

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



**DECEMBER
1984**

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Freedom From Dependency





THE INTERNATIONAL
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OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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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 recovering 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*.

From The Editor

This issue was fun to put together, because of the quality of recovery evidenced in these articles. Congratulations to all of you who submitted input on a first rate job of carrying the message. let's keep it up. I'm watching my mail....

Pay particular attention to the origin of each article as you read them. I get this vision of a growing, unified world-wide Fellowship as I read my own story told by addicts from places as diverse as Alabama, England, Kansas, Washington, New Zealand, California, Ohio, Oregon, New Jersey and Michigan. Look out world, here comes NA!

On a note of business, the NA way is offering a special holiday offer. See page 16 for details. Now would be the time to get a friend a subscription as a holiday gift, or just to spread the word about the magazine. The holiday season, with all its traveling and mingling with relatives, can really be a time when a portable NA meeting is a valued friend. I hope you enjoy this one.

R.H.,
Editor

*When I remove my **DEPENDENCY** from drugs, where do I place it . . .*

"Three N.A. members share their trial and error resolutions of this question."

DEPENDENCY



Taking Responsibility For My Own Recovery

Throughout my seventeen year drug-using career, I was either attached to some man or temporarily between men. That pattern followed me into recovery. Until recently, I've been unwilling to let go of my latest "flame." Only when I finally did let go did I discover I was suing relationships to avoid taking responsibility for my own recovery.

Thoughts of HIM dominated my thinking. I always wondered when he would call, what he was doing, who he was with. I worried about whether I had said the right thing the last time we were together. I schemed and plotted how I would maneuver to get him to surrender himself to me.

When I talked of him to my sponsor, she told me to stop worrying about him. "The relationship doesn't seem that strong." I decided that she hadn't been in the program long enough, so I got another sponsor. The new sponsor told me to let him go and start working on my own program. Meanwhile, he was becoming infatuated with a new woman that he had brought into the program. I was in severe distress and almost used over it.

After two weeks of detachment, I started again thinking of all kinds of excuses to keep hanging on. As long as we enjoyed each other's company I figured

it was OK to hang out with him. I anticipated that our relationship would evolve into a loving, monogamous one if I could satisfy all his desires and stop acting jealous. I had a car, he liked to drive, I didn't. I would just happen to be going by his house.... I had a million good reasons for initiating contact; but I was a fake. I wasn't being myself.

When I heard other women tell their stories, some of the things I heard irritated me. I heard some share about how they had to put their Higher Power and their own recovery first before the men in their lives.

As their words and the reality of daily living began shining through my fog of denial, I realized this relationship was just like another drug to me. It was another escape from me. I had turned my life and will over to this man. I was intent on pleasing him. From fixing his favorite meals to taking him wherever he wanted to go or loaning him money, I regulated my life according to his whims. And I didn't have to deal with a Higher Power, since I had one in the flesh.

Through my acculturation into the NA way of thinking, I discovered that no matter what baggage I added to my addiction, I would still be stuck with me. There were no magic formula to recovery, no shortcuts. I had to learn to take responsibility for my own happiness. No one else could create it for me.

Writing out the first four steps over my unhappy situation resulted in a revolution in my perception. I went from self-pity to gratitude. I realized I could enjoy solitude. I stopped feeling sorry for myself. I saw I was capable of taking care of myself. Activities such as cooking, reading, knitting, cleaning and gardening stopped being time-fillers. I started living my life in a state of happiness instead of waiting for Prince Charming to make my life complete.

I started praying to be an instrument of God's will rather than praying for what I wanted. I asked to be of service rather than asking to get things I thought I deserved. I became open to suggestion and willing to do the footwork.

The other women in the program have become benign mirrors for me rather than threats. Their reflections inspire me, clarify my own inventory, and help me feel less alone.

