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

THE NA WAY

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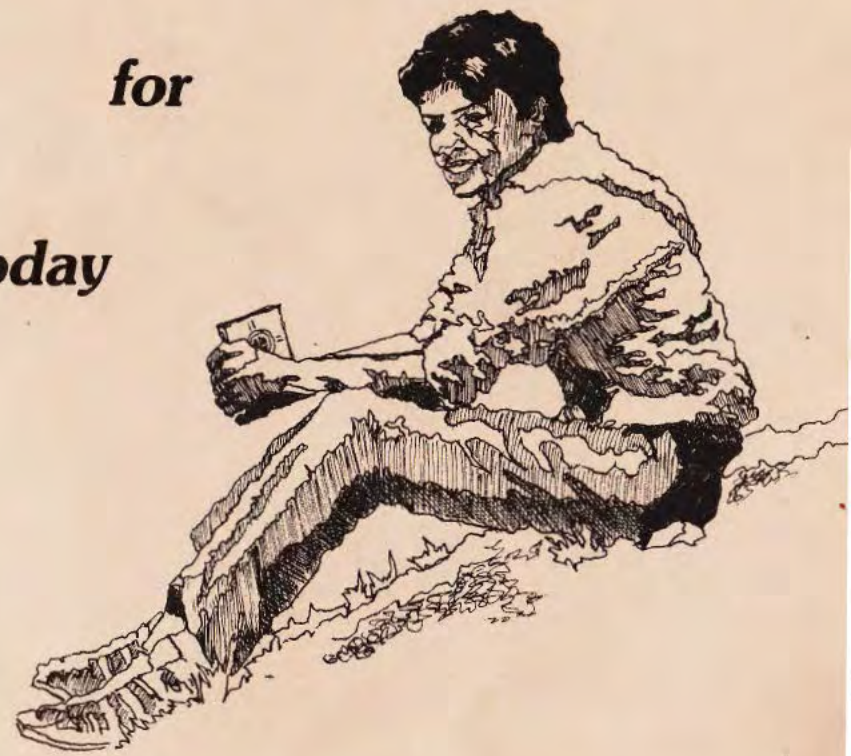
Just for Today



THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF THE FELLOWSHIP 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.*

All members of Narcotics Anonymous are invited to participate in this "meeting in print." Send all input along with a signed copyright release form to: The N.A. Way; *World Service Office, Inc.; P.O. Box 9999; Van Nuys, CA 91409*

THE TWELVE STEPS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

1. *We admitted that we were powerless over our addiction – that our lives had become unmanageable.*
2. *We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*
3. *We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood* Him.
4. *We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*
5. *We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*
6. *We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*
7. *We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.*
8. *We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.*
9. *We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*
10. *We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.*
11. *We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood* Him, *praying only for knowledge of His will for us, and the power to carry that out.*
12. *Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of those steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

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My Life With Narcotics Anonymous

I look back on my drug problem now and wonder why it took so long to find N.A. I wonder, in spite of all the professional people who tried to help me straighten out my life, why Twelve Steps and a little blue book can change my life so totally. I have only been clean one month but I know that, just for today, I never have to use again if I keep going to N.A. and reading the Basic Text.

I remember when I started using, I never thought of it as a problem, I just thought of it as something to do. I started out on pot and sometimes beer. I thought it was nothing, I thought that it would not do anything to me. Then I noticed my grades were slipping in school and my life was falling apart, but I just thought that it was me. I was the problem. My mom and dad would bring me to doctors and counselors but they never had an answer for my problem. Then I was getting into different kinds of drugs because the old ones were not doing anything for me anymore.

Then I was locked up in detention for a burglary I did to buy drugs. They came down to my cell and asked me if I want to go to a meeting called Narcotics Anonymous. I asked them what it was about, and they

said "drugs," so I went to get out of my cell for a while and to also find out what this meeting was about. I walked into a room and there was a few other guys in there who were also in detention. They were acting cool, like they thought the whole thing was a joke. Well I wanted to be cool too, so I just sat there the whole meeting and made jokes about the people who were running the N.A. meeting. I did notice, though, that a lot of their problems were the same as the ones I had, and that they really wanted to help me if I would let them. But I wouldn't let them. I wanted to be cool like the other kids in detention.

Well I finally got out of detention and headed straight for my dealer's house. I ran away from home and went to parties and took any drugs I could get my hands on. I remember going to a friend's house to sleep after a party one night. After he was asleep I started thinking about my life. It was a very scary feeling, and I never want to feel it again. I was thinking about doing more burglaries to buy drugs and deal them so I could have some money to spend. The next day I had it planned to do a few houses and get some money to buy drugs. Well I got up and did the burglaries and I got caught.

They finally said that they had enough of me in the community, so they sent me to a juvenile institution. I was still fighting people, claiming that I did not have any drug problem. Finally one day I could not take it anymore so I tried to escape. I wanted to go to get some drugs. I got caught in less than two hours. Now I am in a locked cottage and have been attending every N.A. meeting that they bring in here.

I am now the chairman of a small N.A. group. I have learned that all it takes is two addicts to have an N.A. meeting. I think the two best parts of going to N.A. are that my life is changing drastically and I have some friends who really do care a lot about me and my life. I have noticed that people in N.A., addicts like me, are a lot happier now. I think that the N.A. program is for me.

C.K.
Washington State

My Gratitude Speaks

My life today is shadowed by my dark past. But the shadows aren't entirely negative or without merit, but instead they serve as a yardstick with which I can measure the distance I have come since my drug using days.

