

1 **Being ourselves**

2 *"Our real value is in being ourselves."*

3 **Basic Text, p. 101**

4 Over and over, we have tried to live up to the expectations of those around us.
5 We may have been raised believing that we were okay if we earned good grades
6 in school, if we cleaned our rooms, or if we dressed a certain way. Always
7 wanting to belong and be loved, many of us spent a lot of time trying to fit in--yet
8 we never quite seemed to measure up.

9 Now, in recovery, we are accepted as we are. Our real value to others is in
10 being ourselves. As we work the steps, we learn to accept ourselves just as we
11 are. Once this happens, we gain the freedom to become who we want to be.

12 We each have many good qualities we can share with others. Our
13 experiences, honestly shared, help others find the level of identification they need
14 to begin their recovery. We find that we all have special gifts to offer those around
15 us.

16 **JUST FOR TODAY:** My experience in recovery is the greatest gift I can give
17 another addicts. I will share myself honestly with others.

Looking for the assets

"In accordance with the principles of recovery, we try not to judge, stereotype, or moralize with each other."

Basic Text, pp. 11

How many times in our recovery have we misunderstood the behavior of another, then immediately formed a judgment, applied a label, and neatly tucked the individual into a pigeonhole? Perhaps they had developed a different understanding of a Power greater than themselves than we had, so we concluded their beliefs were unspiritual. Or maybe we saw a couple having an argument; we assumed their relationship was sick, only to find out later their marriage had prospered for many years.

Thoughtlessly tossing our fellows into categories saves us the effort of finding out anything about them. Every time we judge the behavior of another, we cease to see them as potential friends and fellow travelers on the road to recovery.

If we happened to ask those we are judging if they appreciate being stereotyped, we would receive a resounding "no" in response. Would we feel slighted if this were done to us? Yes, indeed. Our best qualities are what we want others to notice. In the same way, our fellow recovering addicts want to be well thought of. Our program of recovery asks us to look positively at life. The more we concentrate on the positive qualities in others, the more we'll notice them in ourselves.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will set aside my negative judgments of others, and concentrate instead on appreciating the favorable qualities in all.

1 **More powerful than words**

2 *"We learn that a simple, loving hug can make all the difference in the world..."*

3 **Basic Text, p. 88**

4 Perhaps there have been times in our recovery when we were close to
5 someone who was in great pain. We struggled with the question, "What can I do
6 to make them feel better?" We felt anxious and inadequate to relieve their
7 suffering. We wished we had more experience to share. We didn't know what to
8 say.

9 But sometimes life deals wounds that can't be eased by even the most
10 heartfelt words. Words can never express all we mean when our deepest feelings
11 of compassion are involved. Language is inadequate to reach a wounded soul,
12 as only the touch of a loving Higher Power can heal an injury to the spirit.

13 When those we love are grieving, simply being present is perhaps the most
14 compassionate contribution we can offer. We can rest assured that a loving
15 Higher Power is working hard at healing the spirit; our only responsibility is to be
16 there. Our presence, a loving hug, and a sympathetic ear will surely express the
17 depth of our feelings, and do more to reach the heart of a human being in pain
18 than mere words ever could.

19 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will offer my presence, a hug, and a sympathetic ear to
20 someone I love.

Letting go of our limitations

"We don't have to settle for the limitations of the past. We can examine and re-examine our old ideas."

Basic Text, p. 11

Most of us come to the program with a multitude of self-imposed limitations that prevent us from realizing our full potential, limitations that impede our attempts to find the values that lie at the core of our being. We place limitations on our ability to be true to ourselves, limitations on our ability to function at work, limitations on the risks we're willing to take--the list seems endless. If our parents or teachers told us we would never succeed, and we believed them, chances are we didn't achieve much. If our socialization taught us not to stand up for ourselves, we didn't, even if everything inside us was screaming to do so.

In Narcotics Anonymous, we are given a process by which we can recognize these false limitations for what they are. Through our Fourth Step, we'll discover that we don't want to keep all the rules we've been taught. We don't have to be the life-long victims of past experiences. We are free to discard the ideas that inhibit our growth. We are capable of stretching our boundaries to encompass new ideas and new experiences. We are free to laugh, to cry, and, above all, to enjoy our recovery.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will let go of my self-imposed limitations and open my mind to new ideas.

Onward on the journey

"The progression of recovery is a continuous, uphill journey."

Basic Text, p. 79

The longer we stay clean, the steeper and narrower our path seems to become. But God doesn't give us more than we can handle. No matter how difficult the road becomes, no matter how narrow, how winding the turns, there is hope. That hope lies in our spiritual progression.

If we keep showing up at meetings and staying clean, life gets... well, *different*. The continual search for answers to life's ups and downs can lead us to question all aspects of our lives. Life isn't always pleasant. This is when we must turn to our Higher Power with even more faith. Sometimes all we can do is hold on tight, believing that things will get better.

In time, our faith will produce understanding. We will begin to see the "bigger picture" of our lives. As our relationship with our Higher Power unfolds and deepens, acceptance becomes almost second-nature. No matter what happens as we walk through recovery, we rely on our faith in a loving Higher Power and continue onward.

JUST FOR TODAY: I accept that I don't have all the answers to life's questions. Nonetheless, I will have faith in the God of my understanding and continue on the journey of recovery.

1 **Fun!**

2 *"In recovery, our ideas of fun change."*

3 **Basic Text, p. 102**

4 In retrospect, I realize that when I used, my ideas of fun were rather bizarre.
5 Usually I would get dressed up and head for the local club. I would go to these
6 establishments and dance, drink, and do drugs until the sun rose. On more than
7 one occasion, a gun battle broke out. What I then called fun, I now call insanity.

8 Today, my notion of fun has changed. Fun to me today is a walk along the
9 ocean, watching the dolphins frolic as the sun sets behind them. Fun is going to
10 an NA picnic, or attending the comedy show at an NA convention. Fun is getting
11 dressed up to go to the banquet and not worrying about any gun battles breaking
12 out over who did what to whom.

13 Through the grace of a Higher Power and the Fellowship of Narcotics
14 Anonymous, my ideas of fun have changed radically. Today when I am up to see
15 the sun rise, it's because I went to bed early the night before, not because I left a
16 club at six in the morning, eyes bleary from a night of drug use. And if that's all I
17 had received from Narcotics Anonymous, that would be enough.

18 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will have *fun* in my recovery!

Not perfect

"We are not going to be perfect. If we were perfect, we would not be human."

Basic Text, p. 30

Everyone had expectations about life in recovery. Some of us thought recovery would suddenly make us employable or able to do anything in the world we wanted to do. Or maybe we imagined perfect ease in our interactions with others. When we stop and think, we realize that we expected recovery would make us perfect. We didn't expect to continue making many mistakes. But we do. That's not the addict side of us showing through; that's being human.

In Narcotics Anonymous we strive for recovery, not perfection. The only promise we are given is freedom from active addiction. Perfection is not an attainable state for human beings; it's not a realistic goal. What we often seek in perfection is freedom from the discomfort of making mistakes. In return for that freedom from discomfort, we trade our curiosity, our flexibility, and the room to grow.

We can consider the trade: Do we want to live the rest of our lives in our well-defined little world, safe but perhaps stifled? Or do we wish to venture out into the unknown, take a risk, and reach for everything life has to offer?

JUST FOR TODAY: I want all that life has to offer me and all that recovery can provide. Today, I will take a risk, try something new, and grow.

Being right

"When we admit that our lives have become unmanageable, we don't have to argue our point of view.... We no longer have to be right all the time."

Basic Text, p. 56

Nothing will isolate us more quickly from the warmth and camaraderie of our fellow NA members than having to be "right." Insecure, we pretend to be some kind of authority figure. Suffering from low self-esteem, we try to build ourselves up by putting others down. At best, such tactics push others away from us; at worst, they draw attack. The more we try to impress others with how "right" we are, the more wrong we become.

We don't have to be "right" to be secure; we don't have to pretend to have all the answers for others to love or respect us. In fact, just the opposite is true. None of us have all the answers. We depend upon one another to help bridge the gaps in our understanding of things, and we depend upon a Power greater than our own to make up for our personal powerlessness. We live easily with others when we offer what we know, admit what we don't, and seek to learn from our peers. We live securely in ourselves when we cease relying on our own power and start relying on the God we've come to understand in recovery.

We don't have to be "right" all the time, just recovering.

JUST FOR TODAY: God, I admit my powerlessness and the unmanageability of my life. Help me live with others as an equal, dependent upon You for direction and strength.

1 **Living clean**

2 *"As we recover, we gain a new outlook on being clean.... Life can become a new*
3 *adventure for us."*

4 **Basic Text, p. 88**

5 The using life is not a clean one--no one knows this better than we do. Some
6 of us lived in physical squalor, caring neither for our surroundings nor ourselves.
7 Worse, though, than any external filth was the way most of us felt inside. The
8 things we did to get our drugs, the way we treated other people, and the way we
9 treated ourselves has us feeling dirty. Many of us recall waking too many
10 mornings just wishing that, for once, we could feel clean about ourselves and our
11 lives.

12 Today, we have a chance to feel clean by living clean. For us addicts, living
13 clean starts with not using--after all, that's our primary use for the word "clean" in
14 Narcotics Anonymous. But as we stay "clean" and work the Twelve Steps, we
15 discover another kind of clean. It's the clean that comes from admitting the truth
16 about our addiction rather than hiding or denying our disease. It's the freshness
17 that comes from owning up to our wrongs and making amends for them. It's the
18 vitality that comes from the new set of values we develop as we seek a Higher
19 Power's will for us. When we practice the principles of our program in all our
20 affairs, we have no reason to feel dirty about our lives or our lifestyles--we're living
21 clean, and grateful to be doing so at last.

22 "Clean living" used to be just for the "squares." Today, living clean is the only
23 way we'd have it.

24 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I feel clean because I'm living clean--and that's the way I
25 want to keep it.

Relationships

"Also, our inventories usually include material on relationships."

Basic Text, p. 29

What an understatement this is! Especially in later recovery, entire inventories may focus on our relationships with others. Our lives have been filled with relationships with lovers, friends, parents, co-workers, children, and others with whom we come in contact. A look at these associations can tell us much about our essential character.

