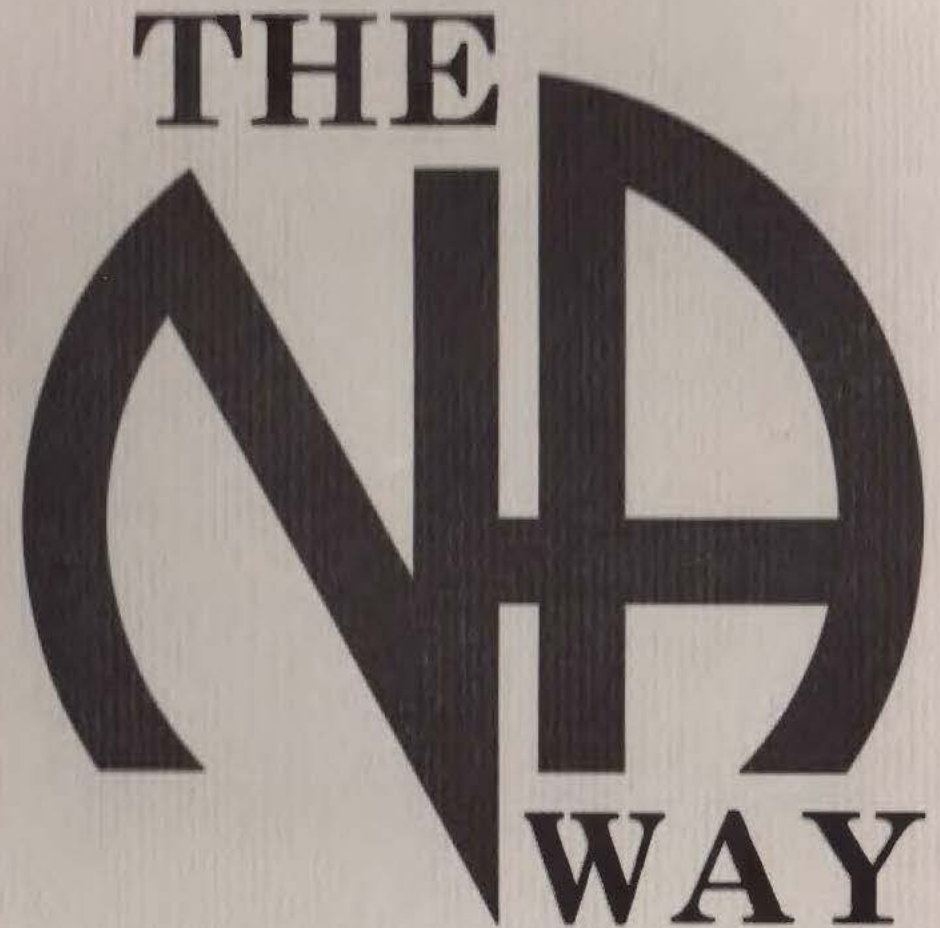


**My Gratitude Speaks
When I Care
And When I Share
With Others
The N.A. Way.**



**JANUARY
1984**

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".



**JANUARY
1984**

VOLUME 2

NUMBER 5

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I'm glad to be alive today

"I'm glad to be alive" is said so many times in meetings, but how many of us really feel that gratitude? Many times I wondered, "Why me? Why can't I use successfully?" Since I've been clean those questions have changed. Today, the questions are, "Why is it I am still here to see the beautiful skies? How is it that I am able to smell the sweet fragrance of a flower? Why am I able to function almost normally without the aid of a machine? How is it I'm still alive?" All these questions can only be answered by God as I understand God. For whatever reason I am an addict, who by all rights should be dead. But I am alive and feel alive. I'm no longer walking around dead on the inside. Thanks to the program of N.A., the Steps, the Fellowship, and a sponsor, I have come to know and believe in a God of my understanding. My God wants me, loves me, and has never left me or let me down. I can't help but be grateful when I think of all this. When I got to this program I didn't know the meaning of gratitude. All I knew was if I didn't stop using I was going to die, and that was real scary when I realized that I had never lived! Other members welcomed me; telling me I never had to use again. I really didn't understand, but you don't have to understand this program in order for it to work. They also told me to "keep coming back". I'm glad I do. A friend in the Fellowship says, "It works if you work it". I've found this to be true. Thanks, I'm glad to be alive today!

