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The Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous

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

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The N.A. Way Magazine welcomes the participation of its readers. You are invited to share with the entire N.A. Fellowship in our monthly international journal. Send us your experience in recovery, your views on N.A. matters, and feature items. All manuscripts submitted become the property of World Service Office, Inc.

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Blind faith

I wobbled on Step Two. How could anyone believe in a Higher Power and yet not have to be religious? I suspected theological trickery, some sort of missionary bait. I remembered the Sunday schoolteacher who wanted me for God when I was thirteen. In his car he'd fondled my knee while he talked urgently about my need to be "saved," had me in tears, and set up a lifetime's aversion to evangelical tactics.

After twenty odd years of using, chemical divinity had failed me too. On acid I'd seen God in a pond, and on speed I'd felt as creative as Mozart.

On opium I'd become a Hindu, and on grass lived in Shangri La, Swiss Cottage. By the time I'd reached the hell I found out was called a rock bottom, belief in anything except the next toot, toke, or pint, was hard to capture. So I smirked when I heard the term Higher Power. Disguised fanaticism was a verdict that wouldn't go away.

I was in no state to be snotty though. Intellectual integrity sounds very grand, but it wasn't doing much good for my health. Psychiatrists, encounter groups, gurus, and diets had all been a washout too. I'd become locked in my own little funny farm, and a familiar sense of being a resident alien intensified as I lost old friends. My brain was a pain, rooms seemed like tombs, streets like deserts, and the feeling of futility was overwhelming. Desperate ills require desperate remedies, I said to myself, and if that means getting God so be it.

The turning point of this melodrama was the fact that I had a friend who'd joined N.A. and who seemed to be on an odd adventure. If she could accept this Power-greater-than-oneself stuff, perhaps I could. She may be clean off the wall, I thought, but she's clean off drugs too. What's more she seems sure that I need the same kind of help she's having. I've lost my flat, my money, and any impetus to work or play, what the hell else apart from my life have I got to lose? Why does she seem so much happier than I've ever seen her before?

At first, then, I submitted rather than surrendered to the Twelve-Step programme, tense with resistance, looking for loopholes, but at the same

time achingly needy. One phrase I heard early on, which echoed in my head as a mantra as I jogged up and down on the 31 bus to meetings, was "Blind Faith." The old band of that name meant that I saw the words beginning with capital letters. The message blended with sixties nostalgia—rock fever yearnings and all that stuff.

Later, looking at Step Two, my past theater training helped. In the rooms, particularly around the subject of prayer, I heard the suggestion "fake-it-to-make-it," which I took to mean "belief-can-follow-action," i.e. rehearse. Pleasure crept into my pain. I'll show 'em... so I tried. Self-consciously I prayed. I kneeled, closed my eyes, and spoke with as much histrionic honesty as I could muster. Then—amazingly—inside this performance I heard a small voice say, "This is meant." I felt the thrill of unknowing. As a consequence, ever-so-daring, my public voice pompously altered the Step Two wording to "I came to suspend disbelief." The notion of God as an inner voice took on life.

I doggedly obeyed another suggestion—to attend ninety meetings in ninety days. Blind Faith, unemployment, hostel living, a dying mother, feelings of being hollow and abandoned, were the blessing in disguise that drove me to them. I did three sets of ninety meetings in two hundred and forty-three days, running up and down the Kings Road and around North London like a headless chicken, determined to get my ticket to Enlightenment, tanked up on fear and anger. It was quite a

turnabout for someone who'd always mocked the idea of insurance policies. I shouted at motorists, and cried listening to Radio 4. The desire to use surfaced now and then, but it appeared mostly in dreams.

The more I heard the astonishing honesty at meetings the more the distinction between "religion" and "spirituality" became clear at a gut level of understanding where feelings precede words. A poetic notion now acquired a physical zone—"God" equals "gut." What had happened to me, I realized, was that all my feelings had fled to my head, and in that gothic prison the drugs had been the janitors disguised as liberators, and fear was the governor. That raging mob called Feelings was in severe need of food, exercise, and fair play, before the rest of the slates got hurled off the roof.

Once the word "God" became for me a free-ranging code for honesty, rather than piety, I stopped worrying that I might be at a gospel meeting. I started to speak, because others I heard, said what I was feeling with such accuracy. I busted to say "I feel like that too." When I heard this voice that was me but seemed to belong to some stranger—what a relief! The doom lifted. The more I talked the more people talked to me, and the more the pain cells popped for both of us. Laughter returned, less anorexic than before. Easy bondships grew based on the revelations of recovery. At times in meetings I feel I'm at home in a circle of mirrors. The reflections get better as some of the lessons I've learned are lived through clean—the necessary stages of grief, the

process of letting go, the adjustment of self-defeating addict behavior, and the awareness of the rewards of a re-oriented life. The x-factor is restored.

I don't really understand what happens in the act of relaying one's deepest feelings to a huddle of listeners on a wet Wednesday night in a musty church hall. To be fancy I'd say it can be like the liberation of demons and angels, an unholy communion, an emotions launderette, a psychic tape exchange. I prefer, though, the words of the recovery text, which I've come to recognize are solid-

ly true—"The therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel." I find that description moving beyond belief.

That's what keeps me coming back. In acknowledging that the chemistry of a meeting has without doubt a power greater than myself, I realized after a while that I was in fact standing, less wobbly now and a bit bemused, on Step Two. Recover seems to me to be a series of tiny surrenders. As the surrendering happens so the adventure blooms. What a carry-on!

Chris

sanity

Volume IV

December 1990

Number 7

Commitment

A personal experience

At my first N.A. meeting I asked the question, "Do I belong here? I drink always, and take drugs, too." It was clearly explained to me that my addiction is all encompassing and covers any type of substance that changes my mood. This makes me an addict. That clear message helped me. It helped me not to rationalize that, O.K., I know alcohol was "my thing" but pot never made me crazy, so I can smoke that, just that. But the thing with "that" is if I smoke a joint I get paranoid and want to drink to take the edge off; and then when I drink I wanna do coke so I don't get so sloppy and so on and

so on. That clear message of one disease enabled me to understand that complete abstinence from all substances was the only way to achieve freedom from active addiction.

I'm grateful that it was made so clear from day one. Probably saved me a lot of pain, too. My commitment to N.A. is to carry that same clear message that I received on Day One—that I'm an addict and what makes me one is my living to use and using to live. I have a commitment to newcomers to make sure they receive that same message.

It was suggested to make ninety meetings in ninety days in the beginning, and I made a commitment to myself to do just that, and I did. I counted all the meetings I went to, in fact, I kept a journal of them. I recorded if I liked them, who spoke to me, what the format was, etc. This was my first early experience with commitment. It kept me coming. At that point of my life I was so confused. I just knew I was going to work and to a meeting. I made a commitment to call my new sponsor every day for ninety days. Now this was tough cause I didn't know what to say. But the "winners" told me this is how to stay clean, so I did. I was learning about commitment.

I took that ever-popular suggestion of joining a home group. Now my commitment was to be at this meeting no matter what. I remember feeling awkward about attending those business meetings. I didn't know what was going on and all the discussion sounded foreign. But my commitment to support my home group was making me a member of N.A. in my eyes.

I decided to support this group in all its activities, events, etc. My commitment to this group brought me much growth. First I was elected chair, how frightening. I remember asking a fellow addict to sit next to me because I was terrified. But this commitment made me grow, too. First I was unsure if I could handle it. By the end of the commitment, I didn't want to give it up. I started being careful about my message of recovery knowing that I was carrying a message to any potential N.A. member in the room that night, as chair. Here my commitment to N.A. as described above was growing into my commitment to my home group.

After the chair position, I made a commitment to be on the "clean-up crew." I made sure those tables were wiped, ashtrays emptied and stacked neatly, chairs in order, etc. I was becoming responsible, even a little proud, of my new home group. I took other trusted servant positions there, committing myself to the group and therefore, helping myself.

As time went on in my recovery I began to get involved in other areas of service work. As my clean time grew so did the responsibilities of my service work. I think by taking a commitment in N.A. you can't help but get just a little better. That pride in a job well done and that feeling of belonging is beyond compare. At the same time, you're helping the Fellowship. My service commitments these days are starting to involve travel to places not so convenient, but it's the same idea. I do it and I strongly suspect I'll get just a little bit better. I have not been without a service commitment

in N.A. since I had about eighty days clean. I just celebrated three years, so I think I'll keep doing just that.