Often our inventories catalogue the resentments that arise from our day-to-day interactions with others. We strive to look at our part in these frictions. Are we placing unrealistic expectations on other people? Do we impose our standards on others? Are we sometimes downright intolerant?

Often just the writing of our inventory will release some of the pressure that a troubled relationship can produce. But we must also share this inventory with another human being. That way, we get some needed perspective on our part in the problem and how we can work toward a solution.

The inventory is a tool that allows us to begin healing our relationships. We learn that today, with the help of an inventory, we can start to enjoy our relationships with others.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will inventory the part I play in my relationships. I will seek to play a richer, more responsible part in those relationships.

Enough!

"Something inside cries out, 'Enough, enough, I've had enough,' and then they are ready to take that first and often most difficult step toward dealing with their disease."

Basic Text, p. 203

Have we really had enough? This is the crucial question we must ask ourselves as we prepare to work the First Step in Narcotics Anonymous. It doesn't matter whether or not we arrived in NA with our families intact, our careers still working for us, and all the outward appearances of wholeness. All that matters is that we have reached an emotional and spiritual bottom that precludes our return to active addiction. If we have, we will be truly ready to go to any lengths to quit using.

When we inventory our powerlessness, we ask ourselves some simple questions. Can I control my use of drugs in any form? What incidents have occurred as a result of my drug use that I didn't want to happen? How is my life unmanageable? Do I believe in my heart that I am an addict?

If the answers to these questions lead us to the doors of Narcotics Anonymous, then we are ready to move on to the next step toward a life free from active addiction. If we have truly had enough, then we will be willing to go to any lengths to find recovery.

JUST FOR TODAY: I admit that I have had enough. I am ready to work my First Step.

1 **A growing concept of God**

2 *"The only suggested guidelines are that this Power be loving, caring and greater*
3 *than ourselves. We don't have to be religious to accept this idea. The point is that*
4 *we open our minds to believe."*

5 **Basic Text, p. 24**

6 In a lifelong process of coming to believe, our understanding of God will
7 change. The understanding we have when new in recovery will not be the same
8 when we have a few months clean, nor will that understanding be the same when
9 we have a few years clean.

10 Our initial understanding of a Power greater than ourselves will most likely be
11 limited. That Power will keep us clean but, we may think, nothing more. We may
12 hesitate to pray because we have placed conditions on what we will ask our
13 Higher Power to do for us. "Oh, this stuff is so awful, even God couldn't do
14 anything," we might say, or "God's got a lot of people to take care of. There's no
15 time for me."

16 But, as we grow in recovery, so will our understanding. We'll begin to see that
17 the only limits to God's love and grace are those we impose by refusing to step
18 out of the way. The loving God we come to believe in is infinite, and the power
19 and love we find in our belief is shared by nearly every addict across the world.

20 **JUST FOR TODAY:** The God I am coming to understand has a limitless capacity
21 for love and care. I will trust that my God is bigger than any problem I may have.

That one special person

"With one sponsor we can learn to build a relationship based on trust and honesty. Through shared experience a sponsor is able to reflect on personal growth."

I.P. #11, "Sponsorship"

We've asked someone to sponsor us, and the reasons we have for asking that particular person are as many as the grains of sand on a beach. Perhaps we heard them share at a speaker meeting and thought they were funny or inspiring. Perhaps we thought they had a great car and we would get one by working the same program they work. Or maybe we live in a small town and they were the only person who had the time available to help.

Whatever our initial reasons for getting the sponsor we have, we're sure to find that our reasons for keeping them are quite different. Suddenly, they'll amaze us with some stunning insight, making us wonder whether they've been sneaking peeks at our Fourth Step. Or maybe we're going through some sort of life crisis, and their experience with the same problem helps us in ways we never dreamed possible. We call them in pain, and they come up with a special combination of caring words that provide genuine comfort.

None of these remarkable feats on the part of our sponsor are mere coincidence. They've simply walked the same path before us. A Higher Power has placed that one special person in our lives, and we are grateful for their presence.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will appreciate that one special person in my life--my sponsor.

Listening

"This ability to listen is a gift and grows as we grow spiritually. Life takes on a new meaning when we open ourselves to this gift."

Basic Text, p. 102

Have you ever watched two small children carry on a conversation? One will be talking about purple dragons, while the other carries on about the discomfort caused by having sand in one's shoes. We sometimes encounter the same communications problem as we learn to listen to others. We may struggle through meetings, trying desperately to hear the person sharing while our minds are busy planning what we will say when it's our turn to speak. In conversation, we may suddenly realize that our answers have nothing to do with the questions we're being asked. They are, instead, speeches prepared while in the grip of our self-obsession.

Learning how to listen--really *listen*--is a difficult task, but one that's not beyond our reach. We might begin by acknowledging in our replies what our conversational partner is saying. We might ask if there is anything we can do to help when someone expresses a problem. With a little practice, we can find greater freedom from self-obsession and closer contact with the people in our lives.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will quiet my own thoughts and listen to what someone else is saying.

Fear or faith?

"No matter how far we ran, we always carried fear with us."

Basic Text, p. 14

For many of us, fear was a constant factor in our lives before we came to Narcotics Anonymous. We used because we were afraid to feel emotional or physical pain. Our fear of people and situations gave us a convenient excuse to use drugs. A few of us were so afraid of everything that we were unable even to leave our homes without using first.

As we stay clean, we replace our fear with a belief in the fellowship, the steps, and a Higher Power. As this belief grows, our faith in the miracle of recovery begins to color all the aspects of our lives. We start to see ourselves differently. We realize we are spiritual beings, and we strive to live by spiritual principles.

The application of spiritual principles helps eliminate fear from our lives. By refraining from treating other people in harmful or unlawful ways, we find we needn't fear how we will be treated in return. As we practice love, compassion, understanding, and patience in our relationships with others, we are treated in turn with respect and consideration. We realize these positive changes result from allowing our Higher Power to work through us. We come to believe--not to think, but to *believe*--that our Higher Power wants only the best for us. No matter what the circumstances, we find we can walk in faith instead of fear.

JUST FOR TODAY: I no longer need to run in fear, but can walk in faith that my Higher Power has only the best in store for me.

Active listening

"Through active listening, we hear things that work for us."

Basic Text, p. 102

Most of us arrived in Narcotics Anonymous with a very poor ability to listen. But to take full advantage of "the therapeutic value of one addict helping another," we must learn to listen actively.

What is active listening for us? In meetings, it means we concentrate on what the speaker is sharing, while the speaker is sharing. We set aside our own thoughts and opinions until the meeting is over. That's when we sort through what we've heard to decide which ideas we want to use and which we want to explore further.

We can apply our active listening skills in sponsorship, too. Newcomers often talk with us about some "major event" in their lives. While such events may not seem significant to us, they are to the newcomer who has little experience living life on life's terms. Our active listening helps us empathize with the feelings such events trigger in our sponsee's life. With that understanding, we have a better idea of what to share with them.

The ability to listen actively was unknown to us in the isolation of our addiction. Today, this ability helps us actively engage with our recovery. Through active listening, we receive everything being offered us in NA, and we share fully with others the love and care we've been given.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will strive to be an active listener. I will practice active listening when others share and when I share with others.

1 **Too busy**

2 *"We must use what we learn or we will lose it, no matter how long we have been*
3 *clean."*

4 **Basic Text, p. 82**

5 After putting some clean time together, some of us have a tendency to forget
6 what our most important priority is. Once a week or less we say, "I've gotta get to
7 a meeting tonight. It's been..." We've been caught up in other things, important
8 for sure, but no more so than our continued participation in Narcotics
9 Anonymous.

10 It happens gradually. We get jobs. We reunite with our families. We're raising
11 children, the dog is sick, or we're going to school at night. The house needs to
12 be cleaned. The lawn needs to be mowed. We have to work late. We're tired.
13 There's a good show at the theater tonight. And all of a sudden, we notice that
14 we haven't called our sponsors, been to a meeting, spoken to a newcomer, or
15 even talked to God in quite a while.

16 What do we do at this point? Well, we either renew our commitment to our
17 recovery, or we continue being too busy to recover until something happens and
18 our lives become unmanageable. Quite a choice! Our best bet is to put more of
19 our energy into the foundation of recovery on which our lives are built. That
20 foundation makes everything else possible, and it will surely crumble if we get too
21 busy with everything else.

22 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I can't afford to be too busy to recover. I will do something
23 today that sustains my recovery.

Calling a defect a defect

"When we see how our defects exist in our lives and accept them, we can let go of them and get on with our new life."

Basic Text, pp. 33-34

Sometimes our readiness to have our character defects removed depends on what we call them. If misnaming our defects makes them seem less "defective," we may be unable to see the damage they cause. And if they seem to be causing no harm, why would we ever ask our Higher Power to remove them from our lives?

Take "people pleasing," for example. Doesn't really sound all that bad, does it? It just means we're nice to people, right? Not quite. To put it bluntly, it means we're dishonest and manipulative. We lie about our feelings, our beliefs, and our needs, trying to soothe others into compliance with our wishes.

Or perhaps we think we're "easygoing." But does "easygoing" mean we ignore our housework, avoid confrontations, and stay put in a comfortable rut? Then a better name for it would be "laziness," or "procrastination," or "fear."

Many of us have trouble identifying our character defects. If this is the case for us, we can talk with our sponsors or our NA friends. We clearly and honestly describe our behavior to them and ask for their help in identifying our defects. As time passes, we'll become progressively better able to identify our own character defects, calling them by their true names.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will call my defects by their true names. If I have trouble doing this, I will ask my sponsor for help.

Regular inventory

"Continuing to take a personal inventory means that we form a habit of looking at ourselves, our actions, attitudes and relationships on a regular basis."

Basic Text, p. 41

Taking a regular inventory is a key element in our new pattern of living. In our addiction, we examined ourselves as little as possible. We weren't happy with how we were living our lives, but we didn't feel that we could change the way we lived. Self-examination, we felt, would have been a painful exercise in futility.

