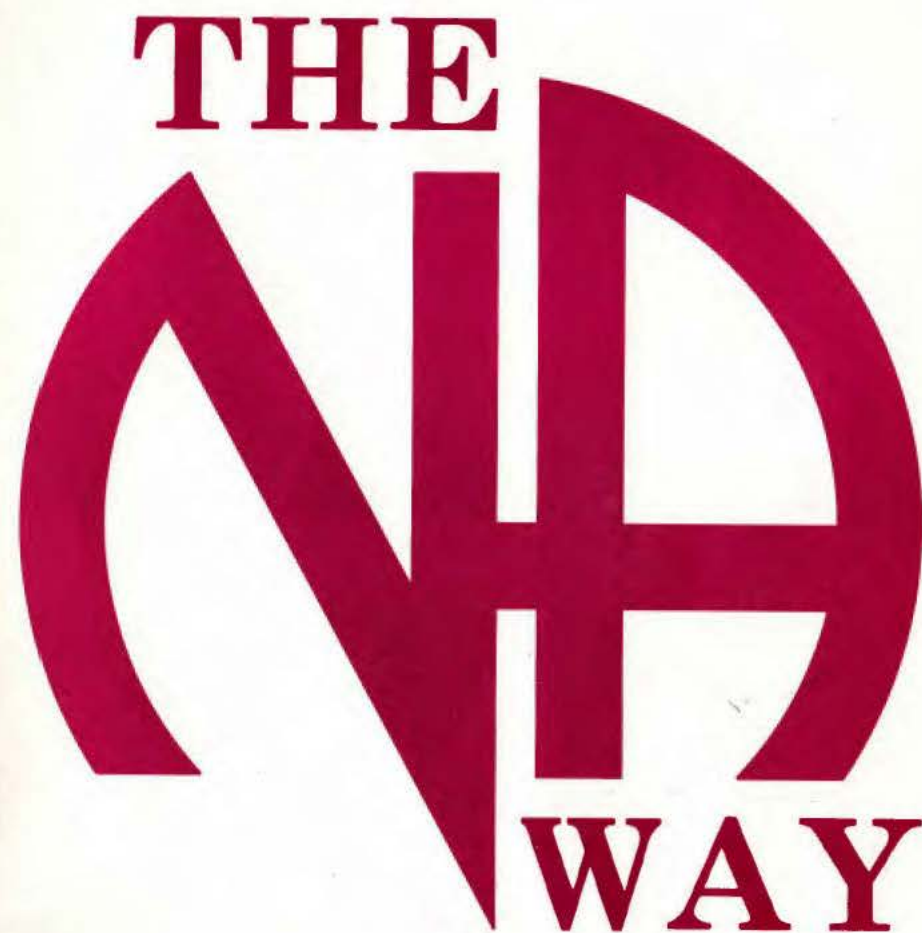


**My Gratitude Speaks
When I Care
And When I Share
With Others
The N.A. Way.**



APRIL
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".



APRIL
1984

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ADDICTION

Dear Editor,

The enclosed article on addiction and recovery was written by a member of our local Fellowship. He hadn't completed the last page when he went in the VA Hospital for emergency surgery. I found his handwritten copy and have written in the last part.

He died on February 17, from complications caused by the surgery and his many years of addiction. He was a real miracle in N.A. He lived in almost constant emotional turmoil and pain but he stayed clean. He had great empathy for others and many people, myself included, turned to him when in pain and doubt. He shared his recovery with everyone. His death was a great loss to our Fellowship. He was working the 9th and 10th Steps and had achieved some peace and serenity in his life. His spirit will live on in those of us who knew him as we share our recovery with others.

I'd like to see this article published in the N.A. Way. He was going to send it to you. I have not edited it in any way.

In love and Fellowship,

When the term addiction comes to mind, the dictionary definition always seems appropriate, Addiction, i.e. - To crave a substance, narcotic, alcohol, caffeine, etc., etc. Being a recovering addict, with 22 months clean time from all mood changing chemicals, addiction meant a way of life, a driving compulsion, coupled with an overbearing obsession to use a mood altering chemical to alter my state of consciousness and propel me into a world of unreal fantasy, along with a bout of demeaning insanity that knew no bounds and eventually pushed me into the world of street crime, self-

degradation, jails, mental institutions and had I continued, eventually death.