My commitment to the women I sponsor helps me stay on my toes. There are those days where I don't feel too spiritual, and have no problem letting my friends know that. However, I cannot hope to grow and be unspiritual at the same time. Sponsees are good for that. I am at my "spiritual best" when I've just finished hearing a sponsee's story that involves her resentment of someone. I always try to help her see how the cause of her resentment might see

it. This helps me. My commitment to my sponsees also keeps me connected to my recovery. There's always a message light flashing on my answering machine from a sponsee who needs to talk. So I'm always discussing recovery. I need to do this every day.

So my commitment to N.A. is, in reality, a commitment to myself. It's bettering myself and hopefully allowing me another day drug free. Not bad for someone who didn't know if they belonged in N.A. or not.

D.G.

The Clean Sheet

DALLAS  AREA

24-Hour Dallas Area N.A. Helpline (214) 699-9306

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The Dallas Area N.A. Newsletter

Volume II, Number 33

April 1991

To walk in the light

As an addict, I have spent much of my life walking in shadows so as not to be seen. In some ways I chose this path, in others I had no choice. My addict life, like many of us, began at an early age, before using any mood-altering chemicals, when I began hiding my behavior with lies so as not to be known. That was the beginning of a long chain of events and lies to hide those events or make them seem different. I became more and more secretive as my addic-



tion blossomed and flourished and declined and resurfaced over the years; secretive, secluded, cut-off from all the world around me. I led a guarded life, filled with anxiety and fear of exposure. I became a closed person.

All this time that I walked in the shadows, I knew, but refused to acknowledge that there were other paths to follow. The one I chose led to a world of delusions and hallucinations and those became my real world and the world of reality became unreal.

Today, through the grace of my Higher Power, my God, I have been given the opportunity to walk another path, one that is in the light and leads to a greater light. One step in walking this path to light is to reveal my real self to others in the Fellowship of N.A.

This path in the light is not the easiest one to follow. As I do my fourth

step, I come to know myself, my character defects and patterns that I have followed, as well as my assets, I must look deeply into myself and I must be fearless because, as the light increases, we often tend to see ourselves worse than we thought and are amazed at our blindness to what we have been. In truth, we are not worse than we were, but we are far better, and we need to remember that we only begin to see the problems when recovery has begun.

For me, this process is not yet complete, but as my past slowly comes out of the shadows, today I can walk in the light, I can be seen and known and I am willing to be known and to know. I thank my God and the Fellowship of N.A. for this choice that I have today and for the courage and the encouragement to walk in the light.

Larry H.

Changes

**** A HASCONA NEWS LETTER 24 HOUR NA HELP LINE 661-4200

Feelings: recovery gifts

Feelings of joy, peace and contentment are gifts of recovery as we grow and change with working the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. We are able to accept the disappointments and frustrations as a part of daily living. Even though recovery may not be easy for us, it is a worthwhile journey. Whatever we have done in the past, we don't have to do it again. Most importantly, we never have to use again.

Those of us who have found recovery in prison know that upon release we are vulnerable. Faced with the feelings of insecurity and fear our release from prison often brings, the temptation to return to using may be overwhelming. This is a time when we need the support of the Fellowship.

The first time I went for parole, I turned release down. I felt I was not ready to face the outside and stay clean. Later the parole board decided they were going to give me a chance and I was petrified. Now that I didn't have those walls around me and people staring at me, I had built walls inside of me. I was faced with going out there and being on my own. These were real scary feelings for me.

Our experience shows that whether we are in prison or on the outside, wherever we go, we are not cured from the disease of addiction. The actions taken to begin recovery while incarcerated are the same actions recovering addicts practice on the outside. Our first priority is staying clean.

I used after I went to a few meetings while still in jail, but I learned. The N.A. program began working for me while I was still locked up, and it has continued to work for me on the streets.

The first days after release are critical for our continuing recovery. We cannot afford to be around people who are using drugs. We need to go to meetings and surround ourselves with recovering addicts.

Because of addiction, I had lost custody of my son, my family had abandoned me, and I felt completely alone. Two days out on work release, I used. I used for fifteen days, committed new crimes and found myself in a park with

a knife at my throat. I hadn't lived through all that, including prison, to die. For ninety days in work release I had never been offered so many drugs. There were times when I thought I was losing my mind. On blind faith, I followed the suggestions.

I got on my knees; I had done worse things for drugs, so I was willing to do this in order to live. Finally after sixty days I used the phone to call outside N.A. members. I was scared to death. I would be vulnerable. I would have to speak to someone I didn't know. Before, I had only used the phone to find out who had money or where the drugs were.

In many meetings those first ninety days, I screamed about wanting to get loaded. At one meeting, I literally held onto the table for dear life so I wouldn't run out and use. "Stay here, it gets better," kept running through my head. N.A. members kept telling me to come back. Inside me, I longed to be able to carry on a conversation, smile and laugh. It had been years, if ever. I shared how I felt and hung onto the members of this fellowship. I had to completely change. I had no idea how to change, and it scared me. Change is in our Twelve Steps, so at sixty days clean, I made a step meeting my home group.

The meetings are a source of hope, support, guidance and fellowship. Any addict is welcome at an N.A. meeting. We sense the acceptance and concern in a meeting room. Regular attendance needs to begin as soon as possible. We need to let members get to know us and to let them know we need help. No one can help if they don't know that there is a problem.

That first week, I went to work and isolated in my apartment. I was talking on the phone with some people in the program back home. I shared with them how desperate and scared I felt. I couldn't understand all these feelings I was having, and I was clean. They told me I needed a meeting. I needed recovering people in my life. I needed to be in the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous again.

Many of us had no idea what to expect, living without the use of drugs. As we share with recovering addicts, our problems and fears lessen. Our hope, freedom from the disease of addiction, grew as we worked the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. We found a life worth living which far exceeded anything we had ever imagined for ourselves.

Sometimes I thought it would take a stick of dynamite to break down the walls I had built up inside. It has taken me some time, but I believe I have knocked down a whole lot of them. I started by not using drugs, going to meetings, and by getting a sponsor to help me take the steps and apply them to my new life on the outside.

Some actions we have found helpful in making the transition from prison to the outside are: 1. Don't use, no matter what. 2. Go to an N.A. meeting on the first day out; attend meetings regularly. 3. Get and call a sponsor; talk to other recovering addicts. 4. Read N.A. literature. 5. Get phone numbers of other N.A. members. 6. Work the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. 7. Again...don't use, no matter what.

RRAGS T RECOVERY

NEWSLETTER OF ROCK RIVER AREA GROUP SERVICES

July 1990

Vol. 1, Number 1

Our primary purpose is to carry the N.A. message of recovery and to encourage thoughtful discussion on N.A. issues.

Feeling is believing

I came to Narcotics Anonymous searching for an answer to what I thought was a drug problem. I was sure of only two things; I wanted to stop using and I had not been able to do it on my own.

At my first meeting I heard the steps being read for the first time. I was appalled. The reference to a Power greater than ourselves and God had me convinced I was becoming involved with some sort of religious cult. My first instinct was to run, to get away from these wide-eyed zealots. I didn't have anywhere else to go. I felt that I had exhausted all other possible avenues to recovery, so reluctantly, I stayed. I determined I'd just "sit on" Step One and not worry about the rest.

By the time I had sixty days clean, "sitting on" the First Step had become very uncomfortable. I was miserable. I did my best to make everyone around me miserable.

One day my spouse finally reacted. I was told, "I can't take this much longer, why don't you just go out and get high?" At this point I went to a meeting and asked questions about

coming to believe. It was suggested that what worked for others would probably work for me. "Be open-minded, you don't have to believe, just don't disbelieve, look at all the good things that are happening in your life and stop calling them coincidences," I was told.

I still couldn't accept the idea of some conscious God and I argued with my sponsor about the issue. "I can't see God, I can't hear God, I can't touch God, therefore there must not be a God," I reasoned. My sponsor pondered this for a moment and then responded, "What happens at a really good meeting? There is something in the air, a feeling of goodness, caring, love. Everything just feels right. The sharing is clear. The people are excited about their recovery. Haven't you ever felt that way at a meeting?"

