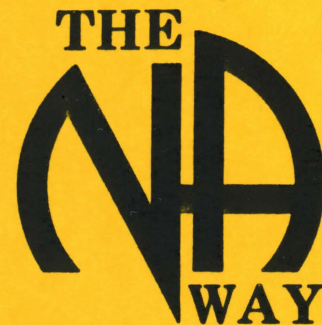


**My Gratitude Speaks  
When I Care  
And When I Share  
With Others  
The N.A. Way**



**MARCH  
1986**

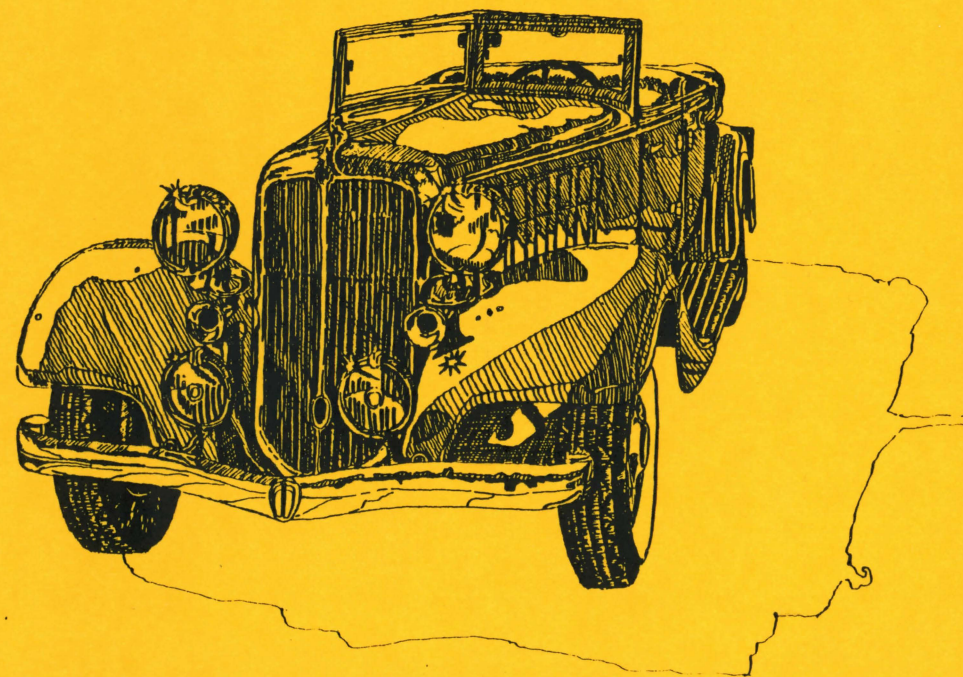
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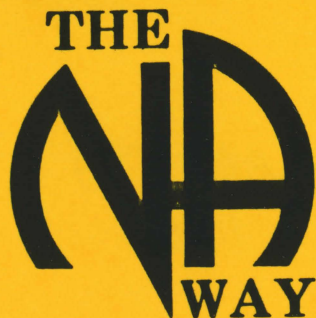
**NUMBER 3**

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## **N.A. Way Classics**







THE INTERNATIONAL  
JOURNAL OF THE FELLOWSHIP  
OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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## What is Narcotics Anonymous?

N.A. is a worldwide 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. It doesn't matter which drugs you used, or what you have done in the past. We are concerned only with how we can help addicts recover. It costs nothing to be a member of N.A.—there are no dues or fees. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using. 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*. For more information about the N.A. groups nearest you, write us at the address below.

*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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## FROM THE EDITOR

The history of Narcotics Anonymous is rich with stories of determination to build a viable, strong recovery Fellowship in spite of tremendous obstacles. After N.A. began to really flourish and spread, sometime in the mid 1970's, it became obvious that we needed a Basic Text. Many of us were skeptical that such a feat could be performed with almost no centralized services with the resources to support the project. A few dreamers got the project rolling, a few more joined the ranks, and pretty soon these dreamers were actually going to unbelievable lengths to write that book. A Basic Text literally emerged from the heart and soul of this Fellowship.

When the 1982 World Service Conference approved the book, a surge of joy and awe went through the Fellowship over what had been accomplished by a Higher Power, through trusted servants of N.A. That event forever changed the way we perceive ourselves as a Fellowship. We know it for sure now: "Together we can."

The N.A. Way was born of the same can-do pioneering spirit. This magazine was originally published, beginning in September of 1982, by an all-volunteer team of N.A. trusted servants. In spite of the difficulties involved in gathering input, in laying out the magazine, having it printed and shipped, keeping subscription lists and other records and books, and the myriad other tasks that go with putting together a magazine, they did it. Both this project and the production of our Basic Text were accomplished in the midst of sometimes great controversies and setbacks, but both were brought to completion.

Today, as a direct result of the publication of our Basic Text, this Fellowship is able to employ special workers to accomplish much of the work that used to be solely the domain of the trusted servant. This magazine is now produced by the staff of the WSO, which has the best chance of keeping up with the burgeoning growth our Fellowship is experiencing. Our literature too is now being produced by a mix of trusted servants and special workers as we continue to strive to bring together the best, most balanced team possible, within the guidelines of our traditions. The next few years will see the fruits of this new approach as we continue to grow and change as a Fellowship.

This first annual issue of "N.A. Way Classics" is dedicated to the pioneering spirit of that early editorial team, and of those who forged our Basic Text out of the heart and soul of a Fellowship that seemed too frail and young to accomplish such a lofty goal. The current team of special workers, volunteer writers and subscribers together salute the collective spirit of recovery in action that gave us our magazine.

This is a new era for Narcotics Anonymous. As we develop a vision of our own future that is truly staggering in its

possibilities, we take this opportunity to reflect on the service work that made this all possible. All of the stories printed in this issue were drawn from before June of 1984, when the World Service Office began producing the magazine. As our Second Tradition points out, a loving God has truly expressed Himself.

## BACK ISSUES

This is a good time to resurrect the discussion of the offer for *N.A. Way* back issues. Several months back we made an offer to sell back issues of the *N.A. Way* by Volume. Volume I, September, 1982 through August, 1983 will cost \$15.00; Volume II, September, 1983 through December, 1984 will cost \$17.00; Volume III, January through December, 1985 will cost \$15.00. Those of you who sent in a letter or form indicating interest will be receiving an order form soon. If any of you who have not already written wish to receive the order form, watch for it in the next *Newsline* and *N.A. Way*.

The delay in making these back issues available was the result of change in our duplication process here at the World Service Office that would allow us to print these at a considerable savings. That change has finally been made, so we are ready to move ahead. We are still expecting to take a loss on the overall project, but now it will not be a substantial one. We are grateful for the opportunity to make this piece of our history available to the Fellowship. Thank you for your patience.

R.H.  
Editor

*From the February, 1984 issue*

## Thank You, N.A., for My Life

I first used drugs at thirteen years old. My mother made me promise to never use again. I promised...

I didn't stand a chance. I used all kinds of drugs for eighteen years. My problem was definitely not with one specific substance.

At nineteen years old, I was given three days to live; at twenty-one I was discharged from my second detox (main admission wards of mental hospitals) as INCURABLE. The doctors had given up on me, the courts saw me as hopeless and treated me leniently for a number of years. I believed I was a hopeless case, too. I got busted again and was offered a choice of another detox or jail.

One doctor said just try to stop using, a day at a time. I thought, what a stupid comment to come from a trained doctor, and that he was a waste of time. That phrase was alien and unadaptable to my sick, extremely closed mind.

Finally a very shaky, nervous, self-conscious addict braved the unknown--without drugs. My head didn't work, my voice was slurred, and I repeated the same incoherent sentences, forgetting I had just said them.

