

THE N.A. Way[®]

M A G A Z I N E

July 1991

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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[®] M A G A Z I N E

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volume nine, number seven

meeting in print

Dealing with depression	2
Freedom from destruction	6
Close calls	7
Step Seven	9
Basically speaking	10
More on the "God question"	12
Friends in recovery	17

the broad perspective

Fellowship news	18
-----------------	----

home group

Special submission	20
Eddie & Marge	21

feature

Giving ourselves a break!	22
Report on Daily Book	25

viewpoint

Taking inventory	27
Dear Sir	28
To the editor	29

from our readers

Letters and short articles	30
----------------------------	----

comin' up

A worldwide N.A. calendar	33
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Dealing with depression

I have suffered off and on from depression all of my life. While a college student, I was hospitalized for manic-depression (also known as bipolar illness); at that time I was put on medication. For over five years, various psychotropic medications were a part of my diet. I was really sick; people with simple anxiety are not put on antipsychotic medication.

Today, I choose not to take mood changing chemicals or lithium. Because of the fellowship, I have been off of booze and prescription drugs continuously for fifteen years. Since I have recently read several articles concerning the use of prescription drugs for depression in *The N.A. Way Magazine*, I want to add my opinion of how I, a former mental patient, have managed to live one day at a time without chemical crutches by simply using what is freely available in our rooms.

What does depression feel like for me? Not too _____ good. In depression I'm confused and overwhelmed. I feel alone, unlovable, guilty, behind, and not as good as everyone else. I do not know how I fit in the world, what my world is. My mind slows down. Nothing gives me joy. I want to crawl into a cave and die.

I see the world as a hard, cruel place with everyone against me. I feel like I am in a horror movie where everyone is a monster or will soon turn into one.

What have I learned from the steps about depression? Before I could really get a handle on depression, I had to accept that I had it—just like I had to accept that I was an addict. Due to my early environment and/or my genes, I have a tendency to go into depression. Others may react with anger or get ulcers. I get depressed. My anger gets turned against me. My tendency is to always blame myself. If I had just worked harder. If I was just smarter. My thoughts go on and on.

Over the years, I have done many written inventories. Many clear patterns have emerged from these examinations.

My biggest depression while in recovery came about because I lost a dream. I dreamed of being famous, of being on talk shows, the whole bit. This was all going to happen when I won in the judo nationals. My fantasy blew up when I was beat in the first thirty seconds of my first match. My brain is so good at producing great plans and dreams, but when reality does not match my expectations, my brain shuts down.

I have learned that depression is just a mask; it is an illusion. What it actually represents is some emotion that I am denying such as fear, anger, hurt or guilt. In my early recovery, many low periods started with guilt about avoiding responsibilities. As an active addict, I had let my life go. When I got clean, there was so much

of life to get caught up on. There was my broken-down car. There was my leaky roof. There was my poor health, high blood pressure, cavity-filled teeth, one-hundred-pound beer belly. When I took care of my responsibilities, my depressions eased.

Throughout my life I have not allowed myself to grieve. After a relationship ended, I frantically jumped into another. I did not feel my pain or cry. I did not process my thoughts. Part of my sickness was to always be busy. If I was full of things to do, I did not have to feel.

I have just shared some of the ways my mind works to get me into a depression; now I will explain what I do to get out of depression.

I never had the benefit of a rehab, so I had to learn from the people in the rooms ways of getting out of depression. The program has taught me that I never have to be alone again and that I can stay depressed as long as I want. To stay clean, I had to go to meetings, work the steps, and get a sponsor—these work for depression, too.

For quick, but not necessary long-lasting relief, I have found some techniques that always work. From the start, hard, sustained exercise has worked. However, I had to work out until I was exhausted—twenty minutes of light aerobics was not sufficient. Judo, wrestling, and long distance running saved my life hundreds of times. Actually, any kind of activity helps me. I have to force myself to get out of bed, to put one foot in front of the other. I may not feel like doing anything, but I am still capable of doing things. I can cut the

grass, rake leaves, or show up for class even when depressed. For years now, I have found all my depressions relate to H.A.L.T.—being too hungry, angry, lonely or tired. Often, I am tired and need to rest or do something good for myself. Frequently, I need to get out of the lonely feelings by connecting with others—going to meetings, conventions, dances, making phone calls, talking to my sponsor.

For long-range help, I simply need to work a good N.A. program. The answers are in the steps. Our emblem lists the essential points that we need to cover: self, God, service, society and freedom.

I am always writing inventories. My inventories are focused on what I am feeling, where I am at, and where I am going. I look to see where I am at with H.A.L.T. I need to really meditate to find out if I am feeling angry or hurt. I have to look at why I am angry. Usually, I am not allowing myself to be human—to feel tired, to feel sad. Am I angry because I am comparing my inside to someone's outside? Do I feel that God is not giving me enough, fast enough? When was the last time I went to a meeting? When I am angry, blaming others is not the answer; it never helped me before, it is not going to ever help me. I must put the focus on myself. The core of our program is the serenity prayer. If I am angry at a situation, perhaps I need to change, not procrastinate due to fear. If I can not change a situation, I must accept it.

Most of my depressions come from denying my emotions. I need to identify my real feelings and my true motives. I have gotten myself in some



pretty ugly moods by expecting praise which did not come or did not come from the right people. Every day I praise myself. I pat myself on the back for big and little performances and for just making an effort. If I am clean today, I am a success today. I know how much effort I put into something. I know how much I have improved. I depend on my inventories to tell me where I am in life, not other people.

If I have an attitude of gratitude, I am not depressed. I read over a gratitude list every morning before I start my day. I tend to forget where I came from. I forget about all the freedoms that I have in this new life without drugs.

Meditation has lifted me to higher planes. Now I see reasons why my H.P. permitted me to suffer. I've had to work very hard to get where I'm at today; therefore, I really appreciate what I have. In some ways, my recovery was difficult. I really worked the steps when I stumbled into the rooms. By listening to my inner voice during meditation, I have gained acceptance of me and my H.P.

Probably the surest way for me to avoid the lows is service work. Every time I make coffee, I am taking out insurance against a depression. If I share with another addict, I will remember from whence I came. Trying to help another addict takes me out of myself. Sharing takes my mind off of my problems. Working with another addict puts my life in perspective. It makes me realize that just being clean is a big reward.

I believe that we each have a destiny. By meditating and writing inventories, I am discovering what my role

in the world is. My H.P. speaks in a quiet voice. It is up to me to listen. I choose goals and make plans to achieve them based upon what my inner voice tells me. Sometimes my H.P. speaks through the people in the rooms. Someone will be sharing and a light will go on in my head. When I am depressed I feel useless. When I know that I am here for some special mission I am not depressed. Perhaps my mission is to help another addict who will later go on to do some great deed for the world. Maybe someone I help (and it could be just a hug and a "keep coming back") could bring hundreds of people into the fellowship with his/her influence.

There is more to life than meetings. I feel it is my duty to take what I have learned in the meetings to the world—to practice these principles in all of my affairs.

When I came in, I was the youngest person around. They told me that I did not have to lose my productive years—they were right. I entered the program as a three-hundred-pound slob and was transformed into a well-conditioned athlete who ran twenty-six mile marathons. My mind healed enough for me to earn a masters degree with outstanding grades. Today, I own a house with a fireplace and swimming pool. I look like a normal person and have the respect of my family, my neighbors and my co-workers.

All that I am, all that I have done, I owe to the people in the fellowship. Our Basic Text predicted my good fortune with, "Our disease has been arrested and now anything is possible."

Anonymous

Freedom from destruction

Recently I came across this writing from my active addiction:

"I am destructing, yet what can I do? Now entertaining thoughts I never knew possible. What is my enemy that's killing me? The only life left in me is the very breath I breathe. I am being destroyed by a force unknown."

Today, I know what I was writing of. Addiction is a powerful force that almost destroyed every glimmer of hope. I survived years of hopeless emptiness. Focusing all my energy on feeding my addiction, I never knew a better way.

One day a woman walked into my life and shared with me something I had never heard. A powerful message of hope and her story of freedom from active addiction. I listened intently as her calm voice and gentle laughter even more strongly than words convinced me I wanted to know more. For the first time in my life I sensed that the force of destruction was in fact strengthened by my best friend, drugs. I knew then that I must free myself. Yet all attempts failed until I surrendered. I learned that we can do together what I cannot do alone. I

learned that true freedom comes as I live a clean life and replace all my knowledge that my addiction provided me with. That knowledge is the basis for destruction, the character defects I choose to practice only hold me back. When I can release the negative and hold tight to positive, I am truly free. Today spiritual principles bring me to places I've never been.