I didn't even have to think about my answer. I knew the feeling he was talking about. "Yes," I replied.

"Well," he said "that's God."

Over the years since that conversation my concept of God has grown and evolved, but that was the day that I came to believe. I knew it was true, what he said, that a Loving God would speak in the midst of a meeting if I was open, if I was listening.

G.W.

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

Basic Newsletter

October—November 1990

Powerless over what?

The First Step uses the words "powerless over our addiction—" nothing more, nothing less. The longer I stay clean, the more I have to take the words of the step literally. Too often I hear people say they are powerless over this person or that thing or situation or whatever, and I have to wonder at their perception. I don't believe I'm necessarily powerless over any of those things; in fact, my behavior and reactions often have a definite effect on other people.

That effect can be either positive or negative, depending on the reaction I choose. The choice I make is dependent upon my spiritual basis at the moment. And the reaction, and the thought process leading up to it, is what I work the principles of the First Step on. I, alone, am powerless over my addiction, and most likely will receive warped information about what reaction to have.

Once I acknowledge that I am powerless over the addiction that gives me that invalid information, and begin practicing the principles of

honesty, willingness, courage, humility, open-mindedness, etc., that are involved in the first Three Steps, then I am open to the influence of a loving Higher Power. Then I can make choices to react to those people, places and things in a more positive, healthy way.

The extent to which we are able to draw on a Higher Power is the extent to which we admit powerlessness over our addiction. And addiction is what can change the ways in which people, places and things appear to us. They seem sometimes to be causing us so much discomfort that we hide behind it, saying, "oh, I'm powerless over her or it or that."

It's really quite a convenient way for us addicts to remain irresponsible for our actions and reactions. If we can claim non-responsibility by buying into the line about being powerless over people, places and things, we don't have to practice the honesty and other principles that are required to take the steps. Of course, we also lose out on the benefits of recovery!

D.B., California

THE RECOVERER

WASHINGTON-NORTHERN IDAHO REGIONAL NEWSLETTER

VOL.10, NO.2

CARING & SHARING THE N.A. WAY

The big change was communication

Recently, I celebrated two years clean in the Narcotics Anonymous Fellowship. And like many of us, I nearly let my expectations of the celebration get the best of me.

I've been making what I think are major changes. And my addict mind started moving when birthday time came around. That old self-centeredness and ego were wondering if anyone had noticed. I also started wishing I had let these changes happen just a little bit earlier, last year, so that you'd surely have noticed and would then have nice things to say about me.

These changes I'm talking about are the result of some painful insanity that forced me to develop a dependence on a loving God of my understanding. Through that struggle, I feel like I've begun a new stage in my recovery.

This change I'm referring to, the one that my Higher Power and I'm attempting, is about communication. This new undertaking is a very sim-

ple and rewarding change, but sometimes I make it so hard. I have been trying to tell my friends how much they mean to me. Yes, actually verbalizing communication toward another human being.

I have finally realized that people can't read my mind and if I don't let them know how I feel about them we both lose out.

Letting myself become vulnerable is a very hard thing for this addict to do. What I've discovered though is that by sharing my true feelings with another I receive such a good feeling inside myself that I have a hard time dealing with the happiness and joy. Yes, this truly is another miracle given to me by N.A., all of you and my loving and caring God. For this I am truly grateful. My birthday meeting was very inspirational for me. All my dear friends came and shared with me this wonderful night. The things that were said about me were so kind that for a moment I wondered if I was at the wrong meeting.

Yes, my change was noticed. And I couldn't hold the tears of joy back. These kinds of experiences have kept me coming back for over two years now and if this stuff gets any better...well, you know, "more will be revealed."

Spiritual rock dock

When I was guided into N.A., there was no room for me to doubt that my life had become unmanageable. The turning point for me was to surrender to this new way of life or to die. In looking back at the series of events that were to become my first days in recovery, I could see where a Higher Power had guided me through the door of N.A., but I certainly was not consciously aware of this at the time it was happening. This made me feel as if I had missed making contact in the confusion.

I went to my sponsor and asked about her conscious contact. Her advice to me was to pray. The only type of praying that I had experience with was the type where I would ask God to please just get me through this one and promise never to do it again. I knew this God person must be very tolerant and patient because I broke every promise I ever made to him, but it was this past experience that kept getting in the way of the new conscious contact I was trying to create.

I was sharing a house at this time with two other women in the program. One of the women had received a job in another city so that she was in the process of moving out. I was helping her pack the last of her things, when she began to tell me about a rock that was located on the beach by our house. She described the rock to me in detail, and told me it was where she did her conscious contact work. She then told me she want-

ed to give me this special place as a gift. I immediately saw this as the opportunity to do the work I needed to improve my conscious contact.

The next day I started down the trail that led to the beach. When I arrived, I scanned the area and what I saw were *rocks*, hundreds of them. I immediately panicked because I had no idea which one was the right one—they all looked like the same rock she had described.

I began walking down the beach, trying out all the rocks by lying on each one. I finally came upon a rock that stood out. It had an earthy red color to it and when I laid upon it I felt as if I was being cupped in a large hand.

I sat on this rock for some time not knowing what to do next. It then came to me to ask for God's help so that I may feel his presence in my life. I asked for this out loud while sitting on this rock. I then began to visualize myself on this rock and floating up from the rock into warm, loving hands protruding from the clouds above. This was all I needed to do, and I still use this visualization today.

I don't know if I ever found my friend's rock, but finding her rock was not important. Today I know that I found the rock that I needed to fulfill Step Eleven. Today I am grateful for the many members of N.A. that help guide me so that I may be able to find the answers I need to live life the N.A. way.

Anonymous



Hole in the Wall Newsletter

*On this day
Mend a quarrel.
Search out a forgotten friend.
Dismiss a suspicion and replace it with
trust.
Write a letter to someone who
misses you.
Encourage a youth who has lost
faith.
Keep a promise.
Forget an old grudge.
Examine your demands on
others and vow to reduce them.
Fight for a principle.
Express your gratitude.
Overcome an old fear.
Take two minutes to appreciate
the beauty of nature.
Tell someone you love them.
Tell them again,
and again.*

Oregon State Prison Even in Prison

I sat at the N.A. meeting in the church at Thirteenth and Clay in downtown Portland listening to guys talk about having just come from a birthday meeting. This one had a twist, though. The birthday boy wasn't there. He was at the Oregon

State Prison so they put the meeting on tape to send to that birthday boy in the stir. I remember thinking that if I was ever sent to prison, "No way I'd stay clean." But part of me really admired this guy. He had guts, that's for sure.

Five months later I was on the chain headed to O.S.P. I had never been to prison. It was one of my "yets," but I had relapsed. The judge sentenced me to ten years with a five year minimum. In county jail in Portland I hit bottom. Whatever idea I once had about drugs making life easier died there. And I almost died there too. I tried hanging myself, but I couldn't do that right either. I blacked out and the next thing I knew paramedics were stuffing ammonia capsules up my nose. I guess my attempt at self-annihilation worked—my ego got out of the way long enough for me to see that anything was better than my old way of life. With the help of a doctor at MCDC and by immersing myself in the N.A. text, some semblance of sanity returned. I was disappointed, though, when I got put on the N.A. list and was visited only twice in three months by someone in the program. But my "Higher Power" took care of me. One day a guard was shaking down my cell. The guy looked kind of familiar and when he found my Basic Text, he brought it out of the cell and asked, "You read this?" I answered, "Everyday." He smiled as he said, "Damn fine book isn't it?" I flashed on where I'd seen him before—N.A. He helped me more than once to find peace with myself. I also came to understand the importance of anonymity through our contact.

At O.S.P. I read in the "Walled Street Bulletin," our weekly prison newsletter, that N.A. met in the chapel on Sunday afternoon. My first Sunday here I rushed up to the chapel. Believe this, I NEEDED a meeting. The chaplain then handed

me a nine-by-twelve envelope full of N.A. pamphlets, and unlocked a side room to let me in. When I asked what was up, where's the meeting? He said that I *was* the meeting; that this guy had been leading a very small group, but that since his transfer it had kind of petered out.