I really believed I would never be okay again. I was so sick that the nurses contemplated removing the chairs from my padded cell. Three weeks later I cracked....

Shaking and crying I spoke to my God: "I'm sorry God I can't do it, I'm never going to be able to live without drugs again, forgive me!"

I lapsed into secondary withdrawals, and a friend at my bedside persuaded me to "Keep on, don't give up now!" (God bless him, he's an N.A. member today trying to get a meeting going on the south coast). There were no total abstinence treatment programs in England then. I painfully tried to control my substitute drug: alcohol. This is how I came to N.A. three and a half years ago. I was the first member to get clean via N.A. London. What a pain I was to those early members--all five of them.

My third try to stop using, the miracle happened. I've been privileged since to help start a few N.A. meetings. Today we are approximately three hundred members in England.

My early recovery depression has long gone. The steps are a treasure to me. I may still be crazy, but I'm a healthy crazy. I feel comfortable where I'm at. I understand recovery is my contribution to life. I have Good Orderly Direction today. I know N.A. works, because I only work N.A. I trust it, try it, and live it.

Anonymous



## RESCUED



I was on a ship one day and the ship sank. It does not matter whether I was the captain of the ship, or just a deck hand. It's not important whether I was up in the crow's nest or down in the boiler room. The fact remains that my ship sank and I was doomed.

Just when I felt hopeless and didn't have any will to live, I saw a lifeboat rowing towards me. I know this may sound insane, but I didn't want to get into the boat. The piece of wood that I was holding onto wasn't much, but I didn't want to give it up.

The people in the lifeboat pulled me in anyway, because I didn't have much fight left. They took me to an island and said that I could stay there for as long as I was willing to do twelve things. At the time, I didn't know what they meant, but it seemed like a nice place. Everyone was happy and smiling. Since I didn't have anywhere else to go, I choose to stay. I also noticed that around this island there were twelve sentry towers. I was told that the sentry towers were there to

protect us from forces outside the island. They told me that if I worked hard and learned the twelve things to do on the island, and tried to live by them to the best of my ability, a day at a time, I could get better. I was also told that I must learn the twelve sentry posts and live within their boundary so that the island would always be there for any shipwrecked person who wanted to stay. They told me that if I did these things, maybe one day I too could become well enough to venture out in a lifeboat and bring some hope to some shipwrecked person.

The Twelve Steps of N.A. saved my life, and the Twelve Traditions of N.A. insure that I always have a place to go when I need to talk with another recovering addict.

I made a mess of my life because I was unable to deal with reality on its terms. I choose to escape using many means. The vehicle which I choose that got me here was drugs of one sort or another. The use of drugs took me to the point of feeling hopeless, helpless, and less than human. I really wanted to die, but I didn't have the courage to kill myself. I just wanted to quit hurting, but didn't know how. It seemed as though everything I did went sour. I felt like a failure and very inferior. I felt unaccepted and unacceptable.

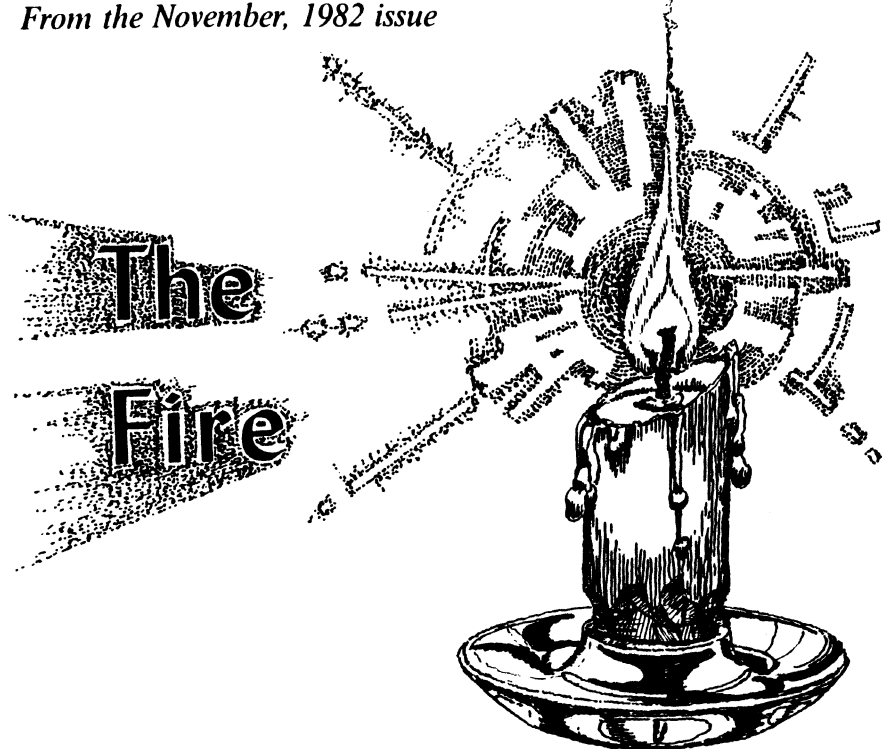
The Fellowship of N.A. was hard for me because I was very much afraid. The people in the Fellowship helped me to understand that I suffer from a disease--not a moral dilemma--and that made it a little easier. They told me that if I wanted to stay free of all drugs, I must surrender to the fact that I was powerless over my addiction and that my life had become unmanageable. I also learned that since I had a disease, I could recover.

For me today, my recovery from the incurable disease of addiction is active change of my ideas and attitudes, made possible when abstinent from drugs. The only way that I can live the Twelve Steps of N.A. is by not taking that first fix, pill or drink. Going to meetings regularly helps me to stay clean and teaches me how to live the program. The meetings provide an atmosphere of recovery and a place for identification. I feel total acceptance when I walk into an N.A. meeting. Today I have come to know unconditional love.

The Twelve Traditions of N.A. insure that an atmosphere of recovery and a place for identification will always remain. The Twelve Traditions keep our meetings free. Without the traditions the group fails; without the group, the addict dies.

I am very grateful to the N.A. Program for teaching me how to love, laugh and finally giving me a life and teaching me how to live it. I can only express my gratitude for recovery through selfless service--anyway, anywhere, anytime I'm asked.

Anonymous



My spiritual beliefs have changed considerably from the time I first came to N.A. Back then, just the mention of "God" or "Spiritual" brought all the negative images I carried from my strict religious upbringing. That "Holier-than-Thou" attitude, the guilt and fear that had been used to motivate me to pray to God, rally turned me off. Then I heard you say that this was a spiritual, not religious, program. I felt relieved, though somewhat confused. I'd always thought "spiritual" and "religious" were one and the same. Today I've come to see how different they really are.

My first taste of real spirituality was the unconditional love you gave me in those first few meetings I attended, and the honesty that prevailed in these rooms. This kindled a little fire deep down inside of me which brought a warmth and trust I'd never known before. My spirit gradually began to awaken; I kept coming back for more, and the fire inside slowly grew and spread all through me. I could tell that others were experiencing that same fire; it was evident in their eyes.

One day I discovered a way to make this feeling last a little longer than the short hour and a half length of the meeting. I went forty minutes early to help set up chairs and make coffee. It was like being the one who goes out to gather the logs and twigs to prepare for the fire. As other members began to come, that fire inside began to burn brighter and stronger than before, on a solid bed of embers.

As I became more and more involved in service to the program, and surrendered to N.A. as a way of life, the fire became continuous and perpetual. Having come from the cold, barren world of addiction, this new feeling was one I cherished and fed as much and as often as I could. At one point, it seemed that the fire became too strong and was beginning to rage out of control. I felt totally powerless over this. That's when I discovered the steps.

