems that go with living in reality.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will remember that my life is a miracle. Instead of resenting how busy I am, I will be thankful my life is so full.

1

Inventory

2 *"The purpose of a searching and fearless moral inventory is to sort through the*
3 *confusion and the contradiction of our lives, so that we can find out who we really*
4 *are."*

5

Basic Text, p. 27

6 Using addicts are a confused and confusing bunch of people. It's hard to tell
7 from one minute to the next what they're going to do or who they're going to be.
8 Usually, the addict is just as surprised as anyone else.

9 When we used, our behavior was dictated by the needs of our addiction.
10 Many of us still identify our personalities closely with the behavior we practiced
11 while using, leading us to feel shame and despair. Today, we don't have to be the
12 people we once were, shaped by our addiction; recovery has allowed us to
13 change.

14 We can use the Fourth Step inventory to see past the needs of the old using
15 life and find out who we want to be today. Writing about our behavior and
16 noticing how we *feel* about that behavior helps us understand who we want to be.
17 Our inventory helps us see beyond the demands of active addiction, beyond our
18 desire to be loved and accepted--we find out who we are at the root. We begin to
19 understand what's appropriate for us, and what we want our lives to be like. This
20 is the beginning of becoming who we really are.

21 **JUST FOR TODAY:** If I want to find out who I am, I'll look at who I've been and
22 who I want to be.

1 **Success**

2 *"Any form of success was frightening and unfamiliar."*

3 **Basic Text, p. 14**

4 Before coming to N.A., few of us had much experience with success. Every
5 attempt to stop using on our own had ended in failure. We had begun to despair
6 of finding any relief from active addiction. We had grown accustomed to failure,
7 expecting it, accepting it, thinking it was just part of our makeup.

8 When we stay clean, we begin to experience success in our lives. We begin to
9 take pride in our accomplishments. We start to take healthy risks in our lives. We
10 may take some knocks in the process, but even these can be counted as
11 successes if we learn from them.

12 Sometimes when we fulfill a goal, we hesitate to "pat ourselves on the back"
13 for fear that we will seem arrogant. But our Higher Power wants us to succeed,
14 and wants us to share with our loved ones the pride we take in our
15 accomplishments. When we share our successes with others in N.A., they often
16 begin to believe that they can achieve their goals as well. When we succeed, we
17 lay the groundwork for others who follow in our path.

18 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will take time to savor my successes. I will share my
19 victories with an "attitude of gratitude."

1

Higher Power

2 *"Most of us have no trouble admitting that addiction had become a destructive*
3 *force in our lives. Our best efforts resulted in ever greater destruction and*
4 *despair. At some point, we realized that we needed the help of some Power*
5 *greater than our addiction."*

6

Basic Text, p. 24

7 Most of us know without a doubt that our lives have been filled with
8 destruction. Learning that we have a disease called addiction helps us
9 understand the source or cause of this destruction. We can recognize addiction
10 as a power that has worked devastation in our lives. When we take the First Step,
11 we admit that the destructive force of addiction is bigger than we are. We are
12 powerless over it.

13 At this point, our only hope is to find some Power greater than the force of our
14 addiction--a Power bent on preserving life, not ending it. We don't have to
15 understand it or even name it; we only have to believe that there *could* be a
16 Higher Power. The belief that a benevolent Power greater than our addiction just
17 might exist gives us enough hope to stay clean, a day at a time.

18 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I believe in the possibility of some Power that's bigger than
19 my addiction.

Keeping recovery fresh

"Complacency is the enemy of members with substantial clean time. If we remain complacent for long, the recovery process ceases."

Basic Text, p. 80

After the first couple of years in recovery, most of us start to feel like there are no more big deals. If we've been diligent in working the steps, the past is largely resolved and we have a solid foundation on which to build our future. We've learned to take life pretty much as it comes. Familiarity with the steps allows us to resolve problems almost as quickly as they arise.

Once we discover this level of comfort, we may tend to treat it as a "rest stop" on the recovery path. Doing so, however, discounts the nature of our disease. Addiction is patient, subtle, progressive, and incurable. It's also fatal--we can *die* from this disease, unless we continue to treat it. And the treatment for addiction is a vital, ongoing program of recovery.

The Twelve Steps are a process, a path we take to stay a step ahead of our disease. Meetings, sponsorship, service, and the steps always remain essential to ongoing recovery. Though we may practice our program somewhat differently with five years clean than with five months, this doesn't mean the program has changed or become less important, only that our practical understanding has changed and grown. To keep our recovery fresh and vital, we need to stay alert for opportunities to practice our program.