Today, all that is changing. Where we were powerless over our addiction, we've found a Power greater than ourselves that has helped us stop using. Where we once felt lost in life's maze, we've found guidance in the experience of our fellow recovering addicts and our ever-improving contact with our Higher Power. We need not feel trapped by our old, destructive patterns. We can live differently if we choose.

By establishing a regular pattern of taking our own inventory, we give ourselves the opportunity to change anything in our lives that doesn't work. If we've started doing something that causes problems, we can start changing our behavior before it gets completely out of hand. And if we're doing something that prevents problems from occurring, we can take note of that, too, and encourage ourselves to keep doing what works.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will make a commitment to include a regular inventory in my new pattern of living.

1

The only requirement

2 *"This program offers hope. All you have to bring with you is the desire to stop*
3 *using and the willingness to try this new way of life."*

4

I.P. #16, "For the Newcomer"

5 From time to time we wonder if we're "doing it right" in Narcotics Anonymous.
6 Are we attending enough meetings? Are we using our sponsors, or working the
7 steps, or speaking, or reading, or living the "right" way? We value the fellowship
8 of recovering addicts--we don't know what we'd do without it. What if the way
9 we're practicing our program is "wrong"? Does that make us "bad" NA members?

10 We can settle our insecurities by reviewing our Third Tradition, which assures
11 us that "the *only* requirement for membership is a desire to stop using." There
12 aren't any rules that say we've got to attend *this* many meetings or these
13 *particular* meetings, or work the steps *this* way at *this* pace, or live our lives to suit
14 *these* people in order to remain NA members in good standing.

15 It's true that, if we want the kind of recovery we see in members we respect,
16 we'll want to practice the kind of program that's made their recovery possible.
17 But NA is a fellowship of freedom; we work the program the best way for *us*, not
18 for someone else. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.

19 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will look at the program I'm working in light of my own
20 recovery. I will practice that program to the best of my ability.

A curse into a blessing

"We have become very grateful in the course of our recovery.... We have a disease, but we do recover."

Basic Text, p. 8

Active addiction was no picnic; many of us barely came out of it alive. But ranting against the disease, lamenting what it has done to us, pitying ourselves for the condition it has left us in--these things can only keep us locked in the spirit of bitterness and resentment. The path to freedom and spiritual growth begins where bitterness ends, with acceptance.

There is no denying the suffering brought by addiction. Yet it was this disease that brought us to Narcotics Anonymous; without it, we would neither have sought nor found the blessing of recovery. In isolating us, it forced us to seek fellowship. In causing us to suffer, it gave us the experience needed to help others, help no one else was so uniquely suited to offer. In forcing us to our knees, addiction gave us the opportunity to surrender to the care of a loving Higher Power.

We would not wish the disease of addiction on anyone. But the fact remains that we addicts already have this disease--and further, that without this disease we may never have embarked on our spiritual journey. Thousands of people search their whole lives for what we have found in Narcotics Anonymous: fellowship, a sense of purpose, and conscious contact with a Higher Power. Today, we are grateful for everything that has brought us this blessing.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will accept the fact of my disease, and pursue the blessing of my recovery.

1

Fear of change

2 *"By working the steps, we come to accept a Higher Power's will.... We lose our*
3 *fear of the unknown. We are set free."*

4

Basic Text, p. 16

5 Life is a series of changes, both large and small. Although we may know and
6 accept this fact intellectually, chances are that our initial emotional reaction to
7 change is fear. For some reason, we assume that each and every change is
8 going to hurt, causing us to be miserable.

9 If we look back on the changes that have happened in our lives, we'll find that
10 most of them have been for the best. We were probably very frightened at the
11 prospect of life without drugs, yet it's the best thing that's ever happened to us.
12 Perhaps we've lost a job that we thought we'd die without, but later on we found
13 greater challenge and personal fulfillment in a new career. As we venture forth in
14 our recovery, we're likely to experience more changes. We will outgrow old
15 situations and become ready for new ones.

16 With all sorts of changes taking place, it's only natural to grab hold of
17 something, *anything* familiar and try to hold on. Solace can be found in a Power
18 greater than ourselves. The more we allow changes to happen at the direction of
19 our Higher Power, the more we'll trust that those changes are for the best. Faith
20 will replace fear, and we'll know in our hearts that all will be well.

21 **JUST FOR TODAY:** When I am afraid of a change in my life, I will take comfort
22 from knowing that God's will for me is good.

Recognizing and releasing resentments

"We want to look our past in the face, see it for what it really was and release it so we can live today."

Basic Text, p. 28

Many of us had trouble identifying our resentments when we were new in recovery. There we sat with our Fourth Step in front of us, thinking and thinking, finally deciding that we just don't *have* any resentments. Perhaps we talked ourselves into believing that we weren't so sick after all. Such unwitting denial of our resentments stems from the conditioning of our addiction. Most of our feelings were buried, and buried deep.

After some time in recovery, a new sense of understanding develops. Our most deeply buried feelings begin to surface, and those resentments we thought we didn't have suddenly emerge. As we examine these resentments, we may feel tempted to hold onto some of them, especially if we think they are "justified."

But what we need to remember is that "justified" resentments are just as burdensome as any other resentment. As our awareness of our liabilities grows, so does our responsibility to let go. We no longer need to hang on to our resentments. We want to rid ourselves of what's undesirable and set ourselves free to recover.

JUST FOR TODAY: When I discover a resentment, I'll see it for what it is and let it go.

Our own true will

"...God's will for us consists of the very things we most value. God's will... becomes our own true will for ourselves."

Basic Text, p. 46

It's human nature to want something for nothing. We may be ecstatic when a store cashier gives us back change for a twenty, though we only paid with a ten. We tend to think that if no one knows, one small deception won't make any difference. But someone *does* know—we do. And it does make a difference.

What worked for us when we used frequently doesn't work long in recovery. As we progress spiritually by working the Twelve Steps, we begin to develop new values and standards. We begin to feel uncomfortable when we take advantage of situations that, when we used, would have left us gloating about what we had gotten away with.

In the past, we may have victimized others. However, as we draw closer to our Higher Power, our values change. God's will becomes more important than getting away with something.

When our values change, our lives change, too. Guided by an inner knowledge given us by our Higher Power, we *want* to live out our newfound values. We have internalized our Higher Power's will for us--in fact, God's will has become our own true will for ourselves.

JUST FOR TODAY: By improving my conscious contact with God, my values have changed. Today, I will practice God's will, my own true will.

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2

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The light of exposure

"These defects grow in the dark, and die in the light of exposure."

Basic Text, p. 31

The Fifth Step asks us to share our true nature with God, with ourselves, and with another human being. It doesn't encourage us to tell everyone every little secret about ourselves. It doesn't ask us to disclose every shameful or frightening thought we've ever had. Step Five simply suggests that our secrets cause us more harm than good when we keep them completely to ourselves.

If we give in to our reluctance to reveal our true nature to even one human being, the secret side of our lives becomes more powerful. And when the secrets are in control, they drive a wedge between ourselves, our Higher Power, and the things we value most about our recovery.

When we share our secret selves in confidence with at least one human being--our sponsor, perhaps, or a close friend--this person usually doesn't reject us. We disclose ourselves to someone else and are rewarded with their acceptance. When this happens, we realize that honest sharing is not life-threatening; the secrets have lost their power over us.

JUST FOR TODAY: I can disarm the secrets in my life by sharing them with one human being.

1

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3 **JUST FOR TODAY:** My friends and my sponsor are human, just like me--and I
4 trust their experience all the more for that.

Living with spiritual experiences

"For meditation to be of value, the results must show in our daily lives."

Basic Text, pp. 45-46

In working our program, we are given many indirect indications of a Higher Power's presence in our lives: the clean feeling that comes to so many of us in taking our Fifth Step; the sense that we are finally on the right track when we make amends; the satisfaction we get from helping another addict. Meditation, however, occasionally brings us *extraordinary* indications of God's presence in our lives. These experiences do not mean we have become perfect or that we are "cured." They are tastes given us of the source of our recovery itself, reminding us of the true nature of the thing we are pursuing in Narcotics Anonymous and encouraging us to continue walking our spiritual path.

Such experiences demonstrate, in no uncertain terms, that we have tapped a Power far greater than our own. But how do we incorporate that extraordinary Power into our ordinary lives? Our NA friends, our sponsors, and others in our communities may be more seasoned in spiritual matters than we are. If we ask, they can help us fit our spiritual experiences into the natural pattern of recovery and spiritual growth.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will seek whatever answers I may need to understand my spiritual experiences and incorporate them into my daily life.

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Self-acceptance

2 *"When we accept ourselves, we can accept others into our lives, unconditionally,*
3 *probably for the first time."*

4

I.P. #19, "Self Acceptance"

5 From our earliest memories, many of us felt like we never belonged. No
6 matter how big the gathering, we always felt apart from the crowd. We had a hard
7 time "fitting in." Deep down, we believed that if we really let others get to know us,
8 they would reject us. Perhaps our addiction began to germinate in this climate of
9 self-centeredness.

10 Many of us hid the pain of our alienation with an attitude of defiance. In effect,
11 we told the world, "You don't need me? Well, I don't need any of you, either. I've
12 got my drugs and I can take care of myself!" The further our addiction
13 progressed, the higher the walls we built around ourselves.

14 Those walls begin to fall when we start finding acceptance from other
15 recovering addicts. With this acceptance from others, we begin to learn the
16 important principle of self-acceptance. And when we start to accept ourselves,
17 we can allow others to take part in our lives without fear of rejection.

18 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I am accepted in NA; I fit in. Today, it's safe to start letting
19 others into my life.

Our own story

"When we honestly tell our own story, someone else may identify with us."

Basic Text, p. 95

At my first Narcotics Anonymous convention, I attended a speaker meeting with at least a thousand people present. The speaker's story was captivating. The audience alternated between tears and outright hilarity. "Someday," I thought, "I'm going to be a main speaker at a convention, too."

Well, that day has yet to arrive. Once in awhile I'm asked to speak at a meeting near where I live. Once I spoke at a small workshop at a small convention. But after all this time, I'm still not a "hot" convention speaker.