Tradition One

The Voice of N.A., Vol. 2, June '68

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

Maintenance of recovery is based on a spiritual foundation whose main aspect is service to others. Haphazard methods can bring no lasting results. Lack of a unified group purpose for our common welfare could soon end in individual effort with self-seeking reward as its goal. Our experience and observations have pointed to this grave defect in the past. It is not our policy to try to ameliorate this condition by rules or regulations (we could not enforce them anyway), but to show the desirability of group effort, and its healing influence through unity of purpose at both the personal and group levels. There is not the slightest indication in our policy of authoritarian control of a powerful hierarchy; we have no need of either. Knowing our type of personality it might be feared that our society would become a form of anarchy. In anarchy, self-determination is license not liberty, we know this destructive force from the past and all the problems it presents. In anarchy there would be no real freedom and without freedom no recovery, one is the foundation for the other. Responsibility as a corollary of freedom is the cohesive constructive force that eliminates self-willed anarchy.

There are two aspects of our past that makes a new approach imperative, they are stronger than any rule or law that we might lay down for ourselves.

1. The progressive destructive pattern of an unmanageable life, controlled by drugs.
2. The inability to form satisfactory relationships with other human beings which results in lasting happiness of any kind.

In setting ourselves to a common purpose and action, we are willing to submerge our own personal wishes and desires so that others may be given a better opportunity to recover. In practicing our personal programs we become more aware of our impulsive and addictive nature. Through the living problems and difficulties we encounter, we realize the deep need to surrender to spiritual principles. Unseen principles are the roots of our society, stronger than any visible power; our seen leadership rotates and is the servant of our Fellowship. The invisible power is the real ruler of our actions.

If we do not alter or modify our thinking and actions in accord to these, we again face total destruction; here the decision is ours alone to make. When we honestly face this alternative, make our decision

and find a more desirable way of life we realize that to keep what we have, we must share it by offering it to others.

Since no man can be truly free alone but only in some kind of Fellowship, group activity becomes a necessity. Lone egocentric activity, seldom if ever removes the bars that imprison us. We need something and somebody else to care about in order to find balance. Fellowship provides both. We inspire and are inspired by group efforts and common goals. Unity springs and grows in this kind of action.

Spontaneity in freedom we should encourage at all levels in our society. Let what restrictions we ask of ourselves be in this spirit, guided our individual and group conscience. We can withstand any pressures from without or within if we remain realistically flexible. Only in responsible freedom can we grow to maturity. Any rules or restrictions imposed by others will only limit our usefulness and bring about rigidity in our attitudes. This we should try to avoid for our common welfare.

Time and time again history has revealed mistakes and weaknesses, from which mankind as a whole has drawn few lasting lessons. If they have learned so little from the authoritarian organizations and governments that comprise their societies that they perpetuate their errors, then what, we might ask, are our chances for survival. Our answer is really simple, we are

guided neither by their rules nor their goals. Our Steps and Traditions are means to a different end.

Self-seeking, power hungry, prestige collecting, status conscious, wealth accumulating humanity has another side we have either seen or heard about. It is not as well publicized perhaps or as well thought of, but is always there between the lines of history.

When disaster strikes in its myriad forms, we will always find men and women who will, in the face of calamity and distress, give comfort, solace and help to each other; they will give freely of whatever they have to each other. Recently we saw this, when tragedy, at the hands of an assassin, struck down a wealthy young presidential candidate. A Mexican American porter cradled the bleeding head above the floor in his right hand, with his left he gave a prized possession, his crucifix, to the dying Robert F. Kennedy. No rewards sought, no prestige hoped for. In the adjoining hall, people from all economic backgrounds, religious affiliations and racial sources, clasped each others hands and exchanged tears of grief on each others shoulders. Honest emotion, the remover of barriers; a goal to be sought. We know this basic need for another human being from the depths of our own fear and isolation. Here is the area for our answers, not the weakness of one, but the strength of many acting according to their inherent nature; a coming together in honest and decent emotion.

An old story of service and love for another is told regarding the starving beggar in old China. This man crawled to the door of a crude hut where lived an old man and woman. In all the world they had only enough rice left for that day. The wife looked to the husband for an answer, he said, "If we give him our rice we may die tomorrow", she replied, "If we don't, he will die today".

What are we willing to give or give up that will have meaning in life or living? Our pride of self in accomplishment? Our bias that says I'm different? Our closed mind that says mine is the right and only way? Are we willing to give others the right to their voice and opinion and see if experience proves them one way or the other?