My Higher Power, God, has given me the ability to change. Growth is up to me. I have the greatest support system in the world, but when it comes to me I must be responsible. I have God, Twelve Steps, N.A. friends, meetings and a sponsor. So I have the means for a truly beautiful and free life—which today I have. I'm grateful for my new life free from the destruction I once knew. May I one day be the person to share that message of hope to the active addict who is where I was, and may they, too, find a better way.

M.M., Florida



Close calls

Yes, today I think I understand relapse with a new vision. Up to now my motto was "We don't use no matter what." That was drilled into my head from day one, and I've lived it, breathed it and cherished it. Those three words "no matter what" have saved my butt from relapse many times. What those words meant to me was that there was not any reason I could find to justify using again. I preached it to many people. I would get angry when my close friends would relapse. I couldn't understand why they couldn't hold on to "no matter what," and live it. I struggled with a sick jealousy of "why do they get to relapse and come back and I can't?" Then I'd tell myself it was because I have chosen not to use no matter what. It felt like I was disciplining myself rather than making it a choice. I did finally find peace from that, and now I genuinely feel sorry for those who must do more research. They always come back and tell me "It's not worth it, don't do it." I do believe that now.

A few days ago my eyes were opened up and my question was answered. I now know why some people cannot

hold on and stop themselves from relapse. Let me share my experience with you. I was two weeks away from my three-year N.A. birthday which really hadn't affected me yet (so I thought). My boyfriend and I went to a concert that was in a casino showroom. I live in a casino town and I've seen a lot of shows clean, so I didn't see any problem with going. I feel I've been working a fairly good program. I'm close with my sponsor and have two sponsees of my own. In my third year I have worked diligently on my Eleventh and Twelfth Steps. I guess what I'm trying to say is I haven't had any fear of using in a long time. I felt pretty strong, which was my first mistake. Anyway, I went to the concert and found myself staring at a beer instead of the show. The disease hit me so fast I barely knew what was happening. The desire for a beer got so strong my mouth was watering and I was shaking. What I hadn't realized until later was how I set myself up.

When the show was over, I told my boyfriend I needed something to drink because I was so thirsty. We went to the bar to get me a coke and, sure enough, we ran into someone my boyfriend used with a lot. Anyway, this friend told us he was holding. He had to get rid of it fast before the cops caught up with him. Well, by that point, I had lost total control and wanted to use more than anything. I was shaking so bad I could barely even speak. I went to the bathroom and prayed to God to stop me, even though I didn't think I really wanted Him to. In the past I had come close,



but I always felt like I was hanging by a thread with my motto "no matter what." This time I had really let go of that thread, and "no matter what" wasn't working. My whole body and soul wanted to use and I couldn't stop myself.

My boyfriend kept saying, "No, we don't want to do this." He kept saying "no" and I think that was God talking to me through him. Before I knew it my body was walking out of that casino, but it wasn't me walking. I know now that when I let go of that thread, my God caught me in His arms and carried me to safety.

Today I experience a new level of gratitude and was blessed with my three-year N.A. birthday. Once again my Higher Power saved me when I couldn't save myself. The importance of the Eleventh Step is more evident

to me now. Nurturing that relationship, praying even when the disease is so powerful, and I think I don't mean it. I have a new understanding of relapse now. I understand sometimes we just cannot stop ourselves, no matter what! Only our Higher Power can help in that kind of place. Give it one more prayer like I did in the bathroom, even if you don't want to or if you don't believe what you're praying for. Do it anyway, and you, too, may find your Higher Power carrying you back to the safety of N.A.

Sincerely grateful today

Step Seven

It was a cold, clear winter night. My footfalls crunched the snow as I ran. I was alive with excitement. I had a slight nervous feeling in my stomach as I wasn't quite sure how the night would unfold.

I was approaching the place I had chosen. I went over the lip of the precipice and scrambled down the rocky path, barely keeping my balance. The wide-open space in front of me was my destination. Three sides were enclosed by walls of rock. The interior was as large as a football field. I slowed and then stopped. It was very quiet. The stars shone brightly overhead. I contemplated them for a few moments while I calmed myself. I knew I needed to be still. Slowly I began to review my defects and the reasons I wished to be relieved of them.

I stood relaxed in this cul-de-sac. I knew then that it would be simple. I focused my willingness, and remembering my humility, I asked the God of my understanding to remove my shortcomings. In a sort of meditation I saw pictures of how life could be without them. I felt an intense longing for these pictures to come true and I expressed it in my prayer.

I don't know how long I was in that place, but I suddenly became aware

that it was time to go. I started to run again, slowly getting back into the rhythm. I was breathing deeply, in through my nose and out my mouth. I reveled in the feeling of well-being that possessed me. I began to run faster, but remained relaxed. I mentally stood back from myself and watched my body move effortlessly through the night. I sensed a loving presence. I felt like I was connected to everyone and everything and I knew I was being cared for. I knew I was going to change. I was at peace.

The houses moved past me, their chimneys smoking. Looking in the lighted windows I saw images of life. The moment was all there was. I had no concern for yesterday, tomorrow, or even the next minute. I was experiencing the now. The realization came to me that the present moment is all I ever have.

Then I was home. I entered the house saying nothing. It was as if I were under a spell that might be broken if I spoke.

The rest of the night I felt quite spiritual and I was kind, considerate and loving.

The next morning I didn't feel so spiritual. I was disappointed, but I knew that all was not lost.

This may seem like a small thing, but to me it was a miracle. Where my disease had been in control. I now had choices. I could choose which fork in the road that I would take: I could be lustful or loving, greedy or fulfilled, coveting or grateful, envious of others or blessing them, lazy or active, vain or humble, angry or forgiving.

I was ready for Step Eight.

G.W., Illinois

Basically speaking

My story starts in April of 1990. I had been clean about eighteen months at the time and I decided, with my H.P.'s help, that a move was in my best interest. "I am in a growing phase," I keep telling myself. Well, I am about sick of growing. I am uncomfortable with my new sponsor. Old friends don't return my calls or letters, new friends aren't providing the recovery that I need. New friends keep telling me that my recovery is hard to match in the area. I have faced a hard lesson in learning that clean time and social acceptability do not equal recovery. In the 960 days that I have been clean, I have not found it necessary to go to other fellowships, therapists or religious organizations. I don't want to have to start now. There is solid recovery to be found in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. I just wish it was easier to find.

I am currently writing my second Fourth Step. This one is turning out to be shorter, but a bit more intense. The last Fourth Step revealed to me that all my shortcomings were based in dishonesty. This Fourth Step is showing me that all my dishonesty is based on a fear of social acceptability.

ty. Social acceptability is not only my greatest fear, it is the justification of all my dishonesty. Wow!!

I am currently in a relationship with a woman who loves me and cares for me, and has nothing in common with me other than she is involved in N.A. Her story is her own to tell. Relationships are a continuing source of pain to a good number of addicts. Our relationship works so well only because of you people and our H.P.s. We live in the same house and enjoy each other's company. We live and laugh and play and fight fair. We don't yell when we are angry at one another. We don't hit each other and we respect each other's need for time and space. We go out of our way only when we want to. We firmly believe that the reason our relationship goes so well is that neither one of us know anything about a healthy relationship. This is a "God deal" for us.

I am a responsible, productive member of society. I have a job. I pay my rent on time. I am making payments on a truck bought in my using days (amends to me). I help pay debts that my girlfriend has. I have money left over. Our pantry is full, as is the refrigerator. We have heat and hot water. The light over my shoulder is electric, not candle. (This has become more of a gratitude list.)