That period of my life began in the late sixties in a fairly large city. Wearing patched jeans and my hair long and straight, I saw myself as a hippie; a special person who believed in love and highs. My drug using buddies and I were self proclaimed saviors of the world from the causes of the "establishment." We felt that by going to the extremes or highs that drugs took us, we proved we were special people indeed. We had many long, drug induced discussions on how the world should be while we fixed, swallowed, or smoked various chemicals, but otherwise took no other action to bring about these changes.

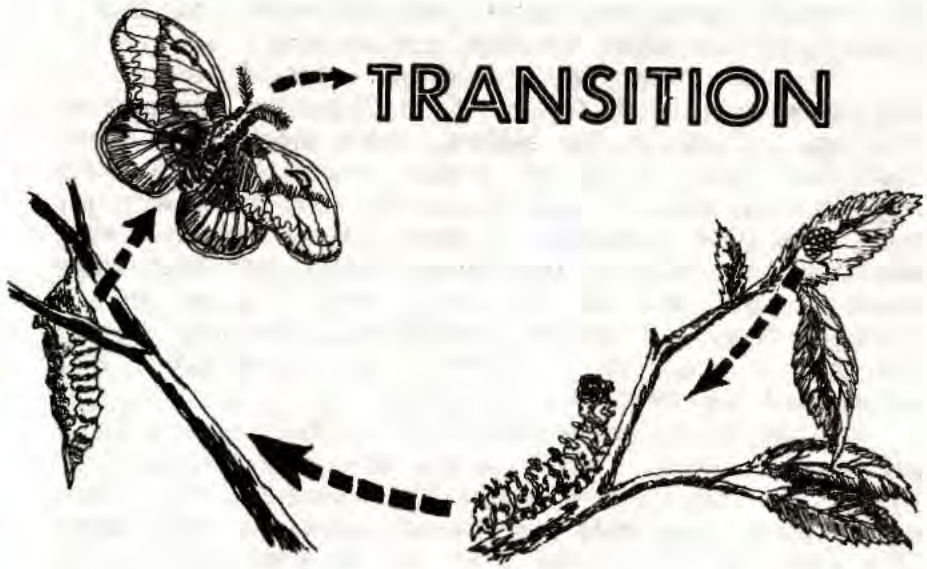
It's funny how fast all those noble dreams slipped away once I became a slave to my addiction. Then life became a sick game of survival: still the highs but now also the lows; sickness and running to avoid jail and reality. The game was actually an unending

chase for drugs, money for drugs, and more drugs. There were no limits to what extremes or evils I would go to try and satisfy my unsatible appetite for dope. But, soon the highs were gone and the game wasn't a game anymore, only a constant and obsessive need to get more drugs so I could be straight or what I thought of as "not sick."

After years of swearing off one drug but substituting still another one, it finally sunk into my sick head that my life had become a hell and I wanted—needed—a change. If I could put my finger on all the ingredients that make up that decision that every recovering addict makes to change his life, I would bottle the mixture and gladly give it to every addict who still suffers that he might also recover from the disease of addiction. In my case, there was my last lengthy stay in jail, the physical sickness of detox, and the realization of all the wasted years and the pain I had caused my family all balanced against the hands and offers of help reached out to me from other recovering addicts and my hopes and visions of a happy and clean future.

Now I suppose this sounds like I am awfully overconfident in my two year clean time, but in reality, I know I am an addict and will always be only one fix away from my past life. The confidence comes from the fact that I now know the joy of living clean, and I see clearly the painful realities of my using drugs in any form. With the continuous support I get from my N.A. group, and in turn am able to give to other members, and with the goals I have accomplished and those I have set for myself (including going to college and being a better mother), I now see a whole new drug-free future unfolding ahead of me. And, maybe some of those changes that I sat back and philosophized about earlier in my life can now become some of my new goals and, better yet, actions.

P.B.
North Dakota



After the 83-84 World Service Conference, I thought I was facing a major decision regarding my life and my program of recovery. One member shared in his report that he no longer attended meetings in the other Fellowship. He felt that since his service was in N.A., his reliance for his total recovery should also be in N.A. I knew that what he said was right, yet I felt resistance toward the suggestion that I do the same.

I got clean at a time and place where N.A. didn't exist. That was over sixteen years ago and outside the continental United States. Fortunately for me, the people who helped me saw drug addiction and alcoholism as the same thing, so they encouraged me to change the word alcohol to drugs wherever I would come across it. I was only twenty-one years old at the time, and drugs had done a number on me. People told me that I was almost incoherent, and they thought I had a wet brain.

For some reason, God knows why, I was ready. I knew these Twelve Steps worked. I identified with feelings of hopelessness and total despair, even though I couldn't relate to the stories. The membership was quite a bit older than I and yet I knew they had the answer. Out of respect and courtesy and also out of fear of rejection and being cast out I would only speak

in general terms and would edit my story so that I would only talk about feelings and behavior.

I was seven months clean when I moved to California and went to my first Narcotics Anonymous meeting. Most of the addicts were older than I and most had done a lot of prison time. The majority were heroin addicts. I did heroin, but it wasn't my main drug. I remember feeling intimidated and even wondered if I was a "real" drug addict, yet that same healing spirit was in the room and I knew that I belonged there. I stayed in California for four months and then moved back to Hawaii. In a year and a half we started our first N.A. meeting.

There were six or seven of us, each with a little bit of clean time. Many people are very transcient in Hawaii, so the meeting would drop down to three, two, and at one time only one person kept the door open. This went on for years. All of us were still pretty young and dependent on the other Fellowship for our support.

