

# THE N.A. Way<sup>®</sup>

M A G A Z I N E

October 1990

\$1.75



*making the Connection . . .*

## 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<sup>®</sup> MAGAZINE

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## Dealing with highs and lows

I read with great interest the article by R.R. of Australia (June, 1990 N.A. Way) concerning the addict who killed himself after stopping his lithium because "he wanted the highs."

I am a manic depressive as well as being an addict. Besides having been on a locked ward, I took various medications for years.

I have mixed feelings about anyone using such medications. Medically, I know that they do work: that is they keep people out of locked wards and permit an otherwise disabled person to hold a job and act within a normal range. For the manic depressive, the lows can be fatal due to suicide. Many addicts abuse these drugs. Some save

them, then take them all at once for a stronger effect, or they double or triple their doses by going to several doctors.

On the other hand, I know of mine and other's experience—we were as crazy as loons—today we make it without any medication by using the program, especially the steps.

Over my years in the program, I have observed some members advising others not to take medication be-

I have been wondering what to share with another addict who suffered bipolar illness, as it is sometimes called. Looking back over the years, I see many events which seem to have been turning points. Points when life became clear and I changed. I will describe some of these insights.

For me, my life changed when I was able to practice some acceptance of my condition. If I experience a big high, I will also experience a big low.



to do everything myself in order to prove that I am a capable person. My low self-esteem drives me to relentlessly prove my worth by performing every task perfectly. In other words, I tend to work hard to balloon up my ego. However, it is like I have a hole in the balloon, for I am constantly driven to pump it up. I seem to always be on the stage projecting a special image. My manic obsession tries to prevent me from taking vacations or time to smell the roses.

When writing an inventory, I discovered I spent my entire life in self-pity. I thought that my life was unfair because everyone was smarter, better looking, and more athletic. Why was I born into a dysfunctional family? Why was my family so poor? All of my problems were outside of me; they were caused by my parents and my teachers so I would not change.

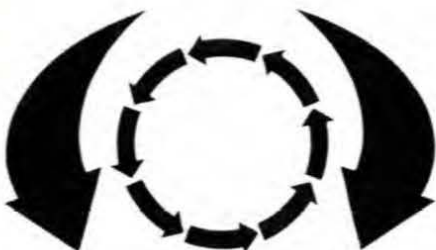
With the help of the steps and a sponsor, I recognize all these people as being humans. They had good qualities as well as bad qualities. My parents did not hate me, they did the best they could—like many they had little to start with.

Most of all I hated God for giving me so many problems, like a speech defect and learning disabilities. Later

cause it was possibly mood altering. Most of us are not medical doctors; hence, we are not qualified to make medical decisions. Several convinced me not to take my tranquilizers. At the time I needed them because I was insane and had the papers to prove it. If I had gone off all of the prescription drugs cold turkey, I would have probably been locked away again, and when admitted to a mental hospital, one does not know how long one will be in—one is there for an indefinite to life sentence.

I had to accept the lows. Anybody can accept being high. I had to force myself to put one foot in front of the other and walk through the pain of depression. I have to accept that I cannot race my mind and body without paying back with a low sooner or later.

The steps have shown me how to deal with the "demons" inside of me. My most common inventory is asking myself if I'm too hungry, angry, lonely or tired. As a manic depressive I get way too tired. Along with getting too tired I get too lonely since I always try





I realized that I did not just want to be as good as others—I wanted to be better than everyone at all things. It was as if I did not deserve the fate of common mortals. I expected God to make me so good looking that no girl would ever turn me down for a date.

I found that I denied my feelings, especially anger and hurt. I need to ac-

"... it is  
imperative  
that we be  
honest  
about our  
addiction..."

knowledge to my sponsor or brothers in the program that I do feel angry or hurt. Many of my depressions stem from covering up my feelings. My system tends to shut down instead of allowing myself to feel. When I used, the drugs would turn off all of my sensations. I need to do as the Basic Text says "to overcome the tendency to run and hide from our feelings." I need to pray and meditate—to listen to that quiet voice within me. I need to do it even though I feel okay. Manic depressives often go long periods being rather normal—that is when we need to work the steps.

When I am depressed or planning suicide my thinking is distorted—I cannot easily get my life sorted out. I used to think about my mental problems as I did my leaky roof: when it was raining it was too wet to fix,

when it was not raining it did not need to be fixed.

Today I see advantages to having my disease. At times I am capable of great bursts of energy and great creative accomplishment. I have done a lot in the program by pacing myself: taking breaks, taking vacations, taking a day to lie in front of the boob tube to rest my mind.

Even though the program has kept me both clean and out of mental institutions for many years, I still believe that for short terms (at times) antipsychotic medication must be given to keep someone from killing themselves.

Nevertheless, it is imperative that we be honest with our doctors about our addiction. Also, we may need to report to a clinic or the company nurse to receive our medication daily since we cannot control our use of drugs.

Before I came to the rooms, I felt that no one loved me. I thought there was something wrong with me and as soon as you found out you would leave. To hide my dark self, I had to always be up, always in control. I thought that everyone would leave if it were just me. Eventually, I saw that you loved me as I was. You gave me the love that I never felt from my parents. This feeling of unconditional love may be the most important reason why I have been able to stay clean and out of mental institutions for over fourteen years.

*Jim S., New York*

## Who is a recovering addict?



In letting go of the past it was shown to me that I needed to build a new identity, this process required a new model. The model I've chosen to pattern my new identity after is this definition of a recovering addict:

Most of us don't have to think twice about this, we know, our whole way of life and thinking is centered in recovery. Very simply we are men and women whose lives are lived practicing spiritual principles. We are people in the care of a loving God, one that gives us the opportunity to experience the unbounded freedom stemming from spiritual awakening and continuing with progressive spiritual growth.

The most difficult problem encountered in letting go of my past was that my identity was my past. It was my whole way of life and way of thinking, and I was chained to it. It justified not only the drug addiction (way of life) but the addiction to resentment, anger, self-pity, self-condemnation,

self-righteousness, etc., etc., ad nauseam (way of thinking).

Letting go all at once would have been like dropping an ice cube into boiling water, the abrupt change would have devastated me. How grateful I am for the slow process that is called recovery.

Identifying with a recovering addict is what I need. The simple direction it gives and hope it confers counters the despair and hopelessness of the Basic Text's definition of, "Who is an Addict?"

How grateful I am to God and the countless number of people who have struggled down the same road, guiding and lighting the way, ever reminding me that traveling the road is a lifetime process. I am also grateful to be off the "road to recovery" and on the "recovery road," thus keeping me out of F E A R (a Frantic Effort to Appear Recovered).

*Recovering, Denver*



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## To all of you

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Thank you Narcotics Anonymous. Because of "you" I'm getting to celebrate another year clean, another year of growth and new awareness, another year of promises fulfilled and hopes renewed.

# 1

My first year in recovery you gave me a place to call home. You gave me identification and an opportunity to finally feel "apart of" instead of "apart from." You gave me a sponsor to help me learn how to work the steps the best I could. You gave me the freedom to choose a God of my understanding that enabled me to do my first 4th and 5th step. You held my hand when at nine months I wanted to use to numb the pain of reality.

# 2

During my second year in Narcotics Anonymous you trusted me to be secretary-treasurer for my home group. You helped me understand the "therapeutic value of one addict helping another" by encouraging me to become a sponsor. The love and acceptance you shared enabled me to make amends for breaking anonymity and taking your inventory. When the desire to use returned at eighteen months, you reminded me that it would pass, and it did.

# 3

Three years into the fellowship you gave me the faith to move to a new town with the promise that the love and message would not change—only the faces. You reminded me of open-mindedness, that just as a newcomer has to identify and not

compare the experience of addiction, I too, had to identify and not compare my new group with my old group. You gave me enough trust to ask someone new to be my sponsor and to use them when the "crazies" hit me at three and a half years and I had to work through them with more Fourth and Fifth Steps. You taught me to reach out and build a support system of recovering friends to help me grow and stay clean in a new place.

# 4

At four years clean you were my safety net when I plunged into a suicidal depression. You patiently waited as I isolated myself from friends, too full of false pride to ask for help. As I slid down from Step Twelve to Step One you showed me the bridges that were still there from my previous recovery and friendships,—and allowed me to go back to them for help. You kept the light at the end of the tunnel glowing bright enough so I wouldn't lose hope and go back out, or worse yet, die. When I finally hit my knees in surrender, your strength, acceptance and understanding was there to help me start over again at Step One.

# 5

During my fifth year clean you taught me the necessity of sharing all of me—my pain, my fear, as well as my growth. You brought me lots of recovering addicts to sponsor and to love and learn from.

Your message of hope and freedom grew from one N.A. meeting a week to four. For the first time I began to work all of Step Eleven and saw my spirituality blossom into patience, love, faith and serenity. A lot of childhood issues regarding sexual abuse were revealed and felt for the first time in recovery after working the steps again with yet another new sponsor.