JUST FOR TODAY: As I keep growing in my recovery. I will search for new ways to practice my program.

Responsibility

"A lot happens in one day, both negative and positive. If we do not take the time to appreciate both, perhaps we will miss something that will help us grow."

IP-8, "Just For Today"

Responsibility, responsibility--the responsibilities of life are everywhere. We're "supposed to" wear seat belts. We're "supposed to" clean our homes. We're "supposed to" do certain things for our spouses, our children, the people we sponsor. On top of all this, we're "supposed to" go to meetings and practice our programs as best as we can. It's no wonder that, sometimes, we want to run from all these tasks and escape to some far-off island where we're not "supposed to" do anything!

At times like these, when we've become overwhelmed with our responsibilities, we have forgotten that responsibility need not be burdensome. When we have a desire to run away from our responsibilities we need to slow down, remember why we have chosen them, and pay attention to the gifts they bring. Whether it's a job we normally find challenging and interesting, or a partner whose personality we are usually excited by, or a child whom we naturally like to play with and care for, there is joy to be found in all the responsibilities of our lives.

JUST FOR TODAY: Each moment is special. I will pay attention, grateful for my responsibilities and the special joys they bring.

First things first

"We apply effort to our most obvious problems and let go of the rest. We do the job at hand, and as we progress, new opportunities for improvement present themselves."

Basic Text, p. 54

It's been said that recovery is simple--all we've got to change is *everything!* That can seem a pretty tall order, especially when we first arrive in Narcotics Anonymous. After all, not many of us showed up at our first meeting because our lives were in great shape. On the contrary, a great many of us came to N.A. in the midst of the worst crises of our lives. We needed recovery, and quick!

The enormity of the change required in our lives can be paralyzing. We know we can't take care of all that needs to be done, not all at once. How do we start? Chances are, we've already started. We've done the first, most obvious things that needed to be done: we've stopped using drugs, and we've started going to meetings.

What do we do next? Pretty much the same thing, just more of it: From where we are, we do what we can. We walk the path of recovery by picking up our feet and taking the step that's right in front of us. Only when that's been accomplished must we concern ourselves with what comes next. Slowly but surely, we'll find ourselves making progress down the path, visibly drawing closer each day to becoming the kind of person we'd like to be.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will walk the path of my recovery by taking the step right in front of me.

1 "I understand"

2 *"We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings."*

3 **Step Seven**

4 Once I was entirely ready to have my character defects removed, I was
5 *entirely* ready! Ironically, that's when the trouble really started. The more I
6 struggled to rid myself of a particular defect, the stronger that shortcoming
7 seemed to become. It was truly humbling to realize that not only was I powerless
8 over my addiction but over my own defects of character. Finally, it clicked: The
9 Seventh Step didn't suggest that I rid myself of my shortcomings, but that I ask
10 my God to rid me of them. The focus of my daily prayers began to shift.
11 Admitting my inability to perfect myself, I pleaded with my Higher Power to do for
12 me what I could not do for myself. And I waited.

13 For many days, my program stayed on Step Seven. I experienced no sudden,
14 total relief from defects--but I did experience a subtle shift in my perception of
15 myself and others. Through the eyes of the Seventh Step, I began to see those
16 around me in a less critical way. I knew that, just like me, many of them were
17 struggling with shortcomings they would dearly love to be rid of. I knew that, just
18 like me, they were powerless over a great many of their own character defects,
19 and perhaps prayed just as humbly as I did to have a Higher Power remove them.

20 I began evaluating others as I had learned to evaluate myself, with an empathy
21 born of humility. As I watched others, and as I kept watch on myself, I could
22 finally say, "I understand."

23 **JUST FOR TODAY:** God, help me see through the eyes of Step Seven. Help me
24 understand.

Honesty and spirituality

"The right to a God of your understanding is total and without any catches. Because we have this right, it is necessary to be honest about our belief if we are to grow spiritually."

Basic Text, p. 25

In meetings, over refreshments, in talks with our sponsors, we hear our N.A. friends talking about the way they understand their Higher Power. It would be easy to "go with the flow," adopting someone else's beliefs. But just as no one else can recover for us, so no one else's spirituality can substitute for our own. We must honestly search for an understanding of God that truly works for us.