I belonged to a group that belonged to neither Fellowship, but was nevertheless a very powerful meeting. It welcomed anyone and everyone interested in a spiritual way of life through the application of the Twelve Steps. In some ways what I got was the best of both Fellowships without working for either.

The Traditions have always been an important part of my recovery, and I've always applied them to myself. However, it's only been in the last seven years that I've applied them directly to Narcotics Anonymous. That came about mainly through the formation of our service structure.

N.A. started growing here in Hawaii as it did all around the country. As each new meeting would start, I'd become a regular member, which meant that I would be attending one less meeting in the other Fellowship. It got so that only occasionally would I go to a meeting of the other Fellowship. All of my service was in N.A., and yet I was reluctant to let go completely.

So that guy's report at the Conference disturbed me, because I felt N.A. was insinuating that one must make a choice. I didn't feel it had a right to do that. Although I realized that that wasn't what he was saying, I knew at the World Service Conference I had

come to a turning point. I prayed and meditated on it, asking for guidance and clarity. Then it dawned on me that there was no decision to make.

My God, as I understand Him, doesn't do that with me. Instead I am urged to go with the flow and follow my heart, to get back into the here and now and ask myself simple questions like, "Where can I be of the most love and service today?" "Where do I feel the most useful and needed today?" "Where do **I need** to be today?"

By the grace of God and through the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous I haven't found it necessary to go to a meeting of the other Fellowship in over a year. As a part of our philosophy in N.A. there is only one disease and it's called addiction and that includes **all drugs.** I am no longer able to identify myself as anything else but an addict, because I don't support the concept of dual-addiction.

A friend of mine shared with me how the transition came about for him. He was asked to speak at a meeting in another Fellowship. Just before he was to speak, the secretary asked him if he would "cool it" on the drug talk. He realized he had only one story to tell, and that in all fairness to himself and them, he shouldn't talk. Now, if asked to speak, he tells them beforehand that he can only speak as an addict and as a member of Narcotics Anonymous.

With the greater number of addicts today who know recovery only though N.A., many of us so-called "oldtimers" are coming to this turning point. For many the transition is scary. Yet any addict who has time clean and has a program working in his or her life can't deny where they are most needed. When the secretary of a meeting asks for newcomers and forty percent of the room stands up, then under ninety days and another thirty percent stand up, six months another fifteen percent, first year birthdays two or three people stand up—there is no question about it. There is an old saying that when the harvest is ready the laborers are few. That is nowhere more apparent than today with this huge influx of addicts pouring into the program seeking recovery and hope.

T.M.
Hawaii

You are Nxxdxd

It is timx for mx to writx a lxttxr on my nxw sxlf-corrxting typxwriter. I havx wantxd onx of thxsx machinxs for a long, long timx. I likx to writx a lxttxr that rxally looks good and is pxrfxct. You spxnd a lot of monxy for a machinx likx this so you xxpxct it to work pxrfxctly.

As you can sxx thxrx is onx kxy on this machinx which will not function. Thxrx arx forty-six othxr kxys that function wxll xnough - but what a diffxrxncx it makxs whxn onx kxy is not working. Can you undxrstand what I'm trying to say?

Somxtimxs it may sxxm that our Fxllowship is somxwhat likx my typxwritxr. It only takxs onx mxmbxr not working to makx a lot of diffxrxncx. Of coursx, if you askxd that mxmbxr, thxy would say that thxy had vxry littlx to offxr and didn't considxr thxmsxlvxs vxry important, that what thxy did would not makx or brxak thx Fxllowship.

My point is that thx Fxllowship is likx my typxwritxr, N.A. nxxds thx activx participation of WX—thx mxmbxrs. I havx found many ways to hxlp thx suffxring addict through activxly sxrving in N.A. I fxxl thxrx is a placx for evxryonx—from thx oldxst of oldtimxrs to thx nxwxst of thx nxwcomxrs.

Wx should nxvxr unxrxstimatx thx importancx of what onx pxrson can do. Onx ridx givxn to a nxwcomxr to a mxxting, a fxw momxnts of sharxing an xncourging word—you will nxvxr know thx diffxrxncx you may makx.

Say to yoursxlf, thx nxxt timx you think you arx not nxxdxd bxcausx you arx only onx pxrson, "onx kxy makxs a diffxrxncx in a typxwritxr, so onx mxmbxr can makx a diffxrxncx by hxlping out.

If I can gxt anything across to you in this lxttxr it is that you arx a kxy mxmbxr of this Fxllowship and you arx nxxdxd vxry much.

Anonymous
Alabama

Growing through the Hard Times

I feel really down and lonely right now. I don't know why, and I guess it really doesn't matter. What does matter is that it will pass and I will get better. I am sitting at work, and it's almost time to go home. When I get home I know it will be the same old thing: pick up the baby from the sitters, get the kids dinner, go to a meeting, then home again and time for bed.

My husband and I separated just a few weeks ago and some days it's really hard to get through the feelings. The pain I'm going through is worse than anything I've experienced clean. He is part of the Fellowship of N.A. also and sometimes that makes it so hard, because we both need to go to meetings. When we see each other there, the feelings and the pain start all over again. I want to avoid the pain; I want to run away to other meetings so as not to run into him. I want to put it off and not deal with it right now, but I know I can't do it that way. I know that I have to experience the pain, do the things that are important for my recovery, go to the meetings that I want to go to—that I need to go to—knowing that I may see him. I know that the pain will help me grow, and growing is something I want so badly to do. My sponsor says that the sooner I go through the pain, the better off I will be, and I believe her. I know that my Higher Power is helping me go through this, I can feel that, and I know he is giving me the strength to go through the feelings and deal with them. He is helping me to be willing to do what I know I must do, now!