I've become grateful for the abundance God has bestowed upon me. Today I have the gift of recovery, so that I can become what I dreamed I could be. Before it would have always remained a dream, a drug-induced haze. Today, I'm learning to let go of my fears of the future, and to let God determine the outcome. I'm no longer afraid of being alone, because I know I can take care of myself. Other people come into my life as I become willing to let them in.

Today I am happy to use my free will to make my own choices to improve myself, help others and enjoy all the pleasures in my life. I've given up on needing any one person to make me feel whole.

J.G.,
Washington



Dependencies

I spent many years living in the shadow of other people. I always had to settle for second best. All my friends seemed to have so much more than me. I felt left out and rejected. Those feelings made me lose confidence in myself. I became self-conscious, shy and scared of what other people thought of me. Because I wanted people to like me and care about me, I became another person by escaping from reality through drugs.

Using drugs gave me the confidence I had lost, it suppressed the feelings I didn't want to face, but most of all it made me forget about me and how I felt about myself. I became very lonely and started to depend on many things—people, places, work mates and emotional situations.

I started off by depending on my work career to make me feel adequate as a person. I needed to be the best at whatever position I held. I wanted people to respect my abilities, show them how good I was at my job so they would like and accept me as part of them.

That wasn't enough. I became very dependent on people, whether it was family, work, friends or boyfriends. I constantly needed someone there, regardless of what was happening. Family was always there if things went wrong. They were back stops, crutches to lean on when I couldn't cope. Boyfriends made me feel wanted, they cared about me and gave me the feeling of being needed.

Since coming to NA I have realized you can't run from reality, escape from yourself through drugs, and have many other dependencies to help you cope with life—it just doesn't work.

Through NA and the fellowship I have started to find out who I am and at last am beginning to like myself. My Higher Power gives me the will and courage to face reality honestly and openly, and the other 12 Steps give me the tools to change myself and my life to someone I like and to a life I now enjoy living.

I still have two big dependencies in my life—My Higher Power, the NA Programme and its fellowship. I am very grateful to both of them for showing me a new way of life.

G—
New Zealand

Inner Happiness



I was so alone in my active addiction. No matter how many people I was in contact with, I still had that inner loneliness. I feel that through my self-centeredness (the core of our disease is what our book calls it) I had insulated myself (heart and soul) from my family, friends, lovers—no one could penetrate this horrible shield.

I found NA and went to meetings, got involved in the Fellowship and I even put some effort into working the steps. SOME effort is not the effort I need to make. I held onto some reservations (which "...no matter how small, rob us from obtaining all the benefits this program has to offer). Because of one reservation NOT—believing that God, through the steps, could instill in me an inner happiness—I hadn't experienced....the meaning of NA (NOT ALONE). Loneliness soon returned, and on its heels, isolation.

I sought relief in outside things. No I did not use drugs; I used everything else though, all material and all temporary. I changed jobs, schools, towns—everything but myself. By this time I had been clean—No, I had been abstinent—for a few years (our book states that there is a difference). I was still going to meetings, involved in fellowship, serving—I was going through the motions. I would have short moments of happiness and long periods of unhappiness. Surely I couldn't use suggestions from other members, like "Work the Steps and live." I'd been clean too long to do that! My ego really saved my face, but it couldn't save my ass.

I found another temporary solution that lasted two and one half years—a relationship. I don't have to be using for my disease to harm others. This is the most painful part of this experience, for I am still grieving the loss of my lover—a loss directly caused by my dependency on her for my inner happiness.

I'm sure this is familiar to a lot of others in our Fellowship. I met her in a meeting; she was close to meeting one of her ends: jails, institutions or death. I immediately got involved; it was great! I was really working a good first and twelfth step. I had found someone who wanted dependency as much as I did. We clung to each other for everything. I wasn't lonely anymore, but eventually I isolated myself from practically everyone but her.

