

THE N.A. Way[®]

M A G A Z I N E

July 1989

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FROM THE TRUSTEES:
What is addiction?

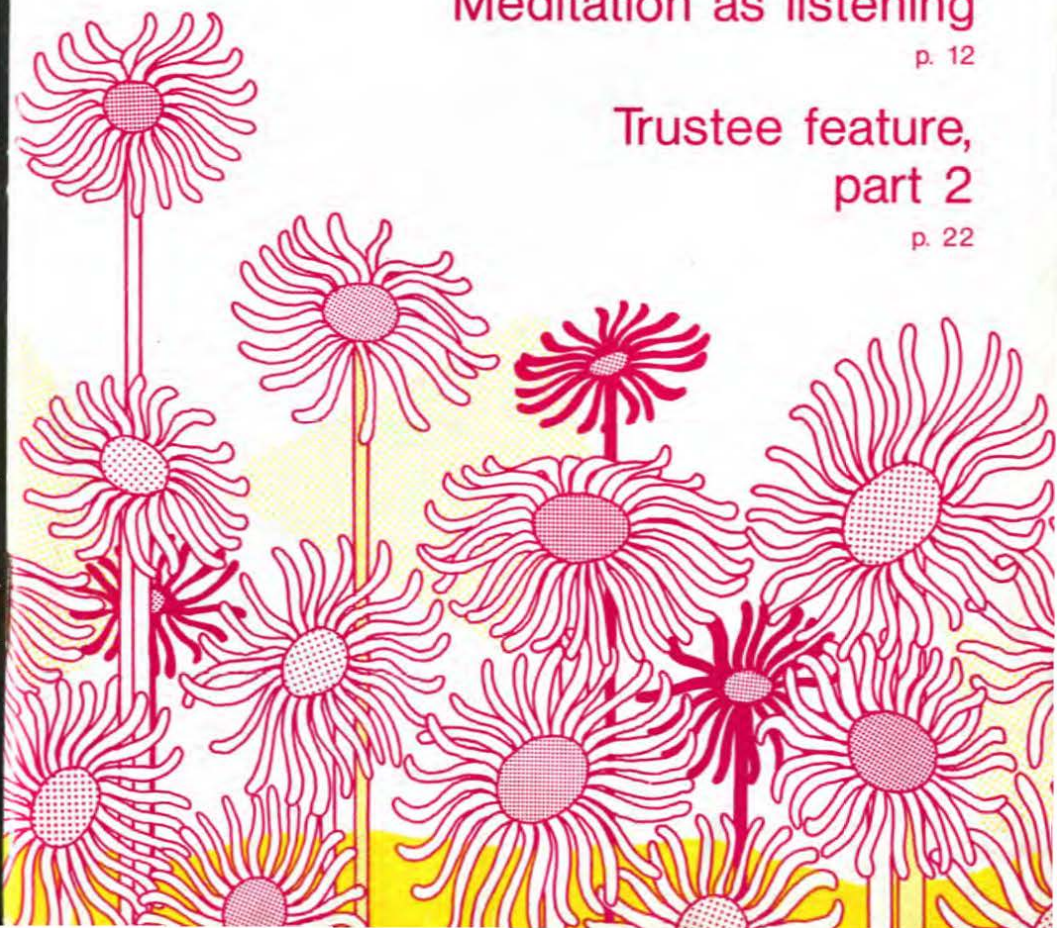
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Meditation as listening

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Trustee feature,
part 2

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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 these steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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THE N.A. Way[®] MAGAZINE

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A new level of acceptance

Since coming to Narcotics Anonymous I have learned that if I get out of the way and let God have his will in my life, things work for the better. I haven't always been aware of that and I still try to take control from time to time. My awareness came

with a suggestion from my sponsor when he told me to write about my feelings.

It was hard at first, because I had trouble identifying honestly what my feelings were. So I procrastinated until the pain was too great to refuse. At first I wrote simple things, like "I'm mad at my cell partner" (I'm in prison on a cocaine charge, but N.A. works no matter where you are); or "Why didn't I get a letter today from some of my N.A. friends? I'm disappointed."

Then my writing became more thorough and honest: "I'm mad at my cell partner because he doesn't ever listen to my problems or joys but he always wants me to listen to his. But wait a minute, look at the time when I am asking him to listen. It's usually when he has a problem he has just shared; that's probably on his mind, and he can't be open-minded at a time like that."

Or, "I guess I didn't get a letter because all of my N.A. friends are real busy; you know how it is on the streets!" Was I being honest?

Then I learned about powerlessness and acceptance. Those truly are hard lessons to learn. I had spent twenty-some-odd years trying to control things, manipulating and conning to get my drugs and the reactions I desired from people. Now I'm in a place where there is someone to tell me my every move: when to eat, when to sleep, when to work, when to play, and how I am suppose to feel about all this in order to get out—meaning staying out of trouble, eating crow at times, like when a guard talks to you like a dog, etc.

It would seem to a "normal" person that prison lifestyle would surely teach you powerlessness. Not so! For me it was through working the Twelve Steps and learning acceptance

that I began to understand powerlessness.

First I had to accept that I was responsible for my mistakes, and that

***It would seem
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Not so!***

I had to pay for the ones I was arrested for. Then I had to accept responsibility for my recovery. Then I had to accept the fact that I had done a lousy job of running my own life, turn it over to my H.P., and accept the suggestions of the program and my sponsor. That is when I finally realized my powerlessness.

I have never listened to anything but my own self-will run wild. So today I feel good about myself, even though I still get in the way sometimes. Today, because of N.A., I usually become aware of this when it first happens, and I turn it over. My sponsor was right when he told me to write. It sets off a chain reaction of awareness and growth.

I still have a few more months to do in prison, but I am grateful for where I am today. I have a program for life that has given me friends who love me genuinely, an H.P. that understands me and, to be perfectly honest, has saved my life.

It took what it took. Thanks, N.A.
T.M., Alabama

More is revealed

Just for today, I am enjoying the freedom and growth that have resulted from actually working Steps Six and Step Seven. For a long time, I wasn't really sure how to incorporate these two steps into my program of recovery.

The Basic Text says that in order to experience the joy of ongoing recovery, I must undergo a personality change. That is what working my Sixth and Seventh Steps on a daily basis is cultivating.

When I first found recovery in Narcotics Anonymous, I was burdened by the strangling defect of jealousy, fostered by my total lack of self-worth. I was also crippled by fear, which was caused by my inability to trust anyone—including myself and God.

On the suggestion from my sponsor I started praying, asking a Higher Power that I didn't quite understand to remove these two defects from my life. I totally surrendered to the fact that they were destroying me. Having lived with them for most of my life, I hated the pain and insanity they caused me. I honestly wanted recovery

from active addiction, so they no longer served a purpose in my life. They had become my enemies, stumbling blocks in my search for recovery.

That was to be the first of many of my Higher Power's acts of love and grace in my recovery. He filled my life with recovering addicts who showed me, by their gifts of love, that I was indeed truly lovable and worth saving. Through allowing these same addicts to teach me the principles of "just for today," my Higher Power gave me the gift of faith.

That was over five years ago. Since then, God has allowed me to slowly, sometimes painfully (unfortunately, pain is still my biggest motivator!), become aware that in order for him to remove the defects that are hindering my spiritual growth, I must surrender them to him.

For a long time I couldn't understand why I would continue to do the same things that disrupted my recovery when I knew how miserable they made me. I would still isolate, not pray, run on self-will—it sounded like the Basic Text's description of insanity: "... repeating the same mistakes

and expecting different results." I had to get tired of the defects before I could work my Sixth Step. I came to realize that, just like drug use, my character defects were symptoms of my disease.

I always thought Step Six and Step Seven meant I had to be tired of *all* my defects of character and ready to have God remove *all* of them before I could use those steps as tools in my recovery. In order for me to grow and change my personality, it's been necessary for me to give up my "all or nothing" attitude toward my Sixth and Seventh Steps.

The list of defects I had discovered in my Fourth Step provided a starting point for me. The ones that caused me the most pain, I readily prayed to have removed. In time, God replaced them with their spiritual opposites. Some of the other defects I just wasn't ready to give up yet. I had to suffer a little more with the pain and insanity they caused before I could let them go.

Today, if I work my Tenth Step, I don't always have to "hit bottom"

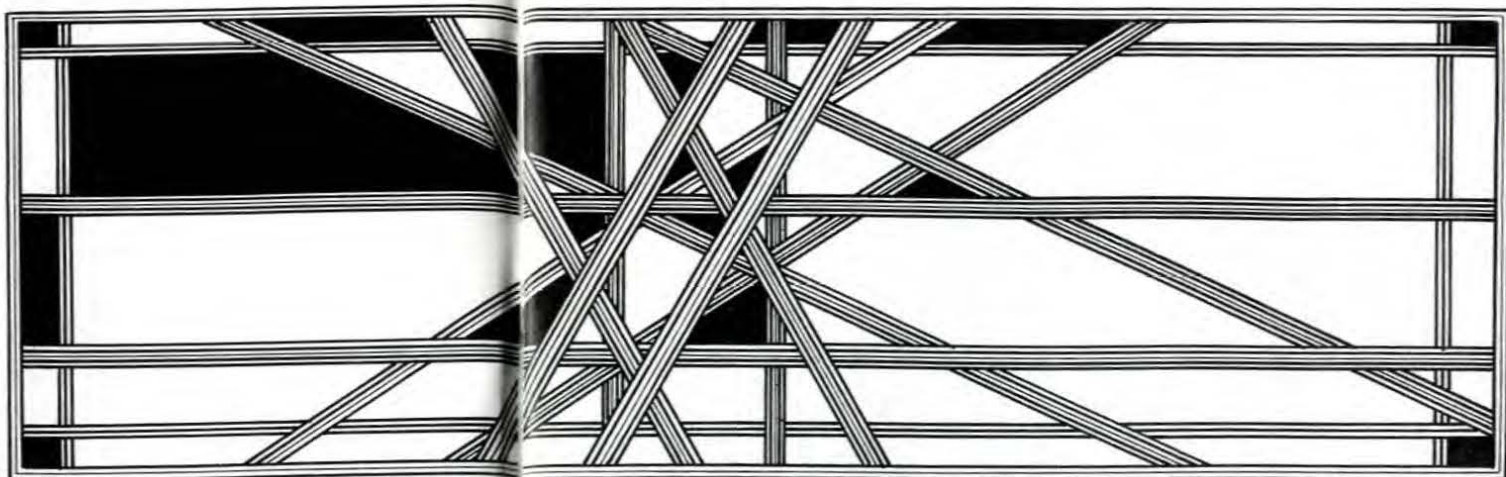
before I'm willing to surrender my defects to God. He gives me a daily reprieve from the symptoms of my disease when I turn them over to him—and I don't just turn over the using, but the defects as well. Every day I'm given the choice to pick up drugs again. The same choice applies to my character defects. I can relapse physically with drugs or I can relapse emotionally with defects. A lot of days I

I've had to give up my 'all or nothing' attitude toward the Sixth and Seventh Steps.

relapse emotionally, but God is patient with me. He helps me loosen the grip of self in order to let his love and grace transform my defects into spiritual principles that allow me the freedom to live and love the miracles of recovery.