So I will go to my meetings, I will surrender, and try to release with love. I'm so glad I wrote these feelings down on paper, because now I feel grateful for the same old things in my life. So I will go home, pick up the baby, fix dinner, go to a meeting, go home and go to bed—alone. But with God in my heart, so I will not really be alone. I am alive today because of these some old things: meetings, this Fellowship, God, willingness and love.

Anonymous

It Takes

What it Takes

I started using when I was thirteen years old. At that time in my life I felt alone—not a part of—and when I found dope I fit in, and didn't feel like I was on the outside or alone anymore. At least for a few years. Most of you all know what I'm talking about. It worked for a while and then the pain, guilt, and the loneliness came creeping back into my life.

I didn't keep friends for long. I was too afraid of what they would think if they saw who I really was and what they might think of my bizarre behavior. Loneliness and mental pain was what brought me to treatment the first time in May of 1980. When I completed treatment and came back home there were no young people in the other Twelve Step Fellowships. They told me that I would have to stay away from old friends and old places, and I did for almost six months. I went to meetings when they started and left when they were over; then it was home to that empty house to be lonely all over again.

I started an N.A. meeting and got one of my old running buddies to come. We lasted about two months and started using again. When the pain and the guilt would get too great, I would go back and repeat all

the same mistakes. I would not make friends in the Fellowship, I would not clean up the meeting hall, go places with other members, get involved with any service work, or share about my addiction, nor was I encouraged to do so.

This went on for three and a half years, and I thought that I was hopeless, that I was one of those few who were incapable of being honest. I decided to try treatment again and stayed there for three weeks. I told myself that I knew what I had to do—it was just a matter of doing it—so I decided to check it out.

Everything went well for about three months, and then I was back on the streets again. I had always run from my home town when it got too bad saying "I can't do it here." I always had the idea that I could walk out of the doors of the Fellowship and come back in anytime. What I forgot was this program is for people who want it; if we are not willing to go to any length to keep it, we lose it. Well, I had overdosed twice and almost did it again.

When I walked into a meeting again I was willing to go to any lengths. They encouraged me to start up N.A. again, but fear kept me from it. Another

member got an N.A. starter kit and I dove in head first. I got a sponsor and lots of telephone numbers, and used them. I made friends and made an effort to go and do things with them. I got involved by going to meetings early and staying late, setting up for the meeting and helping0 to pick up afterwards. One of the most important things I did was to become openminded about spiritual principals. My Higher Power is God, and it took a long time and a lot of pain to come to that understanding. Like it says in "How It Works," "There is one thing more than anything else that will defeat us in our recovery—this is an attitude of indifference or intolerance toward spiritual principals."

I started going to conventions, parties, and campouts and learned I could have clean fun with clean people.

You know, I don't have to be lonely anymore. I have more friends, true friends who help me through the pain and confusion, people who really care for me for the person I am. I don't have the fear of being judged, and I know that they will tell me how they see me even when I am sick as hell and can't love myself. They hug me and show the love that keeps me going.

You know, I have found all of the things in this program that I was looking for on the streets. The love and caring, the honesty, friends who are there and do not judge, and spiritual principles that make life good.

I am happy most of the time and I've almost got a year of clean time—something I thought was impossible for me—and I am grateful for the pain, because "it took what it took." Pain motivates me to move on. I would not be where I am today without it.

Thanks to God, this program, and you people, my family, I am alive today spiritually and physically, and I am capable of caring and sharing with others the N.A. Way.

S.M.
Louisiana

Group Conscience

Few of us could argue that our individual thinking is sound. For me, my best ideas got me here; and they will carry me back to active using if I forgot to take direction from N.A. and my Higher Power.

We decide things in Narcotics Anonymous by polling our group, area, region or the Fellowship at large. Each member can vote and is free to express his or her opinion prior to the vote. Hopefully we discuss the really important issues long enough to attempt to mold the final decision to encompass as many minority viewpoints as possible, possibly even until our decision is unanimous.

Once the decision is made, though, I feel we each have an obligation to support the decision with our participation. If I'm only going to help out if you "do it my way," then I am acting as if I do not believe in group conscience and that **I** know better than **we.** Boy, am I in trouble at that point.

We are not clones here; rather N.A. is the basis for me to be free to be an individual. So long as I trust my Higher Power and work the steps; I'll be fine. But if I trust God, then I feel obliged to **act** like the Second Tradition is part of my faith. Too often I felt in the past that if things did not go my way (or **my** area's way in a regional vote or **my** region's way in a Fellowship vote) then the decision constituted "group opinion." often I would continue to "lobby" against the decision, or at least not participate in its implementation. Right around the time I started looking at Step Ten, I realized this coincidence? Hmm...(smile).

Today I choose to be part of the "we" and go along with group conscience. For me, that's part of unity, and very important to Narcotics Anonymous.

T.B.
Pennsylvania

SPECIAL FEATURE

A Worldwide Fellowship

Another World Convention of Narcotics Anonymous is in the history books. One more time we gathered together as a Fellowship to share our worldwide message of recovery. The lie is indeed dead; addicts are recovering in droves.