Like any good fire, this one needed tending, and the steps were the right tools for the job. They helped bring it back under control, letting it burn at an even rate, without burning out. Like any new tools I've ever used, I didn't really know what to do with the steps when I first picked them up. That's when I found a sponsor. He'd had experience with these tools. He'd been practicing the steps in his daily life for a while and seemed to have a good feel for them. I wanted to be an expert overnight, but he explained that everything he knew came from hard work and a willingness to learn. He said he hoped he never became an expert, because N.A. "experts" are not very teachable. So, for a brief period my fire burned evenly and brightly as I listened, asked questions, practiced, and learned. I was going to master these tools! Once I made it through my Fourth Step and shared my Fifth Step with my God, myself and my sponsor, I could no longer see what earthly good he was to me. I felt he'd given me everything he had to offer, and now he was just in the way between me and my God, and the rest of the Steps! Well, it took me a full year to figure out that I was going around in circles, making little or no real progress in my recovery. I stayed clean though, made a lot of meetings, conventions and conferences, but my little fire inside was in a constant state of extremes; from extremely dim like a candle that's melted down to nearly nothing, to raging blindly out of control like a forest fire. I burned through jobs and relationships like it was all some kind of game. I always seemed to wind up empty-handed. I was still talking a good game when it came to the steps, but my "white knuckles" betrayed the kind of recovery I really had. My God is patient. He waited until I was ready, and in a state of humiliation and despair I found willingness, the key to the Sixth Step, along with a sponsor. Once again I discovered that deep feeling of serenity and calmness, the products of a slow, steady burning fire.

Today I know that the maintenance of this fire inside of me is my primary responsibility. I've learned that I don't have to do it alone. When I share my progress on the steps with another addict, the fire achieves a certain warmth and glow that cannot be described. And you know what? My knuckles are no longer white! I feel alive and free. This program works--IF YOU WORK IT!!

Anonymous

## On Getting Involved with Service



So often I have felt that my life had no purpose. I fell short of what I wanted my purpose to be. Confusion was a constant state. On one hand, I felt that my purpose could best

be served through a profession, and I sought to fulfill myself through my job. On the other hand, as a woman, I felt that marriage and a family should be my purpose in life and I sought the "right man" to complete my purpose. I felt lost and confused.

Today I know what my primary purpose in life is. N.A. has given me that purpose. I may be used as an instrument to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers.

I became involved in structural service several months ago, and as many of you who are involved can relate to, I jumped in; I didn't wade in. I spread myself thin, and volunteered for everything that I felt capable of.

The more I became involved in different areas within the service structure, the more I began to feel that something was wrong. I didn't feel that anything was lacking in my personal commitment to recovery. I did, however, feel a gnawing in my gut that my commitment to recovery and the priorities in my service work were being confused. I am grateful that I have loving friends in this Fellowship around me constantly who lovingly tell me when I'm screwing up.

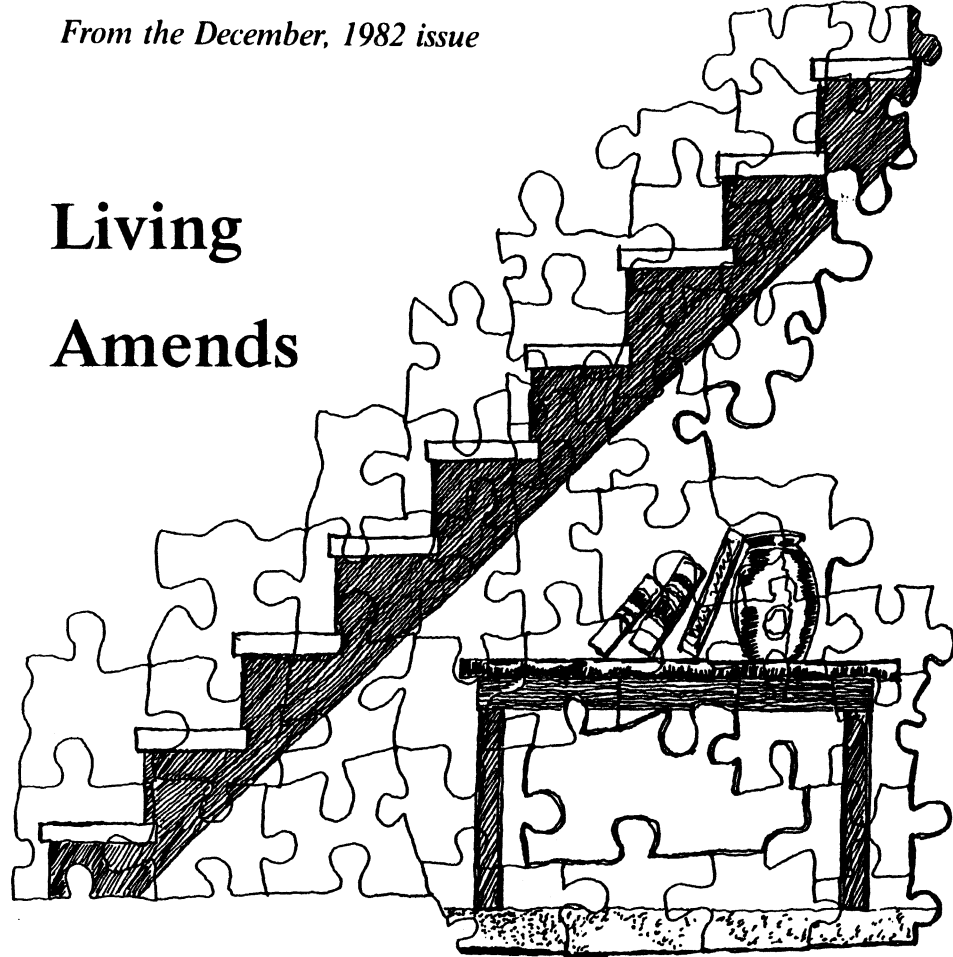
Reading our Basic Text helped me find the key that would clear up the confusion in my mind. I felt sure the collective experience in our book would show me the answer. I found it. "We attend meetings and make ourselves visible and available to serve the Fellowship." "Working with others is only the beginning of service work. N.A. service allows us to spend much of our time directly helping the suffering addicts as well as insuring that N.A. itself survives." I looked at my involvement in service work. I evaluated other people's involvement in service. I concluded that I wasn't putting enough effort into working directly with others.

Today I understand. Sharing at meetings and one-on-one with a newcomer what I have been given through N.A. is the most important way I can help our Fellowship grow. This must be primary in my life, for it is the only way to keep my personal recovery. Helping to insure that N.A. itself survives through the implementation of our traditions and the service structure is necessary and vital, but without providing my part of the atmosphere of recovery in the groups I attend, our service structure would have less to support. Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the addict who still suffers. One of the best ways to insure our Fellowship's survival is to share a pure message of recovery with the newcomer who then may share what they have found with the next newcomer who comes through our doors.

No matter what aspect of service I involve myself in, I cannot, for my own recovery and peace of mind, afford to neglect my primary role.

Anonymous

## Living Amends



The first time I was exposed to the Twelve Steps, two of them stuck in my mind. Fear overcame me, and although I knew that the program would be my only chance in life, I could not fathom completing Steps Eight and Nine. Those steps almost prevented me from making a commitment to the program. I projected the scenario surrounding each and every amend. I then went into complete denial in regard to amends, and felt that I owed no one amends, that the entire world owed me. That thought is a main thought during my active participation in my addiction. Gratefully I had a sponsor at the time who I allowed to actively participate in my recovery. I shared those feelings of fear and self-centeredness with that sponsor, and in turn was provided with proper guidance.