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My sixth year clean you saw me through two major surgeries, taught me much about being responsible for the medication I receive in recovery and how much pain I can really tolerate, and about depending on God to take care of me through illness. You were there for me in full force with phone calls, prayers, visits and cards. You gave me "eyeglasses of gratitude" to wear during my recuperative stays at home when I felt self-pity and frustration constantly.

Until I was well enough to go to meetings, you brought your message to me through the Basic Text, Meeting by Mail, N.A. Way and AT&T.

Now I'm getting ready to celebrate seven years clean. When I first met you, all I wanted to do was quit using drugs. (No wonder you just smiled at me and told me to keep coming back). What you've since given me I could never repay. You've shared a set of principles with me that have forever changed my life. You've walked me through them over and over with love, humor and honesty. You've never abandoned me—filling my life with special recovering friends with whom deep bonds have been forged. You've brought so many precious gifts into my life. Because of you, Narcotics

Anonymous, I didn't give up on my marriage and am getting ready to celebrate my eleven-year wedding anniversary with a loving and spiritual person who also found recovery in your fellowship. Because of you, I share a beautiful and healthy daughter to love and to nurture as you have done for me. You've embraced my pain and fear and made them your own so I no longer have to carry them alone. You rejoice in my happiness and good fortune and encourage me on. Because your message of recovery has never changed, I'm finding new levels of freedom, balance, self-acceptance and gratitude in my life today. You've given me the chance to unearth the beauty of life that was being buried underneath my disease of addiction. I still have a long way to go to cut and polish all the diamond like qualities that are in each of us, but I have the tools and courage to do it. You've transformed my life from one of despair to one of Hope. Thank you N.A....Happy Birthday to us.

*Anonymous, Tennessee*

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## Stepping out

I recently had periods of anger and found it difficult to figure out on my own. I gave it to my sponsor and to Fourth Step meetings. Well, step meetings and, for me, God. At least this anger wasn't like it was a couple of years ago when I entered N.A.

I thought my anger was gone (ha ha). What I failed to realize was I stuffed it so far down that when it started to come out I didn't know what was going on!

Well, my sponsor did. She said "It's time to do another Fourth Step." I said "well—ok!" I know from doing Fourth Steps before I got better.

So I started to write and write and write. Then one day at a Fourth Step meeting something clicked. I had anger mixed up with resentment (ha) and letting go. I was starting to become less needy, but the people I was around were very needy. I was people-pleasing, and I was spreading myself too thin. It was me who I was angry at, not my mother, friends, sponsor or God, but me. I was not allowing myself to become the person I believe God wants me to be.

When I go to meetings, work the steps and use my sponsor the miracle happens. It's really not about what everyone else is doing. It's about what I'm doing.

When I got to the part in my Fourth Step on resentments I had a few people instead of the whole world. And what I saw was my controlling nature. People weren't doing what I thought they should be doing. What a self-centered disease. Then I realized when writing about self centeredness how I thought that went away. Well it did to some extent, but I found there's still quite a bit left.

What I'm glad I realized, after some years in the program, is I still have quite a bit of step work to do!

The steps really make me open my eyes! My sponsor knows just what to have me do and the wonderful addicts in the rooms say "get honest!" I keep coming because I'm understood. People really love me and want me to get better. Me to!

*Anonymous*





## Zippers, electricity and fun

Having just read in the N.A. Way about disunity in business meetings, I have some ideas I would like to share.

Where do we think disunity comes from anyway? Do people just show up at ASCs or RSCs (or wherever) and, all of a sudden, have lightbulbs bursting in their brains about elaborate points they think need pondering? Unlikely! From my own personal experience I can tell you that points get pondered long before business meetings.

Have you ever heard the joke about the gossip in N.A.? It goes like this:

Question: "What's the fastest way to get information to someone?"

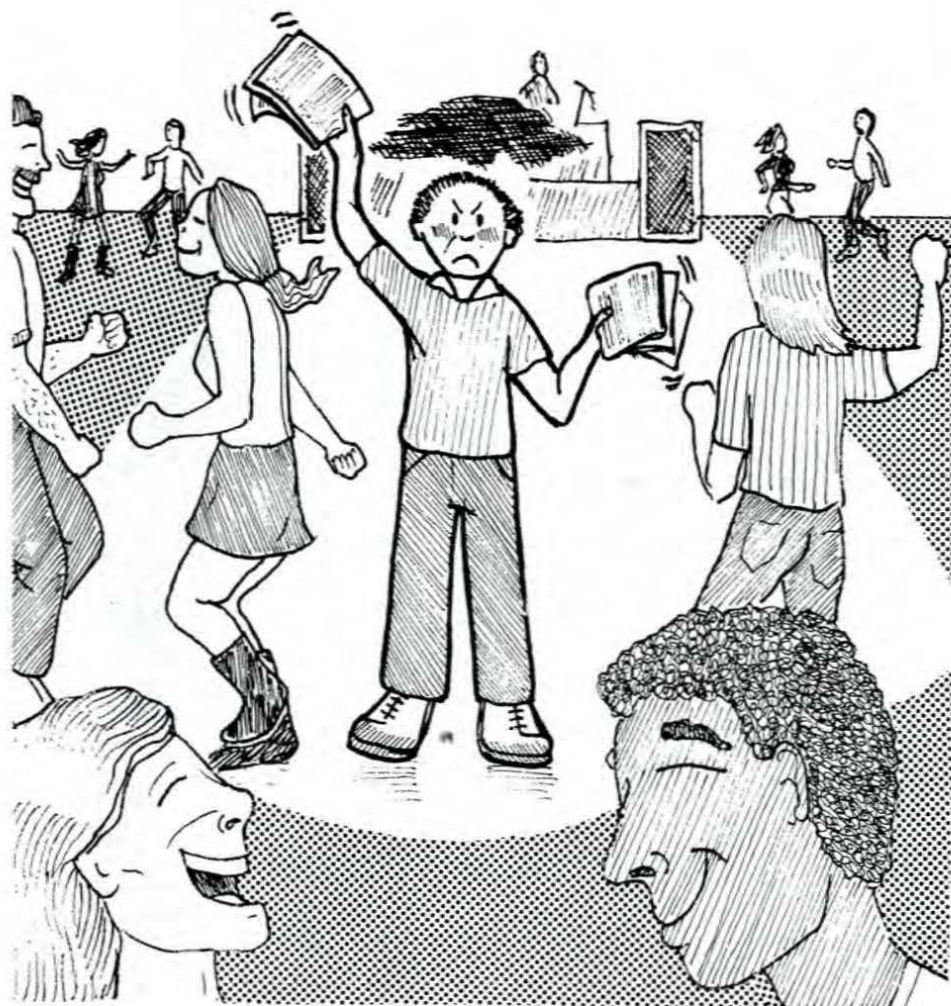
Answer: "Telephone, telegraph, tell an addict." (HA! HA!)

Isn't that just what happens? One person lays out a raging opinion about business on someone, and then those two go and lay it on someone else, and then there are all of these someones at the next business meeting with one raging opinionated point to ponder. What can be done about this? Use a zipper and a sponsor. That's right. I said a zipper. I think we should pray for a zipper to

be smacked on our mouths (...the one our first grade teachers told us about) until we can talk to our sponsors. That might help to get rid of all of the influence of personalities so that we can find out if we really feel there is something that needs to be brought up, or if we are just upset about something that has nothing to do with business.

Now, think with me about Benjamin Franklin for a moment. Contrary to popular belief, he did not discover electricity on the first try. He did what is called homework before he was "electrified." And when he did discover it he didn't claim to have done anything but just that — discover it. He wasn't running around afterward claiming to have invented it, thought it up, or that he even knew everything about it. Is this making any sense yet? What I am talking about is guidelines, guides to service, handbooks and traditions. How many times have we spouted off about this guide or that tradition when we haven't even read it? Let's give ourselves a break — do our homework! Until we do, let's pray for that zipper. And after we do, we may find ourselves just as "electrified" as good ole' Benjamin.