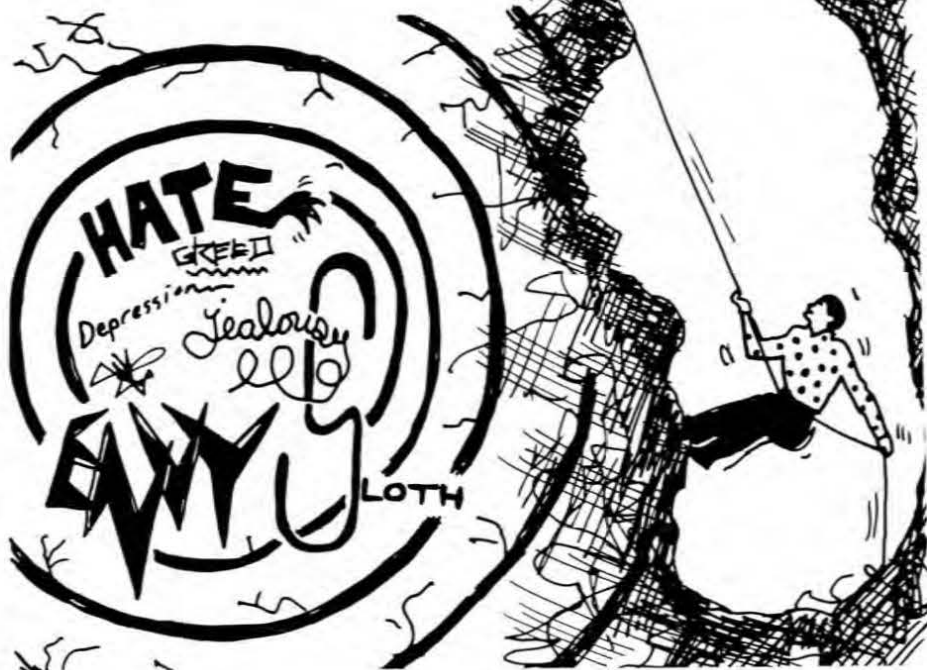
We have three children, two dogs and a cat. The cat, at present, is teaching me tolerance and objectivity. The cat doesn't know what it is doing is not O.K. If I raise my voice to the cat, she just looks at me. She doesn't have a very big vocabulary. Her whole vocabulary is centered around "meow." The dogs teach us

how to stay in today. If one of them gets hurt, she whimpers for a couple of minutes. She doesn't have to run and call her sponsor or do an inventory, when the pain is gone we go back and play. The whole cycle of events takes place in about ten minutes.

All things considered, this has been a very memorable nine-hundred and sixty days. (Not to mention the fact that I can remember most of them.) With all the pain and happiness and the sponsors and sponsees and service work and tradition violations, I think I'll try and stay clean another day.

I am clean today by the grace of a Higher Power that I sometimes call God, and the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. Thank you for letting me share.

P.C., Texas



More on the "God question"

(Note: In the February issue several essays on the representation of God in our literature and meetings were published. As was hoped, many readers responded. Three views on the topic, mainly sparked by the February compilation, are offered here.)

On acceptance

After reading the section entitled "The God question," I feel it necessary to reply.

The question of a God of our understanding and the practice of prayer as we have worked and practiced these principles in the Twelve Steps has been a perplexing subject for many addicts in my area, also. I, too, have come from a religious background, and through the sixties and seventies experimented with all types of religions, which left a bittersweet experience in my memory (what was left of it anyway). And therein lies the problem. I suffer from the disease of addiction, which affects all areas and parts of my life and body.

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Tra-

ditions have been with us for almost forty years, during which time tens of thousands of addicts have experienced recovery as a result of working these steps in the manner that those who went before us did. When I came to N.A. I thought I had better ways to work these steps also; and that included rewriting parts of them. Over the years I have come to understand that I truly do suffer from a disease and one area that it affects most is my thinking. My sponsor has said to me on many occasions "If it works, don't fix it." I truly believe that these steps work—this is the only way I have been able to stay clean after thirty-four years of using.

The wisdom of a God of our own understanding gives each and every one of us the freedom that our February writers are searching for. For me the word God signifies an ultimate source of power, be it a he, she or it. This disease has so devastated my life that if I did not believe there is this ultimate power as expressed through my fellow members of Narcotics Anonymous, the Twelve Steps and my own understanding, I would not be clean today.

The practicing of Step Twelve is vital to maintaining our recovery, but unless we practice the principles of the preceding Eleven Steps, I have found that I am practicing abstinence and not recovery; and while not using is what this is all about—just for today—I want desperately to experience recovery in my spirit, mind and body.

I cannot go inside the mind and thoughts of anyone else, but to associate that the talk of God kept a suffering addict from the rooms and that

later he died, does our readers a great disservice. I used countless excuses for not getting clean in the past, and they were just that—excuses.

The opening article of the February issue, "On taking back the Twelfth Step," may be the key to what these writers see as a turnoff to some newcomers. If that newcomer (and old-timer) receives a warm hug and greeting and gets that personal attention when he/she enters a meeting, instead of the sterile hands-off approach that unfortunately occurs at some of our meetings, then the love and under-

standing of one addict helping another will attract that person to keep coming back.

I think we all need to let go of old resentments and surrender to this new way of life that has worked for so many addicts who came before us. To miss out on the recovery experience because of prejudice, sexism and old resentments can only be overcome through accepting that our wills must be turned over to a power greater than ourselves if we are to stay clean. We choose what that power is!

P.B., Florida



Freedom

"The God question" inspired me to write and share my experience, strength and hope. I'll be celebrating three year's clean in April, and I'm just now getting around to writing.

I feel much empathy for the addict who stayed away from N.A. and died because he was offended hearing about God, but I am far from sorry to have the growing, nurturing relationship with my God as it is today. I can think of many reasons to stay clean and only one reason to use. My only real reason I have to use is only if I *want* to. That reason can be dressed up in rationalizations, justifications and excuses. Besides, if I'm in a room and everybody in that room is saying everything I want to hear, then I'm probably in the wrong room.

My experience in recovery proves to be a process and not an event. When I first came here, I didn't want to hear anything about unconditional love, honesty, open-mindedness and willingness. In fact, back then those very words seemed to make me want to throw up. And I did not want to hear *anything* about God. As far as I was concerned, He was this punishing, grandfather figure sitting on a cloud in the sky aiming bolts of lightning at me—the "gonna getcha" God. I thought God took my parents and my daughter through death to punish me for being such a bad person. Today, I know and feel this is garbage.

I also didn't like the word "using." I called it partying. I thought honesty was not stealing from others, open-mindedness was apathy and

willingness—chickening out. My point is that all my perceptions of anything were extremely warped.

I'm not exactly sure that I can accurately and descriptively define my God today. I recently heard in a meeting that if I can thoroughly define something, then that implies that I can control it. I do know that I have more today than I'd ever dreamed for three years ago. I attribute that to much more than my works or any other human power. My spiritual awakening, too, is a process that began about two weeks prior to my first N.A. meeting. I believe that a power greater than me or anybody else was and is still very much working in my life, if and when I get out of it's way. My God is not a tangible object, but a great spirit of ultimate wisdom, love, serenity and peace. All this spirit wants me to do is try to love as much as it does, which is infinite in dimension. With this belief system, I'm refraining from closing doors on myself in terms of opportunities in spirituality and what God has to offer as I did for twenty-seven years before I got here.

In closing, I don't see the feasibility in changing the wording in our steps and traditions (which serve as our very backbone) to delete God. I am concerned that newcomers may interpret the fellowship, as a whole, has an object such as a bicycle or tree as N.A.'s Higher Power. What if these things deteriorate, are destroyed or die? Wouldn't it be simpler to just emphasize the liberty of an individual's



freedom to develop their own concept of God? I did and am still around along with countless others. It works when we *live* it and if it works, why fix it?

Thank God for N.A. and for providing this new, better way of life!

L.H., Missouri

Personal understanding

Each month I anticipate the arrival of my N.A. Way. As it arrives I sit down in a quiet room and read it cover to cover. More often than not someone has written a letter that I can identify with. This lets me know that I am not alone. Sometimes, though, I run across things that leave many unan-

swered questions in my mind. I put aside the magazine puzzled. This time, though, I decided to write. Maybe someone out there read the same letter I did, and is just as puzzled.

I am writing on "The God question" featured in the February 1991 issue of this magazine. As I read I tried to understand these fellow addicts' viewpoints. There are several things I found myself clapping for, and several things I found disturbing. I know how important our survival as a fellowship is. And I take Narcotics Anonymous very seriously. After all, I owe this fellowship a great deal for helping me find a new way to live.

I agree that some, not all, meetings can be quite controversial closing with the Lord's Prayer. That was a big issue for me. I am not a religious per-

son and I don't approve of religious connotations in an N.A. meeting. My home group closes with the "we version" of the Serenity Prayer, which leaves us all feeling unified.

But I am a bit confused on some addicts' opinions of a Higher Power. The Basic Text suggests that a Higher Power be loving and understanding—unconditionally. In my experience I have found the only power that loves me with no strings attached is God (no specific gender implied).

Before I could decide what a Higher Power was I had to decide what it wasn't. At first I was convinced that the fellowship was H.P., but the fellowship is made up of addicts just like me who have admitted already that they are powerless. These people are human and humans by nature are not always capable of practicing unconditional love. Then I asked myself how on earth could I pray to these people? Soon I was convinced that the fellowship could not be H.P.

Then someone suggested I try a different approach. They said that any object would do, a tree, a flower, the ocean. So I decided to give that a try. I felt very stupid even considering that an inanimate object could have a power greater than I. After all, trees have to be planted and taken care of or they die. Man can destroy them. Flowers wilt and oceans become polluted. No, that would never work. My H.P. had to be something untouched and pure. And at the time of my struggle that was incomprehensible.