Many of us begin that search with prayer and meditation, and continue with our experiences in recovery. Have there been instances where we have been given power beyond our own to face life's challenges? When we have quietly sought direction in times of trouble, have we found it? What kind of Power do we believe has guided and strengthened us? What kind of Power do we seek? With the answers to these questions, we will understand our Higher Power well enough to feel safe and confident about asking it to care for our will and lives.

A borrowed understanding of God may do on a short haul. But in the long run, we must come to our own understanding of a Higher Power, for it is that Power which will carry us through our recovery.

JUST FOR TODAY: I seek a Power greater than myself that can help me grow spiritually. Today, I will examine my beliefs honestly, and come to my own understanding of God.

Learning how to live again

"We learn new ways to live. We are no longer limited to our old ideas."

Basic Text, p. 54

We may or may not have been taught right from wrong and other basics of life as children. No matter, by the time we found recovery, most of us had only the vaguest idea of how to live. Our isolation from the rest of society had caused us to ignore basic human responsibilities and develop bizarre survival skills to cope with the world we lived in.

Some of us didn't know how to tell the truth; others were so frank we wounded everyone we talked to. Some of us couldn't cope with the simplest of personal problems, while others attempted solving the problems of the whole world. Some of us never got angry, even when receiving unfair treatment; others busily lodged complaints against everyone and everything.

Whatever our problems, no matter how extreme, we all have a chance in Narcotics Anonymous to learn how to live anew. Perhaps we need to learn kindness and how to care about others. Perhaps we need to accept personal responsibilities. Or maybe we need to overcome fear and take some risks. We can be certain of one thing: Each day, simply by living life, we'll learn something new.

JUST FOR TODAY: I know more about how to live than I did yesterday, but not as much as I'll know tomorrow. Today, I'll learn something new.

1 **God's will, or mine?**

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

4 **Step Ten**

5 In Narcotics Anonymous, we've found that the more we live in harmony with
6 our Higher Power's will for us, the greater the harmony in our lives. We use the
7 Tenth Step to help us maintain that harmony. On a daily basis, we take time to
8 look at our behavior. Some of us measure each action with a very simple
9 question: "God's will, or mine?"

10 In many cases, we find that our actions have been in tune with our Higher
11 Power's will for us, and we in turn have been in tune with the world around us. In
12 some cases, however, we will discover inconsistencies between our behavior and
13 our values. We've been acting on our own will, not God's, and the result has
14 been dissonance in our lives.

15 When we discover such inconsistencies, we admit we've been wrong and take
16 corrective action. With greater awareness of what we believe God's will for us to
17 be in such situations, we are less likely to repeat those actions. And we are more
18 likely to live in greater concord with our Higher Power's will for us and with the
19 world around us.

20 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I wish to live in harmony with my world. Today, I will
21 examine my actions, asking, "God's will, or mine?"

1 "How long do I have to go?"

2 *"The way to remain a productive responsible member of society is to put our*
3 *recovery first."*

4 **Basic Text, p. 102**

5 The meetings have been great! Each night we've attended, we've gathered
6 with other addicts to share experience, strength, and hope. And each day, we've
7 used what we've learned in the meetings to continue in our recovery. Meanwhile,
8 life goes on. Work, family, friends, school, sport, entertainment, community
9 activities, civic obligations--all call out for our time. The demands of everyday
10 living sometimes make us ask ourselves, "How long do I have to go to these
11 meetings?"

12 Let's think about this. Before coming to Narcotics Anonymous, could we stay
13 clean on our own? What makes us think we can now? Then there's the disease
14 itself to consider--the chronic self-centeredness, the obsessiveness, the
15 compulsive behavior patterns that express themselves in so many areas of our
16 lives. Can we live and enjoy life without effective treatment for our disease? No.

17 "Ordinary" people may not have to worry about such things, but we're not
18 "ordinary" people--we're addicts. We can't pretend we don't have a fatal,
19 progressive illness, because we do. Without our program, we may not survive to
20 worry about the demands of work, school, family, or anything else. N.A. meetings
21 give us the support and direction we need to recover from our addiction, allowing
22 us to live the fullest lives possible.

23 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I want to live and enjoy life. To do that, I will put my recovery
24 first.

1 "I've fallen and I can't get up!"

2 *"There is something in our self-destructive personalities that cries for failure."*

3 **Basic Text, page 77**

4 "Poor me; woe is me; look at me, my life is such a mess! I've fallen, and no
5 matter how hard I try, I just can't seem to get up." Many of us came to N.A.
6 singing this sad refrain.