My sponsor quoted many of the "wisdoms" of this Fellowship such as "Just for Today," and "I Can't, We Can," and more. The sharing provided me with enough faith and courage to work the steps. I was constantly reminded of what step I was on and was encouraged to stay in that step and not allow my mind to jump ahead to future steps.

Putting one foot in front of the other I was able to work my way through the steps, one at a time. By the time I reached the Eighth and Ninth Steps, I feel I had a strong enough foundation to work these steps for the right reasons. I had decided to turn my will and my life over to the care of my God which to me essentially includes feeling good, accepting life, and trying to do the right things for the right reasons.

When I wrote my Eighth Step list, three major amends were included: myself, my family, and society. These amends, I felt, could never be accomplished. There were others on the list which included financial amends, situational amends and the like, but I had faith that these could be completed without much difficulty, and I set out to do just that. However, thinking of those three major amends, I once again froze, and felt defeated. I was unsure of those amends. This is where openmindedness, sharing and listening to the experience of others in the Fellowship began to pay off.

I came to realize that those three major amends could not be completed with just one try. They needed to be living amends. I could not say "I'm sorry" one more time to my family. I'd said that so often and their trust and faith in those words had long been diminished. The best amends I can make are living amends. I explain my disease to the best of my ability to them. Living the N.A. Program daily, I am becoming the family member I always wanted to be. I still make mistakes. My disease often takes over, but in trying to live unselfishly and giving of myself, my amends to my family are made on a regular basis.

My amends to society are shown through becoming "a responsible, productive member of that society." Staying clean, and helping others find recovery through N.A. is the best way to amend my harm to society. I used to think that being productive meant earning a respectable living. Being productive today for me means living the answer rather than remaining a part of the problem, and helping others to do the same.

Throughout my addiction, no matter who or what I hurt, I hurt myself at the same time. Self degradation, self destruction and self loathing were constant. I was killing myself mentally, physically and spiritually. Again, making amends to myself means living the N.A. Program. I can begin to feel good about my life, accept the direction of my God, and live my life with love.

Living the N.A. Program daily as best I can is the best way to make amends to all who come in contact with me, including myself. The program and my God have restored some sanity to my life, and my disease can be arrested.

Anonymous





# I Can Handle It

"You can handle it." That's what my "street friends" always told me, and for five years I believed that I *could* handle it.

After being so lucky as to graduate from "High" school, I lost my job. Not being tied down I took off for a well known West Coast "Druggsville." After four months of drugs, living at four different homes, and more drugs, I mooched a ride to my midwestern hometown.

During my first week home I spent nights and mornings in bars, and days wherever I could find a bed. At the end of this week, my best friend and constant companion left me for the West Coast.

I felt deserted and said to myself, "Oh no, I'm alone, but that's okay, I can handle it." Since I was never one to party alone (misery loves company), I went on a search for a new party buddy. Bar after bar, each of which was loaded with people, only made me feel more and more alone. I couldn't even find a joint, let alone a friend. I gave that up and went to visit a relative. I told her how alone I felt, and that things just weren't the same. I felt like I was crazy. There I was with nothing left. "What has happened to me?" I wondered. There was definitely something wrong. Could it be all the drugs I was doing? It had to be. Now that I recognized my problem, what could I do to help solve it? I wanted help. I didn't know anyone who had ever done anything about a drug problem except to use more drugs. I realized, "I can't handle it."

For the next six days I tried again to "handle it"--just one more time. I practiced my same old routine. On the seventh day I partied like I never partied before. I nearly met my God that night by almost driving into a very large tree at fifty miles per hour. By some coincidence I missed the tree, but I saw my life pass before my eyes. The very next day, my God saved me by bringing an old "party friend" back into my life. He called and said he'd be in my area and asked if he could stop by. "Sure," I told him.

When he got to my place I was amazed at how different he seemed. We sat down for a chat and I asked him where he was going.

"To a church."

"For What?" I asked.

"A meeting" he replied.

"What kind of a meeting?"

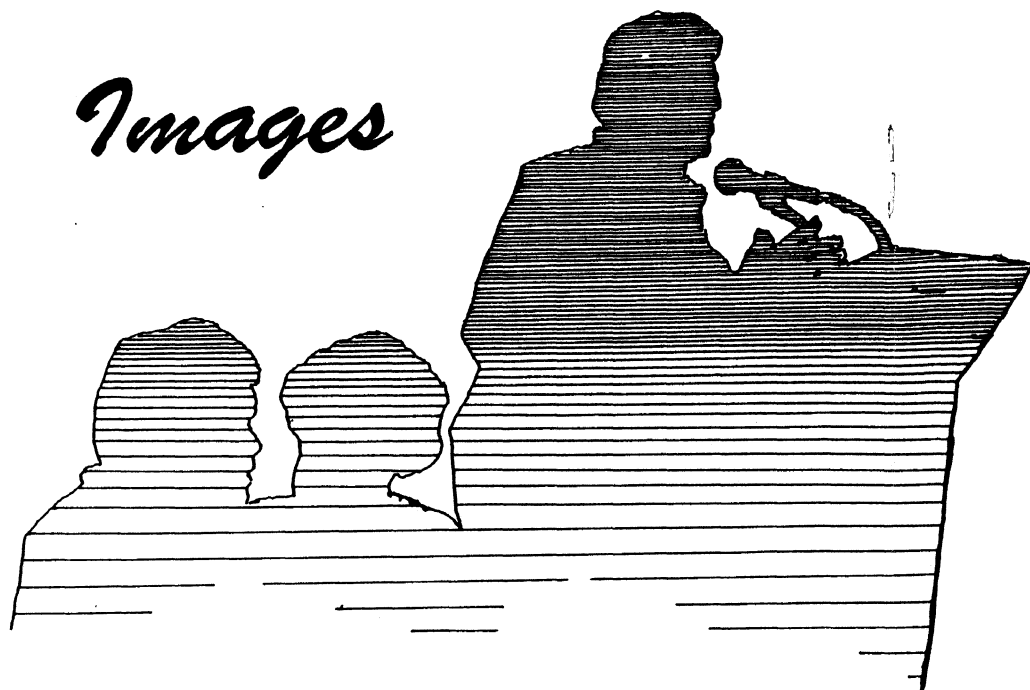
"N.A."

Still further curious, I asked "What's that?" He started to explain and before he could finish, I asked if I could go with him.

I couldn't believe the love I was surrounded with at that meeting. I couldn't wait to go back next week. That one meeting wasn't enough, so the next week I shared my feelings and those beautiful people saw to it that I got to more meetings. I've been clean since my second meeting, and I love it. I'm so grateful that my God brought N.A. into my life. I couldn't handle it alone. I have one hope: that the person who is as lost as I was can find N.A. too.