So I took all that I had thought about and wrote it down. Now I knew what H.P. wasn't. H.P. was not the fel-

lowship made of people, some with no sense of direction, and it was not a door knob or a coffee cup that can be easily destroyed. My only task was to find out what H.P. was. Then someone suggested I try Step Two again, but this time remember that there is a God and I am not it. O.K., so I am not God. But who has the power to restore me to sanity and who do I trust to give my very life to? Not you or my dog.

So I came to believe in a force, a power so great that even I couldn't imagine. H.P. does not reveal Himself to me as a bright light or a strange voice. H.P. is within each of us and is in all things. H.P. is the good in this world. H.P. is the strength and the courage to continue. I call H.P. God because that name fits. Something more powerful than us all had to have created this world.

My heart aches to hear all of those people proclaim loudly that they are atheist. It is those people who deserve so much more. I relish in the comfort of knowing that God, not the fellowship or nature, is in charge. Each day I enjoy and anticipate the time I spend in silent meditation, feeling the peace and serenity inside that God has given me.

To those of you who are still confused, I suggest you take all the concepts of God you were taught as children and throw them away. Put aside religious views and ask yourself just what God is. If it helps, make God "good" and see how you feel. But don't deny yourself the knowledge that God is.

Anonymous

Friends in recovery

I'd like to share what the last few days have been like. I have just recently moved into a house with another recovering addict and I was dreading the idea of packing all my possessions and transporting them thirty miles away just to unpack them again.

When the day came to move, my dread turned to relief when three friends from this fellowship came to help (one with his station wagon and trailer). The next morning, when I brought the last load of furniture to my new home, I discovered a fellow addict whose car had just broke down out of town. He was waiting there with my roommate. We all unpacked my car and put a pot of coffee on to brew as we went out to tow my friend's car back to town.

After several unsuccessful hours of trying to fix the car, the three of us had just sat down to our coffee and were having a informal meeting on powerlessness, when another addict come over in very shaky shape. He was having legal problems that were beyond his control and his frustration was feeding his disease. He joined the "meeting" and stayed at our home the rest of the day as we shared our experience, strength and hope.

He had wanted to use, but his H.P. put him where he needed to be, and he stayed clean. The last few days are just a small sample of what the friends and fellowship have been like since I got clean.

I don't know about others, but I'm curing my active addiction. I never helped anybody but myself unless there was something in it for me. My using "friends" never helped me unless they were getting something in return.

The friendships I have today are real and unconditional, not to mention numerous. The topic at the meeting I attended tonight was "gratitude," and I began to think of all the true friends I have today through this program, some near, some far, some I haven't met yet.

I must take time to appreciate what I have, even if it's something that's common today.

C.G., Minnesota



The broad perspective

This may turn out to be the most meandering "Broad perspective" you've ever read. We are well past deadline for the production of the July issue and its got to go, with or without a wealth of hard information on these two pages. Because of tight money the WSO staff has had to double up on many tasks, so your fellowship magazine team is being called on to aid a lot of non-magazine efforts. We have been shooting at getting the magazine to you within the first week of the month. That continues to be a reasonable mark, but many of you will have noticed that last month it arrived in lots of mailboxes even later, and as these words are being penned, the likelihood seems great that the July issue will be similarly tardy. Some of the distribution confusion is actually the result of a change that will be helpful, and less expensive, in the long run.

A "fulfillment service" is a contrac-

tor that maintains computer files for updating and printing subscriber information. Up until the May 1991 issue that service had been provided by a very large Indiana company that did a pretty good job, but also charged large bucks. Because it was such a big operation the magazine staff had to process information in a way that suited a very intricate process. Time lags for updates of subscriber information were hard to handle, and the result was we often had to explain the unexplainable, like why when you got your money or address change in on the first of the month, you still couldn't get a magazine through regular distribution the next month. There was a reason, but not one that satisfied addicts who had just spent \$15 hard-earned dollars for a publication they *really* wanted quickly.

It took six months of maneuvering (contracts, subcontractors, the bridging of meaning between computer programs in alien and arcane languages, etc.) but we finally escaped the clutches of the larger service and now have the labels and information under the care of a much smaller, cheaper and easier to work with operation, less than ten miles from the office. There's a lot more flexibility and we can process customer service needs faster and more directly. When something goes wrong we can just go over and sit down with the person who physically enters the information, instead of dealing with myriad, and hard to pin down, layers of bureaucrats.

But, like turning a great ship at sea, there are smaller craft that get affected. The larger fulfillment serv-

ice interfaced with several tiers of other vendors. Printers, binders, mailers, and postal requirements. It was necessary to revamp the way much of that related work is accomplished. One vendor says it will take three days to get his part of the process done, but in fact, the first time, it takes seven, "getting the bugs out." Another says "five working days," but takes eight. Alas and alack. Things happen.

Combined BOD/BOT meeting

There was one of those truly massive meetings of Narcotics Anonymous Trustees, World Service Office Board of Directors and conference chairpeople in the WSO lunchroom June 14. As has often been the case a great amount of enthusiasm and tension ensued, while those folks tried to take stock of our circumstances and sort out the priorities of funding for the future.

Tight money throughout the economy and the sporadic purchases of N.A. literature that we are experiencing have resulted in a fellowship prudent reserve of cash and/or equity that is now about one-third of what it was a few short years ago.

Some very drastic suggestions were bandied about, including talk of temporarily halting projects, but the meetings ended without clearly detailing belt-tightening measures.

As the next few weeks and months unfold the newly created "Interim Committee," established for the sake of having a clear decision making mechanism between conferences, will likely face some difficult choices.

A suggestion that the fellowship be apprised of the dire financial straits met with general approval, but no consensus on the best way to communicate that seemed clear.

N.A. Way hard time measures

One opportunity for that communication that won't be missed involves telling you that *The N.A. Way* staff is, and has been for some time, dedicated to a cost effective production of the magazine. Don't be too surprised if you notice changes that result from the need to save, and please bear with us as we suffer the effects of moving to more practical, less expensive, vendors.

Home group

"Doubling up" has some pleasant effects for our friend Slugg, as evidenced by the next two pages.

A reader of the magazine in England, who obviously has some sincere attachment to France, sent along a cartoon creation using Slugg's persistently suffering visage along with a perceptive portrayal of Slugg-think, to announce the Paris Convention in September. It is much appreciated.

"Dear N.A. Way: I made this little picture with my good friend Slugg. I hope you will like it and that you will print it. I put the dates of the Paris Convention...we need support...N/Amicalement! Lots of love, V.C., London."

SLUGG IS GOING SUPPORTING
YOUNG FELLOWSHIP



Home Group

Eddie & Marge





Giving ourselves a break!

The word "campout" is probably being mentioned about as much as "powerless," wherever N.A. members meet this month. All across the U.S. and in many other nations addicts are treating sunburns, or preparing to risk them, for the rewards of a few days along rivers, lakes, oceans or almost anywhere without pavement.

"Bake by the Lake" near Cordele, Georgia, is one such event that continues to draw a big turnout, though it's no longer on the banks of Lake Blackshear, where it began several years ago. "We just outgrew that site," said one attendee, "and we moved into a meadow about four miles away. We liked the name, so we kept it."

A chance to break free of the daily routine and even get a little outrageous seems part of what makes lots of our members support these events. The names of the campouts, many of which have become local traditions,

usually indicate the intended frivolity participants might expect: "Woodstick V" happened near Spartanburg, S.C.; there was "Seize the Day," the first weekend of May in Auckland, New Zealand; the Ninth Annual "Pre-campout Campout," near Wichita, Kansas; the "American River Campout and Gong Show" in California; and, "Weirdness In The Woods," near Carrollton, Georgia.

Describing the allure of a weekend with recovering people of decidedly differing skills in wilderness survival, one campout buff said "All kinds of unexplainable and beautiful things happen. A certain kind of addict is drawn to these things. There are 'campout junkies' just like there are 'service junkies.'"

"You can go on a kind of low budget, just get your vienna sausage and soup or whatever and go. We usually take an extra tent for the people who actually show up without one."

Another veteran N.A. camper said "A lot depends on whether it is what you call 'primitive camping' or not." He said primitive means "you bring it all." Asked to share general impressions of memorable campout experiences, he related, "One that has sort of become a tradition with us . . . when we're all set up and everybody is getting their fires going . . . you know how a campsite will become the focus? When that community fire presents itself, we'll pick someone to be the 'keeper of the fire.' It's really interesting to see how doing that will draw that person in from the outskirts of the group."

"And there's the 'meeting after the meeting' out there, too. You know, after the Saturday night speaker meeting, around the fire, it tends to be a lot more honest. Sort of like a candlelight meeting, but with a little different flavor. And I've been camping with people from cities who have never really seen the stars before. They might have seen four or five, but not twenty thousand all at once."