Have you ever been interrupted from listening to a newcomer share in their first meeting or pulled away from the dance floor when your favorite song is playing by someone who has to talk about business right now? How annoying! Let's stand up for ourselves... lay down the law and say, "If you want to talk about business then call me later, wait until coffee, or **GO TO THE BUSINESS MEETING!**"



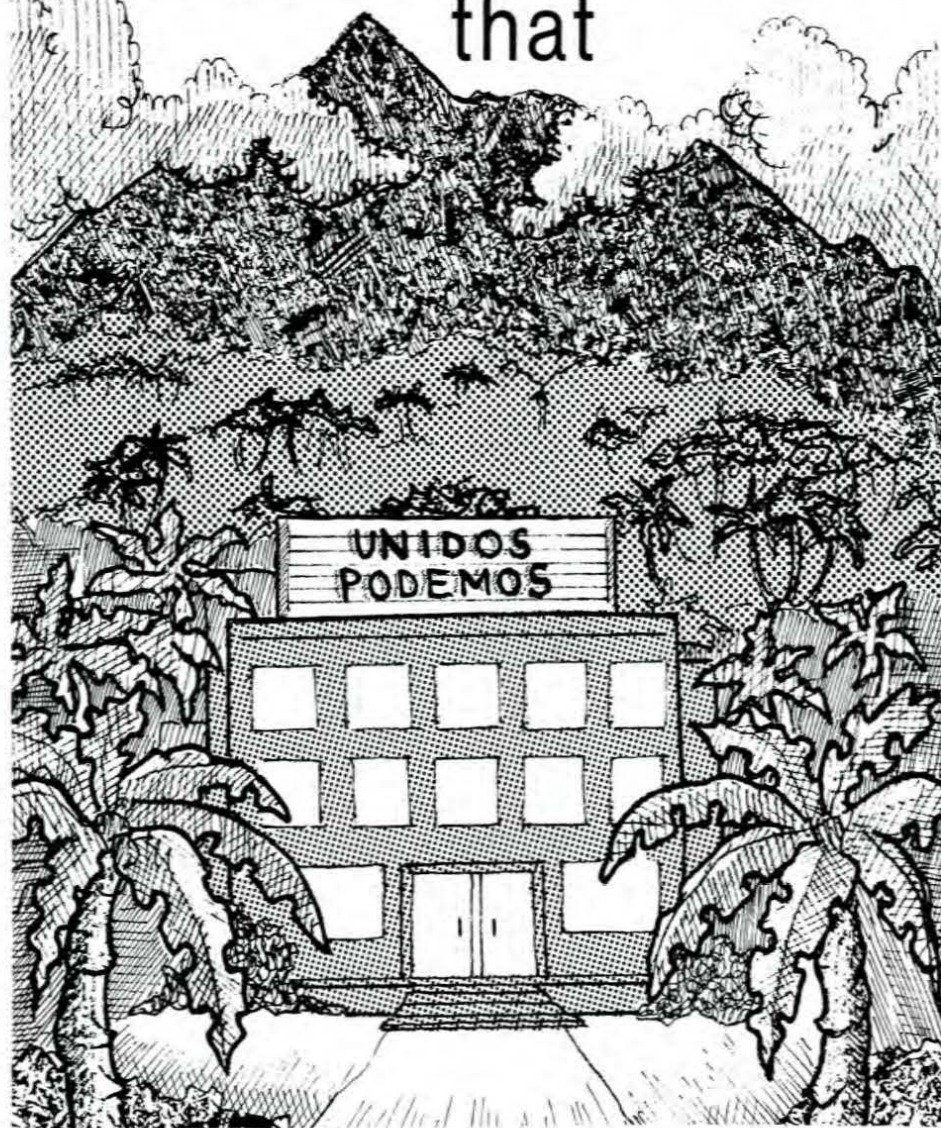
Sure, an area secretary needs to know if someone didn't get their minutes and the H&I Subcommittee Chairperson needs to know if the meeting didn't get opened, but it can wait until the meeting is over or you have done some dancing to your favorite song! Not mixing business in N.A. gives peace of mind, makes fun more fun and helps to get business talked about in the right place.

Because I have read it, I know the First Tradition says we will have differences of opinion, but it also says we can disagree without being disagreeable. I'm willing to try... please join me! Now, if you will excuse me, I have some fun to attend to!

*Mindy A., Missouri*



# Ties bind that



Here I was in a meeting, which usually only averages twenty to twenty-five people, and there were

over eighty addicts from all over, and they continued to pour in.

I sat there just looking around, I could feel the energy and anxiety of

our upcoming first convention, "Unidos Podemos" (Together We Can). My God, it was overwhelming! People from all over came to support our first convention in Puerto Rico. I could feel the power of my Higher Power united with everyone else's Higher Power, as one, as a whole. We could feel the unity which comes from our identification as addicts.

We were told that there was a meeting being held at the Caribe Hilton, the convention site. This was the night before the convention began and that meeting was full of friends I hadn't met yet. That meeting was the start of what was to be a beautiful weekend.

Friday came and it was an overcast day, but inside of me it was brilliant sunshine. You could see the glow on people's faces as they waited on the line to register. More and more people arrived, we ran out of registration forms and packets but we did the best we could with what we had.

Originally we planned to have about two hundred to three hundred people but as more and more people arrived we asked the hotel management to put more tables and chairs in the rooms where the main meetings were being held.

Everyone was giving service. The willingness to be a part of and to serve was much more than what we needed.

The opening meeting was great, we had at least four hundred people. There were two speakers from Puerto Rico. I had the honor to chair the banquet meeting on Saturday night. There we had a local speaker and a speaker from NYC. We had five hundred chairs and we still had peo-

ple standing. The power in that room was euphoric, it was "God's show." Five-hundred addicts in union for one primary purpose, to help each other stay clean a day at a time.

We did a state countdown and there were people from New York, Florida, California, Washington, D.C., Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Costa Rica and Saint Thomas. We also had people with three days to twenty-two years clean.

In the meetings we had non-Spanish speakers and they shared that they could feel and identify even though they didn't comprehend the language. Some shared that just sitting at the meeting was enough for them, they felt safe.

The convention ended on Sunday afternoon, it was a huge success. We did have a couple of loose ends but we have learned from it. We plan to have a better convention next year. The seed is planted for this fellowship to grow in Puerto Rico. "In time" all will flourish. The members' attitudes were really positive, many of us saw what NA is really about. The love and hugs were all there in abundance.

The reality is that the convention is over, but I carry it in my heart. We have made history in Puerto Rico with the first "Together We Can" convention, "Unidos Podemos." The love, the hugs, the support and unity we shared are some things that live and will never die. God, thank you so much for the fellowship and the steps of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. I'm deeply grateful.

*R.M.J., Puerto Rico*



## Tools to live by

I am an addict who has the disease of addiction. My disease causes my head to run in many different directions.

I have found through Narcotics Anonymous tools which I am learning to rely on to live life without having to use drugs. One of the benefits I receive from using the tools, is not listening to my thinking and what it likes to tell me to do. That for me is a miracle. When I have recovery in my life, I am able to find some sort of peace and serenity. For this, I am grateful.

Before I found N. A. I tried to get through life completely on my own. Day after day with the same old stuff, one problem after another, one drug after another. Nothing ever changed. I can remember the pain and despair of trying to get through life without the desire to live. What a miserable existence.

Before I found serenity in working the steps in recovery I had no other choice than to listen to my head. So many times I felt like a prisoner in-

side myself. I believe the worst place for me to be is alone. It is then when I feel like a prisoner in isolation. I lived that way for far too long.

I also remember my life before I had a sponsor who has helped me to work the twelve steps and to find a power greater than myself. For this, I am

grateful. And I sure wouldn't know what to do without the love and support I have found in the meetings and with my friends in the fellowship.

Today when I find myself into the disease of addiction I usually experience pain. Pain for me can sometimes be a warning sign. When this

happens I need to take some action to get outside myself. Sometimes my disease causes me to be very unwilling to do anything. When this happens, the first thing I do is try to pray for some willingness. When this doesn't work, I usually pray for the willingness to be willing and this always works! It is then that I am ready for some action. After all, this is a program of action.

This action can be simple. Go to the tools the program has taught me. One of the tools can simply be to get to a meeting, or call my sponsor, or get a hold of a friend in the program. It is the tools that help to keep me alive and happy today, not the drugs.