I don't want to share more about my loss—she is simply not with us now. Sometimes (like now, as I am writing) the only action that helps is to fall on my knees and pray for her—to pray for the suffering addict. My feelings of grief, sorrow, remorse—those things I feel now—will pass. I have found a new beginning through this pain: an HONEST, ALL-OUT effort in a personal program of recovery.

The fruits of this effort are that I'm in touch with my heart today. I feel that I must be aware and vigilant about this, though, because this new-found sensitivity can become too extreme. That's part of my disease. Are there any other extremists out there? I know there are in my home group. Are there others who have learned to allow your tears to flow? I know mine will today. I'm grateful even for the painful feelings today, for they are from my heart, not my head. As long as I keep that perspective today, my inner happiness lives also.

I have learned two powerful lessons from all of this that I hope someone reading this can learn without having to go through it. One is that the Steps teach us to place our dependency on the spirituality within our own heart. Health is found there. The experiment of placing that dependency on drugs got me here, and placing my dependency on another non-recovering addict was a disaster. Maybe sharing my results will make it unnecessary for you to do the same.

The second powerful lesson is that the "thirteenth step" is no joking matter. Our new people are vulnerable, and they are precious to us, for we will not survive without them. Maybe more sadly, they won't survive either if we don't respect that vulnerability and allow them to recover. I am finding my own spiritual

answers through all this, but perhaps the only real amend I can make is to appeal to you. Please include in your prayers those addicts who had to go back to the disease because they found something other than a helping hand in NA. And maybe more importantly, please join me in walking that prayer by placing your dependency on your inner spirituality through the steps, and leave newcomers of the opposite sex alone to do the same. Maybe you and they and I can then all become free to really experience that inner happiness.

E.A.,
Alabama

3RD ANNUAL LOUISIANA REGIONAL CONVENTION

The 3rd Annual Louisiana Regional Convention will be held at the Oak Manor Hotel, in Baton Rouge, on March 8, 9, & 10, 1985. Special Tradition, H&I, and Newcomer Workshops will be conducted.

Come and join us for some good old fashioned Southern hospitality, the NA Way!

For more info, call:

Tommy R. (504) 675-8118

Billy E. (504) 275-2310



A Little Story

This is a story about four people: Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. There was an important job to be done, and Everybody was asked to do it. Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.

Reprinted from the
"Memphis Miracle"

A Special Inventory



I've just been relieved of a resentment and I feel great. I had a lot of resentments when I came in to the NA Program, but by the time I had worked my way through the Twelve Steps for the first time, they had been removed from me.

I stayed fairly free of resentment for the next two years of my recovery. When I became angry with people on a daily basis praying for them seemed to handle the problem nicely.

My sponsor spent a great deal of time convincing me that I was not as important as I thought I was. I came to realize that people did not really do things to me, they just did whatever they needed to do and if my feelings got in the way, it was my problem. I believe that other people spend about as much time thinking about me as I spend thinking about them (which isn't much).

Eventually a situation arose in which this was obviously not the case. Someone did try to hurt me through character assassination. They succeeded only because I reacted with anger and stayed angry.

I found myself whiling away the moments by conducting conversations in my head. I would engage this person in a verbal dual and emerge victorious. He would be repaid for the wrong he had done me and it would happen publicly. I would repeatedly rehearse imaginary situations, searching for the perfect "killer sentence" which would accomplish my revenge. After a few days of this, I knew I had to do something. Praying for the person wasn't enough this time. I needed to go back to the Twelve Steps with the problem. I work the steps every day, and I had been

seeking help through steps three, six, seven, ten and eleven right along. The Steps always work they are never a waste of time—but they work the best for me when I take them in order. I went back to step one.

I could readily see the truth of the first two steps and the need for the third step. However, I was not succeeding in turning my will and my life about this matter over to the care of God. I was still getting too much sick joy from my mental ambushes. I repeatedly fell back into delusions of power and mental attempts at managing my life. I knew it was crazy to spend time thinking about actions I had no intentions of taking, or words I had no intentions of speaking, but it seemed I could not stop thinking about it.