In the last couple of years, more of the non-U.S. N.A. Fellowship has been showing up at the World Convention. In Chicago last year at the banquet roll call, four continents were represented. The awareness really began to dawn on a lot of people from the states that day—this truly is a worldwide Fellowship. And this year again in D.C., England had a large group there, Canada, Ireland, Germany, the Bahamas, Australia, New Zealand, Israel—all had members there. There was more international flavor in the air than ever before.

A couple of reactions from our readers have already come in. We'll share them with you here.

THE WORLD EXPERIENCE

The engines began to roar as I sat in absolute fear, with my sponsor next to me, en route to Washington, D.C., for WCNA-15, not knowing what to expect in the next few days. As we approached national airport, a friend from N.Y.C. was there to meet us and take us to the hotel. We had arrived one day prior to the convention and only a handful of people were at the hotel. It seemed so big and so empty. I felt frightened and somewhat alone. Throughout that night and the next day, however, the number of people was rapidly increasing. My fears began to wither away as the love and the fellowship continued to grow. I couldn't believe that I was a part of this, me a dope fiend from the gutters of New York City, a part of this wonderful Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. The lobby, the halls, the stairways were full of laughter and newfound friends.

As I got caught up in a traffic jam of people, I froze stiff and thought to myself, what did I ever do to deserve this happiness? It was then that the realization came to me that this was an unmerited gift from God. The workshops and the meetings were absolutely fantastic. The dances and the banquet too. I'm so filled with emotion. When the convention came to an end after the spiritual meeting on Sunday morning I knew that the friendships made here this weekend would carry on with us.

It was great to see that directly after the convention addicts from London went to stay with addicts from Miami, from L.A. to Baltimore, from N.Y.C. to Florida and so on. All that comes to mind is "the therapeutic value of one addict helping another."

The laughter and the noise began to fade, and once again there were only a few of us left. I pressed for the elevator as I turned to my friend and said, "It's so quiet again, like we never were here." He turned to me and said that this hotel would never be the

same, we were here and we've touched it with our hearts, we've laughed here and we've loved here. We've helped a newcomer here; this hotel will never be the same. I've made so many friends here I know I'll never be the same. I'm so grateful for this Fellowship; you've save my life.

K.S.
Orlando, FL

IMPRESSIONS OF WCNA-15

What a colorful bunch we are! Sitting in the lobby at the grand Omni Shoreham hotel, I was struck by the contrasts, the movement, the energy, the joy and love that whirled about me. Men and women, all ages, sizes and colors were talking, walking, dancing through the place. Hotel employees seemed stunned. It was a Clean Carnival in Washington, D.C.!

Ten or more years ago I was in this city and I was loaded. I don't remember much about it. The band I managed was playing at a club there. I remember trying to score some drugs and not having much luck, so I drank my way through the sound check and the show. That period of my life is a blur. No distinct images or memories—only non-stop suffering and rage and loneliness. How different to be in the Capital City clean and surrounded by recovering addicts!

I remember this trip. I remember the faces, the hugs, the hope and recovery I heard from the speakers. I remember the names of people I sat and talked with and where they are from and what they do for a living. I felt "clean" this trip. I felt good about me and about what I was doing there at the Omni Shoreham. Lasting impressions of what WCNA-15 was for me will be the following moments:

Thursday night at the opening speaker meeting there was enough energy in the room to "run Grand Coulee Dam" (I quote from my friend from San Diego who described it that way). The mood was totally contagious. A moment of coming together, or anticipation and joy at being together clean and recovering. The speakers were from around the globe. That touched me deeply, particularly the sharing of a woman

from Germany who told my story. I was filled with a deep feeling of gratitude for her recovery and mine. The terrible pain of addiction is the same no matter where we live, what language we speak, what color we are, what our sexual preference. I felt a renewed commitment to work for unity within our Fellowship, to do what I can to help carry our message of recovery to all the places where it hasn't reached. I left that meeting feeling blessed by a loving God who has given us a way to live free from addiction.

Friday night I sat in the lobby and talked with a number of addicts from around the country. It's the one-to-one sharing that makes this Fellowship what it is, and that night I needed another addict to talk to. God provided just the right person who said just what I needed to hear. She talked about letting go of control, or working the steps and letting God handle the outcome. I felt myself slowing down as she talked, felt the serenity and quiet that comes from surrendering to the moment. In her city she helped start N.A. Now she works in the treatment field and is helping professionals learn to look at their own powerlessness. The woman is one of God's instruments of peace, and I am grateful for our time together.

There were many other moments that I could describe, times of laughter and times when I felt overwhelmed and wanted to hide. Some hours seemed to rush past and other hours seemed to drag. I prayed a lot during the convention. I asked for guidance in each moment and felt strengthened by my God and by the steps.

Ten years ago in Washington, D.C. I was a suffering addict without a belief in anything but drugs. I'd given up on myself and had turned my life and will over to the drugs I abused. At WCNA-15, a new person visited that city—a person who had emerged from the ashes of addiction—and I am that person. I am free today. Free to go to conventions, free to tell the truth about who I am and what I feel. Oh, I don't always manage to remember that I'm free, but the meetings remind me when I've lost the way. My three days in Washington, D.C. reminded me that I share this program with addicts all over this planet. I needed a charge, a reminder of why I do what I do in service.

I'm grateful God used WCNA-15 to remind me, to give me hope and courage and joy to do what's in front of me to do. May God bless and keep each and every one of us and continue to guide our Fellowship as we carry this message of recovery to addicts everywhere!