What I am writing about though is not about my past mis-deeds, or about the chaos and emotional depravity I brought about on my family, friends, neighborhood and self. I'm writing about what I've found out about myself, and how I am getting better. In the beginning they told me I had a disease, it took me a long time in coming to believe that this was the case. I learned this by using the tools of the Twelve Step Fellowship I belong to. This article is dedicated to that.

ADDICTION (Continued)

Through this self help program I found that I was a very lonely, confused, and self-centered child. When I didn't get what I wanted, I was apt to outbursts of very bratish behavior. That behavior stayed with me most of my adolescent and adult life. What bearing this has on this article will be seen further on down the line.

Also, as a child, I felt unloved and different than the other kids, like there was something wrong with me, but I could never put my finger on it. My best memories were those that I spent playing ball in playgrounds and ice skating in the local parks, running so fast I used to think my heart would burst. The exhilaration of these childhood memories still makes my heart beat faster. Usually as my day ended though, a kind of black mood would come over me as I realized that I had to go home to the almost constant bickering and arguing that went on in my household. As I look at it now it left me with a sick feeling in my stomach that usually stayed there all day except when I was with my friends in the schoolyards or parks. It was a real sense of security knowing there was a place I could go and be accepted. Acceptance was what I needed. I would go to any lengths to be accepted. My peers would say, "do this" and I would do it, whether it was climb a 100 foot roof or latch on to a speeding train to show that

I was cool. Later the same attitude came into play with drugs.

Around the age of twelve though, my attitude towards those who loved me changed. For some reason I didn't want to be at home anymore and longed for a change. I started to develop an attitude of intolerance and indifference against anything that didn't go my way. My anger was turned inwards so that no one else would be hurt. Going to and coming from school became a task. I started admiring the older guys who hung on the street corners, especially the way they handled situations. They didn't seem to have a care in the world. Instinctively I knew; "this was for me." I centered myself to be in a position where I hung around them, acting as they did, and doing what they did.

My attitude changed drastically. I started to deceive those who trusted me, and got a thrill out of it. It gave me a feeling of superiority to lie to someone and to watch the look on their face when I saw that they believed me. This set the stage for my active addiction. I used my first chemical at this time. Although I was scared, there was instant relief, and the pressures of growing up were soon forgotten. My flight of fantasy began at age 12 and I didn't return for 22 years. In my recovery from addiction through the self-awareness brought about by the 12 suggested Steps of N.A., I've discovered that:

1. My hiding (suffering of feelings) made me turn my anger inward or to direct it at the people who loved me, or cared for me the most. Pent-up frustrations made me jump from one extreme to another, always planning new moves, manipulating people, places and things to reinforce my ego and to hide my insecurities. Fear ran my life.
2. I felt that no one cared for me, or my ideas, my self-esteem was non-existent. Therefore the problem of learning how to live, being afraid to emot to anyone left me with a feeling of helplessness in learning how to relate to people.

My pride had to be shattered. Asking another human being for help was one of the hardest things in the world, but it was done. Having friends do for me what I could not do for myself was very hard. It was a love I didn't understand at first, but do now. I've had to ask a power greater than me, a spirit that is not fully understood by me yet, for help. Some call this power God, for me the spirit is fine. Asking His help carries me

through on most days. I've had to practice patience and virtue, and by doing this, all my needs are met.

To many this may not seem like much, but I've had a job which I couldn't handle, I have my own place to live, a telephone, friends who take the time out to listen to me when the chips are down and a lot of fun with people like myself. Oh yeah, I'm in college too, learning English so I will be able to write a book, which is already started. To most people this may not seem like much, but for a person who less than two short years ago was living on skid row, it's a lot. Most days I'm willing to continue at bay, sometimes though it has got to be stopped so I don't go crazy.

If you per chance read this article and believe you have a problem with drugs, you just might be an addict. There is help and hope for all. May the spirit be with you all.

Note: Those things I've mentioned above, I'd give them up in a second if I had to just keep the friends I've made. I've tried psychiatrists, doctors, religion and what else comes to mind. This 12 Step Fellowship of N.A. works!