I was able to grasp, for the first time in my own life, how resentments could lead me back to using. This program had spoiled me; I now knew what it felt like to feel good. While I wasn't spending every waking moment dwelling on this resentment, neither was I ever feeling as good as I knew I could. I could tell my attitude was deteriorating, and that it would continue unless I did something. I understood how, if I allowed time to compound the misery, using would look like a good idea.

I attended my usual Tuesday night step meeting. We were on step four. I listened to newer members talk about taking an inventory for the first time and getting rid of anger and resentments. I had just done another fourth step about two months before, covering my life since the previous one. It hadn't occurred to me to do an extensive inventory on just a single aspect of my life, but now I knew I needed to do just that.

I wrote an inventory the next day and some relief was immediate. Two days later I read it to my sponsor and the relief was total. Healing through the remaining steps, was open to me again. Once more, I was able to love the way I felt.

The solution to my problems is always in the Twelve Steps of NA, but I can't always guess which step. I'm grateful for a sponsor who constantly advised me to go back to step one.

B.J.,
Kansas

Satire?

The Kiddie Corner



I crawled into Narcotics Anonymous at the "tender age" of 14. Although my progress has been slow, the people of the Fellowship have quite literally loved me back to life. I'm sure, though, that when I dragged myself through these doors, the "grown-ups" asked themselves, "What does one do with a recovering child addict?"

As more and more young people find their way here, I, at the advanced age of seventeen, ask myself that very question. I have no great wisdom to share, but I, as well as numerous others, represent a sensitive age; one filled with classic fears, frustrations, hopes and dreams.

In sharing with others my age, I find to my surprise that we all think alike. We are addicts just the same as you—so there!

Outlined here are some suggestions devised to help the older addict. We realize we don't know anything, but if our doll houses are in order, God might disclose more to us. We ask Him in our daily meditation for the strength to be home on time and to eat everything on our plates.

Here they are folks:

(1) By all means treat the pubescents with that mock seriousness for which you are so famous. Never let him know what a crumb snatcher he really is. The younger addict must be handled carefully or he won't make it.

(2) Pinch the little addict's cheeks. Let Peter or Polly Program know how cute he is. Go ahead, chuck those chins. Pat those sweet little heads. Reminder: only for very old men is it acceptable to pat the rear of a teenage girl. Viewing the sudden increase of youngsters in NA, it is now considered a major offense for middle-aged men to do this. It's just not done.

(3) Thirteenth stepping is acceptable only when you explain to the kid that you are doing him a favor by keeping him off the streets. If you are painstaking in this stage of your development you will know a new freedom. Eventually the teenager will be off your back. As time passes he may get a job and buy a car. You won't need to cart him to meetings. He will neither bum cigarettes or hit you up for money in coffeehouses. But oh, the greatest gift is yet to come.

One evening in the future, as you are hunched over your coffee in a meeting, you the old-timer, will suddenly look up. You will see your brat as a changed person. There he is. He's standing over there next to the tattooed newcomer. Your brat! He's the one talking to the scared, skinny-legged fourteen-year-old.

NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR: I wrote this article satirically to make a hard point softer. People must think. The consensus of the young people is that these behaviors are unacceptable! The young people in the program are a vital moving force. We must not be handled as the exotic bird type, only to fall prey to those who may be sophisticated but still sick. We lack the subtlety and the maturity to understand people and their quirks. Handle us with care. We bring new hope and fresh ideas.

Anonymous,
California



Use of Medication in Recovery



Many of us in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous experience physical illnesses or injuries during our recovery. At such times, we are faced with the issue of whether or not to accept medication. I have been confronted with this decision, and I would like to share my experience with you, in the hope that it will help you in your recovery from illness or injury, as well as from the disease of addiction.

In the eleventh month of my first year of recovery, my wife and I decided to drive to the first Pacific Northwest Regional meeting in Portland. We left our home in Vancouver early, and decided to spend an evening with some friends in Seattle.