K.J.
California

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As you may have heard by now, the bid for the 1986 World Convention went to London, England. This is the first time the convention will be held outside of the United States. Enthusiasm for this decision was very high in D.C. As we listened throughout the weekend to addicts share from the heart in all sorts of accents, we truly began to feel that worldwide community spirit. Addiction does not care about borders or languages or oceans or barriers of any kind. And today in Narcotics Anonymous it has become clear—recovery does care. As we discussed in a previous "Special Feature," those barriers are being dismantled or overcome, one by one.

What would truly make the 1986 convention a unifying force in Narcotics Anonymous as a whole would be if U.S. and Canada showed up in droves. What a boost that would be for our European family at this critical stage in their development! The European Fellowship is actually not too far behind many North American N.A. communities in their development (indeed, they're ahead of some), so that pooling of perspectives could only be fruitful for all concerned.

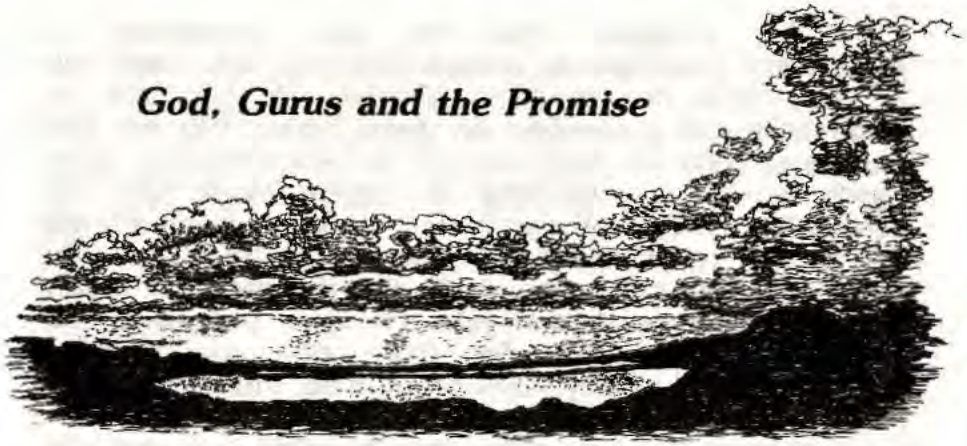
But what are we talking about here? We don't have that kind of money for travel; lots of us are still on parole or probation; addicts can't pull off something like a trip to Europe. Before the "negative committee" passes its verdict, though, have a look at something. There is currently some talk with a travel agent about charter flights over there. Negotiations are underway now. So far it looks very interesting.

The packages that we are discovering on preliminary investigation include features like round trip air fare from any centrally located city in which we could book 250 passengers or more, round trip air fare from your city to that city at no extra charge, seven nights in a four star hotel in London at or near the convention site, and unlimited ground transportation (busses and trains) around London the entire time. The travel agency may even deal directly with state and federal probation departments to seek permission for special ten day visas for those who may have a problem there. (They anticipate little difficulty, based on past experience and their preliminary inquiries.)

And more and more, but I think you get the picture. Remember, these are still rough estimates, because this magazine went to print before there was time to coordinate all of this, but based upon early investigation, there should be real opportunity to have massive participation from North America. We will be letting you know soon exactly what the details will be. If you are not on our subscription list drop us a note to the N.A. Way, attn: London trip, and we'll pass it along to the proper channels. At this writing, we don't know for sure who those channels will be, but we'll pass that along to you as soon as we know. This may just be a chance in a lifetime to do something like this so cheaply, and with planeloads of recovering addicts. I hope you're able to take advantage of it.

R.H.
Editor

God, Gurus and the Promise



A turning point in recovery came for me at about eighteen months clean. It had taken that long for me to work Step One. Yes, I tried for a year and a half to exert power over my disease of addiction. I was drug free, yet my actions were still being controlled by obsession, compulsion, and impulses! It was through these repeated experiences of failure that I finally could feel and believe in my absolute powerlessness, not just over drugs—they had been out of my life for a while now—but over my addiction, as our First Step says.

All this led directly to Steps Two and Three. All seemed well. However, these steps proved to be another long and confusing struggle. It is this struggle, and some insight that came from it, which I would like to share with the Fellowship.

Since I knew beyond question that I did not hold the answers to my problems, I went looking elsewhere. I found help in many places. Addicts, non-addicts, so called "divinely inspired methods," and various human inspired methods all seemed to offer something. Confusion set in! Other people were doing the same thing, so I decided to step back and watch them.

After many months, I began to get some insight. It seems that all of the resources were being turned into "Gurus" of sorts. Many of us, in a fervent search for recovery, had received guidance from one source or another. We were now taking these sources and transforming them into all-powerful answers to life's problems.

It is difficult to explain, but somehow I and others were looking to individuals or individual methods for recovery. It was a new way to use people, places, and things. Instead of incorporating these resources into recovery, many of us turned our recovery over to another person or organization.

The destructiveness of all this soon became apparent as a much clearer picture of my disease emerged. Denial, in the form of refusing responsibility, was full blown. I had been trying to have someone else do my work while refusing to take Step Two and Three. This was not only stifling my recovery, but the recovery of others as well. By looking to individuals, I was helping them to believe that they had more power than they did. I was placing my own life and the lives of others on the line!

I began to search for a higher power which was greater than myself and my other resources. I found this greater power in N.A. It works through groups, areas, regions, World Service Conferences, and the Fellowship, but not necessarily through any individuals. And, it is mine. And, it is not a Guru. And it has no name. And it does not change other people to be the way I want them to be. And, by its very existence, it leads me through the Steps to the one promise made in our Basic Text.