Some of my best friends are popular speakers. One of my friends with less clean time than me is asked to speak so often that I sometimes get a resentment. But I've learned that I, too, have a special message to share, even if it's only at a local meeting with fifteen or twenty addicts in attendance.

I have only my own story to tell; that's it. I can't tell anyone else's story. Every time I get up to speak, all the clever lines and funny stories seem to disappear from my mind. But I *do* have something to offer. I carry the message of hope--we can and do recover from our addiction. And that's enough.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will remember that my honest story is what I share the best. Today, that's enough.

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1 Changing motives

2 *"When we finally get our own selfish motives out of the way, we begin to find a*
3 *peace that we never imagined possible."*

4 **Basic Text, p. 44**

5 As we examine our beliefs, our actions, and our motives in recovery, we'll find
6 that sometimes we do things for the wrong reasons. In our early recovery, we
7 may have spent a great deal of money and time on people, wanting only for them
8 to like us. Later on, we may find that we still spend money on people, but our
9 motives have changed. We do it because we like *them*. Or perhaps we used to
10 get romantically involved because we felt hollow inside and were seeking
11 fulfillment through another person. Now our reasons for romantic involvement are
12 based in a desire to share our already rewarding lives with an equal partner.
13 Maybe we used to work the steps because we were afraid we'd relapse if we
14 didn't. Today we work the steps because we want to grow spiritually.

15 We have a new purpose in life today, and our changing motives reflect that.
16 We have so much more to offer than our neediness and insecurities. We have
17 developed a wholesomeness of spirit and a peace of mind that moves our
18 recovery into a new realm. We extend our love and share our recovery with
19 complete generosity, and the difference we make is the legacy we leave to those
20 who have yet to join us.

21 **JUST FOR TODAY:** In recovery, my motives have changed. I want to do things
22 for the right reason, not just for my personal benefit. Today, I will examine my
23 motives.

1 **What is a sponsor?**

2 *"We know we can look to our sponsor, but it is our responsibility to get in touch*
3 *with them..."*

4 **I.P. #11, "Sponsorship"**

5 What is a sponsor? You know. That nice person with whom you had coffee
6 after your first meeting. That generous soul who keeps sharing recovery
7 experience free of charge. The one who keeps amazing you with stunning insight
8 regarding your character defects. The one who keeps reminding you to finish
9 your Fourth Step, who listens to your Fifth Step, and who doesn't tell anyone how
10 weird you are.

11 It's pretty easy to start taking all this stuff for granted once we're used to
12 someone being there for us. We may run wild for a while and tell ourselves, "I'll
13 call my sponsor later, but right now I have to clean the house, go shopping, chase
14 that attractive..." And so we end up in a trouble, wondering where we went
15 wrong.

16 Our sponsors can't read minds. It's up to us to reach out and ask for help.
17 Whether we need help with our steps, a reality check to help us straighten out our
18 screwy thinking, or just a friend, it's our job to make the request. Sponsors are
19 warm, wise, wonderful people, and their experience with recovery is ours--all we
20 have to do is ask.

21 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I'm grateful for the time, the love, and the experience my
22 sponsor has shared with me. Today, I will call my sponsor.

1

Who really gets better?

2 *"We can also use the steps to improve our attitudes. Our best thinking got us into*
3 *trouble. We recognize the need for change."*

4

Basic Text, p. 53

5 When new in recovery, most of us had at least one person we just couldn't
6 stand. We thought that person was the rudest, most obnoxious person in the
7 program. We knew there was something we could do, some principle of recovery
8 we could practice to get over the way we felt about this person--but what? We
9 asked our sponsors for guidance. We were probably assured, with an amused
10 smile, that if we just kept coming back, we'd see the person get better. That
11 made sense to us. We believed that the steps of NA worked in the lives of
12 everyone. If they could work for us, they could work for this horrible person, too.

13 Time passed, and at some point we noticed that the person didn't seem as
14 rude or obnoxious as before. In fact, he or she had become downright tolerable,
15 maybe even likeable. We got a pleasant jolt as we realized who had really gotten
16 better. Because we had kept coming back, because we had kept working the
17 steps, our perception of this person had changed. The person who'd plagued us
18 had become "tolerable" because we'd developed some tolerance; he or she had
19 become "likeable" because we'd developed the ability to love.

20 So who really gets better? *We do!* As we practice the program, we gain a
21 whole new outlook on those around us by gaining a new outlook on ourselves.

22 **JUST FOR TODAY:** As I get better, so will others. Today, I will practice tolerance
23 and try to love those I meet.

1

3

JUST FOR TODAY: I will try to welcome my feelings, firm in the belief that I have the courage to face whatever emotions may come up in my life.

1 **We do recover!**

2 *"...the time has come when that tired old lie, 'Once an addict, always an addict,'*
3 *will no longer be tolerated by either society or the addict himself. We do recover."*

4 **Basic Text, p. 86**

5 From time to time, we hear speakers share that they don't really understand
6 spiritual principles yet. They tell us that if we knew what went on in their minds,
7 we'd be amazed at how insane they still are. They tell us that the longer they're
8 clean, the less they know about anything. In the next breath, these same
9 speakers tell us about the profound changes recovery has made in their lives.
10 They have moved from complete despair to unfailing hope, from uncontrollable
11 drug use to total abstinence, from chronic unmanageability to responsibility
12 through working the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. Which story is true?
13 Do we or don't we recover?

14 We may think we demonstrate humility or gratitude by underplaying the
15 change that recovery has brought to our lives. True, we do injustice to the
16 program when we take credit for this miracle ourselves. But we do an equal
17 injustice--to ourselves and to those we share with--when we don't acknowledge
18 this miracle's magnitude.

19 *We do recover.* If we have trouble seeing the miracle of recovery, we'd better
20 look again. Recovery is alive and at work in Narcotics Anonymous--in our
21 oldtimers, in the newcomers flooding our meetings, and most of all in ourselves.
22 All we have to do is open our eyes.

23 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will acknowledge the miracle of my recovery and be
24 grateful that I've found it.

1 Getting out of the rut

2 *"Many times in our recovery the old bugaboos will haunt us. Life may again*
3 *become meaningless, monotonous and boring."*

4 **Basic Text, p. 75**

5 Sometimes it seems as though nothing changes. We get up and go to the
6 same job every day. We eat dinner at the same time every night. We attend the
7 same meetings each week. This morning's rituals were identical to the ones we
8 performed yesterday, and the day before that, and the day before that. After the
9 hell of our addiction and the roller-coaster craziness of early recovery, the stable
10 life may have some appeal--for a while. But, eventually, we realize we want
11 something more. Sooner or later, we become turned off to the creeping
12 monotony and boredom in our lives.

13 There are sure to be times when we feel vaguely dissatisfied with our recovery.
14 We feel as though we're missing something for some reason, but we don't know
15 what. We draw up our gratitude lists and find literally hundreds of things to be
16 grateful for. All our needs are being met; our lives are fuller than we had ever
17 hoped they'd be. So what's up?

18 Maybe it's time to stretch our potential to its fullest. The possibilities are only
19 limited by what we can dream. We can learn something new, set a new goal, help
20 another newcomer, or make a new friend. We're sure to find something
21 challenging if we look hard enough, and life will again become meaningful, varied,
22 and fulfilling.

23 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I'll take a break from the routine and stretch my potential to
24 its fullest.

The best laid plans

"It is our actions that are important. We leave the results to our Higher Power."

Basic Text, p. 88

There's an old saying we sometimes hear in our meetings: "If you want to make God laugh, make plans." When we hear this we usually laugh, too, but there's a nervous edge to our laughter. We wonder if all of our carefully laid plans are doomed to fail. If we're planning a big event--a wedding, a return to school, or perhaps a career change--we begin to wonder if our plans are the same as our Higher Power's plans. We are capable of working ourselves into such a frenzy of worry over this question that we refuse to make any plans at all.

But the simple fact is that we really don't know whether our Higher Power's plans for our lives are carved in stone or not. Most of us have opinions about fate and destiny, but whether we believe in such theories or not, we still have a responsibility to live our lives and make plans for the future. If we refuse to accept responsibility for our lives, we're still making plans--plans for a shallow, boring existence.

What we make in recovery are *plans*, not *results*. We'll never know whether the marriage, the education, or the new job is going to work out until we try it. We simply exercise our best judgment, check with our sponsors, pray, use all the information at hand, and make the most reasonable plans we can. For the rest, we trust in the loving care of the God of our understanding, knowing that we've acted responsibly.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will make plans, but I will not plan the results. I will trust in my Higher Power's loving care.

Regular prayer and meditation

"Most of us pray when we are hurting. We learn that if we pray regularly we won't be hurting as often, or as intensely."

Basic Text, p. 44

Regular prayer and meditation are two more key elements in our new pattern of living. Our active addiction was more than just a bad habit waiting to be broken by force of will. Our addiction was a negative, draining dependence that stole all our positive energy. That dependence was so total that it prevented us from developing any kind of reliance on a Higher Power.

From the very beginning of our recovery, our Higher Power has been the force that's brought us freedom. First, it relieved us of our compulsion to keep taking drugs, even when we knew they were killing us. Then, it gave us freedom from the more deeply ingrained aspects of our disease. Our Higher Power gave us the direction, the strength, and the courage to inventory ourselves; to admit out loud to another person what our lives had been like, perhaps for the first time; to begin seeking release from the chronic defects of character underlying our troubles; and, at last, to make amends for the wrongs we'd done.

That first contact with a Higher Power, and that first freedom, has grown into a life full of freedom. We maintain that freedom by maintaining and improving our conscious contact with our Higher Power through regular prayer and meditation.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will make a commitment to include regular prayer and meditation in my new pattern of living.

1

Teachable

2 *"We have learned that it is okay to not know all the answers, for then we are*
3 *teachable and can learn to live our new life successfully."*

4

Basic Text, p. 93

5 In a way, addiction is a great teacher. And if addiction teaches us nothing
6 else, it will teach us humility. We hear it said that it took our very best thinking to
7 get to NA. Now that we're here, we're here to learn.