The next morning after breakfast, I began to have excruciating pain in my lower back. It accelerated rapidly. No matter how I positioned myself, I got no relief. I am an addict, but the thought of taking pain killers did not enter my mind. I believe now that God was protecting me from what could easily have been a rekindling of my addictive flame. After two or three hours of terrible discomfort, it was suggested that I go to a nearby hospital, for examination. The ride in the car, which was no more than ten minutes, was almost more than I could bear. Strangely enough, as I was ushered into the examination room, the pain began to subside. The attending doctor was certain that I had a kidney stone, and suggested that I have a further examination when I returned home.

By the time we returned from the hospital, it was too late to go on to the Regional meeting. Besides, the pain had left me weak and tired. We decided to rest the remainder of that day with our friends. The next day I had another mild attack, and the following day we proceeded home.

I went to our family doctor, and was referred immediately to a specialist. It was not long before I was given a series of tests. The diagnosis was the same, I had a kidney stone, which in all likelihood would have to be removed as soon as a hospital bed was available. I was completely honest with the doctor about my history of addiction. I told him about my drug usage, my experience in treatment, and how I was recovering in Narcotics Anonymous. He seemed to understand and assured me that I would receive medication only as required, and that he would personally supervise that closely.

About two weeks passed before the surgery. During that time I had two more attacks, both resulting in visits to the hospital emergency room. In both instances I was able to get by without medication, in spite of severe pain. Following the second attack, I was admitted for removal of the stone.

The procedure was preceded by a general anaesthetic. Shortly after I awoke, the pain became unbearable. I received a dose of medication and the pain diminished but remained appreciable. About five hours later, the pain returned to its original level. I was given additional medication. This time the pain disappeared completely. I was even able to get out of bed, and as I was walking down the hall, a strange feeling came over me that I would not be needing any further medication. It was as if the presence of the God of my understanding were there to remind me that I am an addict, and that if I ask for more medication, I would be on the addictive spiral again. Miraculously, as I see it, the pain did not return. I was able to sleep the remainder of the night.

The morning came, but with it no pain significant enough to require medication. Later that day, I was discharged to return home. As I left the hospital, the doctor shook my hand and wished me well. I am

certain that it was because he knew the truth about my addiction that he offered me no prescription.

As I look back on this experience today, some three and a half years later in my recovery, my perspective is clearer than it was when it was happening.

Today, I believe that my God gave me this experience, to show me that I could practice the principles of our miraculous Program in any eventuality. All that was required of me, was that I remain completely open and honest, that I seek the help of people who love me—my wife and my NA friends—that I listen to the God of my understanding, and that I follow exactly the instructions of the medical experts.

Though there was a great deal of physical pain involved, I now realize this was insignificant when compared to the horrible emotional pain I could have suffered, had I chosen to return to active addiction.

This experience I have shared has helped me to be truly grateful and proud to be a member of the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous, to which I owe my life.

M.C.,
Oregon



3rd Annual Virginia Convention

The 3rd Annual Virginia Convention will be held at the New Marriott Hotel in Richmond, VA on February 4, 5, 6 1985. The theme of "Spirit of Unity—Foundation for the Future" will set the Tenar of the Convention. For Registration write: P.O. Box 25285, Richmond, VA 23260.

Surrender to the Disease,

Not the Symptoms



Hello, everybody. My name is G— and I'm a gratefully recovering addict. Before last December I would never have dreamed my life could have turned around so much. By the Grace of God, whom I believe in as my Higher Power, I was fortunate to spend three weeks out of my life in an inpatient treatment center. I was desperate. My body, my mind....I had to do something, and I had to do it now.

The Treatment Center gave me all the tools necessary to put God and order back into my life. The knowledge of the disease was a big relief to me. It helped me to admit I was powerless. But alcohol was only one of the drugs I used. Without alcohol my life would still be unmanageable. I was ready to try anything.