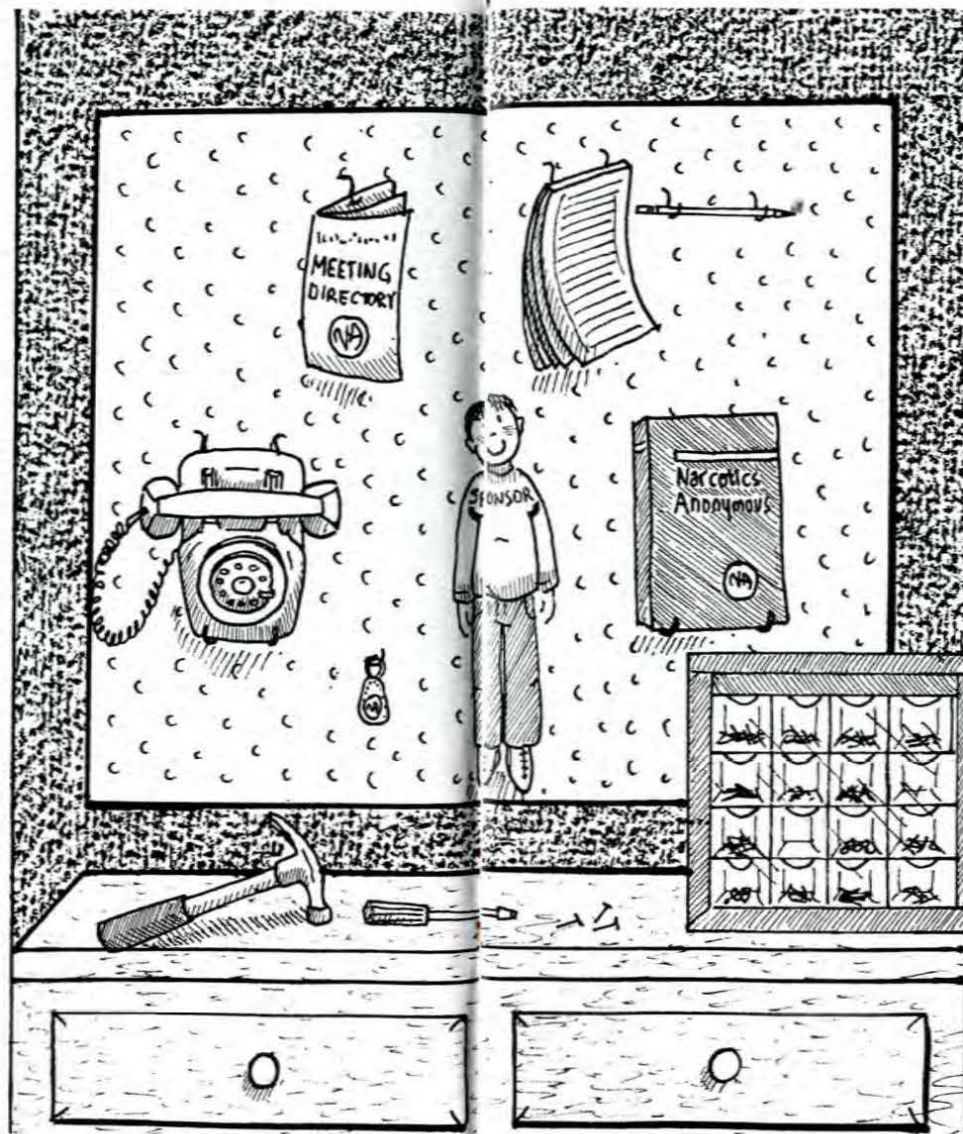
When I choose to use what the program offers me I always feel much better. For me, that's what recovery is about. Not dying anymore, but learning to live. Feeling good about me. I was dying out there for too long. When I remember that I become willing, willing to do whatever it takes to recover from the disease of addiction.

At night I thank my Higher Power for allowing me to live another day drug free, for saving my life and for giving me life. And mainly for helping me learn how to be a better human being, growing and changing through the program of Narcotics Anonymous.

Freedom for me is the freedom of choice and without this program and all the things it has to offer, I would have nothing.

Thank God for Narcotics Anonymous!

L.M., Arizona





## Spiritual, not religious

An addict shared in a meeting recently some confusion about his newly acquired religious beliefs. Since becoming clean in N.A., he has become a "born-again" Christian and wondered if he should continue seeking recovery in the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous or solely through the "God of his understanding" in the church. This brought up several emotional issues within the group. I'm glad our chairperson made the distinction that we are a spiritual, not religious program and that religion was an outside issue.

I'm glad our fellowship is not religious. If it were, which religion would it be? How much time would be wasted debating which religious theory we would follow as a group?

I think we, as a spiritual fellowship, transcend all religions. We encompass all individual concepts of God.

We are not territorial. If the christian concept dominated (in my area, it would be Fundamental Baptist) then would that exempt Buddhists,

Moslems and Hindus wanting to get clean? One of my most spiritual experiences was listening to the Dali Lama of Tibet speak in a Buddhist temple in Dharamsala, India. With the yak butter burning in candle pots and these loving, beautiful, soft-spoken monks and followers quietly meditating, the presence of God was overpowering.

I've had the honor of attending ceremonies in Hindu temples in India and in Bali—I've stayed with Buddhists in Nepal and pushed prayer wheels in Thailand. And I've seen the level of active addiction in these countries. And N.A. groups from around the globe obtain their literature from the world organization where our group conscience dictates one text for one fellowship, stating we shall remain a spiritual, not religious program encouraging every addict to seek his or her own understanding of God. Even our own personal concepts continue to change as we grow in our recovery. Seeking first to use the rooms, our sponsor and other addicts as a force greater than ourselves, we often evolve and grow in our concept of this power. Many of us go on to personalize this Loving Strength as we feel drawn into a spiritual partnership with the God of our understanding.

Many of us tried to get clean through the church. Unfortunately not all denominations practice unconditional love and drug addiction is still looked at as a moral deficiency by some. The unconditional love I've found in the rooms of N.A. allow me the freedom I need to express my in-

nermost thoughts and feelings openly without fear of being judged.

I think the spiritual principles in our program can be used by any one of any belief. Our principles of tolerance, acceptance, open-mindedness, understanding, faith and hope—these guide me daily in my recovery. I have found freedom in N.A.—freedom from active addiction and freedom to choose a God as I understand Him. I

know that any N.A. meeting that I attend in any country of the world should allow me this freedom.

Our format of a moment of silence and the serenity prayer have been designed so that no addict seeking recovery need feel uncomfortable within the rooms. Our spiritual, not religious program of Narcotics Anonymous works for everyone.

*Pam G., Florida*





# Building a story

A recent letter to the *N.A. Way Magazine* included a request that an article be printed detailing "How to write a story for the magazine." The *N.A. Way* review panel agreed that more people might share their experience in writing if they had a little better idea about how to do it, and requested this article be produced.

The *N.A. Way Magazine* is a one-of-a-kind publication, so stories for it need not be modeled on anything else, but there are some "How to's..." based on practicality. On one hand we have the freedom to write anything we want, and on the other hand we have a need for some common symbols and structure that are not so alien as to be unrecognizable.

As the graphic accompanying this article indicates, construction of an *N.A. Way* story or article can be compared with building a house. It is easy to see that houses are built differently to serve different needs and desires; and stories are too.

When you are sitting in front of the typewriter or notebook you mentally jump back and forth between thinking and decisions, but when the words are finally on the paper they are frozen in a single unchanging line.

Some planning about what you

want to express will help. Take the time to make an "outline." Put the *main idea* of what you wish to say at the top of your paper. Then list related or *supporting* ideas and thoughts in brief phrases under the main idea.

After you have several supporting ideas and can't easily think of more, choose the priority in which you wish to express the thoughts. Re-arrange the order on another piece of paper or just number them "one" for most important; "two" for second-most, etc. Remember, it's your story, so you can decide what is most important.

One of the most common "design" mistakes seen in *N.A. Way* stories is that many writers put *supporting* ideas ahead of the *main idea*. Although you may sometimes choose to delay getting to the point for dramatic emphasis, it is usually better to put the main idea in two or three sentences in the first paragraph. At the end of your story you will probably want to re-state your main point to sum up.

When you've got the outline or "blueprint" about like you want it, you are ready to do some "freewriting."

Get as comfortable as you can and, focusing on one of your ideas at a time, begin writing down whatever phrases or sentences come into your head. Don't be too concerned about spelling and punctuation at this stage, you can fix those later. Just get some thoughts on paper. You don't have to show this to anyone so you can be as wild and creative as you wish. If watching the RSC meeting reminded you of the Keystone Cops, say so. If meeting a newcomer sparked feel-

ings like those of seeing a long-lost relative, write it down.

*Constructing sentences* that are clear but contain lots of information can be aided by the use of qualifying words. For instance, indicating "John went home" can carry a lot more sharing if phrased something like "John happily drove off to the pleasant suburban surroundings recovery has recently allowed him to call home."

You may use all your freewriting to construct your finished story, or, more

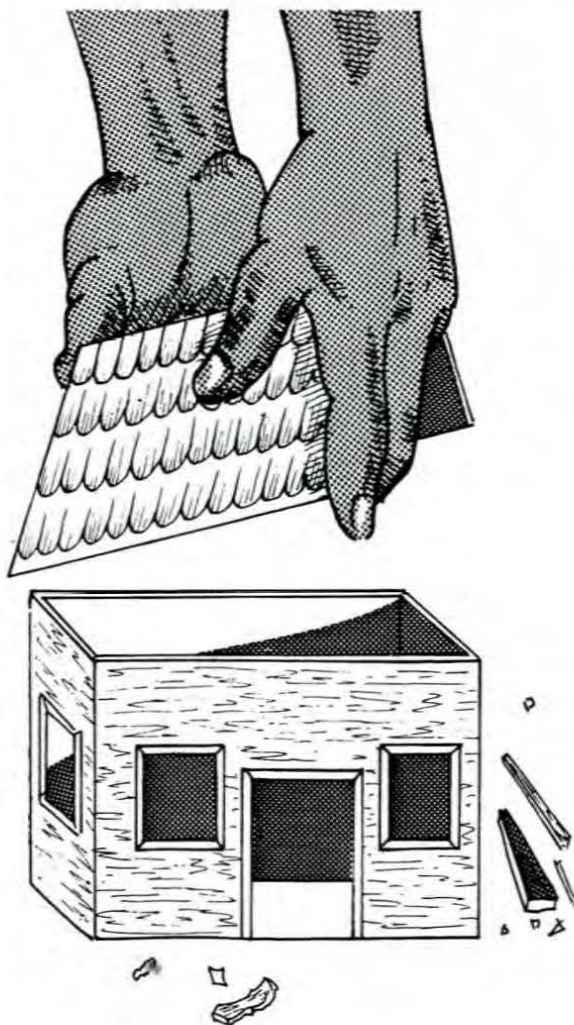
likely, you will choose to leave some of it out. Also, some of the freewriting might bring out more *supporting* elements of the main idea that you did not think of when making your original outline. Add those to the outline in whatever new order of priority that you choose.