Anonymous

N.A. Way • 5



Simply an addict

Hi, I'm an addict, simply an addict. Thank God. . .

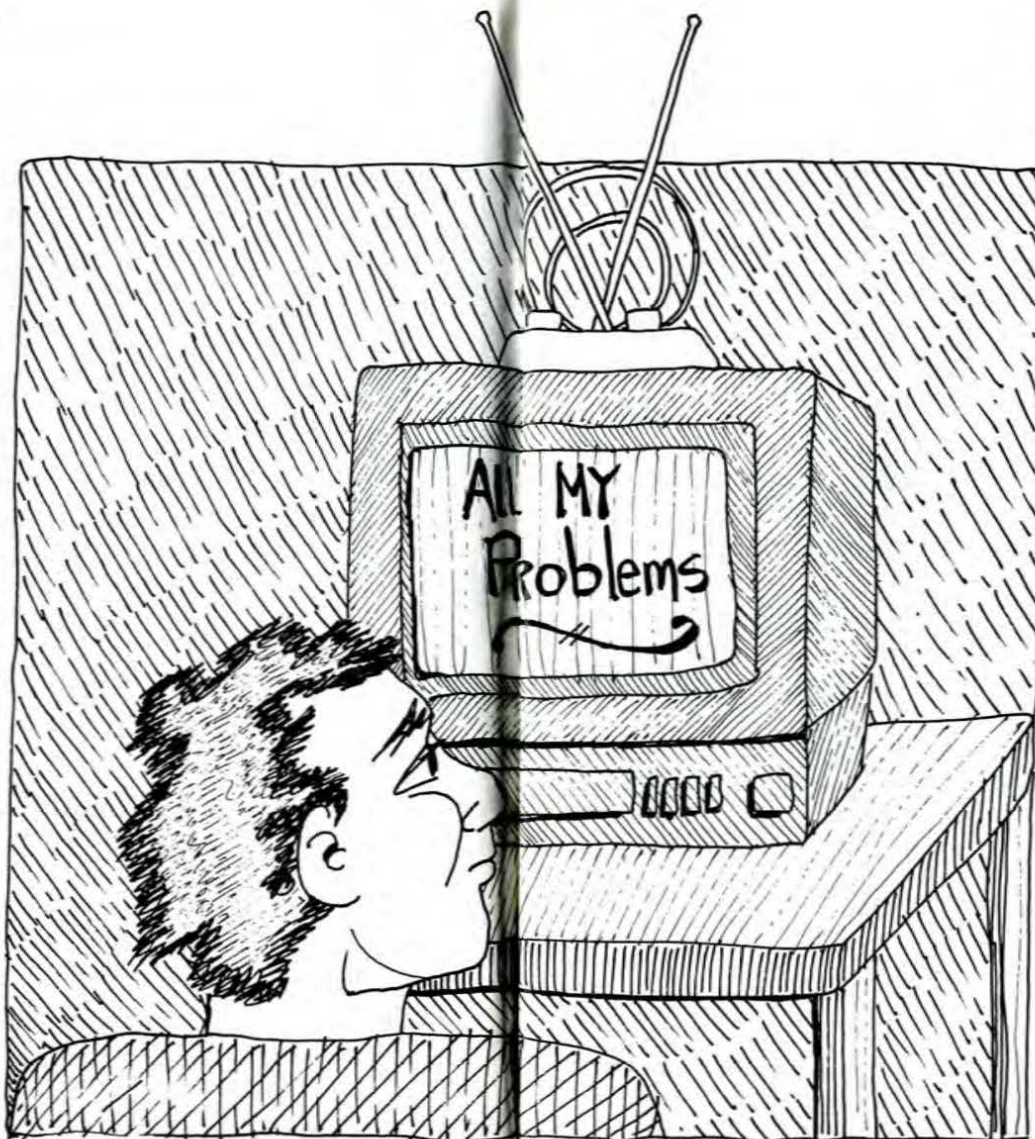
When I first came out of treatment, I was so confused. I wasn't sure about what I was or where I belonged. At that time I was going to four different fellowships, N.A., A.A., O.A., and E.A. I would identify myself as a drug addict, alcoholic, and an overeater with emotional problems.

A guy in my home group would identify himself as a drug-addicted alcoholic. I thought that sounded super-cool, so whenever I went out of town to meetings, I was a drug-addicted alcoholic with an eating disorder. By that time I knew that my emotional problem was directly related to my addiction, so I had stopped saying I had emotional problems.

I really didn't hear what was being said in meetings; all I could hear or see at that time were the differences. I was thirty-seven, old enough to be most of these kids' mother. I couldn't see how they could ever relate to me.

Back then I heard a lot of discussions in and around meetings about specific drugs. I never shot anything into my veins and never snorted anything up my nose. I also heard a lot of discussion about withdrawal and

how horrible it was and how hard it was not to go back to using, and I began to think maybe I wasn't an addict. After all, before coming to N.A., I had stopped smoking pot and using other street drugs when I had to, without too much difficulty. Of course I had turned to my other drugs of choice: alcohol and prescription drugs.



I'd start feeling guilty about my lifestyle, and I'd get into religion. I wouldn't drink, but I didn't give up prescription drugs because I thought I really needed them. I found something else that seemed to ease the pain of living: that was food.

Well, it was a vicious cycle. Every time I'd try to stop using, I would go

into very intense life-threatening depression. Not seeing this as withdrawal, I thought I was going insane. It got worse each time, and I finally went into a depression that I couldn't come back from. No drug on earth could help me this time. I saw only one solution to the situation: suicide. A failed suicide attempt got me into treatment.

So there I was in recovery, but what was I? Was I the drug addict, overeater, alcoholic, or just crazy? Should I attend N.A., A.A., O.A., E.A., or all of them?

About two years into recovery, I got the answer when I heard a speaker talk on the "disease of addiction." We are not trying to cure pot or cocaine, this speaker said. We are here because we have a disease—addiction. I finally understood. It didn't matter what I used or didn't use, because the using was only a symptom of the disease.

What was I? The drug addict, overeater, alcoholic, or just crazy.

From that day on, I knew where I belonged and how to identify myself. I identify myself simply as an addict. For me to identify myself as anything more than an addict would be like saying I'm better than or worse than you. Thank God I'm simply an addict, just like you.

L.S., Alabama

Walking the talk

One of the symptoms of addiction is self-centeredness: the belief that my life and actions only affect me. Through developing a Higher Power and the capacity for honest self-appraisal (a conscience), I understand today that my life and actions *do* affect other people.

Three months ago at my Monday night meeting there was a newcomer who caught my eye. I knew that it was wrong for me to even think about getting involved with her. Through the course of a month or so, she and I became friends. I had never questioned my motives at this point because I knew that anything other than friendship was out of the question. Was I just feeling one of my defects of character: lust? I prayed on this, and sincerely in my heart just wanted to be her friend.

We began to share honestly about ourselves with each other, and I found out that she was very much in touch with her feelings. We were seeing each other about two or three times a week at various meetings, and I still knew I just wanted to be her friend.

Not long after starting to see each other, I asked myself, "Am I going to these meetings just to see her?" One

night after a meeting I felt like I had to be honest with her, that I was attracted to her for honest reasons. Just letting her know seemed to make me feel better. I was no longer hiding the truth. My sponsor has always told me, "Avoiding the truth is living the lie! It's easier to be honest when someone asks for the truth than when someone *doesn't* ask."

I told her how important it was for me not to be involved in a relationship my first year of being clean. She seemed to agree and we left it at that. I told her that I would like to go out as friends, maybe to a movie or dinner. When she said "yes" all sorts of

I told her how important it was for me not to be in a relationship during my first year clean.

feelings kicked in that I had really never felt before.

At that point, I went to my sponsor and my support group. I got honest with them and asked them if this was acceptable. My sponsor told me if I really cared and respected her, I wouldn't go out with her. My network of support told me the same thing. They said, "Give her a chance to grow."

Despite their strength and hope, I went with my feelings and saw her. I became uncomfortable, because today I know there is no right way to do the wrong thing. I started to doubt my

program, my sponsor, and my support group, and almost cashed in on my Higher Power.

Through constantly working with my sponsor and my Higher Power I was able to see "the wisdom to know the difference" of "thy will, not mine, be done," and it hurt.

The pain of shutting down my feelings toward her was like nothing I had ever felt. Putting down the drugs

hadn't hurt that much. I had to have faith that in time, if it was meant to be, it would.

I thought about how I had ended up in N.A.—"I always got what I wanted." I shared this with you so that maybe you can draw some strength and hope from my experience. Plain and simple, "Give the newcomer a chance." I know I did the right thing; I'm sleeping at night again!

J.G., New Jersey



The importance of surrender

For me, surrender was something the guys in the black hats did at the end of westerns. It was not something with which I had much experience.

I was newly clean—scared, but receptive to getting better—when I attended my first N.A. convention. The theme was “Surrender to Win.” For a long time I felt confused by that phrase. Today, since discovering Narcotics Anonymous, I embrace all it stands for.

Of all the times I’ve surrendered in this program, two events stand out in my mind. One of the scariest surrenders in my recovery was the acceptance that my marriage was a very unhealthy relationship. My husband was a “people” in the “people, places, and things” that were keeping me sick. Through a haze of tears and sadness I told him how I felt, and we separated. For a long time thereafter, I felt deeply alone and abandoned. I was sure that with the next step I took, I would fall off the face of the earth.

The love and support from recovering addicts in the meetings helped me see I was *not* alone. They helped me see I could stay clean, even in pain.

It’s been several years that I’ve been the single mother of two small, beautiful creations of God, and in that time, doors have opened for me that I never believed I deserved to have opened.

The most dramatic surrender, however, occurred in the past few months. I am in the process of accepting (acceptance is a long process for this recovering addict) that the profession in which I have worked for over eight years is a threat to my recovery and has kept me safely “stuck” in the “victim/rescuer” role. It was a profession chosen while my disease was active. It was a part of the person I was. I even feared it might be *all* that I was. There were times when I thought that if I left this profession I would discover I was hollow inside. But my

When God provides me with the faith and strength to truly surrender, many doors open.

recovery is precious to me and my top priority. So I took a deep breath and surrendered.

