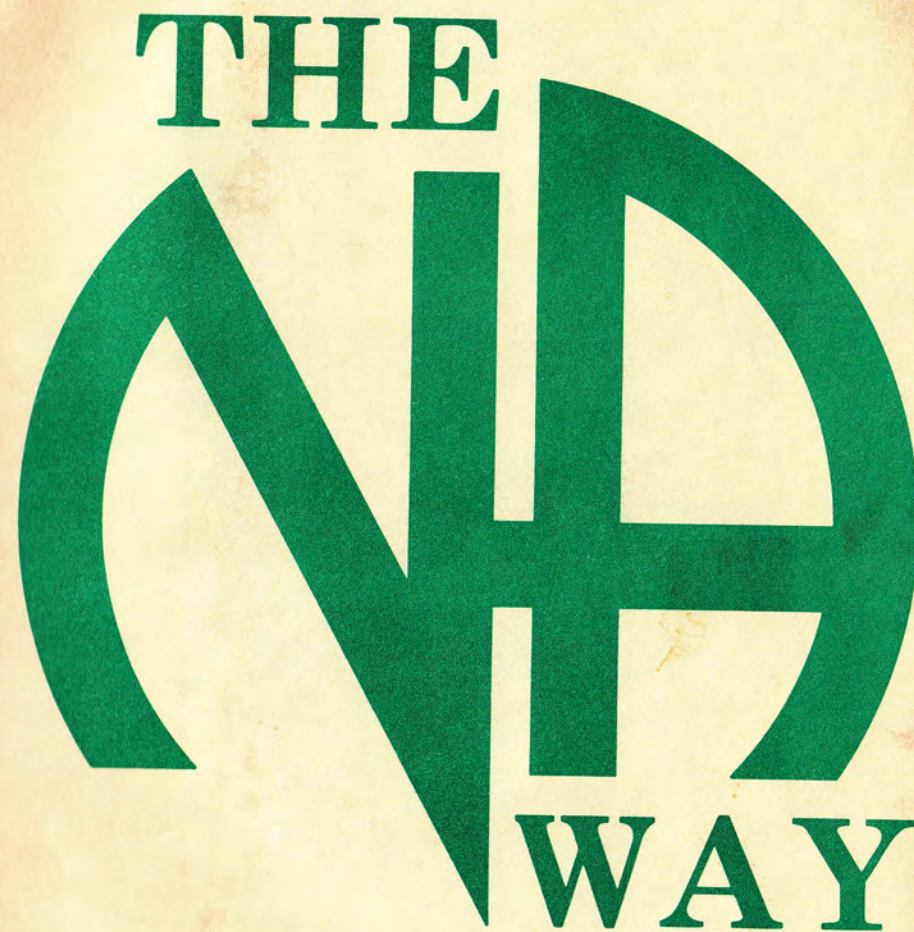


**My Gratitude Speaks
When I Care
And When I Share
With Others
The N.A. Way.**



**DECEMBER
1983**

N.A.

N.A. is a non-profit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovered addicts who meet regularly to help each other to stay clean. This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only "One" requirement for membership, the honest desire to stop using. There are no musts in N.A., but we suggest that you keep an open mind and give yourself a break. Our program is a set of principles, written so simply, that we can follow them in our daily lives. The most important thing about them is that "They Work".



DECEMBER
1983

VOLUME 2

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I am but a speck...

...in the Universe.

I am but a speck in the universe but the power of my God is within me.

When I first came to you, I was broken in spirit and did not know what to do. You were there for me, called me, loved and accepted me, shared, held me, let go, identified, and most of all cared what happened to me. You introduced me to the Twelve Steps of recovery from addiction. You told me and showed me what worked for you and I was interested enough to come back. I found a peace, joy and freedom with you I had never found before, yet had been seeking for a long time. I surrendered and threw myself to you, and hoped N.A. was for real. I hoped it would work for me; that I could enjoy what you had found. Some of you seemed a little hyped-up, and I learned that was your desperation. I could identify and I loved you. Some of you held back; I knew your fear. Some of you gave it your all, the change was reflected in your lives. That is what I wanted. I'm a 100% addict and I wanted a 100% change when I got here. I tried to surrender 100% by doing what was asked, the way I was asked, whenever I was asked, and it worked for me. It hasn't always made sense but that's just the God of my understanding's will, and his way of keeping me from messing up a miracle. Some of

you forgot and were petty. Your pain let me know the program of N.A. was for real. Your pain gave guidance and helped me avoid my pitfalls and side issues.

I am but a speck in the universe but the power of my God is within me.