Our Basic Text states (page 91) "Narcotics Anonymous offers only one promise and that is freedom from active addiction, the solution that eluded us for so long. We will be freed from our self-made prisons."

This promise does not insure a perfectly packaged life for me or anyone else. It simply gives me the opportunity to pursue it. I can go after what I want and periodically evaluate my motives and methods. When necessary, I can accept defeat on some things in life.

These notions and experiences are very dear to me. In fact, they are important enough to give away. They are yours if you want them!

S.S.
Colorado

Honest with Myself

Today I realize that without honesty in all areas of my life I will not recover. There is no such thing as "kind of honest" for me today—there is only honesty or dishonesty. Most importantly I need to be honest with myself.

When I first came into the N.A. Fellowship I thought I was honest. I did not know what honesty was. A few months clean and I thought I knew God's will for me. God's will was to move to a new town and a few months later to move again. Today I see this was my will and my self-deception. But first I had to suffer the pain each of those moves brought me. In one of those towns I took an unethical job. The company lied and cheated. Because the money was good I refused to face my role in all of this. Again I deceived myself, "rationalized outrageous nonsense" and suffered the pain that it brings. I have shared at a hundred meetings how others are causing me pain, and believed it was true. Today I know this too is a lie. Through my inability to be honest with myself I have been causing most of my own suffering. I am the problem, and I will not move ahead in my recovery if I am unwilling to face the truth.

In our Basic Text, honesty is described as "indispensable." I believe today that no matter how openminded and willing I am, without a foundation of honesty, all my efforts to recover will come to nothing.

Today I believe God's will for me is to stay clean and work a program. I know of no other specifics. Today I believe the job I work must reflect my own values. I cannot lie and cheat to make a living. Today I believe I must become honest with myself because I need to share honestly. I must be willing to face issues I don't want to face and to admit my limitations., As an N.A. member once told me, "The things we are unwilling to tell ourselves are much more important than the things we are willing to tell ourselves. My experience tells me that this is true.

If I lie to you I am dishonest. If I lie to myself I cannot be honest. Today more than anything else I need to be honest with myself.

M.L.
Michigan

Back to the Basics

I began my process toward recovery almost four years ago, and I remember the excitement and relief I felt when I found that there was hope for this lost soul. I found that I wasn't hopelessly insane or unreachable. After a short stay in an institution where my addiction was diagnosed, I began to diligently work the way of life that would save my life. I was desperately lonely and my life was in total turmoil. I learned about a Higher Power and began putting the steps of this program to work in my life. Especially the first three steps. I learned to trust the will of a Power greater than myself. My life began to change.

Things didn't go very fast, and at times I became impatient, but I began to get well. I began to look the world in the eyes instead of at the shoelaces. The chaos and shambles that my eleven years of using had given me began to fall neatly into order. There began to emerge a joy to be alive in the place of the suicidal thought patterns that used to dominate. Miracles began to happen to me. My father and I began to rebuild a long destroyed relationship. We became friends. This from the hate and utter disgust for each other we used to feel. I was happy realizing that I had been given a new chance at life. I had friends and huge extended family of addicts. I had a

job that I liked, and became a consistent name on the Dean's list of our local college.

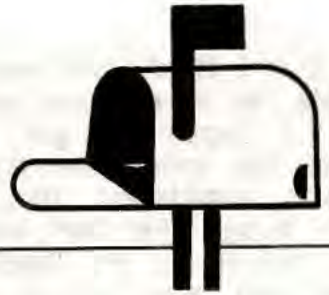
I began to get so involved in becoming a responsible productive member of our society that I became complacent about working the steps and the other things that had saved my life. I would be so busy keeping up my Dean's list image that I would stay home and work on a paper instead of making my regular meeting. I missed my daily meditation using my busy life for an excuse. I began to feel that I didn't need the program, as the occasional weekly meeting missing stretched into months. I didn't want to use, I still connected that with the pain and loneliness of former years. I thought, however that there was little left for me in the smoke filled meeting rooms of N.A. Last March I came to the edge of a cliff that made me look at all of this. I thank my Higher Power for this.

I was burned out with my job, dissatisfied with school and alone. For a time before this there were other signs that I missed somehow. My relationships began to become less important to me and broke down. Friends tried to reach me and asked me about my depression that I didn't think existed. I found myself in March running down a dark and restless tunnel. I was forced to change.

I was fortunate to have the chance to take a break from it all. During the next few months I was given a lot of time to think about my responsibilities to myself and to the program. I found across the country a caring and loving community of addicts willing to help me rebuild my sense of self. I looked at other communities and found a home nowhere but with the family of addicts in N.A. I am again grateful that I have been given the opportunity to give back a little of the life that N.A. has given me. I didn't even know that I had become apathetic and ungrateful, but I know again the excitement that comes from new growth in the program.

M.D.
North Dakota

Letters from Our Readers...



Dear N.A. Way,

Help! Help! Help!

As you can see by the shaky writing, **once again**, but much worse than ever before, I'm in a hospital detoxing from heroin and cocaine. I was really pushing fate this time. When I finally managed to get to the hospital, confused and scared, they all said they didn't recognize me. They said I look at least ten years older and I had lost at least fifteen pounds, maybe more. A walking skeleton! I was, too. No emotion, no idea what time or day it was and didn't even care except if I needed another fix—and cocaine was a new friend. HA! Heroin and I have been together 13 years.