In surrendering to my Higher Power’s will, I am taking some scary steps. I am planning to return to college after an eight year absence.

Many times I have felt overwhelmed by anxiety, fear and self-

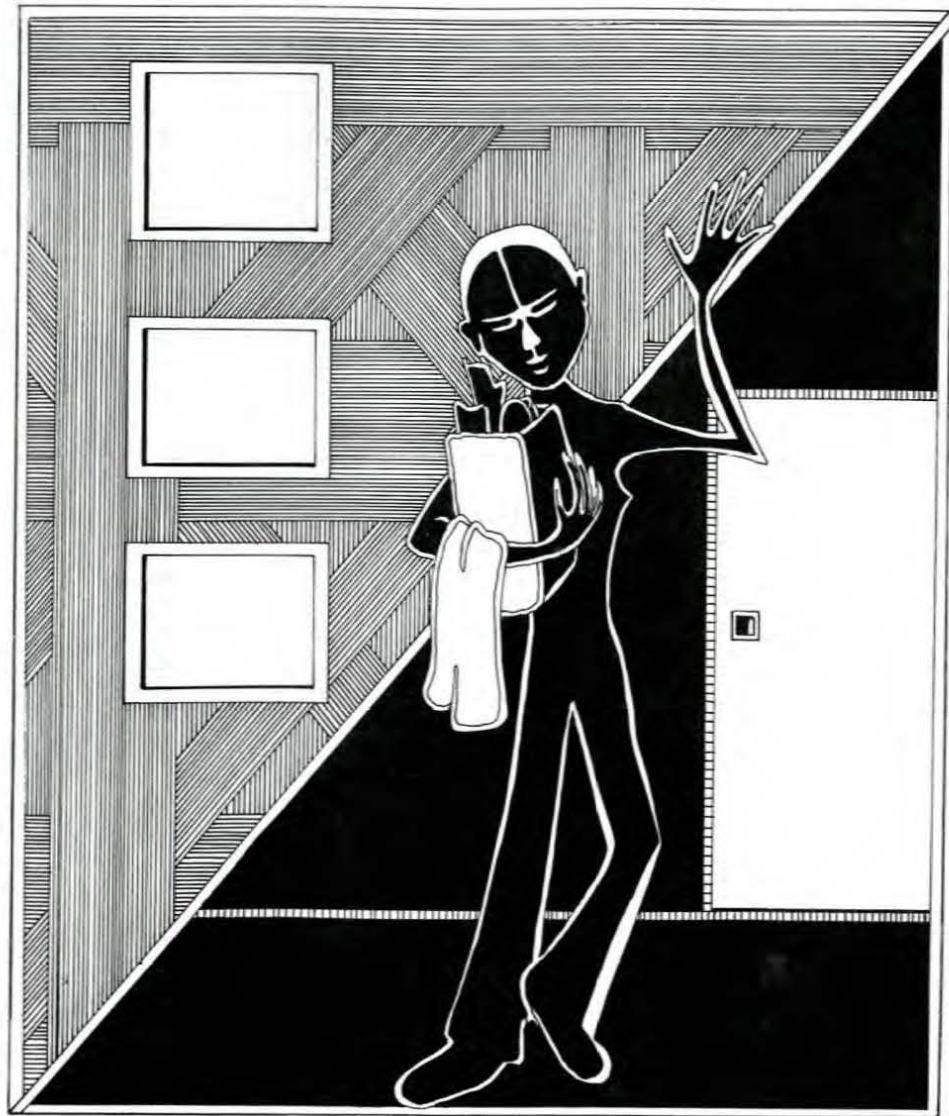
doubt. But looking back I see my Higher Power has always been standing near by to accept these doubts and fears from me whenever I am willing to release them to him.

Surrendering is still difficult. After all, it involves letting go of the control I believed I possessed for so long. It involves trust. It involves accep-

tance. And for most of my life, I have accepted very little. But when God provides me with the faith and strength to truly surrender, many doors open.

Thank you, God, for this rebirth. Thank you for the strength to surrender.

P.M., New York



Listening

I've always heard that praying is "talking" to God and meditating is "listening" to God. I've always known that talking too much and not listening enough was a defect of mine. It was really brought home to me how this defect extended not only into my relationships with people, but with God as well.

In the beginning I worked real hard on listening to those around me, for that was the easiest way to hear what



God had to say to me. In time, though, I realized that for four years in my recovery I had only been working half of my Eleventh Step.

I had always *prayed* diligently for God's will for me and the power to carry it out, but I didn't have the time or patience to *listen* for his reply. The only way he had of revealing his loving guidance to me was through other addicts, which worked fine as long as I was in contact with them on a regular basis. But eventually I got to a place in my recovery where I wanted to "improve" my conscious contact with God, not just maintain it like I had been for so long.

After making the decision to work *all* of my Eleventh Step, I spent a lot of time searching for the perfect meditation technique. That was futile. I soon learned that there are as many ways to meditate as there are people who practice it. Finally, I realized that the best way for me to learn to do it was to just do it! All I needed was fifteen minutes alone and a desire to quiet my mind in order to "listen."

It's been almost two years since I started that simple act of meditation. I know today that just like the prayers I said for so long, my meditations don't require any formalities, special preparations or drawn out rituals—just a simple desire to listen for my Higher Power's will for me.

When I first started trying to meditate, I had to force myself to do it every morning, and then my mind would wander while my body resisted any attempts at being still. But just like with our meetings, I knew that if I just kept coming back, I'd finally get the hang of it. If I kept bringing my body, my mind would fol-

low. So I did and it got easier.

After about a month of daily meditation, I noticed I didn't get angry or lose my patience as quickly as before, and my thoughts were becoming more God-centered throughout the day. A strange deep sense of serenity started to grow inside me that I had never experienced before. Before long, my daily meditation was no longer a chore but something I looked forward to.

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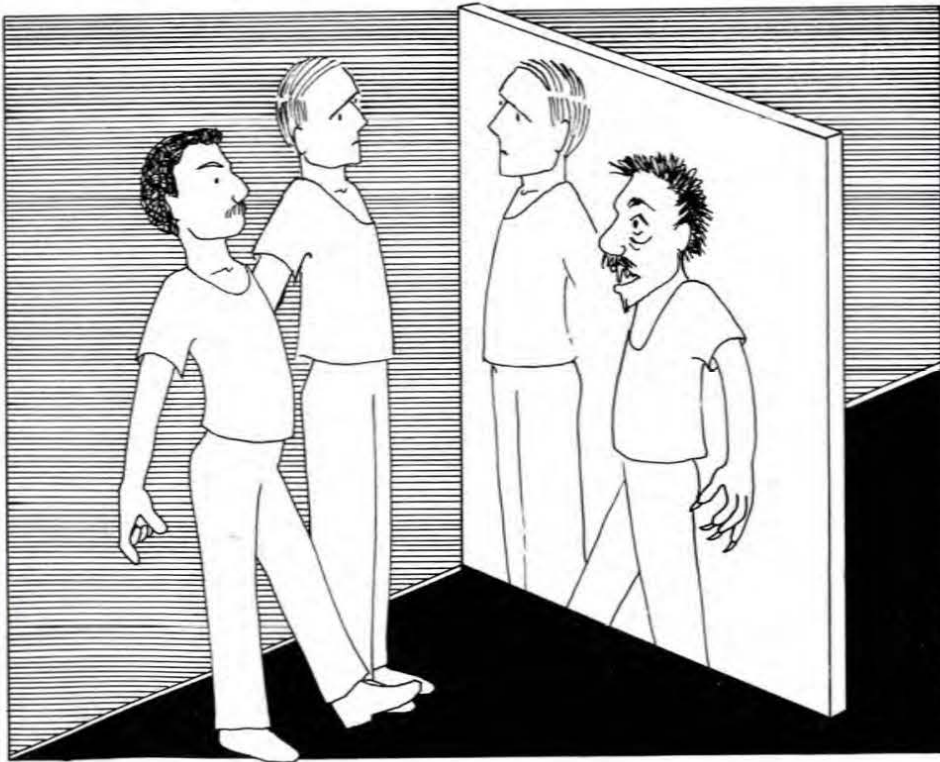
The gifts I've received from "listening" to my Higher Power are miracles in themselves. They embody all of the spiritual principles that our N.A. program is based on. But even greater than that is the increased awareness I have of my Higher Power working in my life today. Through our quiet times together, I have heard the sweet sounds of his love for me and have felt the joy of his quiet presence.

In return for fifteen minutes of my daily time, God has given me not only knowledge of his will for me, but an ever-growing awareness that I have unlimited access to his infinite supply of love and serenity. All I'm required to do is to be quiet. The rest is free for the "listening."

Anonymous

Trust

Trust has many levels and aspects for me. Today, I enjoy the trust of my family, my employer, and myself. There was a time when I could not be trusted. Every day I did not know whether or not to kill myself. I had major blackouts for hours, but what was especially frightening were the numerous blank spots at work when I had no memory of what the person in front of me had just said.



Another side of trust is the ability to trust others. In my last year or so of using, I felt all alone and did not trust anyone. They just did not understand. My life back then was like in the science fiction movies where everyone is turning into monsters who look like people; you don't know whom to trust.

The reason that I felt they would let me down was that I was not a worthy person—I wasn't good enough. In high school, no one in gym class wanted me on their team. Later in life, I thought that no one wanted to be around me, period. They were just putting up with me until they had a chance to leave. I had so much pain with my thoughts, yet I could not trust anyone with my secrets. My worries and fears

were a terrible burden to carry.

Today, I'm not alone. I have no secrets. My sponsor knows as much about me as I do. Hundreds in the program know almost as much. The trouble with trusting people with my problems has been removed.

However, I have not reached perfection. When I ask a favor of someone, I still have some fear that they will turn me down or will say yes, then later change their mind or not show up at all. Most of this problem has to do with my high expectations on people. I seem to want people to never change their mind, never forget, and never get sick. I continue to have the fear that if one person turns on me, then I will never be able to find someone else to help me. I will be left alone in a hostile world full of monsters.

Perhaps what I value most is the trust that I now have in my Higher Power. Today, I believe that God will give me everything that I deserve. I believe that He will grant me things beyond my wildest dreams. I believe that with the N.A. program, I can handle anything that comes down the pike. Yes, there will be pain at times. But pain can result in growth, as long as I don't use. At any rate, I believe I do not ever have to use again, and I do not have to be alone again.