Through this process you are shaping and stacking the bricks and boards you will join together in the finished "house" of your story.

Now line up the selected bits of freewriting according to the order you have established. You will see holes or gaps between some of the descriptions of supporting ideas. Mentally you know the reason you experienced the various ideas as related, but will the reader? If not, you should think of some sentences to make the connections. If, after a bit of consideration, *you can't* connect some of the freewriting, it's a pretty good indication that particular piece needs to be part of another whole story. Put that bit aside for future use.

Though the whole story or article is mainly about one thing, the *paragraphs* are little step-by-step descriptions of parts that contribute information or insight concerning the whole.

Let's try thinking of a story about a real house:





The main, lead paragraph is a descriptions of the "event" of the house, for example:

"I just rented a house on the cliff above the ocean. It is a wonderful house that offers all the comforts of houses in the city, but also has a view that is a daily joy."

And the *supporting* paragraphs, developing the main idea, describe what makes up the house, for example:

"Among the most impressive things about the house is its large south-western deck. It is not only good for getting a tan and having cookouts, but is also an excellent place to just take it easy, meditate and watch beautiful sunsets."

Within the paragraph about the deck you don't write about the stone fireplace in the house or the convenience store nearby. Those are other paragraphs. Have as many descriptive sentences about the topic in the paragraph as you wish, but for the sake of keeping interest in the whole story, don't overdo it. A few remarks to describe each element is usually sufficient to support the main idea.

Choose, and mark, your paragraphs by noticing when enough, and not too much, is stated about the supporting idea.

Connecting-phrases between paragraphs are like bolts or nails. They are words that hold a little bit of the ideas both before and after them. Notice that "Among the most impressive things" in the above example refers to both the main idea and points the reader toward a supporting part of the main idea: "the deck."

Using the old "cut and paste"

method or by re-copying, assemble the parts and and check the "joints" to see that the reader can understand the connections.

Like a new house, your story can probably be made better by some more finishing work, but if you have the time, take a break. Get away from it for a while and think of something else. When you come back to it try to read it as though you were seeing it for the first time.

Be critical about things like saying the same thing more than once. See if you used a complicated word where one or two simple ones would do as well. Complicated thoughts and feelings can be expressed in simple words, and by using simpler words a lot more people will get your message.

There are very personal choices to be made about mixing long or short sentences, long or short paragraphs, and where to re-state or emphasize the main point, claim or impression.

There are no standard length requirements for the magazine, but it is very difficult to use less than a single-spaced typewritten page except in the "From our readers section." That's roughly four pages of handwritten text.

Magnifying the mystery of writing, for the *N.A. Way Magazine*, is how to use words in a fellowship devoted to the wordless language of empathy. The best way to deal with that part is believe what you write. Sincerity is more eloquent than form.

Add to these basic tips the much more important material, which is a desire to share some of your recovery experience with fellow addicts, and you have all you need for a good story.

# Home Group

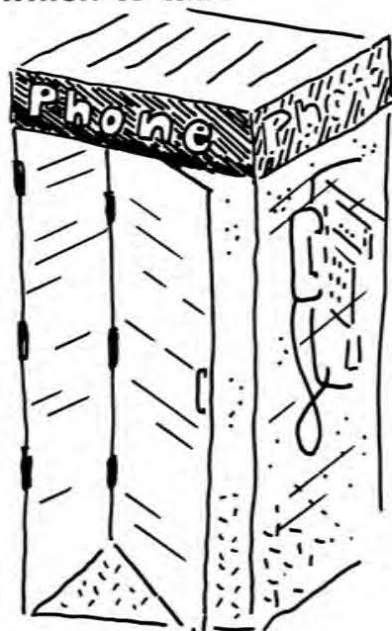
Revelation, part one





# On the LINE

**Addicts just searching for a meeting or crying out for help have the quiet dedication of an army of recovering volunteers with which to talk.**



Volunteers serving on Narcotics Anonymous phonelines throughout the United States describe their efforts as some of the most meaningful, beneficial and heart-rending work available to addicts wishing to carry the message.

In New Orleans "One guy called up and said 'I just pulled the needle out and it was bad dope.' He wouldn't let up. He got real angry that we didn't have THE answer." As the caller became more and more agitated, fearful and angry the volunteer remained as calm as possible and connected him with local emergency services. In New Orleans, as in most of the communities contacted for this article, the phone line volunteers have the technology and the resources to "patch through" crisis calls. Still "It was very scary," said the volunteer. "We don't have THE answer. The answer is at meetings."

An addict passionately involved in support of the New York City Narcotics Anonymous phoneline said "The phoneline was my sponsor for my first 30 days clean. I used for over 30 years. I was an IV user, heroin and other drugs. I kicked at my house. For the first 30 days I'd call the helpline every day. I'd be laying on my couch, shaking, and there was always another addict there to talk to. Sometimes, if they weren't busy, they'd talk with me for an hour or more.

"Sometimes I could get out to a meeting, but I didn't want to talk with the people there, and they didn't want to talk with me."

Conversation with this addict was interrupted several times as he answered incoming calls and dealt with

new volunteers coming onto the daily service shift

He could be heard responding to a caller with "This is Narcotics Anonymous. My name is. . . . I am an addict. Can I help you?" Along with most other veterans of phoneline service, he emphasized the need to let the caller know up front that they are in fact talking with someone who has been where they are, so the "I am an addict" is incorporated in the standard initial response.

Standard responses, resources, and clarity are musts to these people. In the NYC operation a thoughtful volunteer has placed in the local phoneline service handbook the phonetic representation of Spanish for "Give me your number, I'll have a Spanish-speaking addict call you back."

"Everybody leaves here with so much gratitude" said one addict. "You're not talking with an audience, like at a speaker meeting with all the ego stuff that can come up. A guy says 'I want to die, please help' and you are talking to the disease, live."

Another: "Once I received a call from the police detectives, narcos. They said 'We have our friend right here, he's handcuffed. We don't know what to do with him. Will you talk to him?' He'd been getting into the cocaine. I talked to him for a while and he ended up thanking me, you know."

A Chicago woman, a veteran of the local office effort, had someone special she wanted to participate for this article. She did say "I see them really grow in the program (as result of phoneline service). They are exposed to what N.A. is really about."

The fellow she got to share with us was not short on comments. Obviously excited about sharing what has meant so much to him he said, "It is a good way to meet people and hook up. It saved my life. When I got on the line I was still hurting. I ain't done nothing all my life but use, I never belonged anywhere but on the corner and I still felt like it, all the time. People called up hurting and scared, and I was too.

"It was something that I needed. I walked in here (phoneline office) and told . . . . I'd do anything. He told me to sit down, he had something I could do. It made me feel like I belonged."

The razor's edge of sharing that goes on to such benefit between relative newcomer recovering volunteers and addicts hurting on the other end of the line presents some dilemmas for the committees that undertake the efforts.

Orientation in addition to written guidelines for the volunteers is a standard in most established systems.

A Wisconsin addict who has been working on the lines for five years says "I've got kind of judgmental about volunteers. The person calling doesn't really know who they are talking to. Sometimes its hard to find people who are going to relay a Narcotics Anonymous message. We have to work with principles as well as personalities."

The benefits to the volunteer's recovery were mentioned by everyone polled. One said "Without a doubt it has done me a lot of good. I found it very difficult to get back into the mainstream of things when I came in. I've never been a real social animal.



"I ended up as chairperson of the local committee and keep the beeper. It keeps me in touch at the ground level. It's not glamorous, not out in front. But it is the front line of service. It's not in the spotlight."

Because anyone can call a helpline the volunteers often must decide what to do about calls concerning outside issues. More established systems have already made part of their orientation and resources the familiarity with phone numbers for suicide intervention, family difficulties and other emergency contacts, as well as a statement that "N.A. does not endorse. . ." other efforts.

A fairly common vulnerability

**"People who  
don't want  
to talk with  
their sponsors  
call up."**

phoneline volunteers are learning to face is when someone leaves a message (during times when recorders are operating) to call back a certain number. "When you call back," said one volunteer, "The guy wants to know where the h. . . you got his number?"

Another aspect of phoneline activity that is mentioned is the amount of calls from people with time in the program who just need to talk and for whatever reason want to do it very anonymously. "People who don't want to talk with their sponsors call up.

They say 'I don't know you and you don't know me.' I mean people four, five years clean. Its like sometimes they are doing a Fifth Step."

Several of the recovering addicts who participated in the development of this report echoed one's remark that there is an increase of "people calling us to report that their neighbors are dealing dope." Patience and humor as well as gratitude and reverence were often evident in the voices of the volunteers.