I was pretty upset and I felt lost. Then I felt scared. Then angry. But I showed up every week. Sometimes nobody came, sometimes one or two. Once even four. Well, thank God for A.A. It was going strong and it really did help me. But I'm a straight up dope fiend; I *need* N.A.! Eventually, a guy started coming, and then another, then a few more. We got it going. We started to write "H&I" all around the state: first to Salem, then Portland. We got no answer, but we wrote again, anyway. We wrote the World Service Office and registered our group as, "The Hole in the Wall." It's a play on words: the good/bad guys of the movie "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid," and the fact that N.A. is the way out of "the walls" both here in prison and from our addiction. Van Nuys registered us and sent a nice letter, some pamphlets, a new group "starter kit," and assured us our area H&I representative would soon be in contact. We did receive a nice letter from the H&I person in Eugene, but Portland and Salem were silent. Back at O.S.P. we were as busy as we could be, though. We wrote proposals, met with prison officials, and generally made a nuisance of ourselves. There was a lot of resistance to the idea of N.A.

Then a couple of guys from Portland came to share with us. It was a real treat for me. I knew one from Portland

N.A. meetings: he has a very powerful message. Word got out about us having *real* N.A. meetings. Our membership grew to twenty. We got so big the chaplain helped us to get moved to the education floor. But first we met with the head of the activities department. He was outright supportive. We applied for "club" status, and we had a meeting with A.A. club people, and corrections treatment program personnel, and a guy they hired to set up twelve-step meetings within the department of corrections. I never liked the idea of any twelve step "club": clubs require presidents and are not in line with the "Twelve Traditions." I suggested forming "Recovery Club" and having A.A. & N.A. as functions of that club, much like the P.A.S.S. club, in Portland. Well, the guys from A.A. did not like the idea at all. After agreeing, both twelve step groups are working independent yet cooperative.

We now have over *eighty* members in our "Hole in the Wall" N.A. group. We are growing each week. From four meetings a month, there are now eight each month. We are getting some good outside people coming to our meetings. *That is a key* to the program here: *outside support*. You'd have to do time to fully appreciate how much it means to us to have the outside sponsors who care enough about sick, sorry, addicts behind bars, to come and share their experience, strength and hope with us. We are outcasts. Imagine if you will, how you would feel behind these walls, knowing that drugs got you here, knowing you needed help, crying out for it and having your cries fall on deaf ears. I

only pray you haven't had to experience that—yet!! It need never happen like that here again: if people in the program, "out there" share their programs with those of us in here: we are just like you, only we got caught. To be sure, there are some who are here for crimes I cannot understand. Some come to our meetings. But who am I to judge? No one died and left me God.

The program taught me forgiveness. It's given me back my life. It's a debt I can never fully repay. So many M-I-R-A-C-L-E-S have happened to me through my involvement with N.A. that I could write a book. I still have miles to go, getting well, but I'm getting better. I love this program and all my brothers and sisters who are doing together, that which I could not do alone—staying clean One Day at a Time, One Step at a Time. Words can't express my gratitude. All I can say is thank you, and thank God for N.A. (especially B.S., where ever you are, *Thank You*. You gave me courage, and hope and you showed me that, even in prison, N.A. works.)

Yours in gratitude and service
T.B., Oregon



CLEAN TIMES

Special Issue

Published in
Perth, Western Australia

Me my-self and I

Hi, my name is Fred and I am an addict.

As far back as I can remember I was always getting myself into troublesome situations. I used to ask myself why this was always happening. Wasn't I happy just to be taking drugs, robbing people, manipulating those around me, including friends and family? the answer was, "not me," all I wanted to do was be nice, loving, caring, comfortable, at peace, raise a family, white house, even a white picket fence. . .not what I managed to get for myself.

Her Majesty's Motel, big, sandstone brick, even higher walls and lots of

uniformed servants to open and close the doors. Only one snag—we had to stay there until the lease ran out. Sometimes I'd sign the lease for years.

It had to come to an end. I had to confront myself and arrest the disease that was leading myself astray.

Someone said "Drop the drugs, and whatever happens, DON'T PICK UP ONE DAY AT A TIME, tell yourself to go to a meeting and get yourself a sponsor."

And finally, I said to me, myself and I, we had to pray to a God of our understanding. A lot of other things (nice) were suggested to me; that I had to get to work on myself.

I looked at myself and didn't like the reflection in the mirror. A look of horror and total rejection at all those nice suggestions.

But I had had enough of myself, his destructive ways, the next stop was death. I had to pull the reins and surrender to my disease that makes me, myself and I so unmanageable and ask a Higher Power to restore a simple sanity of living into my life.

Now I take myself to meetings. I make myself sit and listen, stand up and share, get up and mix with others in recovery, we stay away from places where we might get tempted to sign another lease.

I think me, myself, and I'm enjoying the freedom we have now. White house and picket fence—even that's possible one day, but not today—today we go to a N.A. meeting and share about finding myself to be O.K.

Fred S.

The broad perspective

With this issue an attempt is made not only to represent samplings of Narcotics Anonymous newsletters, but to faithfully mirror in layout and design what we can of the current N.A. newsletter experience.

In keeping with that that effort, for the first time in many years, we decided to use a black-and-white cover. "Basic" is a watch-word popularly used by many of our members today, and such willingness to keep it simple is regularly symbolized by the appearance and "feel" of our fellowship's newsletters. Though a few brave committees have been experimenting with colors and curlicues, the majority simply get the stories on the street. Boxy, black and white, cut and dried, no-frills recovery information. The September 1991 cover of our magazine is a salute to the basic message, and the people who get it into type.

An attempt was made to have this issue of *The N.A. Way Magazine* represent proportionally the types of material we find in N.A. newsletters. Among articles that were found to discuss or share insights on more or less the same topic, the re-printed piece was chosen because it got its point

across with a minimum of extraneous lines or paragraphs. By choosing such articles we were able to stick quite faithfully to a commitment to avoid "editing." With some very minor exceptions, discussed below, the articles are re-printed here exactly as they appeared in the newsletters from which they were excerpted. Including titles!

The only subject that appeared with some constancy not here given space was last year's brouhaha about a "bogus basic text." Available articles were a bit too shrill and disjointed, from every viewpoint, to present a coherent balance of opinions.

Some newsletters are represented more than once, and many not at all. The quality of communication definitely moves around, but some locales do seem to, temporarily at least, foster more fervently effective efforts.

Two complete paragraphs were removed from "Spiritual Rock Dock," page 13, to comfortably fit it on a single page. Several personal names and references were omitted from "Even in prison," page 14. A name and address the author said needed to be deleted from the "feature" starting on page 20, was removed. About half the seventh paragraph, which urged the placing of principles before personalities, was removed from the "Viewpoint" article "To the editor," starting on page 31.

All other changes were purely cosmetic or very slight improvements, we hope, of punctuation.

It's been fun! Hope you like it. Don't look for any other reason for the graphic on the next page except it was just too darn nice to leave out.

The Bottom Line

MAR-APR '91

GOLD COAST AREA NEWSLETTER, P.O. BOX 24724, FT. LAUDERDALE, FL 33307, 24 HR. HELPLINE: 476-9297





Background of the NA community.

1. Correspondence with World Service Office over the last couple of years has been mainly for two specific purposes:

- A. Meeting list details.
- B. Literature orders.

Due to no focal point of communication this has covered five individual members/addresses, with no central files being kept. It was obvious to all concerned that this was due to absence of a formal service structure.

The Hong Kong mailing address is: 10 Borrack Rd, Hong Kong.

2. This NA community emerged in the summer of 1987 with the help of three AA members and the help of an NA member who visited Hong Kong on a regular basis, and they started a weekly meeting. In 1988, three members came to work in Hong Kong and to accommodate these members the fellowship hosted two meetings per week in Kowloon.

3. It is worth noting at this point that this fellowship had no assistance by way of referrals or cooperation from professionals or institutions until very recently. There is a lot of work to do in this area (PI and H&I) and will need assistance and back up from World Services.

4. There are only four "core" members in this fellowship and two are dedicated to service work at this point in time, and they only attend NA meetings. The rest of the mem-

bership is made up of travelers (e.g., merchant seamen) and other members who come intermittently. All newcomers mainly come from referrals from another 12-step fellowship and one particular institution.