I guess that my trust is like faith. I trust my H.P. today. There is a method in His ways. This trust extends to N.A. I remember when we only had one meeting in the state. Today we have dozens just in my area. I trust that N.A. will continue to grow. It has been quite a trip being a part of its growth.

J.S., New York

Countdown begins for World Convention

This year's N.A. World Convention in Orlando, Florida, August 31-September 3, is really shaping up. The convention headquarters hotel—Stouffer's Orlando Resort—is already booked solid, but plenty of space is still left at the Sheraton World, Wynfield Inn, Heritage Inn, and Rodeway Inn hotels, all within two miles of one another. Most convention events—workshops, main meetings, and merchandising—are being held at the Orange County Convention Center, which is 1.8 miles from Stouffer's.

Busses will be operated to provide transportation between hotels and the convention center. Bus passes are available for an additional fee with the convention pre-registration pak, or for purchase at the convention itself.

On Friday night, an all-you-can-eat barbecue will be held at Sea World. Tickets to Sea World can be purchased at group rates with the registration pak. For a slightly higher fee, members can purchase admission tickets plus the barbecue. As for the Saturday night banquet, there are still plenty of tickets as of this writing.

The convention registration flier is being distributed again to all areas, with translations being sent to non-English-speaking areas. Ask your GSR for a copy, or look in next month's issue of the N.A. Way for a full-page preview of the 1989 World Convention of Narcotics Anonymous.

Out of nowhere

I am an inmate who is very grateful to have discovered Narcotics Anonymous in this correctional facility. I was sentenced to two one-year sentences in January of '87. Even though my charges weren't drug related, at the time I felt that my getting into trouble stemmed from my addiction. As a matter of fact, I was very sure of it.

Upon my arrival, I was brought downstairs to a building which on the inside resembled a barracks from the military service. As I walked through the dormitory door to find an available bed, a few people I had known on the streets walked over to me and welcomed me to my new accommodations. After I had found a bed and gotten somewhat settled in, a friend of mine asked me if I'd like to get high. Of course I said I'd love to!

Afterward I went over and sat on my bed. I really wasn't very comfortable after smoking a joint; I was getting really paranoid and depressed. After a few moments had passed, I realized that I was in jail! It just hadn't dawned on me as I had walked through the doors that I was here and

That I had to accept it. Getting high had been a way to escape from the problems of my being here, but I didn't want to get high anymore. I wanted to get away from drugs and all the trouble and hardships that came from using them.

A few days later I was sitting in the program coordinator's office explaining to her what I was feeling. The first words that she said were, "Why don't you come to an N.A. meeting and just sit in for a while?" She assured me that I didn't have to say anything, and she said that I would find the help I needed.

So I went to my first meeting and was scared stiff! After a few meetings I was feeling a little relaxed, but I wasn't talking to anyone. It wasn't until I was in the program for a few months that I was able to open up and talk freely about my problems.

At one particular meeting the chairperson suggested that we go around the room and introduce ourselves and speak if we wanted to. When it came my turn I hesitated for a few seconds and then I introduced myself and said, "I'm an addict." Out of nowhere I started to explain certain events that had occurred during my seventeen years of using, and what had gotten me involved with the program.

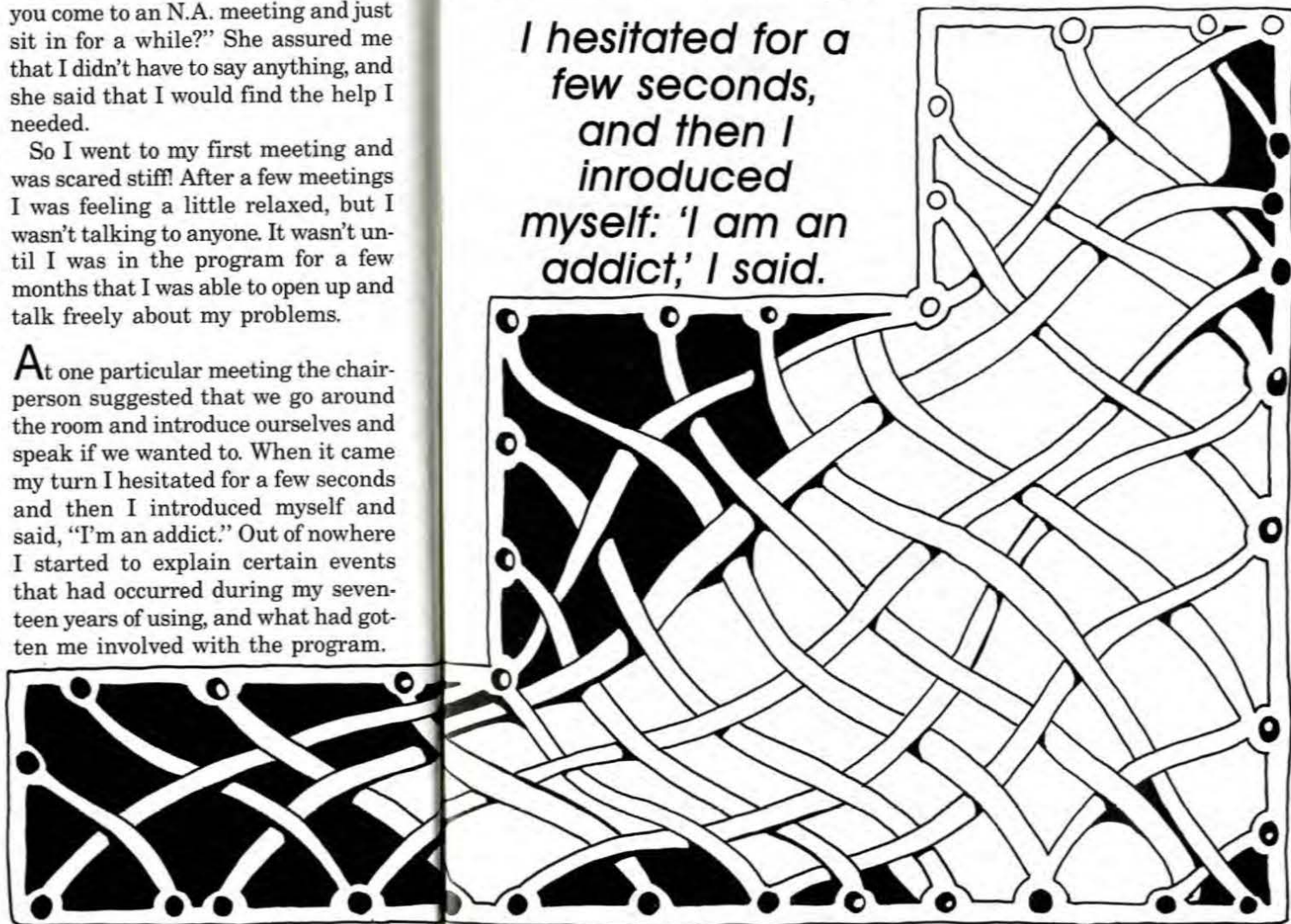
After speaking, everyone clapped for me and I couldn't understand why. A certain individual who is now my sponsor opened up to me and said, "You know, Don, there aren't very many people who can do what you just did. We are very proud of you, and happy that you can be a part of us."

That's when I devoted myself to N.A. I have been involved with the program now for fifteen months, and

I've come a long way since day one. Today, I am still incarcerated, but I am clean; I couldn't have done it without the help of my friends and the N.A. program. I only have six to ten months of my sentence left to do, and when I'm released I am going to continue to make my life better, one day at a time, the N.A. way.

D.B., New Hampshire

I hesitated for a few seconds, and then I introduced myself: 'I am an addict,' I said.



Black, white, shades of gray, and all manner of colors

When I was a kid growing up, we didn't have a television set. I spent a lot of time reading; my fingerprints are on almost all of the books in the library in my home town. Out of all this reading, I developed a wonderful ability to vividly see all the characters in the story and to really visualize the setting. It was as if I were really there—a part of the plot and action of the story.

Shortly thereafter I dived into my active addiction, which progressed rapidly; I watched this wonderful ability turn sour on me. As my life continued to slide downhill into the hell of active drug use, I began to judge everything, including myself, against the colorful fantasies of the stories I saw in my head. Real life became just black and white.

Either I was okay and you were not

(which was just fine with me) or, more commonly, you were okay and I was not (which I could not stand). So I had to build my defenses and learn to strike out at you. Then, on the surface, I could be better than you. Inside, meanwhile, I was becoming alone and isolated.

By my late teens, my life revolved completely around using drugs. Situations requiring decisions became even more black and white. If there was a question involving drugs, inevitably I chose the drugs. My life became even more one-dimensional as I raced downward on the spiral of addiction.

After about twenty years of living the one-dimensional life of active addiction, I completely lost the love and respect of my wife and family. I had absolutely no friends and was in serious jeopardy of losing my job. I hurt from the inside out and the outside in. I was lonely, isolated, and full of despair, with little hope that things could or would ever change. I hung out in my basement just waiting for the end.

Finally, in the spring of 1986, I checked into a treatment center and very hesitatingly began a program of recovery, which included Narcotics Anonymous. Almost immediately my life took on a rosy tinge as I floated on the "pink cloud" of early recovery. During this time, my new N.A. friends put up with me, and I slowly learned to put up with them, then to love them, and finally to love myself. I was also able to begin to develop a contact with a Higher Power that has blossomed into a loving and trusting relationship which I hope will only

continue to grow.

However, after a few months of recovery, the "pink cloud" wore off and real life began to set in. Even though I was armed with a program of recovery, and had a Higher Power and several new friends, I was not prepared for the many shades of gray that came with living in reality.

All the decisions and situations requiring effort on my part were so very different than the one-dimensional black and white world I had lived in for so long. And the rosy "pink cloud" world had absolutely nothing to do with reality either, but I am extremely grateful for the gift that made it possible for me to get started in recovery. When it had worn off, however, confusion and chaos reigned supreme and I almost couldn't stand it.

In early recovery, I could see little connection between working the steps and staying clean. Yet I was able to listen to my sponsor and my N.A. friends, and I finally began to work the steps to the best of my ability. But by writing, working, and sharing, I have begun to change and to learn those things about living that I had not been able to grasp earlier. Most of the time I am very willing to take the time and expend the effort required for changing, because I have seen it work.

Now my life has taken on all manner of colors. I'm beginning to know about the brightness of happiness and joy. I can also feel the darker colors of sadness and depression. I'm learning to deal with the flashing red heat of my anger, and I'm learning to hang onto the quiet pastel hues of peace and calm. I enjoy the crazy kaleido-

scope of love. I reluctantly understand the necessity of the broken colors of grief, and I'm trying to be comfortable with the solid colors of responsibility and productivity, with a sobering splash of balance across the whole.