Some confusion on the part of the public also results in calls that come as result of societies' general measures to deal with drug use. One volunteer mentioned getting a call from a person who was faced with drug testing on a new job. "He actually started crying and saying 'Please let me join,' he saw me as a kind of screening process for membership in N.A."

Because of situations like that one many phoneline efforts have started to include the statement that "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using" as part of their recordings and standard responses.

The New York City Narcotics Anonymous helpline is probably one of the most established and successful in the world. The hours of live addict operation have been reduced recently while some new equipment was installed, but by the time this article hits the streets it is likely the one to six volunteers who are usually "on line" about 16 hours a day will be back at their stations.

During the interim period a quick call-back measure has been in place to respond to the overflow.

In New York such an overflow must

be great because one office helper states the helpline commonly fields three to four thousand calls a month.

A spokesperson for the New York operation says local addicts have come to depend on the phoneline for notices about service structure meetings as well as regular recovery meetings and that there are contingencies for relaying information between trusted servants built into the system. It even includes a transmittal form the volunteer can complete to see that the data is relayed.

Although nothing can replace the therapeutic value of one addict talking with another the sheer volume and intricacy of dealing with callers in New York's five boroughs (comprising 13 NA service areas) has made it practical to lean a little harder on some technology.

What that means is the futuristic "telephone tree" is going to greet some New York phoneline callers. Don't laugh, Louisiana, rumor has it the system is being considered by phoneline committees throughout the fellowship.

This is the deal where a recorded voice very politely and musically describes a "menu" of options for routing your call, and suggests you might wish to "press number such-and-such. . . now."

The few acknowledged members of Narcotics Anonymous present in New York State a little over seven years ago will find the modern volume and technology of the system poignantly different. An NYC addict reminiscing about the forerunner of the current call-back system said "They had the 'Rockefeller Law' until 1983. That

was the 'Internal Possession' charge." An addict, (or, presumably, anyone else) could be charged with what was in his system, as well as what might be on his person or in his effects. Publicly letting it be known who you were and what you were doing, an addict wanting to talk with other addicts on the telephone, for instance, could have unwanted legal consequences.

What was done, according to this spokesperson, was "The 15 or 20 (admitted) addicts in the state of New York would have flyers printed up a hundred at a time, and hand them out at detoxes and places like that.

"The next hundred flyers, a few months later, would have a different number."

In 1983 WCNA-13 was held in New York and generated enough funds to help, when it was safer, open the first phoneline service at 25 St. Marks Place in Manhattan. The operation, which includes the RSO, has moved several times since then, and is now located at 5790 Broadway.

Whether the volunteer is tied to a system as high tech as that in New York or quietly reading by the only "beeper" owned by a local fellowship the bottom line is apparently the same. "Get 'em to a meeting is what we preach" says one.

"This is the Fifth Tradition to the max! says another, "You'll be at a meeting and notice somebody looking at you and think 'Now what is that person looking at?' Then after the meeting they'll come up and give you a hug and say 'Thank you. I'm the person you gave the information today. I get goose-bumps.'"



# The broad perspective

## WCNA 20

Between four and five thousand people participated in activities in the three main Portland, Oregon, facilities hosting the 20th Narcotics Anonymous World Convention Labor Day weekend.

But convention planners say the event "probably just broke even" as far as money is concerned. Paid registration was lighter than expected, with only about 3300 of those present actually springing for the costs. Many addicts who might have been expected to support the Portland get-together told the planning committee they are saving their money to attend the next World Convention, planned for Australia.

The slight disappointment of overall paid attendance was somewhat balanced by a much stronger participation in meetings and workshops than has been the experience at previous world gatherings. Banquets, dances and festivities were general sell-outs. Speakers were well received.

No one who was there will likely

forget the "regional countdown" conducted at the start of the main speaker-meeting Saturday night. As the emcee called out names of states and countries for recognition a note was passed forward. When the announcer read the word "Russia" from the note and a lone visitor stood, a hesitant and wondering spate of applause built as heads turned to see if it were true. As the thousands of addicts in the Portland Coliseum recognized their brother from behind the Iron Curtain a thunderous, standing ovation and floor-pounding was sustained for several moments.

## Unified Budget

WSC 1991 may see the introduction of motions or measures to bring on line a "unified budget" for the services of Narcotics Anonymous. The August Fellowship report and various other hints about the possibilities have been in the wind for some time. Such a fiscal discipline might supplant the current process, which includes different accounting repositories for WSC receipts and disbursements; WSO, Inc; and WCC, Inc. After discussion during the September JAC the issue is slated for more scrutiny during an October joint meeting of the WSO BOD, the BOT and the Admin Committee.

## October WSC Workshop

A workshop specifically oriented for committee business is set for the weekend of October 19-21 in the Airtel Plaza Hotel, Van Nuys, Ca. Room rates are \$66.08 per night including tax, single or double. The "Flyaway"

shuttle bus runs between LAX and Van Nuys every thirty minutes and costs \$8 round trip.

## Conference finances

Though the budget crunch continues WSC Treasurer Tom R. expressed his thanks for the income passed on by regions during August. It is said the August 1990 income surpasses the amount sent in during the same month in 1989, which is very good news considering the bottom line is still so dismal. The admin committee continues to suggest severe cutbacks in committee actions that require disbursing of funds and stands by the priority arrangements now in place calling for postponement of most fund-consuming committee activity. Excepted from restrictions thusfar are the October WSC workshop and the planned work on the steps portion of *It works: How and Why*; the traditions portion of *It Works: How and Why*; the *Guide to Service* workshops; and the efforts of the Ad Hoc Committee on Isolated Groups.

## Guide To Service

Two more workshops on the production of the *Guide to Service* are slated this month. October 5-7th interested addicts will gather in the Best Western Inn, 501 Southwest Blvd., Kansas City, KS. and October 26-28th a similar effort will be convened at the Holiday Inn Convention Center, 1020 S. Figaroa St., Los Angeles, Ca. Call the Kansas City Best Western at (913) 677-3060 and the L.A. convention center at (213)

748-1291. Four previous USA workshops have been held, starting in late August. They were respectively conducted in Philadelphia, Pa., Columbus, Oh., Seattle, WA., and just last week in Atlanta, Ga.

The workshops, conducted during the two-month period from August 24 through October 28, are designed to "educate and inform" N.A. members, to "help the WSC Ad Hoc Committee on N.A. Service revise the draft material into final form," and to provide "training for trainers" at regional and area levels who might conduct local workshops on the *Guide*.

## Regional H&I

People are reminded by the WSC H&I Committee chairperson to send in their announcements of Regional H&I Learning Days in a timely manner. Some notices have not been getting passed along fast enough to be included in *Reaching Out* before the event happens.

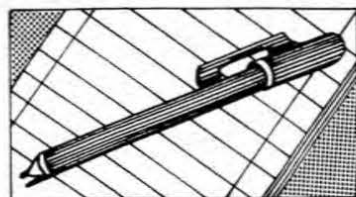
## Cover text

As evidenced by the letter printed in this issue's *Viewpoint* section (and other letters before it) there is some desire among the N.A. Way's readership for a change in the wording of "What is N.A." on the back of the magazine. A good argument can be made about the need to have some clear boundaries on what we are doing in Narcotics Anonymous, but such letters also make very sound points.

If there are some defenders of the current rendition out there, let us hear from you! A change, and/or an explanation, will be printed. *Ed.*



# Viewpoint



quirement for membership is a desire to stop using drugs."

From "We are not interested in what or how much you used or who your connections were, what you have done in the past, how much or how little you have, but only in what you want to do about your problem and how we can help" to "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."

My understanding is that this has been used for sometime now. My fault, I should have read instead of "assumed" that the *N.A. Way* would only print something about our program straight from the literature. Many of us who get the magazine and who understand that this is a violation of our traditions and our trust have a responsibility to do something about it.

I recently received a letter from the trustee's of this program concerning the illicit publication of a Basic Text by a certain group of people. They used the old versions of our text which focus on the specific drugs or "symptoms" of our disease. The wording in those texts and literature served as a way to differentiate us from each other. We needed unity to hold us

together. We learned drugs were only a symptom of our disease and that disease is "addiction." This is why we revised the old versions to clarify and unify the fellowship.

The trustees are distraught that this group of people are printing a copywritten publication without permission. I am distraught that they are using something that greatly effects *N.A.* as a whole through "self-will." I believe we need the unity that the revised versions of our literature gives us. Further, I am recovering from the disease of addiction, not from drugs! If I only needed help to not use drugs there are any number of places I could go and be helped to not use.

For me, I need help to deal with this disease. You know, that one that tells me I'm not worthy, kills my self-esteem, makes me irresponsible and selfish. It kills me in more ways than just drugs ever could. It tells me I'm fat and I need to starve myself to be okay, or that if I keep on gambling, I'll win big and then everything will be alright. It tells me that my kids will be better off if I'm dead.

See, I don't come here to just stop using drugs. I come here to help me learn how to live in spite of this disease which wants me to die. I learn how to love myself and be happy. This is the miracle of this program. No, I don't use today, but I don't die today either. I am a gratefully recovering addict.