After six days in detox I was still a mess. One of the nurses suggested I check out the Narcotics Anonymous meeting on Thursday night. I went to the meeting with a bad attitude and hated it. I heard too much honesty. The following week I put in for a pass to go to an outside AA meeting for Thursday. When the list came out Thursday night, my name wasn't on it. As it turned out, my case manager lost my pass. So there I was, alone on the third floor with the detox patients. Everyone else went to the outside AA meetings. I was angry and resentful. Then the

announcement for the Thursday night NA meeting came over the intercom and I ran down to it. I needed to talk to someone. Again they gave me a lot of honesty and this time I was ready to accept some of it.

The message I heard and the people I met started my recovery off with an understanding of how deep my addiction ran. It was far more than just drugs, including alcohol. It was my personality, my compulsive attitude towards everything in my life. I could truly relate to the people in the Fellowship of NA. I wasn't different. I was an addict. With this knowledge, this Fellowship and my Higher Power, I found recovery. Today I can live the life I believe God intended me to live.

Serenity is a blessing, one day at a time. This I thank God for each day. So, with the help of that treatment facility, and now ongoing involvement in NA, I can function as an important part of society. This is my life today. I cannot stress enough the necessity to get involved. It saved my life.

G.R.,
Ohio

Dear G—,
Happy one year birthday!
The NA Way Staff.



BETWEEN NOW AND JANUARY 1st, 1985,
ANY SUBSCRIPTION WE RECEIVE WILL BE
\$10.00 AS A SPECIAL HOLIDAY OFFER.

Nurturing Back to Life

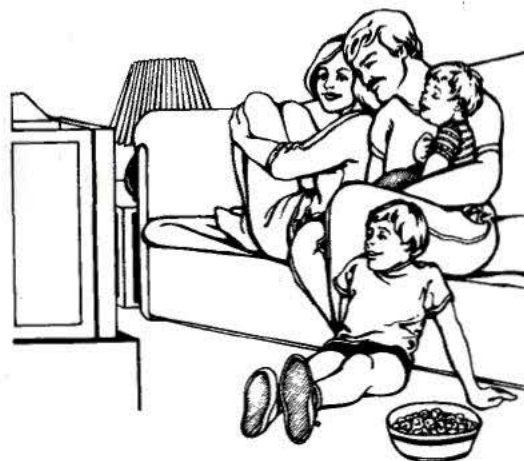


A storm had damaged some of the flowers that were growing outside of the place where I work. A sudden impulse had me gathering the broken stems and placing the flowers in a vase of water. It was as I looked at them, enjoying their beauty and freshness that I had a sudden flashback.

I remembered the first time I looked at mums. It was from my bed at the rehab. For some reason that day, I picked some flowers to keep me company. I was lonely, lost and empty. The tough-guy had been beaten badly by this disease. They told me if I could learn to take care of plants, maybe I could learn to take care of myself. As usual, most of the advice you receive in early recovery makes no sense to someone new off the streets. After all, what did we know about love, care and living. The flowers were the first color I noticed in a gray world. I took some plants home and they grew. I got my water and sun from NA. By working the steps, going to meetings and not picking up, I began to change.

Picking those flowers put me in touch with where I came from. My last high was an overdose where my heart stopped. I should be six feet under the flowers, and I would be if I hadn't kept coming back like you told me to. No one had to tell me today is a gift. I don't take it for granted. I feel very grateful for the new-found freedom from addiction NA has given me.

NA member
New Jersey



Living the Program Today

Until two years ago, I lived each day recklessly as though there were no tomorrow, but now I've learned to live today, as though tomorrow will come. This new outlook is very different from my old way of thinking.

I lived in an ongoing celebration for sixteen years prior to April, 1982. The first signs of this began in high school. I lost interest in studying, and found it hard to plan or even imagine myself going on in life to become a responsible adult.