Are we willing to try new ideas

Faith without works is dead, gratitude without action is not shown, love without care is not there.

Peace of mind is the reward of practicing forgiveness.

Sharing is caring, caring is loving and love is what it's all about.

wholeheartedly? Are we willing to apply to others and the group, the same tolerance and patience we show ourselves when we fall short of our personal ideals? Are we willing to do in concerted effort what we cannot do alone? When things do not go well, even when we have tried well, do we scatter to lick our wounds and nurse our grudges, or can we pick up the pieces and with more understanding build in a better way?

We are neither saints nor geniuses, but if we pool those talents we all do possess, great and small, we can change the course of our history and the lives of many we have yet to meet.

Without a dream a man is only half a man, without a vision a fellowship is a farce, with both all things are possible.

Participate

When hopeless, helpless, powerless and unmanageable;

When incapable of self-honesty;

When unable to understand what's read, heard, said, felt, thought or done because of addiction;

When feelings, thoughts and actions are part of the drug using pattern developed over the years;

When self-will, self-knowledge, self-power and self-etc. fail;

When totally confused and demoralized;

When desperately struggling to survive an endless crisis;

When self-will run riot, coupled with drugs, completely uses up life's energy to the point life with or without drugs no longer works; and depression is all there seems to be left;

When it's impossible to stop being controlled by drugs;

And when all alone...with denial, self-hate, low self-esteem...

And easily frustrated — trapped in a self-pity prison...

How can addicts be responsible for their recovery?

They can't...I think

Arriving at this point, it seems they can only participate in whatever their God has in store for them.

Participation in our recovery is all I feel we can do. We surrender to win. "We're not bad people getting responsible; we're sick people participating in our recovery."

We can participate in recovery simply by showing up.

Let's focus on participation rather than responsibility.

Let's participate in recovery.

recovery

relapse

recovery

This is my story of recovery and relapse. I did all the things necessary to get to the program. I used for too long a time and got tired of paying the price for it. I'm in my early 30's, a veteran, raised in a middle class home by both of my natural parents.

At the age of 28 I ended up in a treatment facility for fifteen months. I got to the facility with all of my possessions in a paper bag. I was forty pounds underweight. While in treatment I was introduced to Narcotics Anonymous and got involved in the program. I started working the 12 Steps. I wrote an inventory and shared it with my sponsor. I worked the sixth and seventh steps to the best of my ability. I drew up a list of amends and became willing to make these amends. I was involved in N.A., helping out with meetings, setting up, tearing down, making coffee, and washing ashtrays. I was attending from five to seven meetings a week. Things were going along pretty well for a while in my life. I had a good job and was making better money than I ever had. At 18 months clean I met a lady in the Fellowship with whom I became involved. I thought I had it made.

All through my upbringing I had been told I had potential and intel-

ligence, that I was special. I really believed this and was finding myself more and more dissatisfied with my work and my position in life. I wanted to move on to bigger and better things. I had a trade and decided to go into business for myself. I started out with nothing and at the end of four months I had a large shop with four people working for me. I started believing that I was pretty good. I mean, I must not be like all those other recovering addicts I had met, I wasn't in touch with the fact that whatever I had was a direct result of living this program and a gift from my God.

I had virtually stopped going to meetings. I was working ten to eighteen hours a day with only an occasional day off. I'd put in an appearance at a meeting every few weeks to let everyone know how well I was doing. I had stopped communicating with my sponsor because, after all, he was not a businessman and therefore couldn't really help me in what I was doing. I was obsessed with the making of money and became dishonest in order to make more. At this point I had totally "written off" the Fellowship and all the people connected with it. It was good for those who needed it. I thought the program was a good thing but I really didn't need it. I was a self made man.

The thought that I was different from the people in the Fellowship led me to believe that I could probably use. I was hardworking and under a lot of pressure. A little alcohol after work would help me relax. An honest look at the past would have shown me the insanity of this thought but I didn't stop to take a look. One night I decided to take that drink and I did. I knew in my gut that what I was doing was wrong, but my head, my disease let me overlook that, telling me it was okay. That night I took the first one and the next day I went to my connection and used every day after that. I lost my business, the lady, and the possessions I had accumulated. I went down like a Kama-

kazi. The next year was a living hell. I had my program in my head and drugs in my body. This was a horrible combination. I knew that I didn't have to be doing what I was doing and hated myself for what I had done. I was to bounce in and out of the Fellowship for that year always ending up using again. Finally I landed in jail for some of my activities and was sent back to the recovery house. This was nothing short of a miracle. I've found that my God truly does work through others. I am clean today and I truly know that through working the program of Narcotics Anonymous I have a chance to be clean tomorrow.