8 The NA Fellowship is a wonderful learning environment for the recovering
9 addict. We aren't made to feel stupid at meetings. Instead, we find others who've
10 been exactly where we've been and who've found a way out. All we have to do is
11 admit that we don't have all the answers, then listen as others share what's
12 worked for them.

13 As recovering addicts and as human beings, we have much to learn. Other
14 addicts--and other humans--have much to teach us about what works and what
15 doesn't. As long as we remain teachable, we can take advantage of the
16 experience of others.

17 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will admit that I don't have all the answers. I will look and
18 listen to the experience of others for the answers I need.

1 **From isolation to connection**

2 *"Our disease isolated us... Hostile, resentful, self-centered and self-seeking, we*
3 *cut ourselves off from the outside world."*

4 **Basic Text, pp. 3-4**

5 Addiction is an isolating disease, closing us off from¹ society, family, and self.
6 We hid. We lied. We scorned the lives we saw others living, surely beyond our
7 grasp. Worst of all, we told ourselves there was nothing wrong with us, even
8 though we knew we were desperately ill. Our connection with the world, and with
9 reality itself, was severed. Our lives lost meaning, and we withdrew further and
10 further from reality.

11 The NA program is designed especially for people like us. It helps reconnect
12 us to the life we were meant to live, drawing us out of our isolation. We stop lying
13 to ourselves about our condition; we admit our powerlessness and the
14 unmanageability of our lives. We develop faith that our lives can improve, that
15 recovery is possible, happiness is not permanently beyond our grasp. We get
16 honest; we stop hiding; we "show up and tell the truth," no matter what. And as
17 we do, we establish the ties that connect our individual lives to the larger life
18 around us.

19 We addicts need not live lives of isolation. The Twelve Steps can restore our
20 connection to life and living—if we work them.

21 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I am a part of the life around me. I will practice my program
22 to strengthen my connection to my world.

1

Not just surviving

2 *"When we were using, our lives became an exercise in survival. Now we are*
3 *doing much more living than surviving."*

4

Basic Text, p. 50

5 "I'd be better off dead!" A familiar refrain to a practicing addict, and with good
6 reason. All we had to look forward to was more of the same miserable existence.
7 Our hold on life was weak at best. Our emotional decay, our spiritual demise, and
8 the crushing awareness that nothing would ever change were constants. We had
9 little hope and no concept of the life we were missing out on.

10 The resurrection of our emotions, our spirits, and our physical health takes
11 time. The more experience we gain in *living*, rather than merely existing, the more
12 we understand how precious and delightful life can be. Traveling, playing with a
13 small child, making love, expanding our intellectual horizons, and forming
14 relationships are among the endless activities that say, "I'm alive." We discover so
15 much to cherish, and feel grateful to have a second chance.

16 If we had died in active addiction, we would have been bitterly deprived of so
17 many of life's joys. Each day we thank a Power greater than ourselves for
18 another day clean and another day of life.

19 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I am grateful to be alive. I will do something today to
20 celebrate.

Humility in action

"If we are hurting, and most of us do from time to time, we learn to ask for help."

Basic Text, p. 80

Sometimes recovery gets downright difficult. It can be even more difficult to get humble enough to ask for help. We think, "I have all this time clean. I should be better than this!" But the reality of recovery is simple: whether we have thirty days or thirty years clean, we must be willing to ask for help when we need it.

Humility is a common theme in our Twelve Steps. The program of Narcotics Anonymous is not about keeping up appearances. Instead, the program helps us get the most from our recovery. We must be willing to lay bare our difficulties if we expect to find solutions to problems that arise in our lives.

There's an old expression sometimes heard in Narcotics Anonymous: We can't save our face and our ass at the same time. It isn't easy to share in a meeting when we have a number of years clean only to dissolve into tears because life on life's terms has made us realize our powerlessness. But when the meeting ends and another member comes up and says, "You know, I really needed to hear what you had to say," we know that there is a God working in our lives.

The taste of humility is never bitter. The rewards of humbling ourselves by asking for help sweetens our recovery.

JUST FOR TODAY: If I need help, I will ask for it. I will put humility into action in my life.

1 **A new vision**

2 *"Do we really want to be rid of our resentments, our anger, our fear?"*

3 **Basic Text, p. 33**

4 Why do we call them "shortcomings"? Perhaps they should be more aptly
5 called "long-goings," because that's often what it takes for them to fade from our
6 lives. Some of us feel that our shortcomings are the very characteristics that
7 saved our lives when we used. If this is true, then it is little wonder that we
8 sometimes cling to them like old, dear friends.

9 If we are having trouble with resentment, anger, or fear, we may want to
10 envision what our lives could be like without these troubling defects. Asking
11 ourselves *why* we react in a certain manner can sometimes root out the fear at the
12 core of our conduct. "Why am I afraid to step beyond these aspects of my
13 personality?" we ask ourselves. "Am I afraid of who I will be without these
14 attributes?"

15 Once we have uncovered our fear, we are able to move beyond it. We try to
16 imagine what our lives could be like without some of our more glaring
17 shortcomings. This gives us a feeling for what lies past our fear, providing the
18 motivation we need to push through it. Our Higher Power offers us a new vision
19 for our lives, free of our defects. That vision is the essence of our own best,
20 brightest dreams for ourselves. We need not fear that vision.

21 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will imagine what my life would be like without my character
22 defects. I will ask for the willingness to have God remove my shortcomings.

1

Living in the present

2

"We want to look our past in the face, see it for what it really was and release it so we can live today."

3

4

Basic Text, p. 28

5

For many of us, the past is like a bad dream. Our lives aren't the same any more, but we still have fleeting, highly charged emotional memories of a really uncomfortable past. The guilt, fear, and anger that once dominated us may spill into our new life, complicating our efforts to change and grow.

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The Twelve Steps are the formula that helps us learn to put the past in its place. Through the Fourth and Fifth Steps, we become aware that our old behavior didn't work. We ask a Higher Power to relieve us of our shortcomings in the Sixth and Seventh Steps, and we begin to be relieved of the guilt and fear that plagued us for so many years. In the Eighth and Ninth Steps, by making amends, we demonstrate to others that our lives are changing. We are no longer controlled by the past. Once the past loses its control over us, we are free to find new ways to live, ways that reflect who we truly are.

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JUST FOR TODAY: I don't have to be controlled by my past. I will live this new day as the new person I am becoming.

18

1 **Being ourselves**

2 *"To be truly humble is to accept and honestly try to be ourselves."*

3 **Basic Text, p. 35**

4 Humility is a puzzling concept. We know a lot about *humiliation*, but *humility* is
5 a new idea. It sounds suspiciously like groveling, bowing, and scraping. but
6 that's not what humility is at all. True humility is, simply, acceptance of who we
7 are.

8 By the time we reach a step that uses the word "humbly," we have already
9 started to put this principle into practice. The Fourth Step gives us an opportunity
10 to *examine* who we really are, and the Fifth Step helps us *accept* that knowledge.

11 The practice of humility involves accepting our true nature, honestly being
12 ourselves. We don't have to grovel or abase ourselves, nor must we try to appear
13 smarter, richer, wealthier, or healthier than we really are. Humility simply means
14 we drop all pretense and live as honestly as we can.

15 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will allow knowledge of my true nature to guide my actions.
16 Today, I will face the world as myself.

Expectations

"As we realize our need to be forgiven, we tend to be more forgiving."

Basic Text, p. 38

Our behavior toward other people in our life is a mirror of our behavior toward ourselves. When we demand perfection of ourselves, we come to demand it from others around us, too. As we strive to repair and heal our lives in recovery, we may also expect others to work just as hard and to recover at the same pace as we do. And just as we are often unforgiving of our own mistakes, we may shut out friends and family members when they don't meet our expectations.

Working the steps helps us understand our own limitations and our humanity. We come to see our failures as human mistakes. We realize that we will never be perfect, that we will, at times, disappoint ourselves and others. We hope for forgiveness.

As we learn to accept ourselves gently, we can start to view others with the same accepting and tolerant heart. These people, too, are merely human, trying to do their best and sometimes falling short.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will treat others with the tolerance and forgiveness I seek for myself.

Difficult people

"By giving unconditional love... we become more loving, and by sharing spiritual growth we become more spiritual."

Basic Text, p. 99

Most of us have one or two exceptionally difficult people in our lives. How do we deal with such a person in our recovery?

First, we take our own inventory. Have we wronged this person? Has some action or attitude of ours served as an invitation for the kind of treatment they have given us? If so, we will want to clear the air, admit we have been wrong, and ask our Higher Power to remove whatever defects may prevent us from being helpful and constructive.

Next, as people seeking to live spiritually oriented lives, we approach the problem from the other person's point of view. They may be faced with any number of challenges we either fail to consider or know nothing about, challenges that cause them to be unpleasant. As it's said, we seek in recovery "to forgive rather than be forgiven; to understand rather than be understood."

Finally, if it is within our power, we seek ways to help others overcome their challenges without injuring their dignity. At the very least, we pray for their well-being and spiritual growth, and for the ability to offer them the unconditional love that has meant so much to us in our recovery.

We cannot change the difficult people in our lives, nor can we please everyone. But by applying the spiritual principles we've learned in NA, we can learn to love them.

JUST FOR TODAY: Higher Power, help me serve other people, not demand that they serve me.

People-pleasing

"...approval-seeking behavior carried us further into our addiction...."

Basic Text, p. 14

When others approve of what we do or say, we feel good; when they disapprove, we feel bad. Their opinions of us, and how those opinions make us feel, can have positive value. By making us feel good about steering a straight course, they encourage us to continue doing so. "People-pleasing" is something else entirely. We "people-please" when we do things, right or wrong, solely to gain another person's approval.

Low self-esteem can make us think we need someone else's approval to feel okay about ourselves. We do whatever we think it will take to make them tell us we're okay. We feel good for awhile. Then we start hurting. In trying to please another person, we've diminished ourselves and our values. We realize that the approval of others will not fill the emptiness inside us.

The inner satisfaction we seek can be found in doing the right things for the right reasons. We break the people-pleasing cycle when we stop acting merely to gain others' approval and start acting on our Higher Power's will for us. When we do, we may be pleasantly surprised to find that the people who really count in our lives will approve all the more of our behavior. Most importantly, though, we will approve of ourselves.