One last thing. Yes, I feel it's wrong for this group of people to publish something without our (the fellow-

ship's) approval (not just W.S.O.). Don't forget you work for us, right! But it is just as wrong for you to publish or revise anything that is not *N.A.* approved material, as *N.A.* literature.

No, the *N.A. Way* is not *N.A.* literature. It is only the opinions, thoughts and ideas of those of us who choose to share here. However, when you choose to put *N.A.*'s name and parts of our literature on the cover or in the contents, you are responsible for it's wording. Please, remember you do not have the right to write *N.A.* literature and distribute it without the approval of the fellowship.

I would like it withdrawn from the cover (personally forever) until such time it is brought to the fellowship for approval. Why not use the already approved I.P. until such time as it is approved?

I hope it will not become another "fight" amongst ourselves. If we would each remember we have a responsibility to each other and the program as a whole, I believe all of this disharmony would cease. It sounds unrealistic but I've seen it happen. When we each (individuals or groups) do something, (even if we think we are right and are doing it for the good of *N.A.*) that affects *N.A.* as a whole without the fellowship's approval, we are doing more harm than good. Let's please, each remember our responsibilities and not use self-will to get what we want.

There is a slogan I want to close with—"Trust the process, it works!"

*J.R., Tennessee*

## More about cover text

I have been subscribing to and suggesting to others very highly *The N.A. Way Magazine* for most of my recovery. However, there is now a problem I feel with it which tends to change my views on the whole magazine. The back cover has an unapproved version of "What is the *N.A. Program*" on it. I felt this is in great violation of our traditions as well as our steps. The magazine has chosen to change the wording from "*N.A.* is a non-profit fellowship or society. . ." to "*N.A.* is a world-wide fellowship or society. . ." from . . . "There is only one requirement for membership, the desire to stop using." To "The only re-



## Call for acceptance

I want it now! You know, to come natural. Why me? Can't they see we are just like them. Where's the unconditional love?

It seems that each time I consciously or unconsciously work toward something and finally reach some point of acceptance and freedom, I end up having to continue to fight to keep it.

I just returned from a meeting and I'm angry. My first reaction is to blame others, look for easy ways, side streets or stuff it. Today I choose to try this way.

Anonymity insures equality but it's up to us to follow this principle. It starts with me welcoming that new addict into N.A. whether it's he or she, any race, sexual preference, color or creed. We all deserve recovery. I must choose it.

The more I start to love myself, the more I want to keep what I have, and the more I want more. I begin to notice more ways to change. The Basic Text says, "The more we live our program, the more God seems to put us in positions where issues surface."

I used to wonder why there are especially for Gay and Lesbian meetings. After all, this is N.A., we all love each other. WRONG. I believe we all want that but today I must continually put myself into healthy living

spaces, healthy relationships, and healthy meetings. If I can't talk about my love for other men, if I have to continually screen my conversation, if I have to continually listen to subtle hints and put downs of being gay then I think it's time to start a gay meeting.

I deserve no more or no less than equal opportunity to pursue my recovery in Narcotics Anonymous.

This week (not in meetings) I had friends fag bashed, put down and generally hated for being themselves.

N.A. is my home and it's supposed to be safe. And yeah, it is, but that's not any reason not to make it safer for all who attend and want a new way of life.

The funny thing is I can't blame anyone or anything. It must start with me, but I can't do it alone. The world may hate me for my sexuality, but let's together change that in this fellowship. Hey, it's not okay to discriminate, abrasive or non-abrasive.

Let's change, I don't want to be sick today. We are here, we are "queen," clean and not going away."

Oh, by the way, if you're reading the N.A. Way for the first time or you're a newcomer or both, keep reading, it's great. I found that we don't just stay clean in this fellowship, we recover to a new life filled with love, concern, peace and FREEDOM! The N.A. Way is just one way to express our sentiment about a fellowship which gives us acceptable ways to live life. I care about it and I want what's best for it. Another way to express sentiment is talk to your RSR.

Love,

M.J., Minnesota

## From our readers

### The lie is dead

After a lifetime of addiction, which had taken me down a trail of nightmares I had just gotten out of my fourth or fifth recovery home and was back on the streets for one more try at life on life's terms.

I was attending meetings of the "other" fellowship because, like most old junkies, I had become a wino, and there was no N.A. in town. But when I spoke of my drug use those old timers would always shut me down. What could I do? I was back in my home town where it all had started and I often could see some of my old "friends" nodding in doorways along Main Street.

I had entered college and spent a Summer in the city near our World Service Office. I went to an N.A. meeting every night. I visited the office and got myself a basic text and a starter kit. When I returned home I found a meeting place and started the first N.A. meeting in town.

That first night I didn't have to clean any ashtrays because no one used them. I had thought for sure the room would be full! To say I was disappointed wouldn't quite express how I felt. It was like that for over a year. Once in a while a traveler passing through town would show up, and one of my old connections came in once in

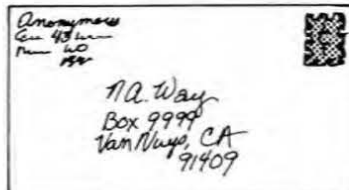
a while, but he just couldn't stay clean.

I went through a lot of growing pains that year. In the middle of a meeting of the other fellowship I got into a shouting match with a member over my literature display. I wasn't doing real good and had a couple of scary close calls where I almost used. Those experiences convinced me that God carries me when I am unable to carry myself.

It's six years later and I live in another small town a hundred miles away. I'm reading an N.A. pamphlet about staying clean in isolation and it brought a flood of memories and prompted this letter. I could go on forever about the miracles in my life because of Narcotics Anonymous, Twelve Steps, and God, but there aren't that many pages in our magazine. N.A. is alive and well in that small town where I was born. Some of those young people who used to peek in the door have come to believe. They have four meetings a week and they are growing. Not bad for a one horse town where there's nothing to do but get loaded.

The lie is dead, we do recover-the N.A. Way!

S.R.B., California





## 90 in 90 in '90

As members of Narcotics Anonymous, this year presents us with a unique opportunity that we won't have for another hundred years.

In our Basic Text it is suggested that we try to attend a meeting a day during the first 90 days of our recovery. This is often referred to as "90 in 90." I would like to suggest that all of us, even those of us who are not new to N.A., try to attend 90 meetings in 90 days in 1990 or "90 in 90 in '90." As you can see, this opportunity won't come around again for a hundred years, and 1990 is quickly slipping by. So we had better start as soon as possible.

If everyone would do this imagine the strength and support it would provide our groups, and I am sure our own personal recoveries will benefit as well!

While we are doing or 90 in 90 in '90, let's keep in mind who is the most important person at any meeting. We need to make an extra effort to see that newcomers are made welcome. So often after a meeting is over we split up into our own little groups to visit and plan for what we will do after the meeting, leaving the newcomers off to the side to fend for themselves. Try to remember what it was like when we first came to N.A. Remember how we felt and some of the questions we had during our first few weeks in the program.

We need to seek put the newcomers and talk to them even if it's only to offer them a schedule and a hug. We need to make sure that everyone who

picks up a white keytag also gets a current meeting schedule with some phone numbers.

By talking with newcomers and making them feel welcome, we make recovery attractive. We demonstrate that the therapeutic value of one addict helping another truly is without parallel.

*Mike M., Missouri*

## My Higher Power is spiritual

I don't believe in coincidence anymore. Before I started to have my spiritual awakening, I used to attribute some of the inexplicable occurrences in my life to coincidence, but now I see them as evidence of a power greater than myself. I wish I had a nickel for every time I went to meetings when I was confused or in pain, only to hear somebody say exactly what I needed to hear.

What is amazing to me is that I am able to have a concept of a Higher Power that I can call "God" and with whom I feel secure. As a transsexual, I am used to being condemned by various religions, and for a long time, the fear of "going to hell" made the concept of God a scary one for me. I am SO grateful that this is a spiritual instead of a religious program.

To me, the difference is very basic. I believe that religion is spirituality tainted by specific beliefs, rules and rituals, and unfortunately, that most religions maintain that their way is the only right and true way. I think that religion is an attempt to define

God in mankind's limited terms. My faith is in a Higher Power that is greater than all limiting definitions, that includes the concepts of all religious beliefs, and that is loving and great enough for us to all be right in our understanding of God. This is why I really don't care for the Lord's Prayer—it only addresses a small part of God, and leaves a lot of agnostics and atheists feeling very left out.

God's latest lesson for me came in the forms of an N.A. Way article entitled "Hostage Situation". It came at the exact right moment, right after I'd broken up from a very co-dependant and addictive relationship. Once again, God gave me what I needed when I needed it. Though I don't think having read the article would have saved the relationship, it helped me to understand my part in its failure and to learn something from the breakup. It helped keep me from being in needless, meaningless pain. I grew up a little from reading it.