While my life may still sometimes be confusing and chaotic, full of pain and hurt, or happiness and joy, I have some tools, a lot of hope, and a chance. I have a Higher Power that is a friend and a source of strength. I have steps to work that help me to learn about myself and to be able to go back and deal with my past. And I have many,

***All the situations
requiring my
effort were so
very different
than the black
and white world
I had lived in.***

many friends I can share with and learn from.

I am so very grateful to the N.A. program, my Higher Power, and my N.A. friends for helping me, and for accompanying me on my journey from the world of only black and white through all the shades of gray to a world with all manner of colors. Thank you, N.A., for helping to put the brilliance back into my life.

D.K., Idaho

Identity crisis? Not here!

I'm an addict, and I've been clean for fifteen months thanks to Narcotics Anonymous.

I've always felt out of place, and wherever I went I would feel different. I was born in New York City, and my parents are Hispanic—that made me a "Newyorican." When I came to Puerto Rico, again I felt different because the Puerto Ricans here didn't see me as Puerto Rican and I didn't feel Puerto Rican—I couldn't relate to their way of life here.

I then went away to college. There were very few Hispanics from New York there, and again I felt lost, as if I didn't belong there. I was always trying to be someone I wasn't. I would be ashamed to play my cultural music, and I wasn't happy being Hispanic. I asked myself why couldn't I be from a rich Jewish family. I felt "less than" wherever I went.

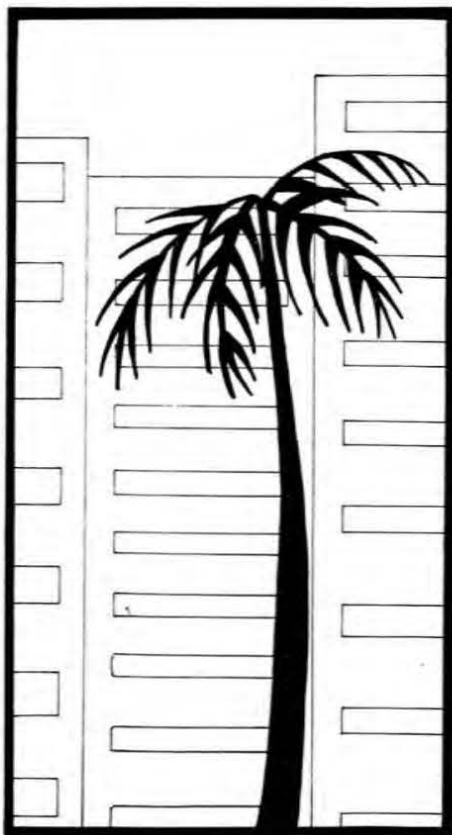
I have found that I can always feel different as long as I compare. Even in the rooms of N.A. I felt different, because I compared instead of identifying. Today I know that was my disease. Today, I also know that we are all one in N.A., and that no matter where we're from or where we were raised, we can always identify with

others in Narcotics Anonymous.

You see there's no culture in Narcotics Anonymous. This is one addict helping another. Not one black addict helping another black addict or one white addict helping another white addict. When I was using, I got loaded with anyone who had drugs. I didn't care where you were from. And today, as long as we are on the path of recovery, I don't care where you're from either. I hope my Higher Power allows me to keep looking for similarities so that I can continue to recover through identification with other addicts in recovery.

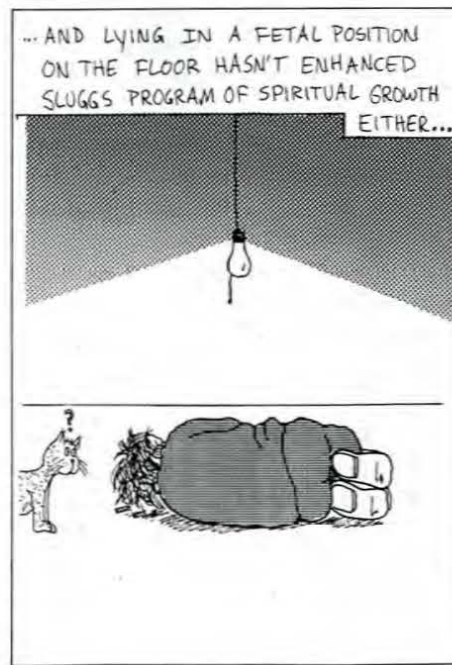
Sigue viniendo—keep coming back.

R.M., Puerto Rico



Home Group

Slugg has a difficult day



The Board of Trustees find their stride, stumble, step back—and set a new course

Trustees, Part 2

In last month's issue we looked at the formation and early development of N.A.'s longest-standing service body, the World Service Board of Trustees. This month, we'll take a look at the continuing development of the World Service Board as our fellowship approaches the Nineties.

A risk pays off

An incident occurred in 1985 that was, as the chairperson noted in her report to that year's conference, "...reminiscent of the WSB action with respect to Traditions Four and Nine which caused so much controversy two years ago." The trustees had not forgotten the painful conflict over revisions in the Basic Text.

Upon close examination, the literature committee had noted that one of the personal recovery stories approved by the '84 conference for inclusion in the book included a phrase considered too vulgar to be appropriate for publication in our book. A decision had to be made regarding whether or not to fix it before printing.

The literature and administrative committees of the conference asked the Board of Trustees to concur with them in having the phrase removed from the book prior to its next printing. The board unanimously agreed, and anxiously awaited the fellowship's reaction.

Contrary to the conference's response to the earlier board action, however, the WSC backed the trustee decision at its May 1985 meeting,

and approved the addition of language to trustee guidelines providing that "responsibility may be exercised by the Board of Trustees, when acting unanimously, to correct a violation of traditions if such is found in our printed literature."

Changes in the Little White Booklet

The Little White Booklet, as we noted earlier, had evolved as the first piece of N.A. literature. Though it had been substantially revised a few times previously, the version of that book which was in print as of 1985 had been unchanged for many years.

In 1982, when several new pieces of literature were approved by the conference, changes to the Little White Booklet were also proposed by the literature committee and defeated. Some members agreed that changes were needed, but that the proposed changes didn't make the needed improvements. Others felt that the booklet had historical significance, and should be left alone.

The matter was sent back to the literature committee for further study and possible action at a future conference. The fellowship was invited to submit input, and many members did, but no action was taken by the conference on the matter for three more years.

In 1985, after persistent inquiries from some elements of the fellowship about the matter, the conference turned it all over to the trustees to study and make specific recommendations the following year.

The trustees spent the year working very hard on the project. They carefully reviewed the existing draft for problems in several areas. They looked for inconsistencies with the traditions and for consistency with N.A. terminology standardized during the writing of the Basic Text; they integrated the comments received from the fellowship regarding the earlier edit that had been rejected; and they took a thorough look at matters of grammar and punctuation.

The Little White Booklet had evolved as the first piece of N.A. literature. In 1985, the WSC asked the trustees to study the idea of updating it.

Pre-1985 Little White Booklet:

This sounds like a big order, and we can't do it all at once, we didn't become addicted in one day, so remember—easy does it...

Although there are no musts in N.A., there are three things that seem indispensable. These are, Honesty, Open-mindedness, and Willingness to try. With these we are well on our way...

The only way to keep from getting or continuing a habit is not to take that first fix, pill or drink. If you are like us you know that one is too many and a thousand never enough. We put great emphasis on this for we know that when we use drugs in any form, or substitute one for another, we release our addiction all over again or create a new one.

The substitution of alcohol has caused a great many addicts to form a new addiction pattern, which in its progression brings as many problems as before. We seem to forget that alcohol is one of the oldest known drugs. It would appear that we are people with addictive personalities who are strongly susceptible to alcoholic addiction.

At the 1986 conference, they presented a detailed set of recommendations for specific edits. The matter sparked an impassioned debate on the conference floor, as some members felt strongly that the booklet was okay as it was. They felt that leaving it intact would be more respectful of our earliest members, whose stories and original writings made up the booklet. Others felt equally strongly that providing a consistent message for today's newcomer was more important than preserving the historical document.

The matter was committed to an ad hoc committee formed on the spot to hear both sides out and come back later in the week with a recommendation. When they came back, they recommended that the conference accept the changes. The conference did so overwhelmingly, and the changes were made. In the shaded boxes on this page, we have shown you examples of the kinds of changes that were made.

An "activist" board

The mid-Eighties saw the board working hard to fulfill its advisory role in N.A. services. Their streamlined ability to answer correspondence in concert with the WSO, their liaison role in conference committees, their *Newsline* articles, their role in assisting in literature revision and development, all contributed to the sense that their advisory role was the proper one.

They still had no direct management responsibilities over world service affairs. The World Service Conference itself, meeting once a year—and by then experimenting with additional workshops throughout the year—played the primary managerial role. The WSO Board of Directors managed the day-to-day affairs of the office. The trustees served as a kind of "consultation pool," bringing to bear long years of collective N.A. experience in an effort to be of service to the overall effort.

In keeping with its more activist role, the

board's 1986 report to the World Service Conference contained five position papers covering a wide range of subjects of great interest to the fellowship: N.A.'s relationship to NarAnon and Families Anonymous; definitions of "open" and "closed" N.A. meetings; clarification of the "N.A. language" issue; methadone users in N.A. meetings; and special interest meetings.

"Many of these issues continue to recur," the trustee chair wrote, "and it is our hope that we will make strong statements in response to the fellowship's concerns and submit these to the WSC. In this process, the fellowship can consider and vote on these issues which affect N.A. as a whole." Through the following November, comments from N.A. members on these papers were gathered—over two hundred responses, all told.

Stepping back

The trustees began to be troubled by two trends they were seeing in the responses. On the one hand, certain members were choosing not to think for themselves or to work out problems first at a local level. Instead they were looking to the trustees for "The Answer." The trustees were concerned that this trend was unhealthy, in that it enabled local N.A. communities to avoid working through situations themselves, thereby maturing and developing.

Another set of N.A. members was questioning the trustees' authority to issue what these members perceived to be the "final word." Even though the board had clearly stated that these papers were presented for discussion only, and that it would be up to the conference to adopt them, modify them, or reject them, confusion over that was widespread. In some places it began to look like the statements were creating controversy where none had existed before.

By the time the board had prepared its material for the 1987 conference, some of its

Trustee revision, Little White Booklet:

This sounds like a big order, and we can't do it all at once. We didn't become addicted in one day, so remember—easy does it... Three [spiritual principles] that are indispensable are honesty, open-mindedness and willingness. With these we are well on our way...