"Nine Ways To Wreck An Organization"

1. Don't go to meetings.
2. If you go, be late.
3. If the weather is bad, don't even think of going.
4. When you do attend a meeting, find fault with the leaders.
5. Never accept an office. It is much easier to sit back and find fault and criticize.
6. If you should be appointed on a committee, don't go to the meetings. If you are not appointed, get peeved about it.
7. When your opinion is asked, reply that you have nothing to say, but after the meeting tell everyone how things should be done.
8. Do nothing more than is absolutely necessary, but when others do the lions share, tell everyone how the organizations is run by a "clique".
9. Don't bother about getting new members. Let the one's who do all the work, do that, too.

HONESTY

When I was first asked to do this, I said, "What?" Yet, as I thought about it, it seemed very appropriate.

Very recently I had the opportunity to "come clean" at a group level. 'Ya see, I, like so many others am dishonest to the degree that I make such definitive statements as, "This I will never give up."

My experience is this, I came to N.A. living a lie. 'Ya see, I didn't want to be a newcomer so I told everybody that I had over a year clean. I truly believed that this made me okay. I told this lie to everyone; sponsors, groups, H & I panel discussions. I wouldn't give this lie up even through working steps. I went home every night knowing that I had lied but absolutely refusing to "come clean". I told this lie for fourteen months, every day. I had told the truth about everything except this. Yesterday, at this writing, I was sitting in front of a cooker, a needle, cotton and my drug of choice wondering, "What happened? Didn't I do all the Steps? Wasn't I giving it away to keep it? Wasn't I sponsoring four

guys? Why do I feel so far away from my God?"

Then a little voice came to me and said, "Why don't you just get honest?" At first I rebelled, "It would make me look bad." Yet, I knew if I didn't tell the truth, it would get me loaded, and today I truly didn't want to be loaded. I spoke first at my home group. Working through feelings of fear, guilt, and self-pity, I "got honest".

Instead of throwing rocks, spitting at me, and kicking me out of N.A., they hugged me and told me they loved me. These are the same people whom I have judged, condemned, resented, and spoken about badly. They still cared. As I received this love, I slowly crept out of self-pity, and that door that I had closed to that sunlight of the spirit began to open. As I continued to "get honest" that door will remain open.

I now feel free and clean. I have a God that loves me and this wonderful Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. For all these things I am eternally grateful. May your God bless you and keep you.

"Narcotics Anonymous has long recognized the need for a complete Basic Text on (recovery from) addiction - a book about addicts and for addicts."

At my first N.A. meeting I knew I was where I was supposed to be. It was at that first meeting that I heard the past few years of my life read from our White Booklet. In one sentence: that is, "Our whole life and thinking....and finding ways and means to get more" - that was me! And that was recovery in written form.

Throughout my clean time, I had heard about a book called Narcotics Anonymous. Although I had this other book and it was big, I wanted the N.A. book, because it's in N.A. that I can relate. Therefore, I, too, sent \$25.00 for the first edition book. We waited a long time for it. During this time I heard many stories; some good, some bad, some right and some wrong; in addition, I believe much of the talk was hearsay.

Again last spring there was talk that it would be in the mail soon. I remember last May the feelings of happiness and gratitude that rushed through my body as I carefully opened the package from W.S.O. - it was "Our Book"!

Since the first printing there have been two more. Many members in our area have gotten and are getting Our Book. I think that is unity.