This is one of the cornerstones of my faith, that God doesn't let "bad" things happen in my life without a reason. As much as the breakup hurts, because I still love the person, God let me learn something from it which was emphasized by the letter I read. Since both of us were trying to use each other to do what only God can do for us, to make ourselves feel complete, our relationship became addictive and was doomed to fail for that reason. It may take some time for me to become emotionally and spiritually ready for a healthy relationship, and I expect this is also true for my

ex-lover. As a couple of self-involved control junkies, we have a long way to go.

This program suggests no new relationships for the first year, but, at two years clean, it looks like it will take a lot longer than that for me, but that is okay. My faith in my H.P. tells me that she will make sure I get what I need when I need it and not before I'm ready for it.

*C.B., California*

## Letter to the editor,

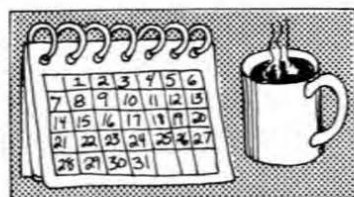
There was an error in the July 1990 N.A. Way Magazine "Report on India..." The error may discourage N.A. members from visiting Calcutta if they believe what the report says that "apparently, there are no N.A. meetings in Calcutta except for ones that are some way connected with treatment centers."

In October of last year I wrote W.S.O. from Calcutta that there was a small, struggling but active group meeting three times a week in St. Mary's Catholic Church on Rippon Street. I attended the meeting for three months. The largest attendance was ten. Four were women. N.A. members visiting India would be well rewarded if they went out of their way to visit the group. It really needs your experience, strength and hope. W.S.O. should encourage Bombay area groups to bus up to Calcutta and join in some inter-area function. It would be encouraging to Calcutta.

*D.E., New York*



# Comin' up



## LET US KNOW!

We'll be happy to announce your up-coming 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.

**ALABAMA:** Oct. 12-14, 1990; Surrender in the Mountains; Mt. Cheaha State Park, central Alabama; rsvns P.O. Box 18031, Huntsville, AL 35804-8031

**2)** Oct. 27, 1990; 11th Anniversary of So. Avondale Group; So. Avondale Group, P.O. Box 320847, Birmingham, AL 35212-0847

**BAHAMAS:** Nov. 2-4, 1990; BACNA III; High On Life In Paradise; Bahamas Third Annual Convention; rsvns 1-(800)-722-2449; Resorts International, (Bahamas) LTD, 915 NE 125th St., N.Miami, FL 33161

**BRITISH COLUMBIA:** Oct. 26-28, 1990; 13 Annual Pacific Northwest Convention; Delta River Inn, 3500 Cessna Drive, Richmond, BC, V7B 1C7; rsvns (604) 278-1241; PNWCNA -13, P.O. Box 43018, Burnaby, BC, Canada, V5G 4S2

**CALIFORNIA:** Nov. 2-4, 1990; 11th So. Cal. Regional Convention; Bonaventure Hotel, 404 S. Figueroa Street, Los Angeles; rsvns (213) 624-1000

**2)** Nov. 18, 1990; 3rd Annual, Knotts Berry Farm; Eastern Counties ASC, c/o Knotts Berry Farm, P.O. Box 5861, Whittier, CA 90607

**COLOMBIA:** Nov. 3-5, 1990; I Convencion Nacional de Narcoticos Anonimos

**COLORADO:** Oct. 26-28, 1990; 4th Colorado Regional Convention; Holiday Inn, 425 West Prospect Road, Ft. Collins CO 80526; rsvns (303) 482-2626; Colorado Reg. Convention, P.O. Box 5183, Englewood, CO 80155-5183

**CONNECTICUT:** Nov. 2-4, 1990; Connecticut River Valley (NA Group Sponsored) 12 Step Retreat; Episcopal Camp and Conference Center, Ivoryton, CT; For information call (203) 443-0309 or (203) 347-7856; Retreat, P.O. Box 343, New London, CT 06320-0343

**FLORIDA:** Nov. 15-18, 1990; Serenity In The Sun IX; Hilton Hotel, 150 Australian Avenue, West Palm Beach, FL; rsvns (800) 445-8667; Recovery Weekend, 931 Village Boulevard, Suite 907-155, W. Palm Beach, FL 33409

**HAWAII:** Oct. 19-21, 1990; Third Annual Maui Gathering; Camp Maluhia; Register (\$65 for adults, \$30 for children) by writing Maui NA, Box 978, Puunene, HI 96784 or contact Donya at (808) 879-7801; Transportation will be provided from Kahului Airport, Maui to Camp Maluhia

**IRELAND:** Nov. 9-11, 1990; New Frontiers, Sixth Irish Convention of N.A.; Actons Hotel, Kinsale, County Cork; Call Actons Hotel at (021) 772135; IRCNA, P.O. Box 1368, Sherriff Street, Dublin 1, Ireland

**MICHIGAN:** Nov. 24-25, 1990; 1st Unity Weekend; Lansing Clarion Hotel, Lansing, MI; rsvns (517) 694-8123

**NEW ZEALAND:** Oct. 26-28, 1990; New Zealand Regional Convention; Victoria University, 2nd Floor, University Union Building, Kelburn Parade, Wellington; NZRSCCC, P.O. Box 12-473, Molesworth Street, Wellington, New Zealand

**NORTH DAKOTA:** Oct. 13, 1990; Living A Clean Dream; Lake Agassiz Area Ninth Annual Banquet; Fargo, N.D. 58108; rsvns; 1-(701)-234-9330; , P.O. Box 3243, Fargo, ND 58108

**OHIO:** Dec. 28-31, 1990; 2nd Central Ohio Area Convention; Radisson Hotel and Conference Center, Airport, Columbus, Ohio; rsvns (614) 475-7551; COACNA, P.O. Box 14272, Columbus, OH 43214

**2)** Dec. 31, 1990; Central Ohio Annual New Years Eve Celebration; Ohio State Fairgrounds, Rhodes Center, 17th Columbus Avenue; COACNA, P.O. Box 14272, Columbus, OH 43214

**OREGON:** Oct. 13-14, 1990; Heartbeat of N.A., rsvns (503) 341-6070

**PENNSYLVANIA:** Nov. 9-11, 1990; Tri-State Regional Convention; Start to live VIII; rsvns (412) 391-4600, (800) Hiltons; TSRSO Inc., P.O. Box 110217, Pittsburgh, PA 15232

**2)** Nov. 23-25, 1990; Beehive Area Thanksgiving Convention; Sheraton Crossgates Hotel; rsvns (717) 824-7100; phoneline (717) 283-0828; send speaker tapes; Beehive ASC, P.O. Box 291, Wilkes Barre, PA 18703

**3)** Nov. 23-25, 1990; Spiritual Foundation Mini Convention, Philadelphia Inner City ASC; Holiday Inn, 18th and Market Streets, Philly. info at Box 7333, Philadelphia 19101; , P.O. Box 2342, Philadelphia, PA 19103

**SOUTH CAROLINA:** Nov. 15-18, 1990; Serenity Festival VIII; Landmark Best Western Resort Hotel, 1501 South Ocean Boulevard, Myrtle Beach, SC; rsvns (803) 448-9441 or (800) 845-0658; Serenity Festival, Inc., P.O. Box 1198, Myrtle Beach, SC 29577

**TENNESSEE:** Nov. 21-25, 1990; 8th Volunteer Regional Convention; Hyatt Regency Hotel, 623 Union Street, Nashville, TN 37219; rsvns 1 (800) 233-1234; VRC VIII, P.O. Box 121961, Nashville, TN 37212

**TEXAS:** Nov. 2-4, 1990; 3rd Annual Best Little Regional Convention; Kingston Inn by the Airport; 7909 Lakeside, I-40 E. at Lakeside, Kingston Inn; rsvns (806) 373-3071, (800) 669-4456; BLRCNA III,

**Attn:** Registration, P.O. Box 19973, Amarillo, TX 79114-1973

**VERMONT:** Nov. 9-11, 1990; Champlain Valley Area Convention; Ramada Inn, South Burlington; rsvns (800)-2-RAMADA or (802) 658-0250; CVACC, P.O. Box 64714, Burlington, VT 05406

**WASHINGTON:** Nov. 2-4, 1990; WNIR Reaching In, H&I Learning Day's; Luny Slope Grange Hall, 323 Easy Street, Wenatchee, WA; WNIR H&I Learning Day, P.O. Box 70404, Seattle, WA 98107

**2)** Nov. 16-18, 1990; Seattle Area Men's Retreat; Camp Casey Conference Center on Whidbey Island; Men's Retreat, 5833 7th NW, Seattle, WA 98107

**WEST VIRGINIA:** Oct. 26-28, 1990; True Colors III, An Autumn Convention; rsvns (304) 372-7000

**WISCONSIN:** Oct. 19-21, 1990; 7th Wisconsin State N.A. Convention; Holiday Inn Southeast; Madison, WI; rsvns (800) HOLIDAY; WSNAC VII, P.O. Box 14501, Madison, WI 53714





# N.A. Way

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3TEA

## The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous

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

Twelve Traditions reprinted 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 dues or fees. 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.