As I grow in the ways of real love and follow the path of recovery, my deepest dreams take form and become real. My deepest fears crack, melt and are washed away, as I realize I can starve the "bastards" out if I just don't get sucked into a losing set-up. If that happens, my ability to see and avoid a losing set-up will increase a hundred fold.

I saw fear rise. Ignorance seemed to prevail 10,000 times, but never won. Always, at the end, love and recovery would still be there. Fear would be lost and ignorance replaced with answers. All I had to do was keep the faith, do what I could to help, not pick up the first fix, pill, or drink, and stay for the whole movie. I was really grateful for this last bit because I had no where else to go. If N.A. couldn't have stood up to all this, I would have no basis for surrender or belief today. After all, I'm a real addict and the program had better be real. The Twelve Steps of N.A.

got me out of my primary losing set-up by eliminating my need to attempt to regain the comfort I had once known through using. N.A. gave me a better way. The Steps guided me into a relationship with my Creator which I had seen before but never was able to establish. My defects became expendable, my way has been cleared through willingness to admit faults and make amends. Prayer and meditation allowed me to set my house in order and have plenty left for others. The best thing I can give another is my time, either directly or through serious well-wishing. Always, the place to change is in my heart. There is no way to obtain something in the world without it first being in my heart. When I am hurting or looking for something, today I first look in my heart. If it is clean and I find it there, then the rest takes care of itself. This has come to me as a direct result of N.A. I did not get it before N.A. got me.

My interest in others has gotten better. I am more willing to give to them than at any other time in my life. I have found the joy of giving through service work, group service, and personal service to others. They all seem the same to me except that service work takes more surrender.

I am but a speck in the universe but the power of my God is within me.

The truth I have found in N.A. is that even though we are addicts

and suffer to some degree from our affliction all our days clean, we can enjoy life and live pretty well as others do. We don't become powerful through the N.A. Steps, but we become complete. We become whole enough to exercise some reason and judgement in our lives. Whatever others think of us, however they praise or dismiss our recovery, each of us come out ahead. We find the ways and means to take care of our needs without harming others. We find in time, ways to help others without causing harm or diminishing what our Higher Powers have given us. A paradox is only a phase of learning before the parts become one.

A Spirit is within us as it is in all creatures great and small. The Power used to get diverted from its primary purpose and siphoned off into our disease. In recovery, our health is energized and it doesn't get wasted. I am what I believe. I become what I think. However you believe in the God of your understanding, the Power of your God becomes a real force in your life in recovery. This power directs and controls you because you have surrendered, became willing, and have the courage to try. Long live the difference from the way we used to be. Even in times of pain and suffering we are never alone. We celebrate our lives clean. We do what we can for others. We can enjoy life without getting hung up on any particular thing. We see that life is a plan, not a destination.

...just for today

...do what you're able to do

...read N.A. literature

...share with other recovering addicts

...direct your obsessiveness toward recovery

...develop your own program that fits

...treat yourself as you would a friend

...rationalization has no place in your life

...allow yourself to actively seek recovery

...don't deny you have denial

...know you are loved and accepted

...love and accept

Anonymous

SELF OBSESSION AND THE FIRST STEP

Addiction does affect every area of my life. I see the core of my disease as self-obsession. The other symptoms seem to be some form of this obsession with self. Denial, justification, rationalization, distrust of others, guilt, embarrassment, substitution, isolation. The list goes on and on.

I forget about my powerlessness sometimes, and get a false sense of control over my life. I become complacent. I quit surrendering to the Steps and my program stops. Other things I do for my recovery slow down or stop. Like using the telephone, my sponsor, meetings, the literature and especially turning to my Higher Power for the help I need. Turning it over is one of the strongest motivations for my program. When I stop, my life becomes overwhelming, and problems seem larger than life. Self-obsession keeps me from doing what works in my personal program.

Self-obsession leads me to do things my way and plan or predetermine results. When it becomes apparent that "my way" isn't

working, I either get deeper into my disease, or surrender to the First Step of Narcotics Anonymous. The only "big deals" today are believing my own denial, taking myself too seriously, buying into unrealistic expectations, doing things even though I know they hurt me, and taking control where I have none.

This program and the Fellowship have taught me a lot about myself and the disease I have. It's important to my recovery to have all the support of and contact with other recovering addicts as possible. They can be my eyes and ears because somehow I miss the perception of reality I need to see. My way still doesn't work for me, but I'm still capable of trying to force it. It happens a lot less when I'm living the program to the best of my ability.