By the time I graduated, I found myself looking for an escape from what seemed to be an unfulfilled future. I found this escape through the use of drugs, and not occasional use, but continuous use on a daily basis.

I left a path of destruction behind me. It didn't matter what I did, whom I had loved and lost, or whom I owed money, because just maybe there was no tomorrow. With this attitude, it didn't matter that somewhere in the back of my mind, I had a sneaking suspicion that someday I just might have to pay the price for my irresponsibility.

Living in a denial of reality, I had to bury my emotions in drugs to avoid the guilt, and to maintain the state of euphoria to which I had become accustomed. I could never totally escape the pain and misery stewing inside me. Somewhere deep within, a voice kept telling me, "There must be a better way!"

In March of 1982 I was arrested, and it became obvious to me that something was wrong. A friend of mine directed me to the Narcotics Anonymous Program, which has taught me to live "one day at a time." To me, this means that I don't worry about yesterday, and I live today as responsibly as I can, and tomorrow will come.

By living today as if there is a tomorrow, I've learned to relieve myself of most unnecessary guilt feelings by not doing the things which used to make me feel bad. I do the best I can to avoid using people, places and things for selfish reasons, like sex, money and drugs. Everyday I try to do something for another human being. This is my way of making amends for my past.

Today I'm seeking a way of life that has no room for self-centeredness. I'm searching for a way of life that will fulfill my needs. One such need is to have positive people in my life who are willing to accept me as I am, yet will give me constructive criticism when I need it.

I've found that by being myself and accepting things the way they are, I'm OK. Today I'm willing to accept the knowledge given me in school, and in all other areas of my life. Now I learn from my mistakes, because without drugs, I'm forced to go through the natural emotions that happen as a result of the daily challenges of life.

By living in today, knowing tomorrow will come, I have a hope that someday my dreams will become reality. It is my responsibility to make whatever changes are necessary to become the person I want to be. Today, I am one day closer to my dream.

Anonymous
Washington State

Recovery is like a wheel barrow, you've got to put some real action behind it.

Importance of The Home Group



Two Essays from Pennsylvania:

After I surrendered to my addiction and asked for help, my sponsor's home group became mine. I didn't realize the importance of this until much later, but important it was—and is. A home group did more than anything else in helping me fit into society again. All my life, I never had friends. yes, I know many people, and many of them called me a friend, but even though they were honest with me, I could never be honest with them. I was always knotted up with lies, and was always maneuvering to protect myself. I surrendered and told these people in my home group about me—the real me. Things I could never before share with anyone—not myself, not my folks, my wife, my kids, my employers, my doctors, my friends, my god—all came flowing out. Openly and freely I talked with these NA people who I was seeing on a regular basis. They were accepting me, not for what I wasn't, but for what I really was. I didn't have to impress them; I only had to be myself.

With the Steps, my sponsor, my home group and God, I started to live again without being anything but me. I went back into the world no longer afraid.

Anonymous

Narcotics Anonymous is a program of spiritual principles, Twelve Steps which we take and practice in order to recover. We as a group of recovering addicts who have accepted the Steps in our lives will have no problem accepting the Twelve Traditions in our group.

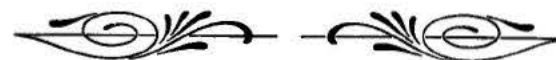
When we practiced the twelfth step, "...we tried to carry this message to addicts and to practice these principles in all our affairs." The word "we" means I don't carry this message alone. We have group meetings to carry the message.

Our first tradition states, "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on NA unity." We cannot do this alone. We need others to help keep us on the right path. When my home group is twelve stepping a newcomer, I am keeping in contact with what I need in my life. The rest of the Twelve Traditions are for the group, and they come together just fine as long as we don't have an attitude of indifference or intolerance toward the Twelve Steps. I surrendered to this program of recovery because nothing I had ever tried had worked for me. Ever since I surrendered to the spiritual principles of this program, I lost the obsession to use, and I gained some kind of peace of mind and serenity. I gained the desire to live.