5. When other 12-step members drop in, the meeting usually takes on an extremely different atmosphere—usually a drinkalogue. At this point the Hong Kong members present asked that the article on suggested language/format be mailed to them to aid them for the future challenges.

6. This fellowship has been operating under the NA name since 1987 and struggling ever since. It has always used conference approved literature right from the start. Group service positions and traditions are now being adhered to (since February 1989).

7. Clean time varies from zero to five years. Except for the Hong Kong rep who has over five years clean time (originally got clean in the United Kingdom), the average clean time would be five-six months and male to female ratio would be approximately 2:1.

8. There is currently a loose service structure in operation which has been in its current status for the last three months. Hong Kong currently has one group operating two meetings. Group positions are secretary and treasurer.

9. The Hong Kong fellowship does not participate at the WSC. The reason

for this is only financial. They did send a report last year but it did not obviously reach its destination. Now that there is a service structure they will endeavor to send a report this year to the WSC.

Aims and objectives of this visit

The aims and objectives of visiting this part of the world are obviously to open up communication lines in the South Pacific/Asian community, which has had very little World Service attention. Due to the enormous potential of the incredible concentration of addicts in this part of the world NA must commence 12-stepping in this area. I believe we have opened the door.

General questions

Due to their consistent receipt of Newslines, etc., they were surprisingly up to date with current issues within the fellowship.

They asked if they could get some standard letters to health professionals, etc., so that it may aid them in their PI and H&I efforts. They also ask that they be sent anything on file that has proven beneficial to other new and emerging fellowships in the past, that could help them.

The socio-economic state of this NA community is one of white European and middle class. No native (Chinese) members have yet found their way to NA. There are six million people in Hong Kong. Two percent of those are non-chinese. There are something like

N.A. in Hong Kong, Malaysia, & Singapore

I arrived safely in Hong Kong on Friday night, 9th November, 1990, and was met by two members of the Hong Kong fellowship who I had been liaising with by telephone since the early planning of this trip. I left my arrangements for accommodation, weekend schedules for talks and a business meeting, to the local members, and they were very helpful and hospitable.

50,000-60,000 heroin addicts, by government estimates. There are treatment centres, but no 12-step programmes within this community. The local Hong Kong members could not envision the native Chinese coming along to their meetings due to the cultural differences.

For NA to emerge for natives of Hong Kong, they said we would need literature in Cantonese. Also another problem pointed out was that the "admission of powerlessness" would be an incredibly hard thing for the Chinese to identify with, as it is totally foreign to their culture.

H&I and PI can be done with the British ex-patriots but to reach Chinese we would need translations of our literature so that the professionals could assist with our message. All professionals work in Cantonese with their clients. The local fellowship welcomes any support we can give them to reach the professionals, as long as they get a copy of what is being sent so that they may follow up. There is no real attitude toward NA at the moment, as it is so small and unheard of. The main problem here is that there is the Westerners and the rest, or the Chinese and the rest, with no in between.

The biggest encouragement to the Hong Kong fellowship is communication and networking with the American and Australians that travel through and the established pen-pals in these countries. This fellowship depends at the moment on visitors/servicemen for fresh recovery and they urged me to let everybody possible know of their existence and desire for communication. The Hong Kong fellowship also asked that loners in Asia

contact them so that they may pass their contact name onto travelers passing through Hong Kong. They were aware of members in Malaysia, Philippines and Manila but no formal contact has been made. The Hong Kong fellowship asked WSO to send them the contact list of other Asian members so that communication may commence. This could easily be the beginning of a south pacific service conference/convention.

They have got a phoneline which is an answering machine, which lists the NA meetings.

The only periodicals that the Hong Kong group gets are the Newslines and The N.A. Way. They have requested future copies of the Fellowship Report, Meeting by Mail, PI News and Reaching Out and any literature reviews coming up, e.g., Steps and Traditions, H&I, anything. Also international phone directories and current H&I guidelines.

Meetings are listed in the World Directory. Although they have a phoneline the committee currently has a letterbox, not a PO Box.

Some general information

AA has eight meetings per week with a membership of about 60-70 people. They have just celebrated their 21st anniversary.

As you can see there is some work to be done in this NA community. AA has obviously had its struggles and maybe we can learn from this experience.

It was a learning experience but I am optimistic we can help the Hong Kong fellowship mature and grow.

Malaysia

The aims and objectives of contact were:

1. To make contact
2. See how world services can be of assistance
3. Check to see if our information is up to date
4. Link up the Malaysian fellowship with Hong Kong, Singapore and Australis.
5. Show them that we care.

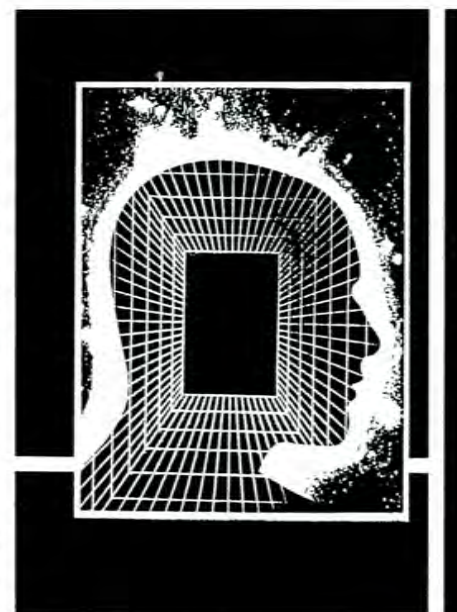
The member that I did most of my communicating with got clean in Sydney, Australia, and had attended NA regularly prior to being deported. He now has approximately six years clean time and is a founder member of the Malaysian fellowship.

Background of the NA community

1. There has been no previous correspondence to World Services other than the correspondence on file, re: registration of their group on a goat farm in Kuala Lumpur, which has been operating for approximately one and one-half years, plus a translation in Malay of:
 - a) Who is an addict?
 - b) What is the NA programme?
 - c) How it works.
2. In 1987 this NA member, along with AA members, started the first NA meeting in Kuala Lumpur. This was at the suggestion of some

AA members, that addicts would better identify in their own fellowship.

3. Of the 15-20 members there are approximately four key members who are the steering force behind NA in Kuala Lumpur.
4. The Kuala Lumpur fellowship has been operating under the NA name since 1987. Group service structure is in place i.e., secretary and literature person, but no formal service structure is in place at this point in time.
5. This group is aware of the traditions and is self supporting, but there has been no H&I or PI work done so far. This fellowship only uses NA literature, they have never heard of NA tapes and requested the possibility of having some sent there.



General questions

All of the four members I contacted were extremely helpful and excited at the fact that someone was bothering to contact them.

World Service was perceived to be very far removed, but helpful as far as literature.

When I asked these members can World Services be of service, there was a resounding yes and the way they need help is by giving professional PI presentation to their government, as no treatment programmes or agencies can set up in Malaysia without going through the home ministry. NA will need to have credibility in order to get referrals. We need to educate the government officials who run the treatment programmes. Members of this community informed me that drug addicts are considered number one public enemies of the country.

At present there is no female member in Malaysia. The reason given to me was that it was due to the tradition and culture of this country.

Most agencies/treatment centres' attitudes towards NA is not positive, as their position is one of "cure". They believe addiction is curable. In the same geographic zone, close to this NA community, there is one gaol (approx. 1500-2000 addicts exclusively), one treatment centre, and two halfway houses, none of which advocate NA meetings.

All available translations have been forwarded to WSO. The closest NA community to Kuala Lumpur is in Singapore, which is held in a halfway house. Apparently it would be un-

usual for Malay's to visit that meeting unless they are of the same culture or a visitor from overseas.

This NA community has no office or central literature distribution point.

To the best of these members' knowledge, they do not receive any of the regular world service periodicals such as the *Fellowship Report*, *Newsline*, *Meeting by Mail*, *PI News* or *Reaching Out*.