JUST FOR TODAY: Higher Power, help me live in accordance with spiritual principles. Only then can I approve of myself.

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Consequences

"Before we got clean, most of our actions were guided by impulse. Today, we are not locked into this type of thinking."

Basic Text, p. 87

Ever been tempted to do something even when you know the results will be disastrous? Ever thought about how much it's going to hurt to do what you're tempted to do, then proceed to do it anyway? It is said that there are consequences to every action.

I didn't understand what was meant by this expression until I had a few years clean. But now I know exactly what it means. It's when I act despite the consequences. It's when I decide to do something, knowing full well that I won't like the price I'll have to pay.

There's a prize and a price. It's okay to act despite the consequences if we're willing to pay the price, but there's always one to pay.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will think about the consequences of my actions before I take them.

1 **Becoming entirely ready**

2 *"We... get a good look at what these defects are doing to our lives. We begin to*
3 *long for freedom from these defects."*

4 **Basic Text, p. 33**

5 Becoming entirely ready to have our defects of character removed can be a
6 long process, often taking place over the course of a lifetime. Our state of
7 readiness grows in direct proportion to our awareness of these defects and the
8 destruction they cause.

9 We may have trouble seeing the devastation our defects are inflicting on our
10 lives and the lives of those around us. If this is the case, we would do well to ask
11 our Higher Power to reveal those flaws which stand in the way of our progress.

12 As we let go of our shortcomings and find their influence waning, we'll notice
13 that a loving God replaces those defects with quality attributes. Where we were
14 fearful, we find courage. Where we were selfish, we find generosity. Our
15 delusions about ourselves will disappear, to be replaced by self-honesty and self-
16 acceptance.

17 Yes, becoming entirely ready means we will change. Each new level of
18 readiness brings new gifts. Our basic nature changes, and we soon find our
19 readiness is no longer sparked only by pain, but by a desire to grow spiritually.

20 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will increase my state of readiness by becoming more
21 aware of my shortcomings.

Returning our sponsor's kindness

"Our earliest involvements with others often begin with our sponsor."

Basic Text, p. 55

Our sponsors are abundant sources of recovery information, wisdom, and loving words. They've done so much for us. From the late night telephone calls to the hours spent listening to our recovery writing, they've believed in us and invested their time to prove it. They've lovingly and firmly shown us how to be honest. Their boundless compassion in times of turmoil has given us the strength to go on. Their way of helping has prompted us to seek our answers within ourselves, and we've become mature, responsible, confident individuals as a result.

Though our sponsors have given so generously and have never demanded repayment, there are things we can do to show our appreciation. We treat our sponsors with respect. They are not trash cans designed for us to dump our garbage in. They have their times of trial, just as we do, and sometimes need our support. They are human, have feelings, and appreciate our concern. Maybe they would like to receive a card in the mail or a phone call expressing our love.

Whatever we do to return our sponsor's kindness will enhance our personal recovery, not to mention the joy we'll bring to our sponsor.

JUST FOR TODAY: My sponsor has cared for me when I couldn't care for myself. Today, I will do something nice for my sponsor.

Being of service

"Working with others is only the beginning of service work."

Basic Text, p. 56

We're in recovery now. Through living the program, we've attained some stability in our lives. Our faith in a Higher Power has grown. Our individual spiritual awakenings are progressing comfortably. So now what? Do we simply sit still and enjoy? Of course not. We find a way to be of service.

We tend to think of service only in terms of committee service, or holding a position at some level, but service goes far beyond this understanding. In fact, we can find opportunities to be of service in nearly every area of our lives. Our jobs are a form of service to our communities, no matter what our occupation. The work we do in our homes serves our families. Perhaps we do volunteer work in our communities.

What a difference our service efforts make! If we doubt this, we can just imagine what the world would be like if no one bothered to be of service to others. Our work serves humanity. The message we carry goes beyond the rooms of recovery, affecting everything we do.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will look for opportunities to be of service in everything I do.

1 **Order**

2 *"We emphasize setting our house in order, because it brings us relief."*

3 **Basic Text, p. 93**

4 Focusing on what others are doing can provide momentary relief from having
5 to take a look at ourselves. But one of the secrets of success in Narcotics
6 Anonymous is making sure our own house is in order. So what does "putting our
7 house in order" mean, anyway?

8 It means we work the steps, which allows us to look at our part in our
9 relationships with others. When we have a problem with someone, we can take
10 our own inventory to find out what our part in the problem has been. With the
11 help of our sponsors, we strive to set it right. Then, each day, we continue taking
12 our inventory to avoid repeating the same mistakes in the future.

13 It's pretty simple. We treat others as we would like others to treat us. We
14 promptly make amends when we owe them. And when we turn our lives over to
15 the care of our Higher Power on a daily basis, we can start to avoid running on
16 the self-will so characteristic of our active addiction. Guided by a Power that
17 seeks the best for everyone, our relationships with others will surely improve.

18 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will set my own house in order. Today, I will examine my
19 part in the problems in my life. If I owe amends, I will make them.

A new pattern of living

"We suspect that if we do not use what we have, we will lose what we have."

Basic Text, p. 75

Addiction gave a pattern to our lives, and with it a meaning--a dark, diseased meaning, to be sure, but a meaning nonetheless. The Narcotics Anonymous recovery program gives us a new pattern of living to replace our old routines. And with that new pattern comes new meaning to our lives, one of light and hope.

What is this new pattern of living? Instead of isolation, we find fellowship. Instead of living blindly, repeating the same mistakes again and again, we regularly examine ourselves, free to keep what helps us grow and to discard what doesn't. Rather than constantly trying to get by on our own limited power, we develop a conscious contact with a loving Power greater than ourselves.

Our life must have a pattern. To maintain our recovery, we must maintain the new patterns our program has taught us. By giving regular attention to these patterns, we will maintain the freedom we've found from the deadly disease of addiction, and keep hold of the meaning recovery has brought to our lives.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will begin a new pattern in my life: the regular maintenance of my recovery.

1 **Bend with the wind**

2 *"We learn to become flexible... As new things are revealed, we feel renewed."*

3 **Basic Text, p. 98**

4 "Flexibility" was not a part of the vocabulary we used in our using days. We'd
5 become obsessed with the raw pleasure of our drugs and hardened to all the
6 softer, subtler, more infinitely varied pleasures of the world around us. Our
7 disease had turned life itself into a constant threat of jails, institutions, and death,
8 a threat against which we hardened ourselves all the more. In the end we
9 became brittle. With the merest breath of life's wind we crumbled at last, broken,
10 defeated, with no choice but to surrender.

11 But the beautiful irony of recovery is that, in our surrender, we found the
12 flexibility we had lost in our addiction, the very lack of which had defeated us. We
13 regained the ability to bend in life's breeze without breaking. When the wind blew,
14 we felt its loving caress against our skin, where once we would have hardened
15 ourselves as if against the onrush of a storm.

16 The winds of life blow new airs our way each moment, and with them new
17 fragrances, new pleasures, varied, subtly different. As we bend with life's wind,
18 we feel and hear and touch and smell and taste all it has to offer us. And as new
19 winds blow, we feel renewed.

20 **JUST FOR TODAY:** Higher Power, help me bend with life's wind and glory in its
21 passing. Free me from rigidity.

Acting out

"We learn to experience feelings and realize they can do us no harm unless we act on them."

I.P. #16, "For the Newcomer"

Many of us came to Narcotics Anonymous with something less than an overwhelming desire to stop using. Sure, the drugs were causing us problems, and we wanted to be rid of the problems, but we didn't want to stop getting high. Eventually, though, we saw that we couldn't have one without the other. Even though we really wanted to get loaded, we didn't use; we weren't willing to pay the price anymore. The longer we stayed clean and worked the program, the more freedom we experienced. Sooner or later, the compulsion to use was lifted from us completely, and we stayed clean because we wanted to live clean.

The same principles apply to other negative impulses that may plague us. We may feel like doing something destructive, just because we want to. We've done it before, and sometimes we think we've gotten away with it, but sometimes we haven't. If we're not willing to pay the price for acting on such feelings, we don't have to act on them.

It may be hard, maybe even as hard as it was to stay clean in the beginning. But others have felt the same way and have found the freedom not to act on their negative impulses. By sharing about it and seeking the help of other recovering people and a Power greater than ourselves, we can find the direction, the support, and the strength we need to abstain from *any* destructive compulsion.

JUST FOR TODAY: It's okay to feel my feelings. With the help of my sponsor, my NA friends, and my Higher Power, I am free not to act out my negative feelings.

Through others' eyes

*"When someone points out a shortcoming, our first reaction may be defensive...
[But] if we truly want to be free, we will take a good look at input from fellow
addicts."*

Basic Text, p. 35

At some point in our recovery, we come to the awkward realization that the way we see ourselves is not necessarily the way others do. We are probably neither as bad, as good, as beautiful, or as ugly as we think we are--but we are too close to ourselves to really tell for sure. That's where our friends in the program come in, caring enough to share with us what they see when they look in our direction. They tell us the good things about ourselves we might not know--and they tell us the hard things, too, that we might not be able to see.

We may react defensively to such "help"--and, in some cases, justly so. However, even malicious remarks about our supposed shortcomings can shed light on aspects of our recovery that we cannot see ourselves. Wherever a useful insight comes from, for whatever reason it is offered, we cannot afford to discount it.

We don't need to wait for others to spontaneously offer their insight. When we spend time with our sponsors or other NA members we trust, we can work the first step and ask them to tell us what they see about particular areas of our lives to which we are blind. We want a broader vision of our life than just our own; we can have that vision by seeing ourselves through the eyes of others.

JUST FOR TODAY: I seek to see myself as I truly am. I will listen to what others say about me, and see myself through their eyes.

1 **Making a difference**

2 *"Words cannot describe the sense of spiritual awareness that we receive when we*
3 *have given something, no matter how small, to another person."*

4 **Basic Text, p. 100**

5 Sometimes it seems as though there is so much wrong with the world that we
6 might as well forget trying to make a difference. "After all," we think, "what in the
7 world can I do? I'm just one person." Whether our concerns are so broad that
8 we desire global peace, or so personal that we simply want available recovery for
9 every addict, the task seems overwhelming. "So much work to do, so little time,"
10 we sigh, and sometimes wonder how we'll ever do any good.