Anonymous



When your Higher Power wishes to remain anonymous, he goes by the name of coincidence.



World Convention 1985

The World Convention of Narcotics Anonymous, 15 will be held in Washington D.C., August 30, 31 thru September 1, 1985. The Host Committee will announce registration in the near future. Those interested in contacting the committee may do so by writing to: WCNA15—P.O. Box 2232, Washington D.C. 20013

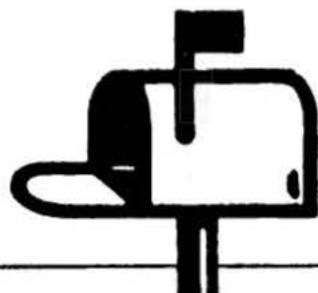
Accentuate The Positive



I was into a lot of self-pity, listening to my own thinking about how difficult and painful recovery is. I went to a meeting and shared a table with several other newly recovering addicts. There we sat and took turns feeding each other's disease by complaining about the miseries of recovery. My Higher Power must have been with us, because as I listened to the disease that had infiltrated our meeting, I realized something, Recovery is not painful—Our disease of addiction is. It's addiction that causes me to focus on negativity, recovery points the way to positive. It's disease which causes my reaction to reality to inflict pain, and it's the Narcotics Anonymous Program that teaches me how to cope effectively, even joyously with life. Truly living our steps, not just mechanically working them will relieve me of the pain of addiction. My disease is a ruthless destructive enemy of serenity and life. If I listen to my own thinking long enough. I can twist even the most beautiful gift from God into something ugly and cruel. Recovery the NA way is granting me freedom from this symptom. Today, instead of grumbling and focusing on my inability to attain the mythical pot of gold; I'm learning to experience and enjoy God's rainbow.

L.B.,
Michigan

Letters from Our Readers . . .



Dear NA Way

Thanks for all your issues. I am very grateful to get the magazine. It gives us strength here in England to read it. I'm sorry that I have written to you only once. I get frustrated at times when I feel responsible as an "old timer" and co-founder of NA in England. At times I get caught up in my ego and growing pains, but it's getting better. I miss some of the others who were around in those early days. We are a growing Fellowship, and we are "bottom heavy." That is, many people seem to clean up in NA and they leave us after a while; but I learn to work my own program as I see it, and really I love it. Where I came from, and where I no longer am, gives me a lot of gratitude for what I have today.

I made it to two conventions in the USA this year. Both of them, the Ohio regional convention and the World convention in Chicago, have given me great help in my own growth, and I was glad to be able to bring that kind of strength back home. Our members are really interested. Eight of us were at the World Convention, and when we got home we had our first convention. We had a lot of support from the USA, Ireland, France and Australia. We too have grown so much from that convention.

NA in England is over two years old. In the last two years, growing was slow; with just a handful of meetings we did our best. As we started to get more contact and experience in the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions, we have grown considerably in the last two years, and we have newcomers in every meeting. By Christmas we will have over thirty

meetings a week. We should reach the fifty mark soon. We are growing, addicts are staying clean and getting involved. We are now very well organized. We have a Newsletter called New Freedom News, an NA office and hot line (01-351-06794), and we are getting a twelve step list together. Groups from other areas also keep in touch, and we're helping each other grow.

At our convention an addict from two hundred and fifty miles away, from the city of Liverpool (home of the Beatles), who was unemployed and the only clean addict as yet, came to find out more. He went back with the good London NA spirit and support, he wrote us a letter two weeks later saying he has started a meeting. Eight addicts came to that first meeting, and we will travel to support that meeting. This is the growth of NA in England. Prisons and hospitals are asking us to come in. This is not just a high, its the reality of the long awaited growth of NA.

So what more can I say. It works if you work it, and the only way to keep what we have is to give it away. Thanks for being there.

J.H.,
England

"More harm is done by the person who gives good advice but sets bad examples."



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