The only way to keep from returning to active addiction is not to take that first drug. If you are like us you know that one is too many and a thousand never enough. We put great emphasis on this, for we know that when we use drugs in any form, or substitute one for another, we release our addiction all over again.

Thinking of alcohol as different from other drugs has caused a great many addicts to relapse. Before we came to N.A., many of us viewed alcohol separately, but we cannot afford to be confused about this. Alcohol is a drug. We are people with the disease of addiction who must abstain from all drugs in order to recover.

"Our fellowship has always relied upon a non-governing type of leadership. We feel it would not be in the best interest of the fellowship to adopt . . . some type of 'official policy.'"

members felt that its well-intentioned plan to provide guidance had backfired. "After long and thorough consideration," the trustee chair wrote in the January *Conference Agenda Report*, "the Board of Trustees decided not to present these issues for voting purposes at this time. The purpose of undertaking this work has been to provide the best possible guidance, philosophy, and concepts to Narcotics Anonymous members. However, our fellowship has always relied upon a non-governing type of leadership. We feel it would not be in the best interest of the fellowship to adopt this work, nor any modified version, as some type of 'official policy.'"

The WSC reinforced that by passing a motion specifying that future board position papers could not be published in the *Newsline* without either two-thirds of the trustees supporting the entire paper, or the conference itself voting to approve publication.

On another front, the board had been active with the literature committee and the WSO in the effort to produce a new book on N.A.'s steps and traditions. That project became embroiled in controversy, primarily around the use of a professional writer. When the draft was circulated for approval, opposition was strong, and the book failed to gain approval at the conference.

And while the trustees' 1986 revision of the Little White Book had been met with great acclaim by most regions, the following year saw certain segments of the Southern California N.A. community objecting strongly and vocally to the changes.

Some of the trustees at the time lived in that region, and found themselves at the center of a disunifying conflict at home. Even though the fellowship at large indicated overwhelming support for the changes, the disunity in those trustees' home region was a painful source of stress for them.

The year following the 1987 conference was one of self-examination for the trustees. A

trustee ad hoc committee was formed to examine once again the role of the World Service Board. The activist posture of recent years was completely absent as the board reviewed its history and its role in world services, looking for the best course of action to take in the future.

Motion 11

One issue came to center stage for the trustees during the 1987-88 conference year: the matter of their status as voting participants of the World Service Conference. This issue has been a point of dispute among those involved in world services over the years. In 1988 it was on the conference agenda once again.

The issue took the form of a motion which would have eliminated the voting rights of the trustees, the administrative committee and committee chairs at the conference. It was listed as item number eleven in the *Agenda Report* issued in January before the conference, and the whole issue came to be popularly referred to as "motion eleven."

The Board of Trustees discussed the possible implications of such an action by the conference. First, however, was the question: "The motion concerns the elimination of votes, including our own, at the World Service Conference. Should we comment on a motion that we feel is not in the best interests of Narcotics Anonymous, or should we refrain?" Their sense of responsibility to provide advice on a critical issue won out, and in March 1988 they issued a special report outlining their views on the motion.

"The rapid turnover rate among our trusted servants throughout the fellowship," the report said, "has created instability in our service structure. All our boards and committees are prone to repeating the same mistakes made by previous committees and boards. Our experience must stay with us, or we will find ourselves no longer useful."

WSB chronology

- 1963** World Service Board of Trustees founded in Los Angeles
- 1971** Trustees organize first N.A. world convention; from proceeds they open the World Service Office, which is managed by a WSB standing committee
- 1975** *The N.A. Tree*, our first service manual, is published
- 1976** Trustees meet with fellowship delegates for the first World Service Conference, an afternoon business session at the world convention in Ventura, California
- 1977** WSO board incorporates separately from Board of Trustees
- 1978** First independent WSC meeting; conference committees formed
- 1979** Board of Trustee guidelines adopted by WSC with new service manual
- 1982** Report of trustee panel on World Service Office operations; N.A.'s Basic Text approved by conference

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

CONT. FROM PREV. PAGE

- 1983 Basic Text first published; controversy over changes in 4th, 9th Tradition essays; *Newsline* series begins
- 1985 On trustees' recommendation, professional writer hired for *It Works*; WSB included in standard literature development process; board granted authority to correct tradition conflicts in literature
- 1986 Trustee revision of *Little White Booklet*; *It Works* released for review; board presents five position papers
- 1987 Position papers repudiated; *It Works* not approved; board considers activation of standing committees
- 1988 WSB paper on conference voting (Motion 11); trustee standing committees activated
- 1989 "What is Addiction?" article published (see p. 31); trustees assigned responsibility for developing a book on N.A. traditions

The board felt that trustees, elected to five-year terms with more extensive experience in recovery and service (eight years) than that required at that time for any other service position, provided a stabilizing element lacking elsewhere in world services. Citing these and other reasons, the board recommended that the motion be defeated. It was, by an almost two-to-one margin.

Once again, there was controversy in the wake of this conference decision. The mood of the floor debate vacillated between deeply thoughtful and highly emotional. Some RSR's who had come to the conference prepared to vote one way felt that the debate contained a substantially new perspective from any they had heard before, and changed their votes.

Back home, some members felt that their regional service representative should not exercise personal conscience in that manner. Others felt that was the only responsible way for an RSR to act in the face of that kind of floor debate. That discussion continues among the fellowship at this time.

Standing committees

The focus of the World Service Board's 1988-89 agenda reflected the trustees' commitment to continue exploring new and more effective ways to be of service to N.A. For most of the year, the board focused on the development and implementation of a trustee committee structure. As we mentioned earlier, the original *Tree* had them divided into committees, and their subsequent guidelines had always allowed for that, but they had not implemented that option for several years. Instead, they had opted to send their members to serve as liaisons to World Service Conference standing committees.

This year, the trustees will be relying heavily on their standing committees, both to evaluate the work of corresponding conference committees and to produce material of their own. Less attention will be paid to liaison

service than standing committee work, with only a few trustees attending conference workshops and reporting back to the full board.

At present, some trustees are expressing real optimism about the WSB standing committee system. One trustee remarked, "We seem to be operating much more efficiently. Before, the WSB was just a lot of individuals on the board. Now each committee does its own work and comes to some resolution; we present that resolution to the whole board, and the board either accepts it or it doesn't."

This year...

The viability of the trustees' standing committee system will be put to the test this coming year. A few months ago, at the World Service Conference annual meeting, the Board of Trustees was given two key assignments. First, an additional needs panel was attached to the board's internal/external affairs committee, replacing a conference ad hoc committee. The ad hoc committee had spent the previous two years focusing the spotlight on the need to carry the N.A. message to physically challenged addicts—those with mobility, vision, and hearing impairments. By beginning to "mainstream" the issue, it was hoped that the needs of these addicts would start to be considered as a matter of course rather than as an extra, optional activity of N.A. service.

The World Service Board was also asked to complete the development of the traditions portion of the book, *It Works*. "The fellowship has always looked to the trustees," the WSB report to the conference read, "as having particular responsibility concerning the traditions." In that light, a nearly unanimous conference asked the trustees to complete "a definitive publication on N.A. traditions." Using the same basic guidelines for literature development currently employed by the WSC Literature Committee, it is possible that book

"All our boards and committees are prone to repeating the same mistakes. Our experience must stay with us, or we will find ourselves no longer useful."

We are still a young, developing organization. Growth has come with such staggering speed that every element of world services has had to be open to substantial change.

could be approved for use in N.A. meetings as early as 1993, according to the trustee proposal.

... And beyond

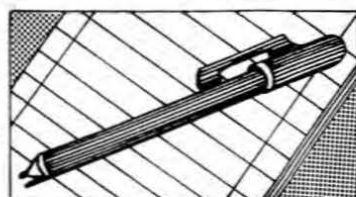
It is clear from this article's brief pass through the history of N.A. that we are still a young, developing organization. The growth and change over the past ten years has come with such staggering speed, and has been of such staggering proportions, that every element of world services has had to be open to substantial change. As we have shown, the World Service Board of Trustees has been no exception.

Our service structure has changed from the model described in the *Tree* to the model described in our earlier *Service Manual* to the current one described in the *Temporary Working Guide to Our Service Structure*. Considerable discussion and hard work is going right now into looking ahead to the next major shift in that structure.

For years, an ad hoc committee of the conference has been at work studying our structure and attempting to draft a new service guide to replace the *Temporary Working Guide*. Of course, the role of the Board of Trustees in the overall picture is an important component of that work.

At this writing, the WSC Ad Hoc Committee on N.A. Service is nearly finished drafting their recommendations for substantial modifications in the service structure, changes consistent with the draft version of *Twelve Principles of Service*, released at WSC-89. Those recommendations are scheduled to be published for review in July as *A Guide to Service in Narcotics Anonymous*. Next month's N.A. Way feature will recap the 13th World Service Conference, including a close look at the outline of those recommendations presented in the service structure committee's report. And beginning in September, we'll start printing the Twelve Principles themselves in the "Feature" section.

Viewpoint



What is addiction?

The 1988 World Service Conference asked the World Service Board of Trustees to define the term "addiction." The stated intent was to define addiction as drug addiction, and to clarify whether or not the word "drugs," as we use it, includes caffeine, nicotine and sugar. What follows is an essay developed during the 1988-89 conference year by the Board of Trustees in response to that request.

The task of defining addiction has challenged physicians, judges, clergy, addicts, their families, and the general public throughout history. There are as many potential definitions as there are groups with an interest in defining addiction. Some definitions would emphasize physiological dependence, some psychological dependence; some would focus on family dynamics, some on behavioral problems, and still others on morality. This list could be expanded at length, and N.A. could come up with

its own definition and add it to the list. Fortunately, Tradition Ten* steers us away from such public debates. Clearly, debating such issues is not N.A.'s task. Our task is to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers.

Still, defining addiction for ourselves is certainly important to the process of recovery. After all, in our First Step we admit powerlessness over it. That admission is the foundation upon which our recovery is built. So the question, "What is addiction?" is relevant indeed; the fellowship has a responsibility to consider it carefully.

It can be answered, at least in part, and we will attempt to do that here. But there is much about this question that we will not be able to answer in concrete terms. In those cases we will try to explain our position, and state why the issue does not lend itself to a clear definition.

This discussion will not include a restatement of our fellowship's broadest understanding of what addiction is. That may be found in the Basic Text, especially in the chapter "Who is an Addict?" Instead we will focus on a few difficult issues that the Board of Trustees has been asked to consider.

* Inside back cover

Is addiction a disease?