An organizer of "Unity by the Sea," conducted each May on Topsail Island, North Carolina, reported a humorous moment as the Saturday night get-together commenced. She said she was leading the meeting and started to laugh as she told the crowd, "You ought to be up here to see how weird you all look! Like a bunch of raccoons!" That impression was created because the campers had spent the day in the open, within a hundred yards of the Atlantic ocean, wearing their shades. Everyone was brown or red, except for a lighter mask around

their eyes.

"Unity by the Sea" drew roughly the same amount of people as it has for the last four or five years—about 150 registered for the weekend, with perhaps fifty more day visitors. Like many of the events described for this article, the Topsail Island gathering is attended mainly by the same people each year. About fifteen recovering addicts from around Washington D.C. and Baltimore now make it an annual outing, as a result of having been initially charmed or cajoled to accompany a Maryland resident who was homesick for her coastal Carolina N.A. roots.

"You get a sense of where we are with these things," said one attendee. "You notice someone missing, even though he's always been there before. It makes you think about the losses."

By far, most of the comments being shared as campers return to their home-towns and groups reflect optimism and joy, alongside tales of scrapes, burns and mosquito bites. Conducting a clean-time countdown in Louisiana a meeting leader was poignantly surprised to see a sponsee she thought she'd lost stand upon the exclamation, "seven days."

A campout that once cooked hot-dogs for 150 on borrowed grilltops precariously suspended over a hastily dug trench, this year barbecued 200 pounds of chicken for a single supper. "As addicts sometimes do, we've gotten a bit more elaborate" an organizer stated.

A bit of camping know-how that seems more likely to have been learned from road warriors than

Davey Crockett was mentioned by an Alabama addict. He said he got a kick out of watching novices learn about putting a little diesel fuel on their campfires to keep insects away. "They didn't know why it worked, but they were willing to learn," he said.

Another addict from the South said, "It's a great way to get to know people," and reported he met his sponsor at a campout about a year ago. "He was really kind of quiet, but I was drawn to him. We shared a spiritual contact. I have no doubt I wouldn't have him for a sponsor today if it hadn't been for us going to that campout."

Among experiences related for this piece, one addict said he'd been a little surprised to see a paraplegic arrive in a very large land-rover type vehicle, do most of the work of putting up his own tent, and then, with a little help, unhitch and launch the boat he was towing.

He said he was even more surprised when the physically handicapped addict began demonstrating his water-skiing skills to the crowd. It turned out the man was a snow-ski instructor from the Midwest, who had "never let his handicap or his addiction keep him from things."

The chairpeople for these events often note the enrichment they experience as a result of phone calls from people planning their trips. "I appreciated being registration chairperson" said one, "because so many people really opened up when they called."

That chairperson, from the southern mid-coast of the U.S., also talked about the workshops that are so much a standard of campout and

convention programs. She said one thing her N.A. community tried, successfully, was to put a little different slant on the usual "Relationships" workshop. "It wasn't so much about your primary intimate relationship as it was about the relationship a person has with all others. We explored how we find out about *ourselves* through our relations with others. We also had a workshop on being single in recovery, focusing on the N.A. message 'You are never alone.'"

Campouts, like conventions, are the testing ground for the art form of the N.A. T-shirt. Perhaps the most remarkable example heard about during the research for this article was one for children of addicts, seen in Louisiana, that proclaimed "N.A. Mutant."

The general prohibition of N.A. workshops was reported by one longstanding campout group, a decision defended by one of its attendees when he said, "We didn't schedule workshops this year because everybody just wanted to play"

The playful attitude was possibly well-typified in the middle of the first night of this year's campout. According to an on-the-scene report, one couple elected to sleep in a car, parked on the bank of a lake.

"We were wakened by the splashing around of naked people in the lake, trying to find the keys to the car, which was about half-way under.

"They weren't paying attention and knocked it out of gear, and it rolled in. They found the keys because they were on an N.A. keytag that floated. That car has a history of slipping out of gear," he added, "everybody around here knows that."

Report on Daily Book

The production of a daily meditation book for addicts was made a top priority by the World Service Conference this year. Conference participants agreed with the WSC Literature Committee on the project's importance by adopting the items on the committee's "A-list" of literature efforts. The "A-list" includes the steps portion of *It Works: How and Why*, the approval form of the informational pamphlet *In Times of Illness*, as well as the daily meditation book.

For the past eight years, regional and area literature committees, as well as individual N.A. members, have been writing and submitting daily book entries. Now the push is on, for the Literature Committee hopes to release a meditation book for consideration at the 1992 World Service Conference. What goes into the process of compiling a book of this nature?

Using a seven-inch thick stack of input received from a host of recovering addicts that has been compiled during the last eight years, WSO workers and literature committee review panels are developing the inspirational pieces needed for the book. In keeping with the tone of much of N.A.'s

literature, most entries are written in the first person plural (we), but to add variety, some first person singular (I) entries have been favorably received by the review panels. These first-person pieces tend to more directly reflect personal experiences in recovery rather than so much present ideas that might be understood as generic truisms.

Once developed, the work goes to a WSO staffer serving as the managing editor of the project. This special worker sends the entries to four separate review panels, each composed of two members of the WSCLC and two general literature members. They review and suggest revisions to the first drafts. This input results in a second draft, which is again sent back to the review panels and the WSCLC for more input, which results in a third draft. Confused? Well, there's more.

Third-draft entries are then mailed to the WSCLC for final input and review. A four-member committee reviews the final input on the third drafts received from the panels, and makes more recommendations for the expression of the thoughts or ideas in the essays.

Three sample batches of the committee's work are then sent to regional literature committees for a sixty-day review and input period. These reviews began May 3, 1991, and end in late August, 1991. Input received from these compilations will be considered by the final review panel. This stage of the project is scheduled for completion by November, 1991. The approval form is scheduled for release in time to be included

in the 1992 *Conference Agenda Report*. If all goes well, by this time next year we might all be reading our own N.A. daily meditation book.

A special worker involved in the project shared his feelings about reading and developing input for this formidable undertaking. "When I was first asked to participate in this project, I experienced alternating waves of excitement and dread. Aware of the strong desire in the N.A. Fellowship for a daily meditation guide that would really be ours, I wanted to do what I could to help bring it into reality.

"There's a lot of fear and apprehension involved. As an addict I have come to recognize that no matter what I do, it will not seem enough. It is pretty easy to say to myself 'Well, if I am spiritually fit the effect of my involvement can only work toward good,' but the hands on the keyboard are human, as well as being tools of some greater thing. With human expression and experience, the spirit is necessarily connected to human error. What are my responsibilities as an autonomous person, and what are those choices that are beyond my responsibility? Such questions would be maddening were it not for the help available in the Basic Text, from my sponsor and from N.A. meetings.

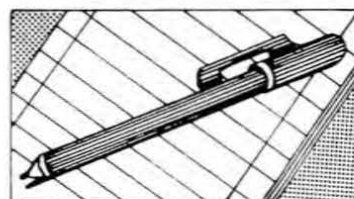
"On the other hand reading and working with the input keeps me aware of the gift of recovery, because most of the time I can really feel what the writers were trying to get across. Even input submitted without punctuation, in phrases that have no perceivable sentence structure, often communicates extremely moving im-

pressions. For a few moments I am there with that person, whether they are at a rickety kitchen table or in the study area of a university library, struggling to signal gratitude and hope resulting from their use of the program.

"I've just got to say that nothing could be more humbling or personally trying than to be asked to participate in a project like this. The fellowship meant the difference between living and dying to me, and more, that I have an opportunity to survive my feelings. Feelings are what this work brings up."

Another special worker shared her thoughts on the project. "Sometimes choosing a topic is the most difficult part. A lot of the input touches some joyous spot deep within me; it inspires me. So much of my life in recovery is filled with beautiful memories—so different from my active addiction. Before I begin, I reflect on the love of my first sponsor, or about the time I almost relapsed and what thought helped prevent it, or about my first relationship in the program. I have learned and grown and changed so much thanks to the grace of God and love of those who helped me recover. To me, contributing to the fellowship by working on this project is a miracle."

Viewpoint



Taking inventory

Lately I'm hearing a lot of people in meetings say, "I've got to take people's inventory so I can stick with the winners."

I put my discomfort with this remark aside at first; I thought it troubled me only because *I didn't like having my inventory taken by others*. I have since realized my discomfort in hearing people repeat this statement around town was justified. This statement is, I believe, unspiritual in nature, contradicts our First and Twelfth Traditions and is not part of the message of N.A. That makes it a dangerous thing to say in a meeting where there are newcomers who will run with it.