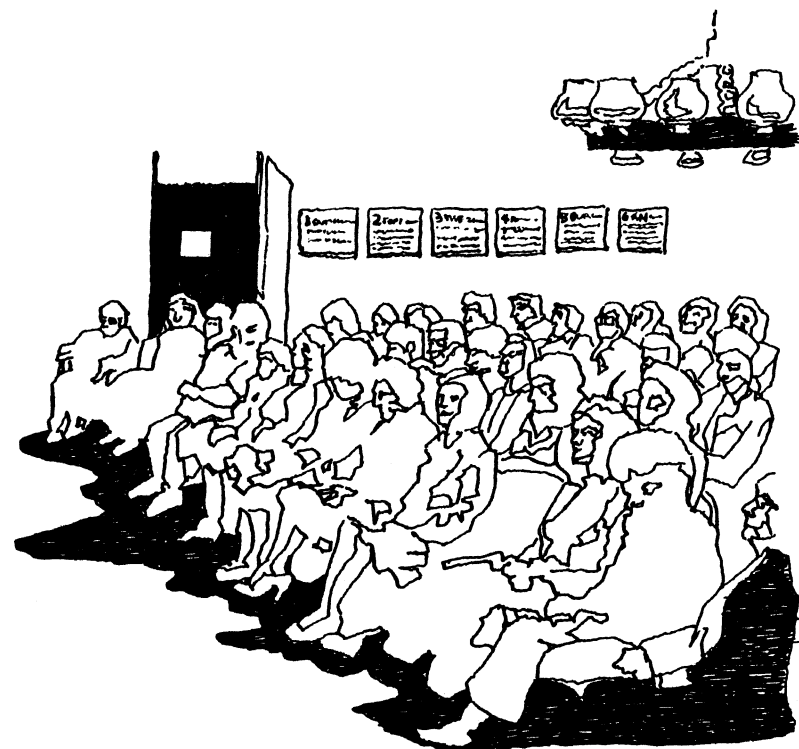
Anonymous

# Images



The image of Narcotics Anonymous is something to which each of us can and does contribute. When attending conventions for our Fellowship as anonymous members, we leave an impression on the community. Our dress, our manner, our demeanor and our behavior is evaluated by the hotel staff, and those merchants we come in contact with during such events. We all know the obviously negative things that we have done that contribute negatively to the image of N.A. There are some obvious things that we can do to contribute positively to the image of N.A., not only at conventions or other events where we as a group of anonymous members have an impact on large communities, but also in our daily lives and our group efforts that have a long-lasting effect on our local communities.

I make a personal statement about who and what I am to my neighbors through the way I dress, the way I talk, the way I act, and the way I keep my house and property. Many of them saw me in my active addiction. Most were concerned. Several have asked what has happened to me, and I have at times mentioned that I attend N.A. meetings. I often indicate that attendance at those meetings is what has resulted in a



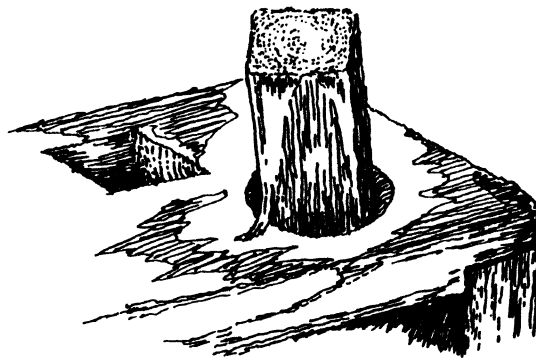
change in my life. What the public sees, what my neighbors see, is the way I behave in society. Society places value on obeying the law. Society places value on public expression of morality and immorality. How we behave when people are watching is a direct reflection on our personal program and can have an impact on the image of N.A.

As secretary of a group, I told my story to the board of a local church in order to secure a meeting place. I shared the fact of my N.A. membership with these people. Then I spoke to them about the principle of anonymity, and requested that they keep in strictest confidence what I had told them about my personal life. The condition in which we leave our meeting place on a weekly basis reflects very strongly the local image of our Fellowship.

Periodically, our group holds community awareness meetings to inform concerned professionals and others who have routine contact with addicts seeking recovery. We inform them of the N.A. Program, what we offer, how and when we're available. We have personal contact with these professionals whenever possible and urge them to attend. How we appear to them reflects on the image of N.A. The dignity and public acceptability of those N.A. members who

*(Continued on page 26)*

## To The Newcomer



This article was written in an effort to dispel the fears, stereotyped thinking and preconceived ideas that most of us had in our initial contact with Narcotics Anonymous. You are probably not unique in any way you think or feel, because we were all new in the beginning. We had impressions, good and bad and sometimes expressed them. Being new is frightening enough, but questioning whether or not we belong is also something many of us worried about. When we recognize our problem, and that Narcotics Anonymous could be a solution to that problem, investigation became necessary.

Were these members really like me? Did they have the answer that had so far eluded me? Was I again lost in a world of confusion and desperation, or was recovery possible? These questions and many more will be answered for each of us in their proper time. For now, being here is enough.

Most of the members of this Fellowship project an inner calm, manifested by a genuine smile or occasional laughter. This at first may appear to be a "put-on," but you will later find that they have gone through a kind of transformation from their ugly past to the beauty of the present. It's an "inside job" that does not happen overnight, but don't be discouraged; you can experience it, too. N.A. members can be "dead" serious, and they have every right to be, for this is their life and their program for survival. Occasionally, you will notice small gatherings or "cliques" of members who appear to be secretly discussing the solutions to the world's problems. These small groups of members are probably close friends who closely identify with each other. You too will in time become part of a set of people you feel comfortable with. It is, however, most important for us to concentrate on the group as a whole, for that's where the strength lies. "Am I ever going to belong?" you may ask, "I keep hearing that if I have an honest desire..." and that "I'm a member when I say I am," but you may still wonder about those horrendous bottoms. Those acts of complete and absolute insanity. Those years spent in jails and prisons. The mental institutions. How many failures, what criteria is necessary to qualify? Is it a requirement to use heroin, or to be a felon? The answer to

those questions is "Whatever got you here, got you here!"

Even with our questions answered, many of us still felt out-of-place; like a square peg in a round hole. We had to surrender the "hope-to-die" theory and give up the idea that "once an addict, always an addict." Although we suffer from a disease, we can obtain, maintain and sustain a fulfilling, productive life. With the help of others we saw and felt something new. It was called hope!

The word "grateful" shocked many of us. In our wildest imaginations, we couldn't find anything to be grateful about. Surely these folks weren't grateful for being addicts or for the disasters that their lives had become. We recoiled at the thought of a Higher Power or even more at the mention of a God. What was that *love* talk all about? How could any *anyone* love everyone? This sounded absurd and out of place! The hugging looked peculiar, but seemed real enough. In general, we may have wondered if they were play-acting or if they "walked like they talked!" They kept saying that the newcomer was the most important person, yet most of us noticed certain individuals who portrayed a different picture. There appeared to be many contradictions in the language, slogans and jargon used. The truth of the matter was we just plain didn't comprehend the meanings. Were we destined to feel like the new kid on the block or would we ever fit in? We wanted recovery and we wanted it now! We were told that in time we would understand, and that more would be revealed.

They said that by sharing our burden, it would be lightened. In other words, we could "talk ourselves well." We were assured that our attitudes and behavior would change through a process called growth. Members suggested that we listen carefully, that we get names and telephone numbers, and actually call those people. We were told to get a sponsor (whatever that was) and to sever all ties with our old "friends" who continued to use drugs. We wanted to rebel! We felt defiance and rage well up inside of us, but then we thought, "who are we fighting?" Later, it became clear to us that we attend meetings for ourselves, and other people could share experiences that would help us to change. Many of the older members said that it took an "all-out" effort consisting of surrender, acceptance and repeated practice of the principles of the program. The principles being the Twelve Steps of recovery which allowed us to clear away our deepest secrets, our guilts and fears so we could discover who we really were.

This program was designed for people whose lives were filled with misery and self-destruction. It shows us a new way in which peace of mind, freedom from bondage, and love of self can be attained. Today the addict has a chance. You can find it as we have in Narcotics Anonymous.

Anonymous



## It's Not Just Words



Recently, I was given an opportunity to pass on a gift of love, a gift that was given freely to me four years ago. I was planning a leisurely weekend, something I hadn't done in quite a while, when a phone call brought news of the death of

a friend's mother. Torn between my need to rest, and my need to be there for my friend, I paused to pray and meditate.