7 Life isn't like that anymore. True, sometimes we still stumble; at times we even
8 fall. Sometimes we feel like we can't get up again, no matter how hard we try.
9 But the truth of the matter is that, with the help of other recovering addicts in N.A.,
10 we find a hand to pull us up, dust us off, and help us start all over again. That's
11 the new refrain in our lives today.

12 No longer do we say, "I've fallen and I can't get up." Usually, it's more like,
13 "Oh, darn, I hit that same bump in the road of life again. Pretty soon I'll learn to
14 slow down or avoid it entirely." Until then, we may continue to fall down
15 occasionally, but we've learned that there's always a helping hand to set us on
16 our feet again.

17 **JUST FOR TODAY:** If I fall down, I'll remember there is a way to get back on my
18 feet. I will accept the outstretched helping hand of N.A.

The ties that bind

"As long as the ties that bind us together are stronger than those that would tear us apart, all will be well."

Basic Text, page 57

Many of us feel that without N.A. we would surely have died from our disease. Hence, its existence is our very lifeline. However, disunity is an occasional fact of life in Narcotics Anonymous; we must learn to react in a constructive way to the destructive influences that sometimes arise in our fellowship. If we decide to be part of the solution instead of the problem, we are headed in the right direction.

Our personal recovery and the growth of N.A. is contingent upon maintaining an atmosphere of recovery in our meetings. Are we willing to help our group deal constructively with conflict? As group officers, do we strive to work out difficulties openly, honestly, and equitably? Do we seek to promote the common welfare of all our members rather than our own agenda? And as trusted servants, do we take into consideration the effect our actions might have on newcomers?

Service can bring out both the best and the worst in us. But it is often through service that we begin to get in touch with some of our more pressing defects of character. Do we shrink from service commitments rather than face what we might find out about ourselves? If we bear in mind the strength of the ties that bind us together--our recovery from active addiction--all *will* be well.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will strive to be of service to our fellowship. I will be unafraid to discover who I am.

Alone no more

"We gradually and carefully pull ourselves out of the isolation and loneliness of addiction and into the mainstream of life."

Basic Text, p. 35

Many of us spent much of our using time alone, avoiding other people--especially people who were not using--at all costs. After years of isolation, trying to make a place for ourselves in a bustling, often boisterous fellowship is not always easy. We may still feel isolated, focusing on our differences rather than our similarities. The overwhelming feelings that often arise in early recovery--feelings of fear, anger, and mistrust--can also keep us isolated. We may feel like aliens, but we must remember, the alienation is ours, not N.A.'s.

In Narcotics Anonymous, we are offered a very special opportunity for friendship. We are brought together with people who understand us like no one else can. We are encouraged to share with these people our feelings, our problems, our triumphs, and our failures. Slowly, the recognition and identification we find in N.A. bridge the lonely gap of alienation in our hearts. As we've heard it said--the program works, if we let it.

JUST FOR TODAY: The friendship of other members of the fellowship is a life-sustaining gift. I will reach out for the friendship that's offered in N.A., and accept it.

1

Something different

2 *"We had to have something different and we thought we had found it in drugs."*

3

Basic Text, p. 13

4 I have always felt that I was different than other people. And I know I'm not
5 unique in feeling that way; I hear many addicts share the same thing. I searched
6 all my life for something to make me all right, to fix that "different" place inside me,
7 to make me whole and acceptable. Drugs seemed to fill that need. When I was
8 high, at least I no longer felt the emptiness or the need. There was one
9 drawback: The drugs, which were my solution, quickly became my problem.

10 Once I gave up the drugs, the sense of emptiness returned. At first I felt
11 despair because I didn't have any solution of my own to that miserable longing.
12 But I was willing to take direction and began to work the steps. As I did, I found
13 what I'd been looking for, that "something different." Today, I believe that my life-
14 long yearning was primarily for knowledge of a Higher Power; the "something
15 different" I needed was a relationship with a loving God. The steps tell me how to
16 begin that relationship.

17 **JUST FOR TODAY:** My Higher Power is the "something different" that's always
18 been missing in my life. I will use the steps to restore that missing ingredient to
19 my spirit.

Relations with others

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

Step Eight

All human beings struggle with self-centeredness. The chronic self-centeredness that lies at the very core of addiction makes that struggle doubly difficult for people like us. Many of us have lived as if we believed we were the last people on earth, utterly blind to the effect our behavior has had on those around us.

The Eighth Step is the process our program has given us to honestly examine our past relationships. We take a look at the writing we did on our Fourth Step to identify the effects our actions had on the people in our lives. When we recognize harm done to some of those people, we become willing to take responsibility for our actions by making amends to them.