In many ways this is one of those questions about addiction that defies an answer. There is a vigorous public debate over the question of whether or not addiction is a disease. As we grow and find ourselves more squarely in the public eye, we must learn to measure our written statements carefully, and not take dogmatic stands we are not in the position to back up.

On the other hand, we are certainly not arguing here that N.A. literature should quit referring to addiction as a disease. It is our fellowship's collective experience and understanding that addiction is in fact a disease. We have no reason to challenge that perception now. It has served us well.

Our experience with addiction is this: When we accept that it is a disease over which we are powerless, such surrender provides a basis for recovery through the Twelve Steps.

A point of view offered by our World Service Board of Trustees.

The numbers of N.A. members living in freedom from active addiction bear our position out pretty well.

So even though we as a fellowship are not in a position to argue what is or is not a disease in the strictest medical sense, we are fully confident that our use of the word "disease" in describing our condition is appropriate. Whether it is appropriate in a

medical sense or in a metaphorical sense is not important. We'll leave that debate to others. It is only important for us that we realize we are powerless over our addiction, and that in Narcotics Anonymous we have the tools to treat it effectively.

And really, that's the key point: Professional people in fields like medicine, religion, psychiatry, law and law enforcement define addiction in terms that are appropriate to their areas of concern. So do we. Narcotics Anonymous defines addiction for the purpose of providing recovery from it. We treat addiction as a disease, because that makes sense to us and it works. We have no need to press the issue any farther than that.

Does "addiction" mean only drug addiction? What about other kinds of addiction?

It must be stated clearly that by the word "addiction" we do in fact mean "drug addiction." Our Third Tradition says, "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using." Clearly we mean "... a desire to stop using drugs."

As a fellowship we place much importance on the fact that we have shifted the focus of our steps off any specific drug and onto the addiction itself. We have done that by wording Step One "powerless over our addiction" rather than "powerless over drugs" or "powerless over narcotics." It is clear to most of us that any wording of Step One which named specific drugs—or drugs at all, for that matter—would have stated the principle with much less power for our purposes than our current wording does.

If we would attempt to broaden our focus beyond drug addiction to include other types of addiction, we believe we would seriously undermine our atmosphere of identification. The balance we are striving for is a delicate one. On the one hand we must understand our First Step well enough to keep our sharing at meetings focused on the disease of addiction, not on specific drugs. That way our focus is broad enough to include all drug addicts. That's why we have tried to agree on terms that adequately describe our disease and our recovery and yet are not drug-specific. On the other hand we must keep our focus specific enough to provide clear identification for our new members.

What about caffeine, nicotine and sugar?

N.A. is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. We state this clearly and unequivocally in our meetings and throughout our literature. At most of those meetings, however, coffee and cookies are served and members are smoking cigarettes. Caffeine and nicotine are being used. Some believe that sugar is a mood-altering drug. To many, this represents a grey area in our program. Some consider it a kind of hypocrisy.

To be quite frank, this problem does indeed represent a kind of grey area. It calls upon us again to rise to a higher level in our thinking about our program, not falling back on simplistic black-or-white dogmatic arguments. There is no black or white here. If there were, we would either say that caffeine, nicotine, and sugar are not mood- or mind-altering (a

claim we would be hard pressed to back up) or that some mood- or mind-altering drugs are okay for us to use. Neither of those statements is acceptable for us to make.

This issue challenges each of us to use common sense rather than expecting the ultimate answer from the Board of Trustees. We have no single statement which is adequate to ad-

We're challenged to use common sense rather than to expect an 'ultimate answer.'

dress this perplexing issue, but we do have years of experience to draw from.

Since our inception as a fellowship, many of our members have been smoking cigarettes, drinking coffee, and eating sugar. Of these members, those who work the steps and abide by the traditions recover. This cannot be said of members who, for example, smoke marijuana or drink alcohol or abuse prescription drugs.

So we as a fellowship do not address the issue of our members' use of caffeine, nicotine, or sugar in any way. We leave those decisions to each individual member to work out. Our disease finds many avenues in which to express itself in ongoing recovery. These can be identified by working the steps, facing ourselves honestly, opening up completely with a sponsor, and relying on a Higher Power for the

strength we lack. Whenever *anything* is producing unhappiness or dissatisfaction in our lives, we should use the Twelve Steps to address it.

Afterward

This essay is intended to stimulate members' thinking and discussion about the nature of addiction. As members awaken spiritually and share with one another, the answers get woven into the fabric of the fellowship's conventional wisdom. Then, just when our thinking begins to harden into dogma, another generation comes along to challenge us and keep our perspective fresh. Clear, simple truth withstands such tests.

We urge N.A. members to remain open-minded and flexible. It is important to look to our literature and our experienced members for guidance, but ultimately each member has the right to understand and apply this program in the way that works best for them.

Editorial replies

Similarities and differences

From Illinois: As a woman recovering in Narcotics Anonymous, I was fascinated by the addict's opinion expressed in "To the Men of N.A." (February 1989). I disagree with the article.

By continuing to view our own needs as so different from those of other recovering addicts, we are denying both men and women the opportunity to learn and the chance to share.

We lived in active addiction with little respect and concern for others. Simultaneously, the obsession with sex was, for many of us, a symptom we could control no better than our drug use. For most men who are early in recovery, their past dealings with women involved only inconsideration, hatred, and pain. Similarly, for the newly-recovering woman, men have become objects of resentment, violation, and fear. Yet we are *all* victims of an ironic obsession with each other.

The only way to dispel the myths and prejudices we each bring to our first meeting is to listen, share, and learn. Rather than miserably tolerating the offensive ignorance of a member who has never heard differently, we can share, "Hey, that hurts. What you're saying is degrading to women/men," or, "Hey, that hurts. Not all men/women think it's okay to treat people that way."

Maybe some things are inappropriate to share in N.A. meetings—things relating to specific members, or jokes that degrade others. But when we try to put taboos on subjects just because they involve our sexuality or actions we owe amends for, then we are denying others the message we must carry or die: that recovery from the disease of addiction can be found in Narcotics Anonymous. This applies to all addicts, not simply those who choose not to share graphic experiences or use obscene language.

The paragraph in "To the Men of N.A." I objected to most strongly addressed the idea that some addicts are so unique that they need Narcotics Anonymous meetings that exclude other addicts. In my opinion, these are not N.A. meetings! The spiritual principle behind the Third Tradition tells us that when we choose to meet for sharing and healing, the only thing we need to have is membership in Narcotics Anonymous. We are given that when we enter our first meeting with a desire to stop using.

If a group chooses to include a specific topic in its format, fine. Perhaps addicts would benefit from meetings about sexuality or women's perspectives in recovery. But when these meetings put restrictions on who may attend and what may be shared, our primary purpose is lost.

Trust and understanding are not easily come by for those of us who have lived in active addiction. By coming to meetings and being willing to share ourselves and to hear others share, we *can* grow and change. By rejecting the isolation we once considered necessary, we do recover. "Complete and continuous abstinence . . . in close association . . . with others in N.A. groups, is still the best ground for growth."

L.F.

From New York: I am writing in reply to "We're Recovering Too" in the April 1989 issue. I am also a teenager and a recovering addict. I found N.A., through the grace of God, when I was eighteen. Now I'm nineteen. I feel the same way as J.O.

When I first came around, people told me that I should be grateful for getting to N.A. at such an early age—and I am—but I feel you get here when you're ready. I was ready. It's true that I wasn't out there using as long as a lot of other people, but I couldn't have been. I haven't been alive as long as some people have

I'm a recovering addict. I'm also a teenager.

been using!

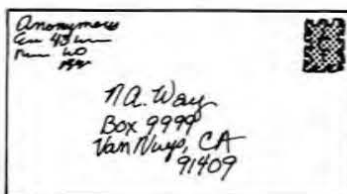
Sometimes I feel people don't take me seriously. They think that since I'm so young I probably won't take the program seriously, and I might go back out. Well, I've been clean over seven months since the first day I walked in to the rooms, and I've yet to relapse. And, just for today, I don't plan to. I take my recovery very seriously, and I work the program to the absolute best of my ability.

I also have been in meetings, and have been ignored. Also sometimes I feel I'm not picked to share because of my age. People think that a teenager can't teach them anything. They are only fooling themselves, because I know—and my sponsor, my support group, and my Higher Power know too—that I have a lot to offer.

I hope that other recovering teenagers see this so that they know they are not alone. And I hope others see it too. Maybe it will open some eyes and let people know that young people recover too.

D.K.

From our readers



Never being alone again

Before coming into the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous I thought I was my own best friend. This was my way of life for a very long time. I was too scared to trust anyone. At times I could muster up some courage and find a way to let someone into my private world of secrets, but once again fear, confusion and pain would set in. Immediately, I would construct more walls around me. My own walls held me prisoner and many times isolated me.

I would repeat this behavior again and again expecting things to be different each time. Insanity! All this was doing for me was making the walls higher and harder to reach over. Not to mention all the loneliness. Too many times it felt as if no one cared or even understood.

After what felt like a lifetime, I have now found a much better way to live. With all the wonderful things Narcotics Anonymous has to offer me, I never have to be alone again. I have meetings I attend daily. This also allows me time to spend with my friends. And there are lots of parties and social activities I frequently go to. People in the fellowship are very friendly and outgoing. I even bowl on an N.A. bowling league!

Wherever I go today, I'm surrounded by people who care about me. When I am being of service to my

area, I'm also spending time with other recovering addicts. I get to participate in my own recovery and have fun too! These are just a few of the gifts staying clean the N.A. way has given me. The best gift of all has been my relationship with my Higher Power.

I never need to do things alone again. When I try something new and find that only-too-familiar feeling of fear start to creep in, I then realize

***It was the
newcomer. He
just called to see
if he could do it.***

that my Higher Power is with me every step of the way, and somehow I find the courage to get through whatever is in front of me. Never before was any of this possible for this addict.

It is great to know that I am always protected and cared for. What a good feeling to be filled with gratitude and happiness, knowing my Higher Power, my friends and the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous is always there for me. I never have to be alone again.

L.M., California

Thank you

I would like to thank those who make this service available. I enjoy

being able to read and learn from opinions outside of my area. Sometimes it is easier to accept things at face value when there is no personality standing between the idea and my mind. To me, the written word is one of the most anonymous ways to receive the message.

R.R., Ohio

Helped by a newcomer

Today I felt full of love for my fellow addicts, and full of joy in our recovery. I wanted to go around spreading smiles and a message of hope.

At my home group I had the opportunity to do so. There was a man there, who looked very frightened. He raised his hand as a newcomer and said it was his first meeting ever. His voice shook, and he stuttered. My heart went out to him; he looked so desperate and fearful.