Surrendering to powerlessness over addiction and the unmanageability of my life seems to slow down my self-obsession. When I practice the principles, I am able to get out of myself; to do service work or share with someone who is hurt-

ing or confused. I'm good for myself and others only when I let go of the core of my disease. It's a good feeling not to be selfish, compulsive, or at odds with myself and the world around me.

I once thought it was weak to admit powerlessness and unmanageability, that somehow things really would fall apart. I was definitely on a power-control freak trip.

I'm grateful that I can finally accept, instead of trying to "under-

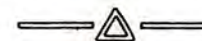
stand". It is the freedom I need to set myself up in daily recovery. Unlimited surrender renders unlimited growth in all areas of my life. My acceptance grows and changes as I do. It has become a great tool for living. It helps me to learn other things that work for me, like learning from my mistakes instead of kicking myself so hard that I miss the point of why I went through what I did. I guess it's all about growing up and finding myself, and where I fit in....recovery.

.....

Here I Sit....

Here I sit in a service meeting wondering "What am I doing here?" When I came to my first N.A. meeting I thought I was a hopeless case. It was there I found hope and felt as though I found home. I wasn't sure if I could get clean but was willing to give it a shot. They told me, "Don't use and go to meetings." At that time there were very few N.A. meetings in our area, and I knew I was supposed to go to ninety meetings in ninety days. I wanted more N.A. meetings, and wanted addicts to know N.A.'s here and it works. We started to travel to many places in "greater" N.A. The people we met in different parts of the country shared with us and became a big part of my recovery. There were days when I knew I was going to use and I would run to some kind of committee meeting. By the end of the meeting, I would forget all about my dilemma.

For me, service is being at the meeting, sharing experience, strength and hope, being there for the newcomer, making sure the meeting is set up, sponsoring others, and answering helpline calls. You don't have to have a trusted servant title to serve. Service saved my life by allowing me to get out of myself and share with others. As I look back at the two years I've been clean in N.A., I can say I'm truly grateful for service and the members who are participating in recovery. Just for this moment I know it's my God's will for me to be here in this meeting trying to carry the message to addicts who still suffer. Thank you N.A. for giving me the chance to live again and to feel a part of....



REMEMBERING

Again a terrible complaint I became.

I forgot that life wasn't one big game.

I tried to manage on my own once more.

I forgot just what the 3rd step was for.

When things started getting a little too rough,

I remembered my past, all the dope and stuff,

So with my sanity restored, I gave a sigh,

Thank God for being there to hear my cry.



Personal Program

When I came to N.A. I found the friendship and Fellowship I'd looked for all my life.

I'd always searched for euphoria in drugs, relationships, friendships, jobs; in short I needed to feel O.K. and I didn't. At first, N.A. was that euphoria; people with a common bond working together for a common solution. I was carried for quite a while on the magic carpet of "We do recover". I concentrated my efforts upon involvement in service, attending functions, and being a part of N.A. as a whole.

Every once in a while I would get bored with my life, but there was always an N.A. function coming up to look forward to. Whether it was a convention, service committee meeting, or just special meeting out of town with friends I hadn't seen for a while. All these things were very good for my feelings of being a part of something important, yet, my day to day life still became complicated.

I had been drug free for quite a while, yet relapse was a solid force in my life. It was quite a while before my first drug, yet it happened! When it happened I looked for a reason and my disease told me all the negative reasons. I was a failure, weak willed, closeminded, and different. At this point I wanted to die and clearly considered what I thought the only way

for me. What happened is that I came back to a meeting and stood up when the chairman asked if anyone had the desire to stop using.

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Today I have a personal program, I know we do recover. I also know we must work the steps for them to work for me. It's not euphoric today; the reality of life and its ups and downs do come and go. One thing I do believe is that the Twelve Steps worked with the guidance of a sponsor, a daily contact with my understanding of God, and most of all a willingness to try these spiritual principles just for today.

Today's changes have come as a result of the friendship and Fellowship I saw upon first entering N.A., for those things kept me coming back. Recovery to (Honesty, Open-mindedness, Willingness) is an active part of changing my old ideas and attitudes. Habits formed in recovery are hard to break and today forming habits true to recovery are my only safeguards against relapse. When mental relapse occurs, I seek a spiritual solution. The physical lesson taught by picking up the first one need not be experienced again.

Want to get involved and don't know where to start? You're in the right fellowship!

"Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps we tried to carry this message to addicts and to practice these principles in all our affairs." Step 12

Did you ever read this step and wonder how you could work it? How can I carry the message? Did you ever feel grateful for what N.A. has given you? Have you ever asked, "How can I pay back for the freedom from addiction"? What I've viewed was that you were probably told to help another addict. Maybe you wondered how can I find one. Try looking in your own group for a way to work this step.