I thought about a friend today, it felt good.

We ALL Need Hugs!

Some of us tend to put old timers on pedestals. It's not that we mean to, or want to, but we condition ourselves to feel inferior, a habit taken from our old ways. It's often hard for us to overlook the clean time that the oldtimers have, the "good talk" at meetings, and their appearance of being "cured", with no problems in life, only answers. We often feel, "what right do I have to approach them or try to be a friend? I have nothing to offer." So, what do we do? We isolate from these people.

But, what about the oldtimer? We all need each other, and where are we when they need us? We are too caught-up in our own fears and inferiority to see their pain and support them as they have supported us. Do we even offer a hug? Something we all have in common when working the program is pain, whether we have one day, one year, or one hundred years. We all need to understand that we are all working toward a common goal, recovery. Although we sometimes refuse to admit it, the oldtimer is sick too, they need the Steps, meetings, and Fellowship to help them through hard times in Recovery just as much as the newcomers.

Have you hugged an oldtimer today? They need hugs too.

HUGS NOT DRUGS

How Surrender Came to Me

At a meeting a few nights ago, the topic was surrender. It was a beginners discussion meeting that is well attended.

As we went around the room taking turns sharing I realized that two topics were being shared instead of one.

Many of the newcomers expressed that they had not yet surrendered. The older members that shared talked alot about acceptance. The topic seemed to be more on believing in the First Step.

How often I have heard members share their experience on acceptance and surrender as if they were the same. My own experience in recovery shows me that there is a difference. I was given acceptance of the First Step through some power other than myself. I expressed a willingness to get and stay clean and this power worked through my closed mind to make it possible.

Surrender came much later, after the pain of just being "clean" became too much to bear. Time clean did not make my life

manageable, nor did reality suddenly become a comfortable place to live.

Surrender came to me through working hard-sought sixth and seventh Steps. I saw in myself that addiction was much more than just drugs; and recovery much harder than abstinence. Denial fought hard to convince me that I could change without any help. Surrender then spoke to me when I could not make the changes on my own. Only a God could do it and all I had to do was give up and ask. My denial always has a small grain of truth so that I may believe the large lie it is really telling: I did need to behave differently to become ready.

After beating my head against these Steps for months I finally began to understand surrender. I could no longer fight, the battle was just too much. It took all my energy. I humbly asked my spirit to show me the way to work these Steps. Finally I was shown how to take the every day action needed to not react as I had in the past, and how to allow my Higher Power to work with me in each endeavor.

HELP: Addicts are Dying

Addicts die every day because they didn't know about N.A. and we are responsible. Why?? Well, it is partly because we are too cheap or too afraid or too misinformed to provide the money that our services need to do the work we demand.

The primary purpose of each and every N.A. group is to carry the message to addicts who still suffer. Our service committees exist only to make this possible. We may carry the message more effectively through co-operative efforts with other members than we can alone. My experience shows that informing the public, making N.A. available to people in institutions, writing literature, maintaining a helpline, and planning activities are most effective when such projects are done by several members from different groups or areas than when they are done by just one or two members. This is the reason why we have ASCs, RSCs and a WSC. These services take money. It is the responsibility of each member to see to it that our services have the money needed to help our groups achieve our

primary purpose. Each of us is here today because the message of Narcotics Anonymous was carried to us. In one way or another each of our recoveries is the result of N.A. Service. We talk a lot about gratitude and yet we regularly refuse to pass group money on to an area committee, area money on to regional committees, and regional money on to our WSC. Something is very wrong. Could it be misunderstanding, lack of faith, or just pure irresponsibility?

I have some very strong feelings about being responsible with money. Someone was responsible enough to see to it that the funds were available and used to carry the message to me. And I am alive, recovering and free. So let me be definite and thorough about what I feel is responsible handling of money.