When I first started coming around, the suggestion was, "Don't take inventory of others." It took me some time to understand what this suggestion meant but when I did, finally, it made sense.

As a newcomer, I didn't know *how* to take another person's inventory—

though I had always done it anyway, throughout my active addiction. The criteria I carried into recovery with me for judging others was self-serving, defensive, hostile and blind—in short, the same set of opinions about people I had used all my life.

In recovery, I began learning how very little I actually knew about living life. What, then, made me think I was capable of judging others honestly, fairly and spiritually? Not a blessed thing. . . . If anything, my life's experience told me I was a pretty poor judge of people, since the ones I thought were square turned out to be winners in life and the ones I trusted usually ended up ripping me off.

The First Tradition tells me, "Our common welfare should come first. . . ." That is, I had to learn how to put others before myself, all the time, which isn't easy. This tradition also tells me that "personal recovery depends on N.A. unity." That is, *my* recovery depends on the people in N.A. and on the fellowship being spiritually united, for I draw from this well every day of my life.

I can't very well be practicing the principles in this tradition if I've set myself up as a judge of others. By telling myself it's okay to take other people's inventory, I am thinking of myself as a big "I" among little "yous."

In N.A., I've learned that I am a winner in my own heart each day I stay clean, though it may not always show on the outside for you to see. If you choose not to stick with me, that is your choice. However, I must be willing to stick by you no matter what, for my own sake.

D.O., New York

Dear Sir

As a member of Narcotics Anonymous who actually reads *The N.A. Way* with some regularity, I would like to offer some comments addressed both to you (the editor), and your readership. I hope that my feelings will elicit some response from other interested members.

First let me say that I have seen healthy growth and change in the magazine over the course of the last year or so. The new candor that is evident in the editorial policy, and the move toward (what I feel is geared toward) a larger readership, is very encouraging.

I think the most serious criticism I have to offer *The N.A. Way* is one that I find is applicable to many of the things we do in the fellowship, as well. It is trying to portray ourselves to the world as prudes and schoolmarm.

I mean, have we forgotten what we are and where we come from? We are

a bunch—a very rowdy bunch at times—of drug addicts who have banded together to recover from active addiction. We are decidedly not a group of people who take offense at seeing the word “shit” in print.

This is emblematic of my major criticism of *The N.A. Way*: I don't think I've ever seen a so-called “four-letter word” once in our magazine. Have any of you ever spoken to an addict and not heard these words used in conversation?

Let's get real, and stop shining ourselves on about what we're about. Most recovering addicts are proud of who they are, and their recovery. It is hard to be proud of our magazine when it is dishonest in its use of language.

Don't get me wrong. I am not saying that we need to produce a monosyllabic journal of obscenities. I am asking for honesty and respect for the intelligence of the readership.

The other criticism (suggestion) I would like to offer is this. I would like to see a participatory contest once in a while. Something to really get people involved with the magazine in a hands on way. My suggestion for a contest would be this: “Design-A-Cover” contest. Interested readers can submit original artwork designed to be a cover for *The N.A. Way*. The winner can have his or her design used and maybe get a free one-year subscription, as well.

Thanks for your time. I hope this hasn't offended anyone. I'd really be interested to hear what other members think about these ideas.

In Recovery

To the editor

Hello, my recovering friends in this community. I have been a subscriber of *The N.A. Way* for almost three years now, and I have had two articles published in this magazine, so I consider myself a supporter. My subscription is up in July of '91, and I am sad to say that I do not wish to support this magazine any longer. This is my way of voicing my opinion that this is not a vehicle of recovery but of rigid and closed-minded views in our broad and diverse fellowship. I ask myself today: What is the spirit of N.A.? What is a *clear* message of recovery? What is censorship? Why can't this magazine express some views that exist in our fellowship? Do we still keep secrets and pretend things aren't there and will go away? Does *The N.A. Way* mean only one true way? Is my recovery unlimited or limited to the dictation of one WAY?

I am a group service representative and received a subscription group-drive form, and was angered by the comments by our current editor of this magazine: “We'll publish pieces with as few changes as possible, editing only when someone rambles along too much or includes stuff that is clearly not N.A.”

I feel I, too, get self-righteous about my recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. I, too, feel I have the *clear* path to recovery, and others that do it differently don't. I, too, feel as though I lack humility and have an ego problem.

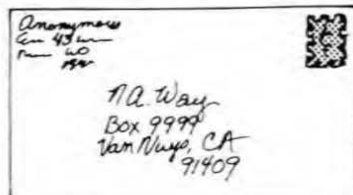
I have hope. I must remember that is our message—hope! Gosh, how simple. I like it that way. It's less confusing and contradicting. *Hope* is clearly N.A. Recovery is possible in my life today. That's hope. I have opened my doors up a little wider today, and can experience growth. Higher Power offers it in many forms, and it has been there all along, and I see more of it today than ever before. Thank you, open-mindedness.

I want to read a magazine that reflects the diversity of recovery in Narcotics Anonymous, one that is healing and gentle. Maybe I can *HOPE* that our magazine changes and will offer that someday and I may choose not to abandon it. Maybe that is more healing. Yes, I will choose to resubscribe, I will choose to hope.

I realize more about myself today than ever before, and not all of it shines brightly as I can imagine it being. I still have injuries, I still have problems, and along with these my Higher Power chooses to put people in my life who are teachers, to teach me, the student, a different, gentler way of life. I can choose to take what I need and leave the rest. This article has been healing for me, I hope it's healing for you. I ask, please *N.A. Way*, open up to the healing recovery message of hope that exists in our fellowship.

M.J., Minnesota

From our readers



My gratitude

I'm coming up on three years clean in a couple of weeks. It's springtime, the earth is coming alive again. The birds and the grass and the insects are returning. April showers, plenty of water and sunshine. The joy of nature!

I hit my bottom in April. A slave to drugs for fourteen lonely, mean, angry years, I dragged down addiction road and headed for the bitter end. But God had other plans.

On May 1, 1988, I woke up in a detox unit a free man. My recovery means more to me than life itself. As a newcomer I was taught not only to reach out for help, but to reach out to help. My sponsor reached out to me; a secretary of a home group reached out and drafted me for group service. I've never forgotten love like that. I hope I never do.

I became a newcomer junkie and home group freak. I sponsor probably too many addicts and I love them dearly. We even hold a weekly meeting in my apartment.

I was sitting alone in my apartment tonight when the thought came to call a certain newcomer whom I hadn't seen in meetings. He said he had relapsed and he shared his pain, his hopelessness, his hell. I shared my recovery with him with compassion and understanding as I've been

taught in the Fellowship of N.A. I offered to take him to a meeting tomorrow, and he agreed. I suggested he pray tonight. After we hung up I felt sad about his pain but joy about recovery. I got on my knees and prayed for him. I know that my gratitude speaks when I care and when I share with others the N.A. way

M.L., Ohio

Regaining trust

I saw where *The N.A. Way Magazine* was calling for letters. At first, I had no idea how to approach it. Then I remembered that the magazine is a meeting in print so a letter was just a manner of sharing in print. That said, I'll move on.

When I first came to N.A., I, like many others, had a terrible time trying to trust and be honest with people. Even though I wanted some of what I saw those people had, I couldn't picture myself being like them—trusting, sharing, crying, hugging, etc. For a long time I would either leave before the meeting was over or try to dash out the door as quickly as possible in order to avoid hugging people. I just couldn't believe that these strangers could care about me and the misery I was in, that they would want to listen and help me.

Most of my friendships up to that point consisted of how much someone

could do or get for me and how little I would have to do in return. I never fully trusted anyone, nor would I dare let anyone get to know the real me for fear of getting rejected. I gradually began to stick around after the meetings and even started going out for coffee afterward. When I saw that people treated each other the same outside the rooms as they did inside, I began to believe that it was possible to be true and genuine. I also realized that many of them had already heard and/or used the same lies and excuses I had, so there was no point in trying to play any games with them.

Eventually I branched off from that original group and helped get another smaller group going in a neighboring town. Because it was a small group, we seemed to become a tightly knit family, both in and out of the meeting rooms. Trust and honesty were still delicate issues with me, but it was comforting because I felt like we were all learning together to trust and be honest with each other. Being vulnerable wasn't as hard when there were others around who were going through the same feelings.

When the time came for me to move to another state, I knew things would have to change. I was grateful that N.A. would be there when I moved, but I guess I was also expecting too much from the people I was leaving. Even though I knew things were going to be different, I thought it was okay to count on a little support and encouragement from the people I believed I had grown so close to. I was, however, in for a rude awakening. In the weeks following my departure, I discovered that those people were not

who I thought they were. I had considered that group and those people to be a very important part of my life. I couldn't believe it when some people went back out, others quit going, and trusted servants resigned from their positions—the group was falling apart and no one seemed to care! I couldn't understand how the group could not be as important to the others as it was to me. Furthermore, I felt like if the group as a whole didn't mean much to these people, then I must not have, either. At a time when I was counting on the strength of my foundation, I felt it crumbling under my feet.