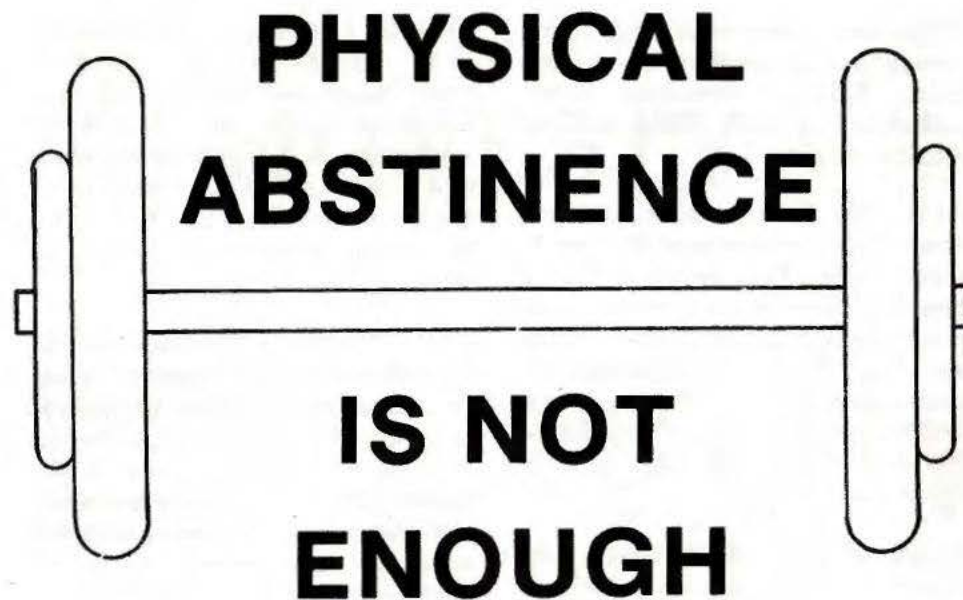
Recently I was sentenced to 90 days in the County Jail as a result of what happened when I "hit bottom" two years ago. I'm able to attend two N.A. meetings per week and I thank my H.P. for this. Yet, I need more. It is here that I've found the value of recovery shared in written form.

"This volume is intended as a textbook for every addict seeking recovery. As addicts, we know the pain of addiction, but we also know the joy of recovery we have found in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. We believe the time has come to share our recovery, in written form, with all who desire what we have found."

'Ya see, I'm an addict continuously seeking recovery; who knows the pain of addiction and the joy of recovery. Consequently, MY GRATITUDE speaks to the N.A. Fellowship, the people who wrote input and those who dedicated their time putting "Our Book" together.

"Appropriately, this book is dedicated to informing every addict: JUST FOR TODAY, YOU NEVER HAVE TO USE AGAIN." Furthermore, I dedicate this article to you and my program, because I can only keep what I have by giving it away.

---most words in quotes are excerpts from the Basic Text...



PHYSICAL ABSTINENCE IS NOT ENOUGH

My daughter sucks her fingers. Not all of her fingers just the first two on her right hand. Her teeth are getting crooked and our dentist says that unless she stops right now, her bite will be permanently affected. It's hard for her to stop, sucking her fingers seems to give her a form of comfort. She does it when she's bored, nervous, tired, or when someone corrects her behavior and she feels sorry for herself. She sucks her fingers automatically, without thinking, instead of taking appropriate action. It's no wonder she does it, her mother is an addict and so am I. Actions speak louder than words.

Although we have abstained for several years, gradually recovering, each of us continues to act com-

pulsively rather than appropriately on occasion. Maybe that's as good a definition of addiction as any: compulsive, self-centered reactions to life situations. I know that the answers to my living problem lies in new, recovery-based behavior. Just knowing is not enough. I must take action on N.A.'s spiritual principles, demonstrating my readiness to have my defects of character removed.

Living this program is difficult and demanding. My disease tells me that it's okay to act on my impulses as long as I stay clean. My disease tells me that living a program of total abstinence is enough. When confronted with a stressful situation, I generally think that I'll feel better if I take comfort in some form

of familiar self-gratification. Often I'll just act compulsively on these thoughts. I take my pleasure and the stress disappears for a while. I usually become so self-engrossed in my pleasure that I continue to do whatever it is that's pleasing me until it begins to hurt me from doing it. At that point the guilt usually starts to creep in. The stressful situation still exists and my spirit reminds me of the appropriate "recovery-based" actions I "should be taking. My disease insists that it's okay to take my pleasure. After all, I'm not using any drugs.... Corrective guilt is overshadowed by a flurry of pleasurable activity, but it soon returns.

Today I have a choice....one basic decision to make....to participate in recovery or to participate in disease. I may make this choice if, and only if, I accept that I am powerless

over addiction and cannot manage my life on my own. If I have faith in, and surrender to the Spirit of recovery....and if I take the appropriate action that my heart knows is right for me...

Denial, for me, is selling myself short. Denial is settling for a program of abstinence alone when I could be recovering from addiction. Denial in action is self-delusion resulting in self-destruction.

My daughter sucks her fingers when she can't get her own way. I watch TV when my office gets cluttered. Neither of us uses drugs, but to me addiction causes our self-obsessive behavior. The difference is that thanks to N.A. I have a choice today. My spirit offers surrender. I may recover, if I am willing. Maybe I can live an example that will help her.