For information:

NA group, Pertama
c/o sang kancil project
Lot 3281, Rm 24
Kg. Paya Jaras Hilir
47000 Sungai Buloh
Selangor, Malaysia

Singapore

If you are a drug addict in Singapore they confiscate your passport. Most addicts in Singapore end up in gaol. Drug trafficking is penalised by the death sentence. I was participating in a field trip to Seralang Prison where all the inmates were there for drug addiction, when leaving there I got on the wrong bus. This bus took me and 10 other participants to a halfway house. After a guided tour they gave us a 20 minute seminar about their programme. At the end of the seminar the presenter said that they have a self-help group every Wednesday night, and it was called an NA meeting. I returned to the hotel, collected my two fellow Australian NA members, and returned to the halfway house to attend our only NA meeting in Singapore.

The meeting: it was great! All the NA members, except for us, were Islamic. All the literature was conference approved. Although it had a treatment centre atmosphere to it, it was still an NA meeting. Because we were visitors and had clean time of 16, 12, and 11 ½ years respectively, guess what, we were the guest speakers. After we finished sharing, all the other members also shared, some in English, some in Islamic. It was a great atmosphere. The meeting has been sponsored by one of the older members for some time. He got clean in the USA and knew the value of NA.

At the end of the meeting there was no serenity prayer. The prayers come from the Koran.

Interestingly, the female member with us was the only female addict in the room. The majority of the members in the room were residents of the halfway house. I feel women may have a problem recovering here due to tradition and cultural restraints, as in Malaysia.

Taking into account all of the above, it was a great meeting, the members in Singapore identified with us emphatically, they were very hospitable and were quick to collect all the leftover literature from the conference I was attending.

It would be very unusual for any Singaporean to attend an Islamic meeting, it is not done, due to cultural restraints and traditions. So, once again, like in Malaysia and Hong Kong, cultural/religious barriers need to be overcome or sorted out for NA to gain some sort of foundation.

There is no H&I or PI work being carried out due to the stigma of ad-

diction in this country. Recovering addicts are scared to show themselves. Generally, treatment centres at the moment are not encouraging NA. It is still illegal for addicts to congregate or meet in public.

There is no phoneline or mailing address for NA, only the halfway house where this meeting is held.

I left this fellowship with warm feelings of acceptance and they also asked me to tell everyone in Australia to drop in when traveling through. (Note, contact WSO for info on Singapore N.A.)

PI Non-NA event Singapore, November 1990

A WSB member attended the 12th conference of the International Federation of Non-Government Organizations for the Prevention of Drug and Substance Abuse. It was organised by the Singapore Anti-Narcotics Association, and the theme was healthy living without drugs. 400 participants registered for this event. The NA workshop attracted about 70 individuals. About 15% of attendants were familiar with NA.

I believe our participation in this event was very successful, and the outcome will depend on follow up.

I think the most obvious gap in our world services that I learned from this event is that we have not a newsletter or periodical for the professionals. After my workshop I was swamped with requests from the participants to be put on our mailing list. Starter Kits and any updates (e.g., statistics) were their main requests. Par-

ticipants were taking it into their own hands to organise their addresses so that I may keep them in contact with what is happening with NA and especially if it starts to take off in Singapore/Asia at large.

Most of the audience could see the value of NA and they all had the same question— how can we help/change the current laws that make NA so difficult to emerge in Asia because of the illegality of addicts congregating together?

After my presentation there was a question and answer time which was very vigorous and encouraging. I completed the workshop and left feeling

that there were 70 or more professionals out there with a positive view of NA.

It was an extremely professionally organised conference. There was a high percentage of doctors, government officials, prison superintendents and top ranking health professionals in attendance. There were new front line drug and alcohol workers present. If we can follow through our communication with these policy makers, NA may have a chance in Asia.

Submitted to NA Today, that we may be conscious of our fellow members in Asia who need our support, WSB member.

É ADITO

JOE ADDICT



("This is gonna be a helluva night!")
("I'm on a roll!")
("Nothing can stop me!")



("I'm gonna meet the guys...")
("The same ones from yesterday, and the day before...")



("I'm gonna empty some glasses...")
("I'm gonna do some drugs...")



("Later, I'll feel I need affection...")
("I'll look for romance.")



("Of course, I won't score... and I'll need to forget...")
("I'll do things to be ashamed of...")



("What will it be?")
("Same as always.")

Courtesy Jornal SERENIDADE, Lisboa Area, Portugal

From our readers

From The CLEAN SHEET
Dallas, Texas

Writing in recovery

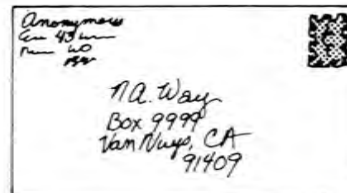
Very early in my recovery I heard a suggestion that I might begin writing about my recovery, a journal of my daily activities and how I felt. My first thought was, "No way!" After all, what could I write? I could barely string enough words together to make a coherent sentence. I decided to give it a try but not without my usual misgivings and self-doubt. I bought a cheap notebook and began writing. At first I wrote about what I did during the day, not thinking about how I felt, because I could not identify how I felt or even that I was beginning to feel. What I found out was that in writing, I was free to make the thoughts that floated in and out of my mind solid. They now existed in the real world, in black and white. I could see what I wrote and keep the ideas that seemed right and begin to change what did not work. That change was possible because I can change what is real to me, but I cannot change that which is not real. Writing became a tool, an action, that could lead me to right thinking. Over time my writing changed from just what I did to include how I felt, because now I was able to feel and know more of what

those feelings were.

Throughout this time my writings were private, though not guarded secrets, they were not meant for public sharing. Even though the thoughts were often shared in meetings about the area newsletter and how it needed support. The thought was planted in my mind to open up some of my writing. After all, N.A. is a program of sharing our experience, strength and hope, as well as our pain.

After considerable thought about my ego and fears of self-exposure, I decided to submit something to the area newsletter, but only after I came to accept possible rejection, because the most important aspect was that I had taken the action to write of myself and ventured sharing what I had written.

In writing I have found a tool that I can use as often as I need, whenever and wherever I need, to help keep me clean and to find some serenity in my life. I am free to write about anything from my deepest fears to my greatest hopes, from my love to my anger and hate and resentments. Nothing I write can harm me, although I may feel the pain. I can also feel the relief and joy of having gotten my feelings, thoughts and words out of my mind and into the light of day where the good flourishes and the bad withers away. I have discovered that it does



not matter how I write, whether I make complete sentences, or write poems or phrases and thoughts that to others may seem unrelated. There is no one to judge or grade my writing, no pass or fail, but only the action of writing that helps me to win another day clean. Best of all, it is a tool that is freely available to almost everyone in recovery.

I thank my Higher Power, my God, for this ability to write and I thank the program of N.A. for helping me to realize the value of this tool in staying clean and living just for today.

L.M., Dallas

Tradition Three

"The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using"

Let's start this off just like any other tradition study meeting I've ever been to. I am a recovering addict, and my name is Guy. As with any other meeting that I attend, I feel that I am only qualified to share my own personal experience, strength and hope pertaining to the topic. The Basic Text is pretty clear about what the tradition means. I feel that the Twelve Traditions are spiritual principles, just as are the Twelve Steps, and that they have a real and often profound effect on my recovery.

When I reached Narcotics Anonymous I was a chameleon of personalities and attitudes. I was able to change my image and attitude to fit my surroundings. I wanted so desperately to belong to a group of people that in the end I had discarded my

own personality and took on what ever characteristics with which the drugs I was doing at the time gave me. By the time I had reached N.A. I was in enough pain to quit using, but I was still ready to do anything I had to do or be anyone I had to be in order to belong. This is where Tradition Three came fully into effect in my life.

I was understandably apprehensive about joining the fellowship. I had not completely accepted my own addiction and here I was considering joining a group of people who readily held themselves out to be addicts in recovery. I wanted to be free from my misery and to "get what they had," but what were they going to make me do or believe to get it? Was this really some cult or conservative anti-drug group that was going to brainwash me or make me give them what little money that I had?

To my benefit, I had nowhere else to go, and I was an avid reader. I had always believed that knowledge was power, and I was not going to get involved in N.A. until I had read their book. I wanted to know exactly what the "rules" of this N.A. were, and what their membership requirements were. The Third Tradition stuck out in my mind when I read it. At that time, it said to me that it was O.K. for me to be there, and I had it in writing to back me up. To my great surprise I never had to fall back on Tradition Three to justify to the fellowship my attendance in N.A. meetings. It did, however, help me justify my attendance to myself—the book jumped up and told me that I *belonged*.