To me a responsible group develops a system of priorities for handling their money. First, a group must pay its' rent and then make sure it has enough money on hand to pay rent the next month. Second, a

group buys enough N.A. approved literature to fill the needs of its' members and provide some literature free to newcomers. Third, the group passes funds on to an ASC so that we may have the communication required for unity. Some of this money may be spent by the ASC to inform the public of N.A., carry the message into institutions, or provide a direct helpline to N.A., write and revise literature, etc. Communication between the groups in an area is most important... without it there can be no unity. Fourth, the group needs to provide considerably more than the area committee needs so that our regional and world services have the funds to provide the services we require. Last and definitely least in my opinion, an affluent group might provide coffee, donuts, or other refreshments, keytags, chips, and/or cakes and parties to celebrate clean time or anniversaries, etc. Evidently some groups don't see it that way. To me, having a different system of priorities is just like holding a gun to the head of a suffering addict. By refusing to fund our services we are denying someone the life-saving message of N.A.

Each group is autonomous and that means we can use our money as we see fit. But to me, groups that have lavish refreshments and parties while their ASCs don't have enough money for paper and stamps is just like lining suffering addicts up in front of a firing squad. Let's take a good hard look at how we spend group money.

To me, accumulating money in group, area or regional treasuries that exceeds the cost of paying rent, buying literature, and providing services directly and immediately related to carrying our message compromises our primary purpose.

One of the problems seems to be the word donation. Passing group money on to an ASC is NOT a donation it is a RESPONSIBILITY! Passing area money on to an RSC is not a donation, it is a responsibility; the spiritual principle behind our 5th Tradition demands this responsible flow of funds. We are not donating or contributing to some obscure charity, we are doing the obvious, necessary footwork to express the gratitude we are all so fond of talking about.

There's another side to this coin that's called direct responsibility. Service boards and committees which are not directly responsible find it difficult or impossible to get the money they want through our structure. To me a service committee is first of all responsible to find out from those they serve what is expected. On the other hand members who feel strongly about specific services need to attend the meetings of those service committees and express their strong feelings.

A lot of addicts are still dying while we spend our money on something other than carrying the message. Let's quit killing them by sitting on our money.

Dear friends of N.A. Way,

I write this with much gratitude for your publication. I have been geographically isolated from N.A. for the last year and have received copies from friends to keep me clean.

Today, I am a bit ill as I was in a rainstorm yesterday and caught something. It is the first day I have ever taken off from a job for a non self-induced illness, so though I don't feel that great, it's nice to know that I can stay home without feeling guilty. Perhaps you know what I mean?

I was looking through things I wrote in early recovery. I am a writer, and found this piece, which I wrote about the spiritual awakening I had through the principles of the Program. For me it came quite quickly, within the first weeks and after the pink cloud wore off, it got tough. But I stayed clean thanks to your help and it's getting better all the time. All my love and gratitude to you. Perhaps you can use it, or chop it up, or rearrange it, etc.



*I am allowed today
things fresh.
I am awake
and moving and running
I breathe
I am breathed into
Not sorceror nor saint
not poet nor paint
I am but a man
breathed into*

*Into my ears
pour the birds voices
their songs
and all the sounds
and songs
for the free
like me,
who can hear.*

*I read God's awakening
in your faces
and hear his love
and wisdom in your voices
let me not throw
up my walls
defending them with cannonballs of criticism
and my many swords
of resentment
My horsemen of terror
fear and bewilderment
For I cannot live
in my isolation
juggling bloodied worlds
with the jaded, sick
green eyes of my jealousy
For these are worlds I have seen
worlds to which I've walked
naked and leprous
chalk white as a shadow
worlds I still may enter
I may choose to abuse*

*But I am awake
and moving and running
I breathe
I am breathed into
Not sorceror nor saint
Not poet nor paint
I am but a man
breathed into*



In writing we often find ourselves answering our own questions.
Problems seem smaller, and solutions easier to find.

Why Do We So Often Lose Our Trusted Servants?

Maybe.....

I came to N.A. as a result of devastation and wreckage of my past. I came in hopelessness and found freedom. By applying the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous to my daily life, this freedom is renewed.

My early sponsorship was through the group. Meeting with them on a regular basis, I was able to do something I could not do for myself -- get and stay clean. They showed me that we can recover.

Those meetings would not have been possible without the dedicated service of members who believed strongly enough in N.A., to make sure this Fellowship survived. They were doing the right thing for the right reason.

Today, through on-going recovery, I too have found the overwhelming need to give back some of what was given to me. My personal program demands active participation in

service to the Fellowship that gave me the choice to live today.