All of a sudden, I was as full of hurt, anger and resentment as I had been when I first came through the doors. It made me question my ability to choose the "winners" with whom I should stick. I really felt betrayed. The effect it had was that I found myself unable to reach out in the new group, even for a new sponsor. I wanted desperately to share and trust in these new people, but I was just hurting too much. I didn't like what I was doing, but I couldn't change it at the time. I attended meetings here and there, but I would leave as soon as they were over. Just like in the beginning, I was running from people all over again.

I spent the majority of my time writing, praying, and reading both the Basic Text and *The N.A. Way*. With the help of my Higher Power one day, I went to a morning meeting that I hadn't been to before. The topic was "honesty and sharing," and someone shared an experience that was incredibly similar to what I had been going through. She hadn't previous-

ly attended that particular meeting, either. One might attribute that chance crossing of paths to coincidence, but I, like many others, no longer believe in coincidence. I fully believe it was the result of a Higher Power's will.

I am still working on trusting and believing in new people, but I now know I will be able to trust again (even though it will be in my Higher Power's time, not my own). I have also been able to let go of the resentment and hostility I was feeling toward the other people. There are still difficult times on occasion, but I am now usually able to pray for them instead of against them (with the help of H.P. and the group).

I never would have been able to cope with the pain and difficulty I went through if it weren't for Narcotics Anonymous. I know I would have handled things the old way, which meant running away from my feelings and numbing them if they caught up with me. I thank my Higher Power and all recovering addicts I've come into contact with for helping me get where I am today.

Anonymous

Open letter to reluctant newcomers

You are torn between wanting things to get better and the fear of losing what little comfort you have.

What can I tell you? I can share about the gifts I have received. I can tell you about the jobs getting progressively better, higher paying, more exciting. I can tell you about the respect people have for me today, the

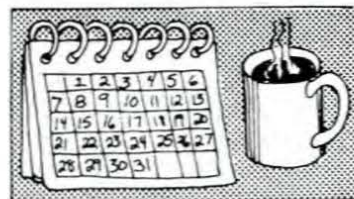
respect I have for myself. You might think that these things are impossible for you to achieve. They were for me, too. That is why I prefer to call them the gifts of my recovery.

I want to share all these gifts with you: the unexpected freedom I found in surrender, the hope which filled my heart when I realized there was help even for me; the faith which grew into courage which in turn taught me trust; the willingness to change; how I found the humility to be myself; the responsibility that is no burden but a privilege; how forgiveness has healed shattered relationships; how consistency has provided a secure recovering life; the power that a loving God invests in me during those fleeting moments of conscious contact. All of these are gifts and I can share how they have changed my life and how they can change yours. But how do I share the awakening? How do I communicate the awareness that comes when we wake up from the nightmare of total self-centeredness? How do I tell you about the depth of feeling to be experienced when we really *know* that we are never alone; that somehow we have become part of something greater than ourselves, something wonderful, something miraculous? How do I tell you about unconditional love? I cannot. I can try to give it to you the way it was given to me, but it can't be explained.

These things must be experienced to be truly known. So I must say to you: keep coming back! Life can be better than you imagine, but you'll never know if you don't try to live it.

G.W., Illinois

Comin'up



ALABAMA: Aug. 16-18, 1991; Celebration of N.A. History; State House Inn, 924 Madison Avenue, Montgomery, AL 36104; rsvn.s (800) 552-7099; information (205) 265-0831 or (205) 232-4365; N.A. History Committee, P.O. Box 11563, Montgomery, AL 36111

2) Sep. 20-22, 1991; Surrender in the Mountain Spiritual Retreat; Mount Cheaha State Park, Delta, AL; information (205) 933-8331; Spiritual Retreat, P.O. Box 190203, Birmingham, AL 35219

AUSTRALIA: Oct. 4-6, 1991. WCNA 21. See note at end of Comin'up!

BRITISH COLUMBIA: Jul. 19-21, 1991; 2nd British Columbia Regional Convention; "Having fun in 91"; Poco Recreation Center, 2150 Wilson, Port Coquitlam, B.C.; information (604) 521-4421; rsvn.s (604) 322-1406

CALIFORNIA: Jul. 13, 1991; 7th Annual Sonoma County Fellowship Unity Day; Villa Chanticleer, Powell Avenue, Healdsburg (new location); Hotline (707) 575-7837; information (707) 996-3726; Unity Day, P.O. Box 1365, Santa Rosa, CA 95402

2) Jul. 26-28, 1991; 7th Annual Campout; Pinecrest, CA; rsvn.s (209) 536-0852; Central Sierra N.A., P.O. Box 5100, Sonoma, CA 95370

3) Aug. 16-18, 1991; 2nd Annual "Set 'Em Free" Campout; Oakwood Lake Resort, Manteca, CA; information (408) 438-3420 or (408) 688-5817; Set Em Free, P.O. Box 1837, Soquel, CA 95073

4) Aug. 16-19, 1991; 2nd Annual One Step at a time Summer Retreat; Greenhorn Mountain Park Camp, Yenis Hente (by Lake Isabella), Kern County; information (714) 949-6212 or (714) 391-3588; IEWAACNA, P.O. Box 9413, Ontario, CA 91762

NEW BRUNSWICK: Jul. 26-28, 1991; 1st New Brunswick Area Convention; "Willingness To Grow"; information (506) 459-4300 or (506) 457-1214; NBASC, P.O. Box 20064, Fredericton, N. Brunswick, CANADA, E3B 6Y8

SASKATCHEWAN: Aug. 23-25, 1991; Additional Needs Workshop; Core Richey Neighborhood Center, 445 14th Avenue, Regina, Saskatchewan; information (306) 522-8361 or (306) 352-9214

COLORADO: Jul. 26-28, 1991; 4th Annual "Standing on Higher Ground" Campout; Telluride, CO; information (303) 728-3062; Campout, P.O. Box 10, Telluride, CO 81435

CONNECTICUT: Jul. 26-28, 1991; 1st G.D.A.N.A. Campout; Treetops Campground, Route 341 Kenico Road Entrance, Kent, CT; information (203) 746-6107 or (203) 350-8161; G.D.A.N.A. Campout, P.O. Box 2253, Danbury, CT 06813-2253

GEORGIA: Jul. 19-21, 1991; PASC Ninth Anniversary; Holiday Inn; information (912) 689-4260 or (912) 272-1586; Registration, Route 2, Box 265, Dublin, GA 31021

2) Aug. 2-4, 1991; MACNA II Convention; Downtown Atlanta Hilton; rsvn.s 1-800 445-8667; information (404) 289-7359; MACNA II, P.O. Box 2339, Decatur, GA 30331

HAWAII: Sep. 20-22, 1991; Maui Gathering; "Walking in the Light"; Camp Maluhia; information (808) 877-4158; Maui Gathering, P.O. Box 6213, Kahului, HI 96732

ILLINOIS: Jul. 19-21, 1991; 7th Annual Little Egypt Area "Flight To Freedom" Campout; Dam East Recreational Area, Lake Carlyle, Carlyle, IL; information (618) 548-1798; Little Egypt Area, P.O. Box 1062, Salem, IL 62881

INDIANA: Jul. 26-28, 1991; Mid-Coast Convention VII; Rodeway Inn, 5240 Distribution Drive, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825; rsvn.s (800) 228-2660; information (219) 744-3284; MCC VII, P.O. Box 11126, Fort Wayne, IN 46856

2) Sep. 6, 1991; 12th Aquarians Group Anniversary Dance; Wicker Park Pavilion, Highland, Indiana; information (219) 836-8240

KANSAS: Aug. 9-11, 1991; 4th Annual "Just For Today" Free Campout; Thunderbird Marina, Rolling Hills Area of Millford Lake, Kansas; rsvn.s (913) 238-5864; information (913) 762-3596 or (913) 238-1531

2) Aug. 23-25, 1991; 2nd Annual "New Life Loadies" Group Free Campout; Lucas Park, Wilson Lake; Information, P.O. Box 544, McPherson, KS 67460

MICHIGAN: Jul. 19-21, 1991; 3rd Annual Public Meeting Campout; Holly Recreation Area, 8100 Grange Hall Road, Holly, MI 48447; information (313) 634-8811; Michigan Service Office, 23906 Woodward, Pleasant Ridge, MI 48069

MISSOURI: Jul. 26-28, 1991; 12th Annual High-on-Life Picnic; Stockton Lake; information (417) 781-3947