My sponsor said to me--"if you want what I've got, then do what I do."

my sponsor went to lots of meetings

so, I went too....

my sponsor worked the steps

so, I worked steps too....

my sponsor went to the same lengths to participate in N.A. that he went to to participate in the drug culture while using

....so I tried to do that also.....it worked.....

Now, new people ask me how recovery works and I say to them. If you want what I have then do what I do....

TRUSTED

from Miracles Happen Newsletter, July '82

Beaten and betrayed, we, come, some crawling, some barely walking, some healthy but dazed, others upright and arrogant, but all defeated, soundly whipped by the demon of addiction.

We had lost the conflict that had seemed eternally there. It seemed to still be there, but at this point was more a dilemma. It would rise again soon. The search for our God would do deadly battle with our addiction.

Our God had a victory in getting us here, now we must form and join to win!!! Unconditional surrender to achieve a victory of the day.

We remain uneasy. The process of surrender is slow, tedious and an aching grind at best. We have been isolated and alienated so long that our defense mechanisms are dear and special friends, but they must be shed. You try to change your program to fit your concept, or your concept of a higher power and find that it is only your program and your concept. You must change yourself to fit the program. The individual must surrender to the group concept or they will remain isolated, in spiritual conflict with the Group.

The group concept cannot become an individual concept or the group no longer exists and addiction wins. The addict dies!

When the individual in the group are in harmony with its spiritual principles, it provides a spiritual atmosphere within the group that makes working a spiritual program much more conducive to, or more readily available to the individual.

When religion, other fellowships, enterprises, or outside issues are allowed to enter the meeting place, individual preference becomes an issue and spiritual conflict is present. The very mention of a religious symbol or another fellowship raises conflicts and conflicting opinions in other individuals.

When one person is injecting their own preference into the group, their desire for individual preference becomes the goal and the group is secondary to them. The group concept is weakest at that particular point. Personality has triumphed over program, and that, however isolated, exists in the group.

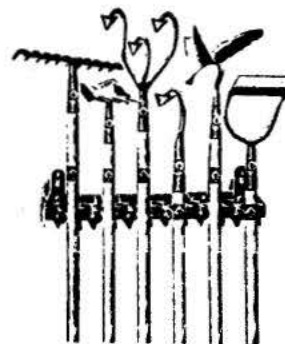
A very basic utility of the Tradi-

tions (especially two, six and ten) is to eliminate or make individual desire secondary to the group principle, and to bring the group into spiritual harmony when it is revealed that the good of the overall group or program is more rewarding than individual desire. Our spiritual desires become one with each other rather than fragmented and divided. The meeting place is in spiritual harmony and

the spiritual program of recovery is at our fingertips.

The group has fulfilled its debt of gratitude to the new member by presenting a safe place where recovery is most available. The best meeting and finest Fellowship on earth are theirs for the taking.

We begin to understand why servants must be trusted.



Growing

Some days I get "all bent out of shape" for almost any reason. Other days, the world can fall on me and I can just push it off my shoulders and let it lie there. If there was a middle of the road for me I'd certainly take it. Some days I wish problems didn't have to be solved, but could just be there without the worry or anguish that follows them. And then, some days, my only answer is to forget that I have any problems — they disappear as fast as I can forget them. Some days my problems speak to me in an unkind voice — I retaliate. Those days, I seem to die a small death merely because I have not allowed myself to grow. Growth only comes when I allow it to, otherwise, I die a little! Until I physically die, I must allow my mental and spiritual growth to be constant and continuous. If I do not, there is nothing left.

"We give away the pain....."

For a long time, whenever I heard the saying "you can't keep it unless you give it away", I thought I understood. However the full meaning of giving it away just came to me quite recently.

I came to understand that in order to keep my recovery I needed to continually share it with others.

What I had been missing was that in order to keep my peace of mind, I had to give my pain and hurt away.

People, N.A. members, are a large part of my program. I love them, laugh, anger and cry, with and for them.

In the past three weeks I've experienced all these feelings, and more, on a level I'd never known before. If it weren't for the people who laughed and cried with me, loved and hugged me through it all — I don't think I'd be here today.

I can't keep love, if I don't give it away; but at the same time, I can't get rid of pain if I don't share it.

Today, I'd rather give and share, than keep and hurt.

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