In my experience, other members in service are there for the same reasons... At least at first. What happens to some of us? Why do we begin to lose sight of just why we serve? There are a few well written articles about members (usually one strong personality) who try to force their negativity and options on others. These members seem to defend our Traditions strongly while failing to apply the 12th Tradition.

They at some point become instigators of personality attacks on one or a few dedicated Trusted Servants. Quietly, cunningly, they cast doubt on the motives of others. Perhaps they use members new to service as their sounding boards and eventually, their mouth-pieces. They effectively stop the members trying to do the right thing for the right reason.

Having witnessed and been a victim of such actions, the reasons seem obvious.... Untreated denial of Addiction. We may be abstinent, but are still blaming others for our problems. We may be unable or unwilling to follow-through on our commitments and the guilt forces us to attack those who do. I wonder if a person who allows their disease so much space in their lives ever thinks of just where their so called "enemies" are supposed to go? I sure wouldn't have needed N.A. in the first place if there had been anything else that could have helped me! If our primary purpose is to carry the message of recovery, how could we justify forcing each other away from the carrying of this message? (service work).

Perhaps you say I have an overly sensitive ego -- yes, that is a symptom of my disease. I have to constantly check my own motives: growth demands this. When I am in a Service meeting of any kind I check to be sure I am doing the right thing for the right reason. After checking myself I let go and work with what is at hand. If I have a fatal flaw, it is believing that you also want to do the right thing for the right reason. I tend to believe in you and listen with an open mind. I trusted no one when I came here - perhaps I trust too much now!

Through it all, I must not just give up and "take my ball home". It's hard to remember that sometimes

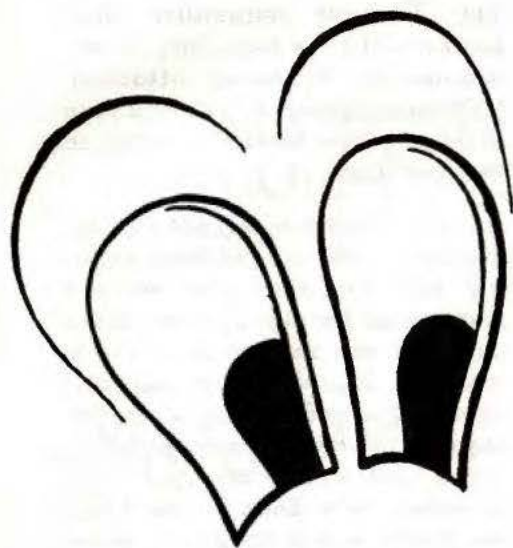
it's your disease talking, not you. Yet, I must remember this, especially when my own personality is being attacked. Untreated disease is just why I am sitting in this service meeting in the first place.

Addiction is a disease, not a moral deficiency. We are not responsible for our disease, but we are responsible for our recovery. If the denial of our disease in action is truly blinding us to the pain and negativity we spread, I understand. I have been there myself at times. I will share and work to help, as others have done for me. I will not, to the best of my ability, allow others to spread their disease to our new members. This may only be accomplished through continual willingness to serve and long term example. I will keep coming back. I hope and pray you will also, so that maybe we can all recover.

If positive can be found in negatives then one great thing has been given me. I must work my personal program even harder today so as not to react destructively to disease in others.

If others reading this feel: "maybe it would be better to just walk away," Take Heart! We need your true commitment more than ever today. The truth is ever-lasting, and in the end, doing the right thing for the right reason is still its' own reward.

KEEP COMING BACK



MY VERY FIRST LOOK AT STEPS 4-6

I personally feel that the 4th and 5th Steps are as interwoven to the same extent as all of the 12 Steps are interwoven. All of the 12 Steps are inter-related, but each also seems to have the separate and specific purpose of gradual change. The 4th Step is about a searching and fearless moral inventory. The purpose in my viewpoint, is to get

an accurate picture of myself. What areas need improved upon? Which defects of character am I willing to change, and which ones I prefer not to be reminded of are all part of the 4th Step. To be accurate, this picture must include feelings, attitudes, frustrations, assets and many more things that make me what I am.