According to our July 1983 schedule, we have 56 meetings a week in the Baltimore Area, not counting all of our institution commitments. Now here's a little math. That shows we need 56 secretaries, 56 group service representatives, 56 treasurers at best, 168 officers positions that need to be filled by recovering addicts like you. Now here's what's sad, we don't have 168 trusted servants. The work is still being done by a few. Many group officers have to double up out of necessity on their positions in the group and this puts a burden on them. They carry it because they

are grateful for what they have and because they have the willingness and the desire to serve.

Now here's something else to read. "Each Group has but one primary purpose, to carry the message to the addict who still suffers." That is our 5th Tradition. It says it all. We can work our 12th Step and 5th Tradition every time our group meets. This is why we meet, to carry the message and give away what was so freely given to us.

Now, when a need for trusted servants to fill the vacant positions in all the home groups of Baltimore is so large, it's time for each and every one of us to sit back and ask ourselves, "What can I do?" If you're not involved or don't know how to get involved, maybe it's time you asked your group secretary or G.S.R. how you could help. Or better yet, go to those groups that need support and make a commitment once a week to be there and help with the meeting.

I hear people are going other places and it's a shame because the message of recovery should be in all our rooms. If it's not, we have no one to blame but ourselves. Maybe the people who are going other places

should roll up their sleeves and practice Step 12 and Tradition 5 here at home, in N.A., where they started their recovery.

It is a big responsibility being a group officer. It takes time, effort, love and care to make sure each week the message of recovery is there in your group. If we don't do it, who will? We have to do this thing together.

If you are at a standstill in your program or having a hard time getting out of yourself, here is an excellent opportunity to change and grow. We all have to change from being the old person we were in our practicing addiction or we will go back to using. Fact. The same person will use again. We have to try every way we can to grow and change, and what is more natural than doing something for someone else. When we were practicing addicts, we used people and took from them. Now we can change our thinking and behavior patterns by giving unselfishly of our time and strength. What does each and

every one of us have to give? The message of recovery. We know how to stay clean, a day at a time.

Don't think you have nothing to give. If you are clean today you have a lot. There is someone who needs to see you, needs to hear you, because they are struggling to find a way out of addiction. Let's hope they never show up at a meeting and find no one there. You and a few others can help show them the way. You have a lot to offer.

One last thing. There is another payback. You get to keep what you have. By giving it away you won't lose it. The more you give away, the more you get back. Many of us are experiencing this. The more love I give, the more I get. The more people I befriend, the more friends I have. The more people we help over the hump, the more strength we have to keep us from going back. Remember, the person you help may one day save your life. As I see it, you're helping yourself the most when you help another. Let's get involved and see what we can do together.

Recovery in action is our attraction.

I've heard about "how painful recovery is" in a lot of meetings lately. Recovery is not painful! Addiction, Self-obsession, and insanity are painful. Recovery is relief from this pain.

I can either die with my disease or from it.

the illusion of confusion

Most of us do not think twice about being confused, we're sure. What we are not sure of is how to sidestep this dilemma. In actuality, our minds function on a far more complicated level than the modern day computer. We are able to store and use millions of bits and pieces of information. The illusion seems to be reality when some insignificant thought gets in the middle of the flow of ideas. This scrambling process is soon recognized as confusion, the dreaded mental state.

Mixed metaphors, twisted tongues, wrecked trains of thought, and countless other inferiorities have been blamed on that old wrench in the gears - confusion. Needless to say, this would not be written if there had not come about a simple solution to this common everyday occurrence. Be quiet, summon your self-confidence, and throw out the useless thoughts that have cluttered your mental processes. Do not limit yourself to staying in an

unbalanced state of mind. Many of the most brilliant people in history have been taken advantage of when caught in this state of confusion. Being gullible is not a healthy way to be. More often than not, a simple backtracking can release you from this dilemma. Slow down and allow the proper thoughts to flow. Nobody demands perfection, nor do they expect minds to constantly produce accurate, clear, and comprehensible words at all times. Don't kick yourself for making mistakes; learn from them. The relief from confusion comes only through self-forgiveness and personal growth. The illusion of confusion is a ghost that we must kill ourselves. To keep this ghost in the closet, and allow its growth, is to stunt our own growth. Let it shrink in the light of exposure, as all ghosts do, and you shall grow from there.

Good luck, and may your H.P. bless you with good thoughts....

...Today.