11 Amazingly enough, the smallest contributions can make the biggest
12 difference. To gain more from life than an ordinary, plodding existence requires
13 very little effort on our parts. We ourselves are transformed by the deep
14 satisfaction we experience when we lift the spirits of just one person. When we
15 smile at someone who is frowning, when we let someone in front of us on the
16 freeway, when we call a newcomer just to say we care, we enter the realm of the
17 extraordinary.

18 Want to change the world? Start with the addict sitting next to you tonight,
19 and then imagine your act of kindness multiplied. One person at a time, each one
20 of us makes a difference.

21 **JUST FOR TODAY:** An act of kindness costs me nothing, but is priceless to the
22 recipient. I will be kind to someone today.

Making mountains into molehills

"When we stop living in the here and now, our problems become magnified unreasonably."

Basic Text, p. 96

Some of us seem to make mountains out of molehills with our problems. Even those of us who've found some measure of serenity have probably blown a problem far out of proportion at some time in our recovery--and if we haven't done so yet, we probably will!

When we find ourselves obsessed with a complication in our lives, we will do well to sharply remind ourselves of all that is going well. Perhaps we're afraid we won't be able to pay our bills for the month. Instead of sitting at the calculator adding our financial liabilities over and over, we can take stock of our efforts to reduce expenses. Following this mini-inventory, we continue with the task at hand and remind ourselves that as long as we are doing the footwork, a loving Higher Power will care for our lives.

Mountain-sized problems happen sometimes, but we don't need to create them. Trust in a loving God of our understanding will put most of our problems in their proper perspective. We no longer need to create chaos to feel excited about our lives. Our recovery gives us countless real-life opportunities for excitement and drama.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will take a realistic look at my problems and see that most of them are minor. I will leave them that way and enjoy my recovery.

A vision of hope

"Yes, we are a vision of hope..."

Basic Text, p. 51

By the time we reached the end of our road, many of us had lost all hope for a life without the use of drugs. We believed we were destined to die from our disease. What an inspiration it was, then, coming to our first meeting and seeing a room full of addicts who were staying clean! A clean addict is, indeed, a vision of hope.

Today, we give that same hope to others. The newcomers see the joyful light in our eyes, notice how we carry ourselves, listen to us speak in meetings, and often want what we have found. They believe in us until they learn to believe in themselves.

Newcomers hear us carry a message of hope to them. They tend to see us through "rose-colored glasses." They don't always recognize our struggle with a particular character defect or our difficulties with improving our conscious contact with our Higher Power. It takes them time to realize that we, the "oldtimers" with three or six or ten years clean, often place personalities before principles or suffer from some other unsightly character defects.

Yes, the newcomer sometimes places us on a pedestal. It is good, though, to openly admit the nature of our struggles in recovery for, in time, the newcomer will be walking through those same trials. And that newcomer will remember that others walked through that difficulty, and stayed clean.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will remember that I am a beacon to all who follow in my path, a vision of hope.

Feeling "a part of"

"The get-togethers after our meetings are good opportunities to share things that we didn't get to discuss during the meeting."

Basic Text, p. 95

Active addiction set us apart from society, isolating us. Fear was at the core of that alienation. We believed that if we let others get to know us, they would only find out how flawed we were. Rejection would be only a short step away.

When we come to our first NA meeting, we are usually impressed by the familiarity and friendliness we see other recovering addicts share. We, too, can quickly become a part of this fellowship, if we allow ourselves to. One way to start is by tagging along to the local coffee shop after the meeting.

At these gatherings, we can let down the walls that separate us from others and discover things about ourselves and other NA members. One on one, we can sometimes disclose things that we may be reluctant to share at the group level. We learn to make small talk at many of these late-night gatherings, and forge deep, strong friendships as well.

With our new-found friends in NA, we no longer have to live lives of isolation. We can become a part of the bigger whole, the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will break free of isolation. I will strive to feel a part of the NA Fellowship.

Patience

"We were trapped by our need for the instant gratification that drugs gave us."

Basic Text, pp. 24-25

"I want what I want, and I want it *now!*" That's about as patient as most of us ever got in our active addiction. The obsession and compulsion of our disease gave us a "one-track" way of thinking; when we wanted something, that's all we thought about. And the drugs we took taught us that instant gratification was never more than a dose away. It's no wonder that most of us came to Narcotics Anonymous with next to no patience.

The problem is, we can't always get what we want whenever we want it. Some of our wishes are pure fantasy; if we think about it, we'll realize we have no reason to believe those wishes will be fulfilled in our lifetimes. We probably can't even fulfill all our realistic desires; we certainly can't fulfill them all at once. In order to acquire or achieve some things, we will have to sacrifice others.

In our addiction we sought instant gratification, squandering our resources. In recovery we must learn to prioritize, sometimes denying the gratification of some desires in order to fulfill more important long-term goals. To do so requires patience. To find that patience, we practice our program of recovery, seeking the kind of full-bodied spiritual awakening that will allow us to live and enjoy life on life's terms.

JUST FOR TODAY: Higher Power, help me discover what's most important in my life. Help me learn patience, that I can devote my resources to the important things.

Freedom from active addiction

"Narcotics Anonymous offers only one promise and that is freedom from active addiction, the solution that eluded us for so long."

Basic Text, p. 102

NA offers no promises other than freedom from active addiction. It is true that some of our members meet with financial success in recovery. They buy nice houses, drive new cars, wear fine clothes, and form beautiful families. These outward signs of prosperity are not the lot of all of our members, however. A great many of us never achieve financial success. This does not necessarily reflect on the quality of our recovery.

When we are tempted to compare ourselves to these other, seemingly more affluent members, it is good to remember why we came to the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous. We came because our lives had fallen down around us. We were emotionally, physically, and spiritually defeated. Our Basic Text reminds us that "in *desperation* we sought help from each other in Narcotics Anonymous." We came because we were beaten.

For addicts, even one day clean is a miracle. When we remember why we came, and in what condition we arrived in Narcotics Anonymous, we realize that material wealth pales in comparison to the spiritual riches we have gained in recovery.

JUST FOR TODAY: I have been given a spiritual gift greater than material wealth: my recovery. I will thank the God of my understanding for my freedom from active addiction.

1

Winners

2 *"I started to imitate some of the things the winners were doing. I got caught up in*
3 *NA. I felt good..."*

4

Basic Text, p. 223

5 We often hear it said in meetings that we should "stick with the winners." Who
6 are the winners in Narcotics Anonymous? Winners are easily identified. They
7 work an active program of recovery, living in the solution and staying out of the
8 problem. Winners are always ready to reach their hands out to the newcomer.
9 They have sponsors, and works with those sponsors. Winners stay clean, just for
10 today.

11 Winners are recovering addicts who keep a positive frame of mind. They may
12 be going through troubled times, but they still attend meetings and share openly
13 about it. Winners know in their hearts that, with the help of a Higher Power,
14 nothing will come along that is too much to handle.

15 Winners strive for unity in their service efforts. Winners practice putting
16 "principles before personalities." Winners remember the principle of anonymity,
17 doing the principled action no matter who is involved.

18 Winners keep a sense of humor. Winners have the ability to laugh at
19 themselves. And when winners laugh, they laugh with you, not at you.

20 Who are the winners in Narcotics Anonymous? Any one of us can be
21 considered a winner. All of us exhibit some of the traits of the winner; sometimes
22 we come very close to the ideal, sometimes we don't. If we are clean today and
23 working our program to the best of our ability, we are winners!

24 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will strive to fulfill my ideals. I will be a winner.

Rebellion

"We need not lose faith when we become rebellious."

Basic Text, p. 34

Many of us have lived our entire lives in revolt. Our initial response to any type of direction is often negative. Automatic rejection of authority seems to be a troubling character defect for many addicts.

A thorough self-examination can show us how we react to the world around us. We can ask ourselves if our rebellion against people, places, and institutions is justified. If we keep writing long enough, we can usually get past what others did and uncover our own part in our affairs. We find that what others did to us was not as important as how we responded to the situations we found ourselves in.

Regular inventory allows us to examine the patterns in our reactions to life and see if we are prone to chronic rebelliousness. Sometimes we will find that, while we may usually go along with what is suggested to us rather than risk rejection, we secretly harbor resentments against authority. If left to themselves, these resentments can lead us away from our program of recovery.

The inventory process allows us to uncover, evaluate, and alter our rebellious patterns. We can't change the world by taking an inventory, but we can change the way we react to it.

JUST FOR TODAY: I want freedom from the turmoil of rebelliousness. Before I act, I will inventory myself and think about my true values.

1 **God could restore us to sanity**

2 *"The process of coming to believe restores us to sanity. The strength to move into*
3 *action comes from this belief."*

4 **Basic Text, p. 24**

5 Now that we've finally admitted our insanity and seen examples of it in all its
6 manifestations, we might be tempted to believe that we are doomed to repeat this
7 behavior for the rest of our lives. Just as we thought that our active addiction was
8 hopeless and we'd never get clean, we might now believe that our particular
9 brand of insanity is hopeless.

10 Not so! We know that we owe our freedom from active addiction to the grace
11 of a loving God. If our Higher Power can perform such a miracle as relieving our
12 obsession to use drugs, surely this Power can also relieve our insanity in *all* its
13 forms.

14 If we doubt this, all we have to do is think about the sanity that has already
15 been restored to our lives. Maybe we've gotten carried away with our credit
16 cards; but sanity returns when we admit defeat and cut them all up. Perhaps
17 we've been feeling lonely and want to go visit our old using buddies. Going to
18 visit our sponsor instead is a sane act.

19 The insanity of our addiction recedes into the past as we begin experiencing
20 moments of sanity in our recovery. Our belief in a Power greater than ourselves
21 grows as we begin to understand that even our brand of insanity is nothing in the
22 face of this Power.

23 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I thank the God of my understanding for each sane act in
24 my life, for I know they are indications of my restoration to sanity.