My brother had died suddenly when I was four months clean. Angry and in pain, I wanted to run from my feelings, to deny they existed. "Program people" saw my need for support and filled that need before I even knew it existed. They understood my inability to reach out, and surrounded me with their love. In the midst of all my pain, all my denial, one fact could not be denied. These people cared about me--really cared. It wasn't just words.

"My friend has plenty of family, and a large local Fellowship for support, I'd only be in the way," I thought. "After all, we've only been acquainted for a few months, and I never even met her mother..." I remembered though, how people I barely knew showed up at the funeral home just to let me know they cared, and I remembered how I had needed them.

I made my decision and a phone call. My friend's father answered. I'd never met him before. I felt awkward and inappropriate as I explained briefly who I was, expressed my sorrow over his family's loss, and asked him to please tell my friend "I'll be there." Not just words...

I packed and began the long drive. I wondered if my ego was so inflated that I believed I was indispensable. A few moments' meditation brought my answer. My friend needed someone and I needed to know someone was there for her. I needed to be that someone. I understood.

Our Basic Text says "A simple hug can make all the difference in the world." How true. No words were needed as I held my friend. How trying it can be to go through the motions of politeness and courtesy when all you want to do is cry and grieve. How grateful I felt to be there in those moments when my friend was overcome with grief, and just our eye contact brought a moment's peace. "A wordless language of recognition, belief and faith, which we call empathy..." How healing it can be to have someone who knows your feelings. I understood not only pain, but I understood that the denial of pain could kill.

Many times again I felt awkward and inappropriate. My clothes "weren't good enough" my hair "wasn't right." Release from this self-obsession came when my friend said I was needed there. The instinctive feelings that come through meditation, and through sharing our experience in recovery, are real. "If sharing the experience of our pain helps just one person, it will have been worth the suffering.... Words mean nothing until we put them into action."

My friend had a need that I understood. I could meet that need. I care, very much. It's not just words.

Anonymous



## Communique on Communication

The recovery I have today was made available to me because I communicated a desire to stop using, and Narcotics Anonymous answered.

Many of us die because we simply don't cry out for help. Our groups die or become stagnant because of lack of communication between members, other groups, areas or regions. I feel our worldwide Fellowship can be brought even closer together through simple word of mouth. Communication is certainly a building block of unity. Negative communication, or none at all, surely spells disunity.

I tend to be the only member in our local meetings with "substantial" time clean. It's easy to allow my disease to convince me to try to control ideas. I then sit in meetings sounding like a clucking, cackling old hen. I avoid this sick tendency when I see it in myself by simply sharing from my experience. My time has given me experience living clean, and I respect this and share it. In this way, what I share can add to the warmth, love, empathy and unity, enhancing the atmosphere of recovery in our meetings.

I use what works: I communicate in Narcotics Anonymous language and terminology. I feel this adds to our unity by encouraging oneness in our groups' message of recovery from addiction, the N.A. way. This may also contribute to our Fellowship's distinct, separate identity as a viable program of recovery. It works for me.

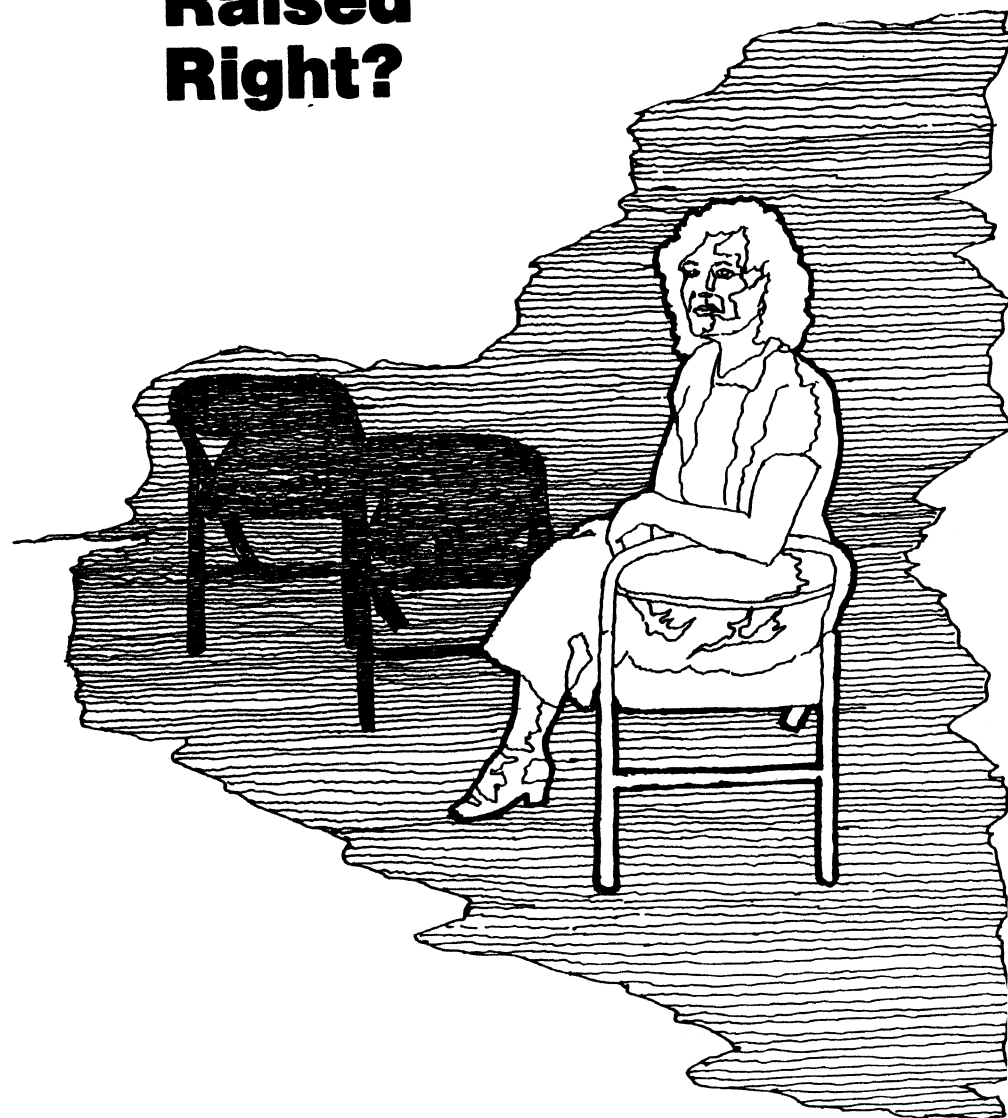
We often hurt each other through negative communication. I've seen lots of damage done to members through malicious gossip masquerading as concern. How many times have we assassinated the character of another member because they weren't working the program the way we thought they should?

The importance of positive communication finally came clear to me recently. I was driving down the road and a song played over the radio: "Communication breakdown--I'm going insane..." Many times in my past, when someone tried to help me, I too would say, "I just want everyone to leave me alone."

Today, my KEY to the H.O.W. of this program is communication. Talk to each other about Honesty. Talk about Open-mindedness. Talk about Willingness to try.

Anonymous

## Raised Right?



While growing up in an upper class neighborhood I was frequently reminded by my peers of "how lucky I was."

Having had the advantages of well educated parents, proper education, etc., I was assured of a successful life. I was being raised right, or so I was told. Yet, somewhere deep inside I never quite *felt* right. I was able to keep up appearances, yet internally all hell was breaking loose. My disease of addiction already had a firm hold on me long before I succumbed to a symptom of it, the daily use of drugs.

I am an addict, yet if one were to believe in the stereotype, I shouldn't be. Didn't addicts come from broken homes, abusive parents, or at the very least, lower class neighborhoods? And didn't they all shove dirty needles in their arms and lie on filthy mattresses? No, but my progressive disease took me places I hadn't even had nightmares about. The innocent experiments with my friends turned into an obsessive daily *need*.