As I listened, I remember how I felt at first, hoping N.A. could help but knowing that I was beyond help. The topic of tonight's meeting was love and fellowship; doing together what we could not do alone.

After the meeting I took a Little White Book and put my number on it, alongside the others written there tonight. The secretary gave him a welcome token and a schedule. We told him to call any of us, any time he needed to talk.

I went home from the meeting, and the phone rang right as I walked through the door. It was the newcomer. He could barely talk. He told me that he called just to see if he could do it. I said that when I was new I would look at the phone numbers, and look at the phone, but was too afraid to call. He laughed because

that was what he'd been doing.

He wanted to know what the "trick" was—how do we stay clean? I told him about one day at a time, one minute at a time, don't use no matter what. He mentioned how happy all of us looked, and that he wanted to look like that, too.

This was a good day for me. Sometimes all I want to do is carry the message of hope and life, because giving love to the fellowship and to the addict who still suffers is the most joyful and satisfying thing I have ever done in my entire life.

N.B., California

I feel there's something wrong, but what?

Anxiety grips me without warning or reason. I'm restless, nervous, even a little scared, but I don't know why. I'm working my program—meetings, conscious contact with my H.P., talking with my sponsor—so what gives? Why do I feel so bad sometimes? I've got everything to be thankful for. I'm clean and sane.

Seconds tick by and suddenly it passes, I feel good again; it was just an anxiety rush. I'm clean and serene once more. But I've got to accept the things I cannot change. I know I'll have another bout with that feeling for no reason. Maybe in an hour, a day, a week, a month, whatever; but that's okay, I can deal with it. It's all part of getting well, getting strong, growing up, becoming reliant upon myself and my program.

I spent a long time trying to ruin my life; it'll take a while to build it back up. Besides no one ever said this would be easy.

T.S., Minnesota

Comin' up



LET US KNOW! We'll be happy to announce your upcoming events. Just let us know at least three months in advance. Include dates, event name and location, N.A. office or phoneline number, and a post office box. (Sorry, but we can't print personal phone numbers or addresses.)

The **N.A. Way**
MAGAZINE

P.O. Box 9999
Van Nuys, CA 91409.
(818) 780-3951.

ALBERTA: Nov. 3-5, 1989; 3rd Alsask Regional Convention; Polish Veterans Hall, 9203 144th Ave., Edmonton

AUSTRALIA: Sep. 29-Oct. 1, 1989; Sydney Combined Areas Convention; Hurstville Entertainment Centre, McMahon Street, Hurstville, Sydney; Fellowship Service Office (Surrey Hills, NSW) tel. 61-2-211-2445; CAC-89, P.O. Box 286, Double Bay 2028, NSW, Australia

BRITISH COLUMBIA: June 30-July 2, 1989; 10th B.C. Rally; James Bay Community Centre, 140 Oswego St., Victoria; phoneline (604) 383-3553; B.C. Rally, P.O. Box 284, Station E, Victoria, BC V8W 2N2

2) Jul. 14-16, 1989; Campout; Felker Lake Legion Campsite, Williams Lake; Williams Lake Group, Site 8, Comp 17, RR 4, Williams Lake, BC V2G 4M8

CALIFORNIA: Sep. 8-10, 1989; 3rd Mountain High Campout; KOA Campground, S. Lake Tahoe; phoneline (916) 541-4100; South Tahoe ASC, P.O. Box 6706, Stateline, NV 89449

COLORADO: Jul. 28-30, 1989; 2nd Annual "Standing on Higher Ground" Weekend; Telluride, central rsvn.s (800) 525-3455; regional office (303) 320-8323; Telluride Retreat, P.O. Box 2124, Telluride, CO 81435

FLORIDA: June 30-July 3, 1989; 8th Florida Regional Convention; Omni Jacksonville Hotel, 245 Water Street, Jacksonville FL 32202; rsvn.s (904) 355-6664; RSO (305) 563-4262; phoneline (904) 723-5683; Florida RSO, 1110 NE 34th Court, Oakland Park, FL 33334

2) Aug. 31-Sep. 3, 1989; 19th World Convention; Stouffer's Orlando Resort

GEORGIA: June 30-July 2, 1989; 7th Piedmont Area Anniversary; Radisson Inn, 2725 Watson Blvd., Warner Robins GA 31093; rsvn.s (912) 953-3000; Piedmont Anniversary, P.O. Box 145, Warner Robins, GA 31099

HAWAII: Oct. 20-22, 1989; 2nd Maui Harvest of Recovery; Camp Maluhia, Maui; Roundup Committee, P.O. Box 978, Puunene, HI 96784

IDAHO: Aug. 4-6, 1989; 4th Oregon / Southern Idaho Convention; Red Lion Riverside Motel, Boise; rsvn.s (208) 343-1871; phoneline (208) 343-0188; OSIC-4, P.O. Box 1234, Boise, ID 83701

2) Aug. 4-6, 1989; 3rd Snake River Area Campout; Thompson Flat Campground, Albion; MCGNA, P.O. Box 875, Burley, ID 83318

ILLINOIS: Jul. 21-23, 1989; Basic Campout; Okaw Bluff Group Campsite, Lake Shelbyville; phoneline (217) 373-2063; New Beginnings ASC, P.O. Box 689, Normal, IL 61761

2) Jul. 28-30, 1989; 5th Mid-Coast Convention; Hyatt Deerfield, 1750 Lake Cook Rd., Deerfield IL 60015; Chicago Service Office (312) 848-2211 or 848-4884; MCC-5, P.O. Box 633, Zion, IL 60099

IOWA: June 30-July 2, 1989; 6th Iowa Regional Convention; Stouffer Five Seasons Hotel, 350 1st Ave. NE, Cedar Rapids IA 52401; rsvn.s (800) HOTELS-1; phoneline (319) 398-9100; IRC-6, P.O. Box 2062, Cedar Rapids, IA 52406

KANSAS: June 30-July 2, 1989; 11th Mid-America Regional Campout; Methodist Church Camp, Webster Lake, Stockton

2) Aug. 11-13, 1989; N.A. Campout; Thunderbird Marina, Rolling Hills area, Milford Lake, Junction City

KENTUCKY: Sep. 22-24, 1989; 2nd Annual W. Kentucky Area Campout; Energy Lake Campgrounds, Canton

2) Apr. 13-15, 1990; 4th Kentuckiana Regional Convention; Executive Inn, 1 Executive Blvd., Paducah KY 42001

MAINE: Sep. 8-10, 1989; 6th Southern Maine Area Convention; Notre Dame Spiritual Center, Alfred; phoneline (207) 761-6695; Southern Maine ASC, P.O. Box 5309, Portland, ME 04101

MICHIGAN: Jul. 1-4, 1989; 5th Michigan Regional Convention; Clarion Hotel, 6820 S. Cedar, Lansing MI 48911; rsvn.s (517) 694-8123; phoneline (517) 483-9101; MRC-5, P.O. Box 4818, E. Lansing, MI 48826

MISSOURI: Jul. 21-23, 1989; 10th "High on Life" Picnic; Stockton Lake, Stockton; phoneline (417) 781-2210

2) Sep. 15-17, 1989; Show Me Regional Unity Campout; Camp Rising Sun, Lake of the Ozarks State Park, Jefferson City; Campvention, P.O. Box 7114, Jefferson City, MO 65109

NEVADA: Jul. 28-30, 1989; 2nd Sierra Sage Regional Convention; John Ascuaga's Nugget, Sparks; phoneline (702) 322-4811; Sierra Sage RSC, P.O. Box 11913, Reno, NV 89510-1913

NEW HAMPSHIRE: Oct. 28, 1989; 3rd "War is Over" Group Anniversary Party; Arrowhead Ski Lodge, Claremont

NEW JERSEY: Jul. 21-23, 1989; 2nd Central Jersey Area Scavenger Hunt; home base at Bradley Beach Municipal Bldg., Main Street between McCabe and Lorraine Ave.s; phoneline (201) 462-9199

2) Jul. 28-30, 1989; Quad State Unity Convention; Parsippany Hilton, 1 Hilton Court, Parsippany-Troy Hills NJ 07054, (800) HILTONS; Bergen County ASC, P.O. Box 104, Northvale, NJ 07647-0104

NEW YORK: Jul. 28-30, 1989; Northern New York Regional Convention; Aurora, NY; phoneline (716) 323-1530; NNYRCNA-89, 2605 Elmwood Ave., Ste. 135, Rochester, NY 14618

2) Aug. 4-6, 1989; 3rd Recovery in the Woods Campout; phoneline (716) 878-2316; Buffalo ASC, P.O. Box 64, Buffalo, NY 14207

OHIO: Jul. 14-16, 1989; 5th Columbiana County Camp-Vention; Chaparral Campgrounds, 10136 Middletown Rd., Salem; Columbiana Co. ASC, P.O. Box 451, Salem, OH 44460

OREGON: Sep. 29-Oct. 1, 1989; 12th Pacific Northwest Convention; Airport Holiday Inn, Portland; Portland Central Office, 1730 SE 12th, Portland, OR 97214

PENNSYLVANIA: Nov. 3-5, 1989; 7th Tri-State Regional Convention; Hyatt Hotel, Pittsburgh; rsvn.s (412) 471-1234; Tri-State RSO, P.O. Box 110217, Pittsburgh, PA 15232

SOUTH CAROLINA: Nov. 9-12; Serenity Festival; Best Western Landmark, Ocean Blvd., Myrtle Beach; rsvn.s (800) 845-0658; phoneline (803) 449-6262; Serenity Festival, P.O. Box 1198, Myrtle Beach, SC 29578

UTAH: Aug. 4-6, 1989; 6th Utah Campout; Utah RSC, P.O. Box 6157, Salt Lake City, UT 84106-0157

VIRGINIA: Oct. 6-8, 1989; 3rd Almost Heaven Area Convention; 4-H Center, Front Royal; phoneline (800) 777-1515; Almost Heaven Convention, P.O. Box 448, Charleston, WV 25414

WYOMING: June 30-July 2, 1989; 6th Western States Unity Convention; Little America Hotel, Cheyenne; rsvn.s (307) 634-2771; phoneline (307) 632-6433; WSUC-6, P.O. Box 184, Cheyenne, WY 82003

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9TEA

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 of 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, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Twelve Traditions reprinted for adaptation by permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

*My gratitude speaks
when I care
and when I share with others
the N.A. way*

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 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 belong to N.A.—there are no fees or dues. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using drugs. 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 N.A., see your local phone directory, or write us at the address inside.