About this same time I asked my sponsor if I really did belong in N.A. meetings, or if I was a mixed-up kid. I was nineteen at the time I got clean, and I had not done many of the things I heard other addicts share about in the meetings. He said I had become a member of Narcotics Anonymous through my desire to stay clean and my practice of the program to keep clean. My sponsor said that it did not matter what I had done, or in my case, had not done. My honest desire to remain clean was all that I needed to attend N.A. Tradition Three gave me the freedom to be myself without the fear of being excluded or ostracized, for the first time. I was very insecure then (at times I still am now) and Tradition Three took on a very personal meaning for me. It was my personal insurance policy on belonging. As long as it was part of the program and said that I could belong, I would belong.

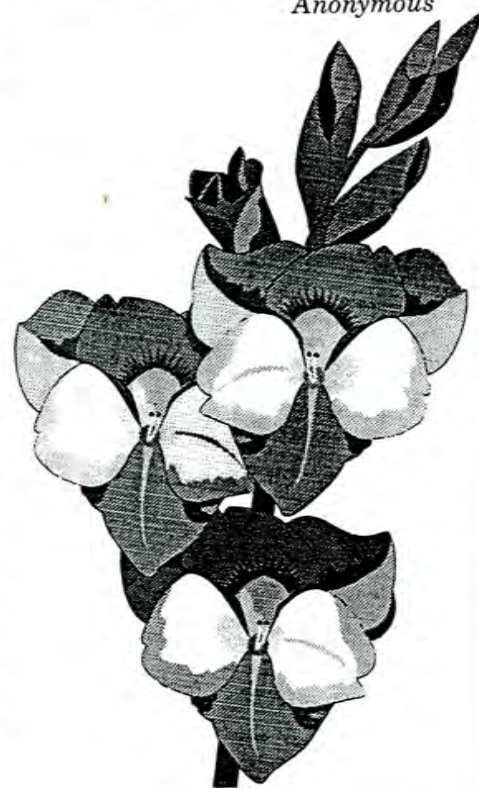
Later in recovery, Tradition Three became a tool for me to try to overcome my own personal prejudices and closed-mindedness. After I had attended N.A. for a while it was pointed out to me that addiction does not care who you are. The disease of addiction is one of the few non-discriminatory, non-judgemental things that I come in contact with each day. The suffering of active addiction knows no social, economic, ethnic, or religious division. The Basic Text and my experience have shown to me that the only outcomes of active addiction are jails, institutions, or death and that I am not exempt from its wrath, nor is anyone else. If the disease I have is not picky about how

and who it kills, then I must work to make sure that I possess the same non-judgemental attitude in my recovery.

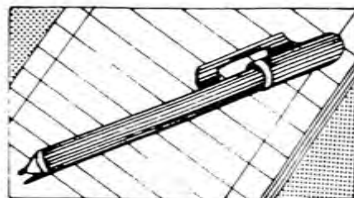
Often times the message of recovery I needed to hear came from someone whom I would have in other circumstances ignored, avoided or attacked. The disease of addiction and a desire to recover from it are the common denominators that allow me to identify with anyone I may come across in a meeting.

To me, Tradition Three is the safeguard of personal freedom in the fellowship. As long as we all practice this spiritual principle, recovery in Narcotics Anonymous will remain open to all those who have a "... desire to stop using."

Anonymous



Viewpoint



From AGAINST ALL ODDS
Daytona, Florida

Why I'm not an "Anda"

Nearly four and a half years ago I sat in a treatment center trying to pick up the pieces of my life. I was desperately trying to be open-minded, though not always succeeding. I had a roommate, with a hot week more clean than me, whose strode back and forth, wagging his finger, insisting that if I didn't admit to a dual diagnosis I would surely relapse. "You're an addict and an alcoholic!" he proclaimed. "Well I only used alcohol to come down from coke," I said. "You're an addict and an alcoholic!" "Maybe that's fine for you, but if I don't feel it's true, what am I accomplishing?" "YOU'RE AN ADDICT AND AN ALCOHOLIC!" "Fine, anything you say." "Man, you're gonna use if you don't get honest!" "Okay, I'm an addict and an alcoholic."

When I got out, I knew where I felt most at home, and stayed in the N.A.

meetings. My roommate went through a long string of relapses. I stayed clean. It seemed less important that I adopt an extra label, and more important that I attend an extra meeting. What I did for my recovery became more important than what I called myself.

As time passed, I realized that the people who had what I wanted were simply calling themselves "addicts." They didn't put down other fellowships. Instead they just said, "keep it simple." They told me they were not especially powerless, just for today, over specific substances, because they were not using them and were not obsessing over them. But they were powerless over their addictions, and the drugs had just been the tip of the iceberg. Addiction, I learned, could cover anything: food, sleep, TV, sex, relationships, work, anger, travel, money—you name it! As an addict I can run with anything. But if I had to work five programs on umpteen diseases, I'd probably want to use!

In the last four years I have had the privilege of traveling and attending N.A. meetings in many places. In many cities where N.A. is still young or weak, I have seen groups struggle with the tyranny of "and-ism." Some have gone so far as to place in their formats a special request to the effect that, "in our meeting, we identify

simple as 'addicts,' and discuss our recovery from the disease of addiction. This is to promote unity and simplicity, and to help the newcomer to better identify with the N.A. message." It doesn't always work. Members say this request is often ignored. But it seems that eventually, in each city, N.A. population reaches a "critical mass" where N.A. becomes strong and mature enough to stand on its own, and not as a poor step-sister to another fellowship. It seems that only time and patience and the development of solid N.A. recovery and N.A. leadership, can bring this about.

"Anda" may be appropriate for a few people who ran unique and distinct addiction patterns; I don't know. But for most of us, it's just a way for treatment centers to hedge their bets.

and for addicts to sit on the fence and avoid making a commitment to their own recovery. I hear "andas" say that they go elsewhere because N.A. is too young, and they need more stability and people with long-term clean time. Well, we won't ever have any people with long-term clean time if all the people with time leave! I see some people with five or so years clean suddenly disappear and then I hear they've popped up in other fellowships' rooms. Well, I guess that's fine for them, but what about the newcomer who is looking for guidance? I believe in giving it back in the same place where I got it, not hiding out where I won't be bothered by newcomers. N.A. saved my life, and I'm willing to keep betting my life on N.A. It works if we work it.



THE AMERICAN RIVER AREA'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

THE
INSIDE CONNECTION

To the editor

Having heard that you are planning on censoring certain words out of existence (within the parameters of our newsletter) and being a good recovering addict, I could do no less than respond.

I started by reading those grand old Twelve Traditions that we inherited along with the Twelve Steps of recovery. I humbly ask your patience and tolerance while I share with you my journey in a search for where it says

(cont'd pg 32)

Respect

What's all the commotion? Why do our service boards tell us what to say? Are they attempting some form of political censorship? Are they trying to govern? These are questions I choose only to ponder upon, but I do care to lend my opinion for this fellowship that saved my butt.

I'd first like to say that I have complete respect for any twelve-step fellowship whose primary purpose is to help its fellow person. But, I also

(cont'd pg 33)

To the editor, cont'd

that censorship is in accordance with our principles.

Tradition One tells us that "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity." Nothing about unallowable words there. Tradition Two: "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." Couldn't see where it says the newsletter editors have to edit out words like "sobriety" or "sober." I guess you all need to bleep the f_____ word, but when did sobriety become a profanity? Must admit to being puzzled at this point. Started me thinking what I could do if I was editor (being the selfsame addict who started this letter) and wondering just *WHO'S IN CHARGE?* I know I can't be. Maybe you're just a lot more recovered than I am. Comforting thought.

I read on through the traditions until I came to Tradition Five. "Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers." Not one word about what words we may or may not use to do that. We carry the message. Period. Granted, the newsletter isn't a group, but we all pay for and benefit from its existence. We ARE the newsletter. We need these traditions. We need the diversity we all bring to it to unite us in our primary purpose. Including our language. Tradition Six reminds us that we don't endorse anything because our egos could well take us away from our primary purpose. Timely tradition; lays it on the

line that we could slip up and be more concerned with power and control than spirituality.