In eight years, I was to progress from simply drinking to simply smoking to simply taking pills. The first time I used a needle it was a direct result of having a few beers. Even mildly intoxicated, I was in no frame of mind to say no. This started another pattern which would continue for a long time. Here's the catch. I gave up the needle "on my own" and went to back to "just" alcohol and pills. This allowed me to rationalize that I was no longer a "junkie." I now used only so-called "acceptable" forms of escape. But this escape route led me through two marriages, several psychiatric units, one rehabilitation center, and finally to jail.

There I sat, this supposedly proper young lady who should have had the world at her feet, in jail. And I wasn't even sure why I was there. Later it was explained. When the door of a bar was locked in my face and I became so angry that I attempted to drive my car into the building, I was taken off to jail. Several other things happened, yet I'm sure the picture is clear to you.

I'm grateful today for that arrest. Only then did I become a little honest with myself. Soon after that, N.A. found me. I was introduced through a series of events to several addicts, and they started taking me to meetings. Something inside clicked. That internal hell started to calm. I was told I had a disease, and at that point a tremendous guilt was lifted from me. For years I had felt within myself I was a disgrace to my family, and a failure. I no longer had to carry those feelings; yes, I'd been raised right.

I know I have a disease. A deadly disease. Yet, it is a disease that can be arrested through the Narcotics Anonymous Program and the help of other recovering addicts. Now when someone tells me how lucky I am, I believe it inside.

Anonymous

*From the February, 1984 issue*

## Clean Up



Do you have one of those rooms or corners where N.A. recovery material just hangs out doing nothing? I do. Sometimes I have to sit on the floor because N.A. literature, tapes, etc. are occupying every flat inch of space. I sometimes find it hard to eat on my kitchen table. When I get desperate and need space for myself, I get everything in one pile, place it in that room or corner I mentioned before and then I start losing things that I need.

Last month as I was looking for some very important recovery material, I found a few N.A. tapes under a foot locker. They had probably been there for months. That's when I made a decision to share them with other N.A. members. I always felt I shared what I had, I even talked with other members about how much recovery material is just hanging out in someone's house. There are probably thousands of pieces that can be put together and developed into very important recovery material. I'd forgotten how much I had stored away myself.

I took the chance and sent a tape to another N.A. member. It was a tape I really enjoyed listening to. It was hard to give away because I really wanted to keep it, yet it seemed to me another member needed it. I discovered that I enjoyed sharing this way. I did it again and again. It got easier. Now when I write to another member, I look around to see what I can share with them. Sometimes I just send a little card with the Serenity Prayer on it.

Right about here I want to mention the feelings I was getting. I was feeling good about giving this stuff away, I felt it was good for my recovery, a big change from the way I used to be. I started to wonder why I didn't need these things anymore. It seems to me that I do need the material I shared. I also believe my H.P. will give me what I need when I need it. It's a big relief for me to know I can pick up almost anything I have and share it with another person.

I really did enjoy listening to that first tape I gave away. A short time later a copy of that tape was sent to me by another N.A. member.

Keep coming back, it works.

We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Anonymous



# GRATITUDE

Today is one of those days in which gratitude comes very easily. It's funny how my Higher Power puts people and situations in my path to make me appreciate the little things. I need to have gratitude for the small often unnoticed gifts that my God sends my way, for when I don't, I find it hard to feel good about the big, obvious miracles.

For me, gratitude begins with being grateful for another day clean. If nothing else seems to go right in a day, as long as I didn't pick up, I know that it was a day well lived.

Next, I take a look at how I've dealt with different situations that came up in the day. Where did my surrender come in? How well did I allow my God to work in my life? What character defects of mine were very noticeable in my dealings with others today? Did I let them run their course to the point where they injured someone else or myself? If so, did I admit my wrong and make amends? Did I take the time to pray and meditate today? Did I reach out to another recovering addict and share my experience with them? Asking myself these questions at different points along my day, I'm often given moments of gratitude when I realize I've done one, a couple, or all of these things today. Comparing myself to myself, I realize it wasn't too long ago I wouldn't have bothered doing any of these maintenance exercises.

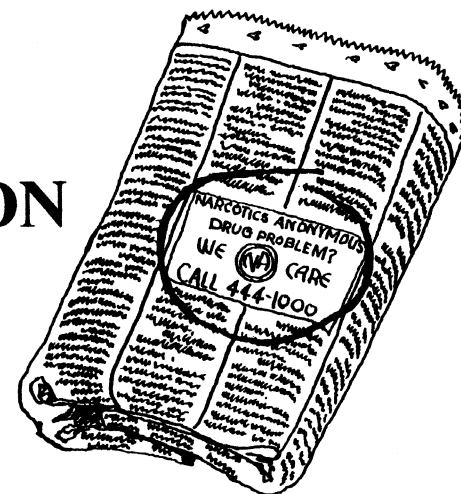
Today, I am able to live a full, active life. I am a productive member of society. I feel human, and my heart beats in step with rest of humanity. I am not unique. I'm not special. I am ALIVE!!! This is only possible through surrendering my will to that of a Power greater than myself, and asking my God to lead me through the day. When I do this sincerely, my day is filled with many little miracles through which my God gives me a heartfelt gratitude for being alive.

I learned to ask myself all of the questions I mentioned above in our newly approved pamphlet, "Living the program." I call it my Tenth Step inventory guide. It's a very simple, uncomplicated exercise which takes about ten minutes of my time. The result, I've found in using it on a daily basis, is twenty-four hours of quality recovery from the disease of addiction. When I don't use it, I may have done all of the things mentioned above, yet I lose out on the gratitude and awareness of realizing I'm doing the right thing. Or worse, I'll begin to forget to do those things, and slowly lapse into spiritual complacency. I quit seeing the little miracles which make up the day, work becomes a hassle, people get in my way, and I become an addict alone in bad company, real quick. Recovery for me is something which is just for today. It's my choice to either make it special or just another day. Today was special. My gratitude speaks.

Anonymous

# PUBLIC INFORMATION

## The Group Level



My home group consists of five regular members. Some have come and some have gone. We do get support from N.A. members in near by towns. Simply, N.A. hasn't been here long, and hasn't grown to a "whopping" twenty members.

The past five or six months we have tried to do something about this situation. Our area service committee gave us some suggestions and we used them.

After a meeting we wrote up some colorful index cards announcing our meeting. We displayed them on local bulletin boards (libraries, police stations, post offices, hospitals, etc.). A few weeks later we began using the newspaper. Public service announcements are free. We had no immediate response from even one addict seeking recovery; *it seemed useless.*

Last week at our meeting there were two new members; one of the newcomers said, "I read it in the newspaper, and came for help." We all went out for coffee and fellowship after the meeting and our new friend came along. We shared and this new member could relate. Our friend attended a couple more meetings that week and kept coming back! We all felt joy and gratitude today when our new friend celebrated ten days clean.

Our footwork was rewarded; our Higher Power shows us that we will grow. A loving God has expressed himself at our group level, and we have carried the message.

We will soon start a second N.A. meeting in our city. The time and place has been established. This is another gift of enthusiastic service.

Anonymous

conduct our "community awareness" meetings, again reflects on the image of N.A.

My home group also sponsors an institutional meeting in a local rehabilitation center for addicted people. We co-sponsor this meeting with our area service hospital and institutions subcommittee. We have made a commitment to this institution to bring a meeting in on a weekly basis. We have made a further commitment that this meeting will carry the message of recovery from addiction as found in N.A. How well we live up to that commitment reflects not only upon our group and the individual members attending, but also on the image of N.A. Such efforts within the treatment community have the potential to effect N.A. as a whole. We try to be sure to live up to our commitment.