The big picture

"All spiritual awakenings have some things in common. Common elements include an end to loneliness and a sense of direction in our lives."

Basic Text, p. 48

Some kinds of spiritual experiences take place when we confront something larger than we are. We suspect that forces beyond our understanding are operating. We see a fleeting glimpse of the big picture and find humility in that moment.

Our journey through the Twelve Steps will bring about a spiritual experience of the same nature, only more profound and lasting. We undergo a continual process of ego-deflation, while at the same time we become more conscious of the larger perspective. Our view of the world expands to the point where we no longer possess an exaggerated sense of our own importance.

Through our new awareness, we no longer feel isolated from the rest of the human race. We may not understand why the world is the way it is or why people sometimes treat one another so savagely. But we do understand suffering and, in recovery, we can do our best to alleviate it. When our individual contribution is combined with others, we become an essential part of a grand design. We are connected at last.

JUST FOR TODAY: I am but one person in the entire scheme of things. I humbly accept my place in the big picture.

1 **Insides and outsides**

2 *"Our real value is in being ourselves."*

3 **Basic Text, p. 101**

4 As we work the steps, we're bound to discover some basic truths about
5 ourselves. The process of uncovering our secrets, exposing them, and searching
6 our characters reveals our true nature. As we become acquainted with ourselves,
7 we'll need to make a decision to be just who we are.

8 We may want to take a look at what we present to our fellow addicts and the
9 world and see if it matches up with what we've discovered inside. Do we pretend
10 that nothing bothers us when, in truth, we're very sensitive? Do we cover our
11 insecurities with obnoxious jokes, or do we share our fears with someone? Do
12 we dress like a teenager when we're approaching forty and are basically
13 conservative?

14 We may want to take another look at those things which we thought "weren't
15 us." Maybe we've avoided NA activities because we "don't like crowds." Or
16 maybe we have a secret dream of changing careers, but have put off taking
17 action because our dream "wasn't really right" for us. As we attain a new
18 understanding of ourselves, we'll want to adjust our behavior accordingly. We
19 want to be genuine examples of who we are.

20 **JUST FOR TODAY:** I will check my outsides to make sure they match my
21 insides. I will try to act on the growth I have experienced in recovery.

"What If..."

"Living just for today relieves the burden of the past and the fear of the future. We learned to take whatever actions are necessary and to leave the results in the hands of our Higher Power."

Basic Text, pp. 90-91

In our active addiction, fear of the future and what might happen was a reality for many of us. "What if" we got arrested? lost our job? our spouse died? we went bankrupt? and on, and on, and on. It was not unusual for us to spend hours, even whole days thinking about what *might* happen. We played out entire conversations and scenarios before they ever occurred, then charted our present course on the basis of "what if..." By doing this, we set ourselves up for disappointment after disappointment.

From listening in meetings, we also learned that living in the present, not the world of "what if," is the only way to short-circuit our self-fulfilling prophecies of doom and gloom. We can only deal with what is real today, not our fearful fantasies of the future.

Coming to believe that our Higher Power has only the best in store for us is one way we can combat that fear. We hear in meetings that our Higher Power won't give us more than we can handle in one day. And we know from experience that, if we ask, the God we've come to understand will surely care for us. We stay clean through adverse situations by practicing our faith in the care of a Power greater than ourselves. Each time we do, we become less fearful of "what if" and more comfortable with what *is*.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will look forward to the future with faith in my Higher Power.

Resentment and forgiveness

"Where there has been wrong, the program teaches us the spirit of forgiveness."

Basic Text, p. 12

In NA, we begin to interact with the world around us. We no longer live in isolation. But freedom from isolation has its price: The more we interact with people, the more often we'll find someone stepping on our toes. And such are the circumstances in which resentments are often born.

Resentments, justified or not, are dangerous to our ongoing recovery. The longer we harbor resentments, the more bitter they become, eventually poisoning us. To stay clean, we must find the capacity to let go of our resentments, the capacity to forgive. We first develop this capacity in working Steps Eight and Nine, and we keep it alive by regularly taking the Tenth Step.

Sometimes when we are unwilling to forgive, it helps to remember that we, too, may someday require another person's forgiveness. Haven't we all, at one time or another, done something that we deeply regretted? And aren't we healed in some measure when others accept our sincere amends?

An attitude of forgiveness is a little easier to develop when we remember that we are all doing the very best we can. And someday we, too, will need forgiveness.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will let go of my resentments. Today, if I am wronged I will practice forgiveness, knowing that I need forgiveness myself.

Write about It!

"We sit down with a notebook, ask for guidance, pick up our pen and start writing."

Basic Text, p. 29

When we're confused or in pain, our sponsors sometimes tell us to "write about it." Though we may groan as we drag out the notebook, we know that it will help. By laying it all out on paper, we give ourselves the chance to sort through what's bothering us. We know we can get to the bottom of our confusion and find out what's really causing our pain when we put the pen to the paper.

Writing can be rewarding, especially when working through the steps. Many members maintain a daily journal. Simply thinking about the steps, pondering their meaning, and analyzing their effect is not sufficient for most of us. There's something about the physical action of writing that helps to fix the principles of recovery in our minds and hearts.

The rewards we find through the simple action of writing are many. Clarity of thought, keys to locked places inside of us, and the voice of conscience are but a few. Writing helps us be more honest with ourselves. We sit down, quiet our thoughts, and listen to our hearts. What we hear in the stillness are the truths that we put down on paper.

JUST FOR TODAY: One of the ways I can search for truth in recovery is to write. I will about my recovery today.

Growing up

"Our spiritual condition is the basis for a successful recovery that offers unlimited growth."

Basic Text, p. 43

When our members celebrate their recovery anniversaries, they often say that they've "grown up" in NA. *Well, then, we think, what does that mean?* We start to wonder if we're grown-ups yet. We check our lives and yes, all the trappings of adulthood are there: the checkbook, the children, the job, the responsibilities. On the inside, though, we often feel like children. We're still confused by life much of the time. We don't always know how to act. We sometimes wonder whether we're really grown-ups at all, or whether we're children who've somehow been put into adult bodies and given adult responsibilities.

Growth is not best measured by physical age or levels of responsibility. Our best measure of growth is our spiritual condition, the basis of our recovery. If we're still depending on people, places, and things to provide our inner satisfaction, like a child depending on its parents for everything, we do indeed have some growing to do. But if we stand secure on the foundation of our spiritual condition considering its maintenance our most important responsibility, we can claim maturity. Upon that foundation, our opportunities for growth are limitless.

JUST FOR TODAY: The measure of my maturity is the extent to which I take responsibility for the maintenance of my spiritual condition. Today, this will be my highest priority.

Regular meeting attendance

"We have learned from our group experience that those who keep coming to our meetings regularly stay clean."

Basic Text, p. 9

The NA program gives us a new pattern of living. One of the basic elements of that new pattern is regular meeting attendance. For the newcomer, living clean is a brand new experience. All that once was familiar is changed. The old people, places, and things that served as props on the stage of our lives are gone. New stresses appear, no longer masked or deadened by drugs. That's why we often suggest that newcomers attend a meeting every day. No matter what comes up, no matter how crazy the day gets, we know that our daily meeting awaits us. There, we can renew contact with other recovering addicts, people who know what we're going through because they've been through it themselves. No day needs to go by without the relief we get only from such fellowship.

As we mature in recovery, we get the same kinds of benefits from regular meeting attendance. Regardless of how long we've been clean, we never stop being addicts. True, we probably won't immediately start using mass quantities of drugs if we miss our meetings for a few days. But the more regularly we attend NA meetings, the more we reinforce our identity as *recovering* addicts. And each meeting helps put us that much further from becoming *using* addicts again.

JUST FOR TODAY: I will make a commitment to include regular meeting attendance as a part of my new pattern of living.

The "G" word

"It is important for you to know that you will hear God mentioned at NA meetings. What we are referring to is a Power greater than ourselves that makes possible what seems impossible."

I.P. #22, "Welcome to NA"

Most of us come to Narcotics Anonymous with a variety of preconceptions about what the word "God" means, many of them negative. Yet the "G" word is used very regularly in NA, if not constantly. It occurs 92 times in the first 103 pages of our Basic Text, and appears prominently in a third of our Twelve Steps. Rather than sidestep the sensitivity many of us feel toward the word, let's address it head on.

It's true that Narcotics Anonymous is a spiritual program. Our Twelve Steps offer a way to find freedom from addiction through the help of a spiritual Power greater than we are. The program, however, doesn't tell us anything about what we have to think about that Power. In fact, over and over again, in our literature and our steps and our meetings, we hear it said, "the God of our understanding"--*whatever* that understanding may be.

We use the word "God" because it's used in our Basic Text and because it communicates most effectively to most people a basic understanding of the Power underlying our recovery. The word, we use for the sake of convenience. The Power behind the word, however, we use for more than convenience. We use that Power to maintain our freedom from addiction and to insure our ongoing recovery.

JUST FOR TODAY: Whether I believe in "God" or not, I will use the Power that keeps me clean and free.

Our own recovery

"The steps are our solution. They are our survival kit. They are our defense against addiction which is a deadly disease. Our steps are the principles that make our recovery possible."

Basic Text, p. 19

There's lots to like in Narcotics Anonymous. The meetings, for one, are great. We get to see our friends, hear some inspiring stories, share some practical experience, maybe even hook up with our sponsors. The campouts, the conventions, the dances are all wonderful, clean fun in the company of other recovering addicts. But the heart of our recovery program is the Twelve Steps--in fact, they *are* the program!

We've heard it said that we can't stay clean by osmosis--in other words, we can't just attend meetings, no matter how many, and expect to breath recovery in through the pores of our skin. Recovery, as another saying goes, is an inside job. And the tools we use in working that "inside job" are the Twelve Steps. Hearing endlessly about acceptance is one thing; working the First Step for ourselves is something very different. Stories about making amends may be inspiring, yet nothing will give us the freedom from remorse that taking the Ninth Step ourselves will give. The same applies to all twelve steps.

There's much to appreciate about NA, but to get the most from our recovery we must work the Twelve Steps for ourselves.

JUST FOR TODAY: I want everything my personal program has to offer. I will work the steps for myself.