2) Aug. 30—Sep. 2, 1991; Show-Me Region Unity Camp/Venture; Lake of the Ozarks State Park; information (314) 878-4193; Activities Committee, P.O. Box 105065, Jefferson City, MO 65110

NEBRASKA: Sep. 6-8, 1991; 8th Nebraska Regional Convention; Ramada Inn, I-80 and 2nd Avenue, Kearney, NE 68848; information (800) 248-4460 or (308) 237-5971; NRCNA VIII, P.O. Box 1332, Kearney, NE 68848

NEVADA: Jul. 19-21, 1991; 3rd Sierra Sage Regional Convention; "One Promise, Many Gifts"; Peppermill Hotel/Casino, 2707 South Virginia Street, Reno, NV; information (800) 282-2444; Hotline (702) 322-4811; Sierra Sage Region, P.O. Box 11913, Reno, NV 89510-1913

2) Aug. 16-18, 1991; Fifth Annual "Mountain High Campout"; Camp Richardson, South Lake Tahoe; information (916) 577-1042; Campout, P.O. Box 6706, State Line, NV 89449

3) Aug. 23-25, 1991; 5th Southern Nevada Convention; Hacienda Hotel, Las Vegas, NV; information (702) 453-3713 or (702) 451-2768; SNCC, 4928 E Tropicana Avenue, Suite 101, Las Vegas, NV 89121

NEW JERSEY: Aug. 16-18, 1991; 1st Annual Northern New Jersey Regional Service Convention; "A New Beginning"; Loews Glenpointe Hotel, 100 Frank W Burr Boulevard, Teaneck, NJ; General Information/rsvn.s (201) 614-9260 or (201) 933-2123; NNJRSC, P.O. Box 5064, South Hackensack, NJ 07606

2) Sep. 13-14, 1991; Multi-Regional Learning Weekend; Hosted by Northern New Jersey; information (302) 427-0587, (718) 856-1632 or (215) 534-9879; M.R.L.C.N.A., c/o N.N.J.R.S.C., P.O. Box 3365, East Orange, NJ 07019

NEW MEXICO: Jul. 19-21, 1991; 3rd New Mexico Regional Convention; Las Cruces Inn, Las Cruces, NM; information (505) 526-7882

NEW YORK: Jul. 12-14, 1991; "Another Recovery Weekend"; Dugfield Camp and Conference Center; phoneline (716) 878-2316; ARW-NA, P.O. Box 174, Orchard Park, NY 14127

2) Jul. 26-28, 1991; Manhattan Area "Unity 91," Convention; Holiday Hills Resort, Pawling, NY; information (201) 485-0570 or (212) 505-2783; Unity 91, 208 West 13th Street, New York, NY 10011

3) Jul. 26-28, 1991; The 6th Northern New York Regional Convention; Wells College Campus, Aurora, New York; information (716) 473-2769; NNYRCNA VI, 2604 Elmwood Avenue, Suite 240, Rochester, NY 14607

4) Aug. 30—Sep. 2, 1991; Recovery In The Woods 5; Camplakeland Conference Center, Franklinville, NY; Hotline (716) 878-2316; ASC, P.O. Box 64, Buffalo, NY 14207

OHIO: Jul. 12-14, 1991; 7th Annual Columbian County Camp-Venture; Stone Ridge Terrace, 33807 Winona Road, Winona; CCASCNA, P.O. Box 451, Salem, OH 44460

2) Aug. 30—Sep. 2, 1991; Serenity in the Woods V; Camp Cambell Gard, Hamilton, OH; information (513) 820-2725; Activities Subcommittee, Hamilton/Middletown ASC, P.O. Box 18430, Fairfield, OH 45018

OKLAHOMA: Aug. 2-4, 1991; 6 1/2 Annual Northside Stroll Campout; Greenleaf State Park, near Muskogee, Oklahoma; information (918) 742-4816; Northside Stroll Group, 4314 East 36th Street, Tulsa, OK 74135

OREGON: Jul. 12-14, 1991; Together We Can Regional Service Conference; Paulist Center, 2408 SE 16th (at Division); information (503) 223-2535; Host Committee, 2140 NW Kearney -413, Portland, OR 97210

2) Jul. 14, 1991; 1st Annual Free State Regional Picnic; Oregon Ridge Park, Westingtonhouse Pavilion; information (503) 686-2532 or (503) 528-1969

3) Jul. 27, 1991; H&I Learning Day; "Unity Through Learning"; Sheldon Meadow Community Center, 2445 Willakenzie Road, Eugene, OR; EASC, P.O. Box 262, Eugene, OR 97440

4) Aug. 10, 1991; Phoneline Learning Days; Eagle's Lodge, 835 Walnut Avenue, Klamath Falls, OR 97601; Wendy White, P.O. Box 749, Chiloquin, OR 97624

PARIS: Sep. 13-15, 1991; Deuxieme Convention Bilingue N.A. Parisienne; Second Paris N.A. Bilingual Convention; "Ensemble Pour Aujourd'Hui"; CPBNA2, Narcotiques Anonymes, BP 630-04, 75160 Paris Cedex, FRANCE

PUERTO RICO: Aug. 2-4, 1991; Unidos Podemus II; Caribe Hilton Hotel; information (809) 721-0303 or (809) 763-5919; Reservations, P.O. Box 10524, Station, PR 00922

SOUTH CAROLINA: Aug. 16-18, 1991; Carolina Regional H&I Awareness Weekend; Hyatt Regency Hotel, Greenville, SC; rsvn.s (800) 228-9000; information (704) 394-5532

TENNESSEE: The originally planned July 12-13, 1991 Chattanooga 12th Anniversary Celebration has been cancelled.

2) Jul. 12, 1991; WTASCNA 12th Anniversary Fun Day; Get Together, Speaker meeting and Riverboat Dance; Overton Park (off East Parkway), Memphis, TN; information (901) 726-1418; WTASCNA, P.O. Box 111105, Memphis, TN 38111

3) Sep. 27-29, 1991; Surrender Under the Stars V; Spiritual Retreat/Campout; Harrison Bay State Park, Chattanooga, TN; Hosted by Chattanooga and Middle Tennessee Areas; information (615) 269-6865 or (615) 646-7952; Surrender Under the Stars, P.O. Box 111345, Nashville, TN 37222

UNITED KINGDOM: Sept. 6-8, 1991. "Faith, Hope & Unity," U.K.C.N.A.5. Site to be announced. Info 071-737-3388 or write P.O. Box 704, London SW10 0RP, England.

UTAH: Jul. 26-28, 1991; 8th Annual Campvention; "Soar to New Heights"; Indian Creek Campground, near Orangeville, UT; VIII URNA Campvention, P.O. Box 400, Springville, UT 84663

VIRGINIA: Jul. 26-28, 1991; Blue Ridge Area Campout X; "More Will Be Revealed"; Natural Chimneys Regional Park, Mount Solon, VA; information (703) 434-6744 or (703) 433-3236; BRANA, P.O. Box 623, Harrisonburg, VA 22801

WASHINGTON: Jul. 26-28, 1991; 2nd Annual Unity Days Campout and Triathlon; helpline (509) 325-5045; NEWANA, P.O. Box 945, Spokane, WA 99210

2) Sep. 20-22, 1991; Northern Puget Sound Area Spiritual Connection VIII; Deception Pass State Park, Cornet Bay Environmental Learning Center, Whidbey Island; information (206) 424-1330; Registration, 100 S LaVenture -36, Mount Vernon, WA 98273

WEST VIRGINIA: Aug. 2-4, 1991; 5th Almost Heaven Area Convention; Shepherd College; Shepherdstown, West Virginia; information (703) 722-3939 or (304) 267-0691; AHACNA V, P.O. Box 3329, Martinsburg, WV 25401

WCNA TWENTY-ONE SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA



WCNA-21 is set to take place in the Darling Harbour Convention Centre in the Kings Cross area of Sydney. Arrangements have been made with two hotels, the Novatel, (02) 934-0000; and the Gazebo, (02) 358-1999 (dial the country code 61 first). Rooms should be reserved early.

Except for residents of countries with waiver agreements, all visitors need valid passports and visas to enter Australia. A packet describing the event, including hotel and convention registration forms, may be obtained by calling (818) 780-3951, or writing

"WCNA-21"

c/o WSO

P.O. Box 9999

Van Nuys, CA 91409, USA.

THE **N.A. Way**
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**Box 9999, Van Nuys CA 91409
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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 non-profit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean. This is a program of complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only one requirement for membership, the desire to stop using. We suggest that you keep an open mind and give yourself a break.

Our program is a set of principles written so simply that we can follow them in our daily lives. The most important thing about them is that they work.