The variety of people we encounter in our day and the quality of our relations with them determines, to a great extent, the quality of our very lives. Love, humor, excitement, caring--the things that make life worth living derive much of their meaning from being shared with others. Understanding this, we want to discover the true nature of our relationships with other people and mend whatever breaks we may find in those relations. We want to work the Eighth Step.

JUST FOR TODAY: I want to fully enjoy the companionship of my fellows. I will examine my relationships with the people in my life. Where I find I've harmed others, I will seek the willingness to make amends to them.

Letting go

"Take my will and my life. Guide my in my recovery. Show me how to live."

Basic Text, p. 25

How do we begin the process of letting our Higher Power guide our lives? When we seek advice about situations that trouble us, we often find that our Higher Power works through others. When we accept that we don't have all the answers, we open ourselves to new and different options. A willingness to let go of our preconceived ideas and opinions opens the channel for spiritual guidance to light our way.

At times, we must be driven to the point of distraction before we are ready to turn difficult situations over to our Higher Power. Anxiously plotting, struggling, planning, worrying--none of these suffice. We can be sure that if we turn our problems over to our Higher Power, through listening to others share their experience or in the quiet of meditation, the answers will come.

There is no point in living a frantic existence. Charging through life like the house is on fire exhausts us and gets us nowhere. In the long run, no amount of manipulation on our part will change a situation. When we let go and allow ourselves access to a Higher Power, we will discover the best way to proceed. Rest assured, answers derived from a sound spiritual basis will be far superior to any answers we could concoct on our own.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will let go and let my Higher Power guide my life.

God-centeredness

"Gradually, as we become more God-centered than self-centered, our despair turns to hope."

Basic Text, p. 92

What a glorious thing to have hope! Before coming to Narcotics Anonymous, many of us lived lives of utter hopelessness. We believed we were destined to die from our disease.

Many members speak of being on a "pink cloud" their first months in the program. We've stopped using, made some friends, and life looks promising. Things are going great. Then reality sets in. Life is still life--we still lose jobs, our partners still leave us, friends still die, we still get sick. Abstinence is no guarantee that life will always go our way.

When the reality of life on its own terms sets in, we turn to our Higher Power and remember that life happens the way life happens. But no matter what occurs in our recovery we need not despair, for there is always hope. That hope lies in our relationship with our Higher Power.

This relationship develops over time. As expressed by the thought in our text, *"gradually, we become more God-centered."* As we rely more and more on the strength of our Higher Power, life's struggles don't have to drag us into the sea of despair. As we focus more on God, we focus less on ourselves.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will rely on my Higher Power. I will accept that, regardless of what happens, my Higher Power will provide me with the resources to live with it.

1

Oops!

2 *"Insanity is repeating the same mistakes and expecting different results."*

3

Basic Text, p. 23

4 Mistakes! We all know how it feels to make mistakes. Many of us feel that our
5 entire *lives* have been a mistake. We often regard our mistakes with shame or
6 guilt—at the very least, with frustration and impatience. We tend to see mistakes
7 as evidence that we are still sick, crazy, stupid, or too damaged to recover.

8 In truth, mistakes are a very vital and important part of being human. For
9 particularly stubborn people (such as addicts), mistakes are often our best
10 teachers. There is no shame in making mistakes. In fact, making new mistakes
11 often shows our willingness to take risks and grow.

12 It's helpful, though, if we learn from our mistakes; repeating the same ones
13 may be a sign that we're stuck. And expecting different results from the same old
14 mistakes--well, that's what we call "insanity." It just doesn't work.

15 **JUST FOR TODAY:** Mistakes aren't tragedies. But please, Higher Power, help
16 me learn from them!

Seeking God's help

"At times during our recovery, the decision to ask for God's help is our greatest source of strength and courage."

Basic Text, p. 26

When we take the Third Step, we decide to allow a loving Higher Power to guide us and care for us in our daily lives. We make the *decision* to allow this guidance and care into our lives. Some of us believe that, once we've made the Third Step decision, God leads us; from that point on, it's just a matter of paying attention to where we are led.

The Third Step decision is an act of faith, and asking for God's help is a way of renewing that act of faith. Putting faith to work in our daily lives gives us all the courage and strength we need, because we know we have the help of a loving Higher Power. We trust that our needs will be met. We can tap into that faith and trust just by asking.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will remind myself that I'm not alone by asking my Higher Power for help each step of the way.