NA COURAGE

When I got enough time in the program to start doing service work, I noticed that there was a definite lack of people in the program who were willing to do much needed service work. When I had six months clean time, I was serving three groups, lead discussion meetings, and was a chairperson at least once a week. Being the secretary of three groups, I had the responsibility of getting a chair and leader for the groups and I noticed that a great many addicts seemed, to a large degree, to be recovered. I say this because many times when I asked relative oldtimers to lead a discussion or chair a meeting, they had to go to work, or go to church, had a date, or were going to dance at a nightclub. I soon started noticing that different addicts have different levels of dedication to the program of Narcotics Anonymous.

I would be distressed after a meeting, when there were newcomers and all the people with more time than me would leave without talking to them. It was at this point that I realized that the old saying, "If you want something done right, do it yourself," still held true. I began doing what I could, and decided that when asked to do something, I would. I began respecting the people with two, four and six years clean who still had

time to do small things and weren't on a recovery-ego trip. I still liked and admired the other old timers, but I just didn't want what they had to offer. I remember one old timer saying this program needed Power Junkies. I thank the God of my understanding this statement is a horrendous misconception. I have found that this program needs love junkies, and that if you are a power junkie you are in the wrong place.

Another misconception that some people seem to suffer from is the idea that Narcotics Anonymous is a supplemental program to other Twelve Step Programs. I have heard people say, "I go to one program to get and come to N.A. to give it away." Well, we don't need that kind of service, I don't go around preaching or bearing witness to the fruits of the N.A. Program. I let my recovery and the recovery of other hard core N.A. members speak for itself. We are a complete and total program in ourselves.

What I'm saying is that the program of Narcotics Anonymous has proven themselves. Based on that concept, I'm sure that you can see why I disapprove of non-members, people who have not surrendered to the program of N.A., or people who

have made a dual surrender, doing service work for us. People who have time in another program and think that they are over qualified for the lower levels of service work and want to go straight to the top here are another breed. For the sake of humility, I feel obliged to remind everyone that service work is exactly what it sounds like. It is not an ego trip, it is not a power trip, it is not sharing your infinite wisdom with some poor ignorant dope field, it is the self-less giving of love, unconditionally.

I don't want to take cheap shots at anyone, and I realize that many

areas are very new and very small. However, small areas don't have to stay small. The serenity prayer says, "The courage to change the things I can."

If you are an addict and found your initial recovery in a hospital or another program, then you may owe your life to that hospital or program. However, if you have found ongoing recovery in Narcotics Anonymous then you owe it to the millions of suffering addicts who are literally dying for recovery to do what you can to promote unity and strengthen the Fellowship in your area.



Some of our clearest and best inspirations come to us at times of greatest anguish. This little verse, written by one of our members years ago, is beauty in simplicity. I hope she will understand that any errors are due to my faulty memory. Personally I will never forget the first time she read it to us:

A Minute

*I have just a single minute,
Only sixty seconds in it,
Didn't make it, didn't choose it,
But I'll suffer if I lose it.
I have just a little minute,
But — ETERNITY is in it.*

from VOICE

Unnaturally Happy

I'm an Addict. The last ten years of my life were spent becoming, experiencing, realizing and finally admitting to this fact. During those years I grew accustomed to feelings of pain, loneliness and despair.

This had become a way of life, the life of an addict, doing the most natural thing for me to do, use drugs. I learned to accept pain and emptiness as my destiny, and only wished for it all to end.

This is how I was when Narcotics Anonymous found me: lost, lonely, tired and without hope. N.A. took me in it's arms, didn't ask for anything, and didn't expect anything.

was loved and promised that it could be better, if I wanted it to be.

Since that time this promise has come true. Today I'm in love. I'm in love with the people who make up this Fellowship, with the world that surrounds me, and the real miracle of it all is that I love myself.

Today I'm still an Addict, and the most natural thing for me to do is still to use. But I don't have to use anymore. I can be happy and I can feel love.

Today, no matter how unnatural it is, I can be happy and clean. For this reason, I'm a truly grateful Addict.



*I have freedom today.
There's no need to hide
There's no need to lie.
To use is to die.*

HOPE

*I sat down and asked my God to help me write a poem for all
the addicts still suffering...*

I asked my God to give me a word for my poem and He gave me Hope

I asked for guidance and He gave me patience.

I asked for strength and He gave me courage.

I asked for understanding and He gave me empathy.

I asked for help and He gave me a second chance....N.A.

*Now, I'm asking my God to share this poem, and to share
what He has given me today.....LIFE!*



To me, our Twelve Traditions are like a roof over our collective heads
protecting us from the storms of society.



Share your recovery with me....I've already got my own disease.



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REMEMBERING

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I forgot just what the 3rd step was for.

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