It is now July 12—ten days since I began this letter, ten days since I've been able to write the rest, physically or mentally. I thought I was through the worst part of withdrawals, when bam, it kicked me right in the rear and I was violently sick again for days. I'm at a psychiatric hospital, the only detox patient here; the rest are psych cases. I felt I needed psychiatric help when I decided to give up and quit. I've been here a month today, and haven't had time to work on anything because I was so physically sick.

They're right about one thing; every time you go through withdrawals it gets worse. And after this time, the pain and hell of it almost killed me. I don't think I could live through one more time of withdrawals. Sure, I've quit lots, but never for good. The best so far was because one of the drug treatment programs I went to took us to N.A. meetings almost every night. By the time I left the hospital, I was comfortable going to those meetings, and it made it much easier to keep it up when I left. That was one and a half years ago. At that time, I loved N.A. meetings. They made me feel good and I hated having

to go back to work, because I couldn't go to meetings as much as I needed or liked. I tried at first, but grew so exhausted doing it all, I found I was in a bad and weak state when I was really tired.

I learned the hard way that on Fridays I was so tired and worn out from working full time, being a mother full time and going to meetings full time. So I slacked off meetings. Still I was always tired and eventually ended up using "once"; that was it. I didn't go back to using right away. I had 100 days clean, but after one time, then I found it easier to justify another time, cause heck, I was working so hard, I was being so good, I was so tired, so lonely, why not reward myself once in a while. And now I am paying for "rewarding myself."

Anyway, I've really missed N.A. and the great friends I made there. I was sitting at this hospital and saw your May '85 issue of N.A. Way and grabbed it up to read and loved every page of it. Unfortunately, I've lost the freedom this time at the hospital, I'm not allowed to go out the locked doors because I'm a junkie and may go get loaded if I'm out anywhere.

I'm on an emotional roller coaster, missing my two daughters, twelve and eight, who are suffering in their own way, and now I have to be put away from them for at least a year because I used again, and that hurts most of all. God, the price we addicts have to pay in the end.

I only pray this is the end. I realize many of your bottoms have been lower than this one of mine, but I only hope it's the last bottom for me. But I realize it's up to me. Anyway, thanks for the great magazine to read. I hope I can get my hands on another, because it's July and no June magazine is here, so I assume someone left it here. You might tell me how to get more issues. And thanks for letting me ramble on. It sure helps me, and maybe it will help someone out there. You don't have to go out and use, I did it for you and now I'm trying hard to stand back up.

Thank you,
L.S.
Oregon

Comin' Up

This space has been reserved for coming events anywhere in N.A. If you wish to list an event, send us a flier or note at least two months in advance. Include title, location, dates, contacts.

CALIFORNIA: Oct 25-27; 7th Annl S Cal Conv; Hyatt Hotel LAX; Stu 805-584-1135; Terry 213-370-9875; Preston 714-761-3222; Bridget 818-762-2305

CANADA: Oct 4-5; Bilingual Convention; College Marie-Victorin; 7000 Marie-Victorin, Montreal, Quebec; INFO: 514-845-1035

CONNECTICUT: Jan 3-5, 86; Connecticut's first convention; Marriott Hotel, Farmington; Mike or Al 203-347-7856

INDIANA: Nov 1-3; Mid Coast RCNA; Atkinson Hotel, Indy; Box 2182, Indianapolis, IN 46206; 317-Terry 873-3295; Micky 873-6519;

IRELAND: Oct 25-27; Ireland's First Convention; Dublin Sport Hotel; Kilterman, Co Dublin, Tel: 893631; PO Box 1368, Sherriff St Dublin

MINNESOTA: Oct 19; 4th Annl Fargo-Moorhead N.A. Banquet; Comstock Memorial Union, MSU, Moorhead; PO Box 3243, Fargo, ND 58108; 701 Rita 232-3543, Mike 235-3752 (Kick off meeting 18th 10 pm St Mark's, 670 4th Ave N. Fargo)

NEBRASKA: Oct 11-13; Nebraska RCNA-II; Best Western Airport Inn; Lincoln; 402-475-9541; PO Box 83615, Lincoln, NE 68501

OREGON: Oct 11-13; 8th Annl Pacific NW Conv for NA; Valley River Inn, Eugene; 503-Martin or Susan 485-1397; Rick 746-7466; Doug 689-7711

PENNSYLVANIA: Oct 25-27; Tri-State RCNA III; Ptsbrgh, PA; Airport Hltn Inn; 412-Carmina 695-7333; Terry 681-4532; Yvonne 304-232-5858;

SOUTH CAROLINA: Nov 1-3; Serenity Festival III; Myrtle Beach, SC; Jeff F. 919-746-3583; Michael D. 803-762-1690

TENNESSEE: Nov 27-Dec 1; Volunteer RCNA; Benchmark Hotel, 164 Union Ave, Memphis, TN; 901-Bill 525-4798; Gene 454-1313; Joseph 529-8779

WISCONSIN: Oct 11-13; 2nd annl Wisc Conv; Wausau Holiday Inn; Box 502, Wasuau 54401; 715-Heidi 845-5545; Bob 675-6673; Marilyn 675-2563

THE NA WAY

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THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

1. *Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.*
2. *For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.*
3. *The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.*
4. *Each group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or N.A. as a whole.*
5. *Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.*
6. *An N.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.*
7. *Every N.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.*
8. *Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.*
9. *N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.*
10. *Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.*
11. *Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.*
12. *Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, every reminding us to place principles before personalities.*

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