Oftentimes my personal rebellion and defiance leads me to dress, behave, and use language in a rebellious and defiant manner. This personal immaturity reassures me that I am still sick, still powerless over the disease of addiction. I'm confident that this local treatment community is tolerant of my growing up. I am grateful, however, for the awareness that my public immaturity can effect that Fellowship which I hold so dear. In public information and institution work on a group level, I feel that my personal opinions about recovery from addiction are not an appropriate message to carry. My knowledge of and experience with the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions of N.A. are the most appropriate sharing in such situations.

Our Basic Text provides sufficient guidance in these matters. It seems that study of this Basic Text can help me express the "WE" of our program. Appropriate use of personal experiences which illustrate the material in our Basic Text constitutes responsible sharing in P.I. and H&I work.

These are some things that come quickly to mind in terms of the image that we project to the public at the group level and as individual members. Many events are sponsored by groups, areas and regions to help us learn about and have fun in our recovery. I can't think of any such event where some member of the local community is not watching our behavior. How would have them view our Fellowship? How can we help them see it as it is?

Anonymous

*Editor's note: This article brings to light an often missed aspect of our public relations policy as stated in our Eleventh Tradition (see back inside cover). It is often more difficult to see how we can practice the traditions in our personal lives than to see how we can practice the steps. Perhaps this article's theme, tied directly to the Eleventh Tradition, would make a good meeting topic--one that would make the traditions more personal.*

## 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.*

**ALASKA:** Mar 14-16; 2nd Annl Anchorage Alaska Conv, Anchorage Alaska Airport Inn, 3333 International Airport Rd, Roger (907) 248-9418

**CALIFORNIA:** Mar 7-9; 8th Annl Northern Cal Conv, Monterey Conference Center; 8th Annl NCCNA, PO Box 223115, Carmel, CA 93922

**CANADA:** May 3-4; 2nd French Conv; Info: District 04, Box 31, Grand-Mere P. Quebec, Canada G(T 5K7; (819) Ginette 537-9448; John 537-6429

**COLORADO:** July 4-6; WSVC 3, Stouffers Concourse Hotel, Denver, Box 816, Boulder 80306; (303) Janice 388-4777; Pam 893-0580; John 642-3273; Gary 830-2640

**FLORIDA:** July 3-6; FRCNA V; FRCNA V, Box 14738, Orlando, FL 32857-4738; (305) Richard 677-7426; Karen 281-7307; Tim or Lisa 830-0140

**GEORGIA:** Feb 20-23; GRCNA V; NW Area Marriott, I-75 & Windy Hill Rd, Marietta, 30062; Ed (404) 436-0311; Tom (404) 429-0239; Bob (404) 589-0697

**HAWAII:** Feb 14-16; Camp Himelani on Island of Oahu, NA Round Up, P.O. Box 23436, Honolulu, HI 86808; (808) Mark 373-9774; Richard 261-1037

**KENTUCKY:** Feb 15-16; 1st Kentucky Reg. Tradition Learning Day; KRSCNA, Box 9741, Bowling Green, KY 42101; (502) Jim 895-2530 Patty 491-1836

**LONDON:** Aug 28-31; World Convention-16, Wembley/Conference Center; Registration in the U.S.A., Vida (818) 780-7951, P.O. Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409; Registration outside U.S.A., P.O. Box 667, London, England NW8-7JW

**LOUISIANA:** Mar 7-9; LA RCNA; Bossier-Sheraton Inn, 2015 Old Minden Rd, Bossier City; LA 71111; (318) Bob 686-2270; Marlene 865-0856; Dale 425-7951

**MASSACHUSETTS:** Mar 28-30; 1st Annl New England RCNA; The Westin Hotel, Copley Place, 10 Huntington Ave., Boston, MA 02116; Brian P. (617) 452-7875

**MICHIGAN:** Jul 3-6; RCNA of Michigan; Freedom II; Mich. Inn, Southfield

**MISSISSIPPI:** Apr 4-6; MRCNA IV; Hilton, Biloxi, MS; Lisa (601) 392-7267; Renee (601) 362-0897; Donna (601) 862-7334

**MISSOURI:** June 6-8; SMRCNA-I; Henry VIII Hotel, 4690 N. Lindbergh, St. Louis, MO 63044; Show Me Region Conv. Comm., Box 596, St. Charles, MO 63302

**NEVADA:** Feb 7-9; 1st S. Nevada Conv for NA; Showboat Hotel, Las Vegas; (702) Corby 737-7357; Anita 382-3550; Dave 870-1357; Box 70591, Las Vegas, NV 89170

**NEW JERSEY:** May 9-11; The Berkley Carteret, Sunset and Ocean, Asbury Park; (201) Kandi 988-9451; Gary B. 774-4846; Bob H. 742-3566

**NEW YORK:** Jun 27-29; 1st Annl Northern New York RCNA; Wells College Campus, Aurora, NY; Mel (315) 548-3610; Ilga (607) 273-8884

**NEW YORK:** June 13-15; 2nd NYRC Freedom II; Stevensville Country Club, Swan Lake, NY; (718) Susanne 646-4433, Greg 435-0156, Barry 238-3492

**NORTH CAROLINA:** April 25-27; Charlotte Area Conven.; Marie Gibson, 5101 Park Rd, #143, Charlotte, N.C. 28204; (704) Andy 892-3286; Brett 535-3865

**OHIO:** May 23-25; ORCNA IV Conv; Hollenden House, E. Superior; ORCNA IV, P.O. Box 29517, Cleveland, Ohio 44129; (216) Joe 671-3316 Tommy 352-2042

**OKLAHOMA:** Mar 7-9; Fourth Annl Mid-America Convention; MAC-64 E. Woodward, Tulsa OK 74114; Sherilyn D., 918-742-1471; Mary Mc. 918-583-3463

**OREGON:** April 11-13; 1st OSIRCNA; Portland Airport Holiday Inn, 82nd St & I-205 Columbia Blvd. Exit, Portland, OR; (503) 775-5319

**PENNSYLVANIA:** Jun 20-22; 7th East Coast Convention; Bloomsburg Univ ; 7th ECCNA, Box 211, Taylor, PA 18517; (717) Ron 457-0587; Rich B. 457-9751

2) Feb 28-Mar 2; 2nd Annl Learning Conf; George Wash. Motor Lodge, Route 22 & 7th street, Allentown; (215) Kristen 867-6827; Barry 433-5866; Bill 398-8438

3) April 4-6; 4th Grtr. Phil. Reg. Conven.; Phil. Centre Hotel, 1725 Kennedy Blvd., Phila., PA; (215) Steve 925-7766; Sheryl 624-8516

**TEXAS:** Mar 28-30; 1st Lone Star RCNA; Austin Hilton Inn, 6000 Middle Fiskville Rd, Austin, TX 78752; (512) Jimmy 443-7215; Vic 448-2144; Tary O. 443-0136

**WASHINGTON:** Feb 28-Mar 2; First Wash/N Idaho RCNA; Sheraton Tacoma Hotel, 1320 Bdwy Plaza, Tacoma, 98402; US 800-325-3535; Canada 800-268-9330

**WEST VIRGINIA:** May 9-11; West Virginia Conv for N.A. III; Cedar Lakes Conference Center, Ripley; (304) Paul 342-7506, Danny 925-7088, Phil 292-0896

**WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE:** April 28/May 2; Airtel Plaza Hotel, Van Nuys; Registration: Vida (818) 780-7951, PO Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409



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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 N.A. 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 non-professional, 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 N.A. 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, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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