After taking this step, I was able to see myself more realistically. As I grow and change by continuing to incorporate these principles (the 12 Steps) into my life, a different and even more accurate picture comes into focus. Partially, I believe because the longer I remain clean and reinforce the Steps and Traditions in my life, the more I change and feel better about myself. Secondly, I have the gift to see much more clearly now my God's hand at work in my life and realize how super-critical of myself I was. With my God's help I can learn to be honest, open-minded and willing.

I feel 2-3 weeks is enough time to finish an inventory. I feel if I am willing to approach this Step I should approach it like a chore. From personal experiences, it appears if more time is spent, unnecessary pain and depression results.

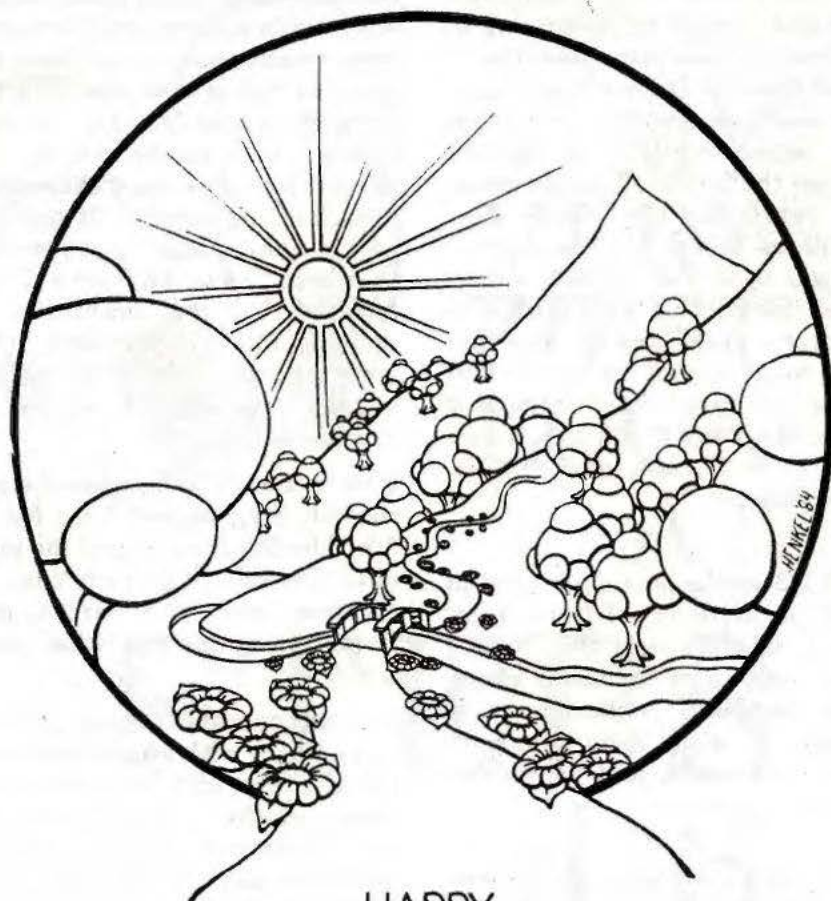
I saw, upon completion, that I was not perfect. I was just another fallible, vulnerable human being. This accurate picture of myself, this inventory gives me much more than I need for the 5th Step which is admitting to God, to ourselves, to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

In my opinion, the 5th Step should contain those things that reinforce my negative self-image. Obviously, some resentments, anger, fear, and some of my sexual activities will work their way into my 5th Step. However, my assets and my self-image had little to do with the exact nature of my wrongs. It seems to me the exact nature of my wrongs is where, how, and who I had harmed by my inability or actions. More importantly, what were my true motives? My motives usually were feelings such as fear, greed, and lust.

Just as the 4th Step prepared me for the 5th Step prepared me for the 6th. The 5th Step helped me move onto the 6th Step with ease, by showing me what areas need improved upon and what areas don't.

It is my opinion that the 5th Step can be done with any other human being, preferably one who is well aware of the purpose of the 5th Step. This Step gave me perspective about my attitudes, the walls I built and why I built them. The 5th Step brought me to a point of feeling like a human being, neither above nor below the human race. This Step gave me honest insight into myself and reinforced the "we" of the Program by showing me that I am not so different.





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