Being an addict, I read ahead to Tradition Nine, where a wonderful and well thought out phrase caught my attention: "... we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those we serve." Doesn't say "only if we use certain words." Tradition Ten states that "Narcotics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues. . ." Censorship sounds like an outside issue. The First Amendment (free speech) of the United States Constitution addressed this "outside issue" directly. It's been invariably upheld by the courts of our country since its inception. Censorship is un-American.

Tradition Eleven talks about attraction, not promotion. I think that if we have to regulate our members' language, we become an unattractive, self-promotional program, and we might want to look at that.

If I limit my experience and expression then I am not speaking my truth; I may not deny that truth in recovery or I will die. If you censor my language, you censor my truth. I cannot give my permission for anyone to do that.

Censorship and oppression go hand in hand. Witness history—that's all we have to do. Our parent program's censorship of us as addicts oppressed us into creating Narcotics Anonymous. We've adopted the assets of that program. Must we inherit its character defects as well?

Anonymous

Respect, cont'd

believe it is easy for our fellowship to be overshadowed by another Twelve Step fellowship. I, as a human being, have gone and still go through a barrage of identity crises; it would figure that N.A., as a whole, would also have such issues.


I have yet to attend another twelve-step meeting in which the N.A. Basic Text, or N.A. literature, was talked about or quoted. I have, however, been to many N.A. meetings where people have mentioned and quoted literature from (other) twelve-step fellowships. And what are their motives for this? Pride? Rebellion? Or is it the way they were shown by their mentors? I don't know. But I do know that I've spent many years at making a play at being different, special, and, most of all, extreme. Yes, I said extreme!

I truly believe there are certain guidelines that can be easily followed. They're found in the Twelve Steps for each individual, and in the Twelve Traditions for each N.A. group and N.A. as a whole. This "controversy" over lending the name of other twelve-step fellowships to N.A. has nothing to do with the First Amendment's free speech clause, or my right to go uncensored. The constitution doesn't keep me clean!

It has to do with giving N.A. the respect it deserves, just as we try to give each other the respect we deserve. What does cooperation, not affiliation mean, anyway?

Wow? Look—a whole letter without the mention of any other twelve-step fellowship! Now, that didn't hurt too much, did it?

Just Another Addict



Where do you go to ask those questions that might not make very good meeting topics, but you just have to know the answer to? Would it not be nice to have a sort of Guru that you could get all the answers from? Sounds a little strange, but there just happens to be a column (on trial basis only) to get most disturbing answers to these strange questions, like...

Q: Why do they serve coffee at meetings?

A: Have you ever been at one of those meetings where the topic really hits home? You know the type; something you need to hear but don't want to. Well naturally, you get up several times to get coffee. Finally 9:00 comes, you're home free, or so you think. You get home and all that coffee kicks in. Then you're up until all hours of the night thinking about the topic you tried to avoid. UNDERSTAND??

Courtesy of The Cleaning Raggs
Texas Tri-County Area Newsletter

Comin'up



ALABAMA: Sep. 20-22, 1991; Surrender in the Mountain Spiritual Retreat; Mount Cheaha State Park, Delta, AL.; info (205) 933-8331; Spiritual Retreat, PO Box 190203, Birmingham, AL 35219

BAHAMAS: Nov. 1-3, 1991; 4th Bahamas Regional Celebration; Wyndham Ambassador Beach Hotel, Cable Beach, Nassau, Bahamas; rsvn.s (809) 327-8231; Celebration 4, PO Box N 3849, Nassau, Bahamas

CALIFORNIA: Sep. 28, 1991; End of Summer Pot Luck and Volleyball Picnic; Hosted by Back County Area; Bucklin Park; info (619) 353-7998

2) Nov. 1-3, 1991; 12th Annual Southern California Regional Convention; Wyndham, Palm Springs; info (714) 544-7943

3) Nov. 8-10, 1991; 5th Annual Western States Public Information Learning Day; Hosted by the San Diego Imperial Region; Hotline (619) 584-1007; W.S.P.I.L.D., PO Box 16505, San Diego, CA 92176

CANADA: Nov. 8-10, 1991; 5th Annual Alaskan Regional Convention; Inglewood Community Association Hall, Calgary, Alberta; N.A. Convention, PO Box 30086, Station B, Calgary, AB CANADA, T2M 4N7

COLORADO: Oct. 18-20, 1991; 5th Colorado Regional Convention; Breckenridge Hilton, Breckenridge, CO; info 421-2303; CRCNA V, PO Box 2115, Englewood, CO 80150

CONNECTICUT: Oct. 6, 1991; Clearview N.A. Stafford, sponsors Chili Cook Off; People's State Park, Barkhamstead, CT; info (203) 643-0880

FLORIDA: Nov. 14-17, 1991; 10th Serenity in the Sun-Recovery; Ramada Hotel Resort, 603 Clearwater Park Road, West Palm Beach, FL 33401; info (407) 844-7726; Palm Coast ASC, PO Box 3151, West Palm Beach, FL 33402

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

INDIANA: Sep. 20-22, 1991; North Central Indiana Area Learning Day Camp-Out; Pla-Mor Park, 2162 U.S. 6 East, Bremen, IN; info (210) 293-7407; N.C.I.A.S.C., PO Box 175, Osceola, IN 46561

IRELAND: Nov. 8-10, 1991; 7th Irish Convention "Living Free"; Hotel Kilkenny, College Road, Kilkenny, IRELAND; info 353-056-62000; fax 353-056-65984; Registration, PO Box 1368 Sheriff St, Dublin, IRELAND

KANSAS: Oct. 18-20, 1991; 2nd Annual Dodge City Roundup; VFW Hall, Dodge City, KS 67801; Info (316) 227-2211; Roundup Committee, 2009 Thompson, Dodge City, KS 67801

MASSACHUSETTS: Nov. 8-10, 1991; 1st South Shore Area Convention; Plymouth, Massachusetts; info (617) 447-5725; S.S.A.C.N.A., PO Box 3442, Campello Station, Brockton, MA 02401

MINNESOTA: Sep. 28, 1991; 8th Annual Twin Cities N.A. Banquet; Saint Mark's School, 1983 Dayton Avenue, Saint Paul, MN; Info 789-4253; Banquet, 316 Oak Grove -305, Minneapolis, MN 55403

NEW JERSEY: Sep. 13-14, 1991; Multi-Regional Learning Weekend; Hosted by Northern New Jersey; info (302) 427-0587; M.R.L.C.N.A., c/o N.N.J.R.S.C., PO Box 3365, East Orange, NJ 07019

NEW YORK: Oct. 11-13, 1991; Heart of New York Area "If You Want It" Fall Retreat, Vandercamp Cleveland, NY; info PO Box 224, Syracuse, NY 13214

OHIO: Sep. 20-22, 1991; 11th Annual Campout; Big Bone Lick State Park, Union, Kentucky; info (606) 384-3522; G.C.A.S.C.N.A., PO Box 8257, Cincinnati, OH 45208

2) Sep. 27-29, 1991; Recovery in the Foothills II; Old Town Camp, Pt. Pleasant, WV; info (304) 675-5132; A.F.A.S.C.N.A., PO Box 107, Gallipolis, OH 45631

3) Nov. 29-Dec. 1, 1991; 1st Greater Cincinnati Area Convention; Cincinnati Marriott, 11320 Chester Road, Cincinnati, OH 45246; rsvn.s (800) 228-9290; G.C.A.S.C.N.A., PO Box 8257, Cincinnati, OH 45208

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

PENNSYLVANIA: Nov. 15-17, 1991; 9th Tri-State Regional Convention; Pittsburgh Hilton Hotel and Towers; rsvn.s (412) 391-4600; TSSRO Inc, PO Box 110217, Pittsburgh, PA 15232

QUEBEC: Oct. 11-13, 1991; 4th Quebec Regional Convention; Auberge des Seigneurs, 1200 rue Johnson, Saint-Hyacinthe, CANADA; info (514) 652-0175; CRQNA 4, Boite postale 23, Varennes, Quebec, CANADA, J3X 1P9

SOUTH CAROLINA: Nov. 7-10, 1991; 9th Serenity Festival; Landmark, Myrtle Beach, SC; rsvn.s (800) 845-0658; SFPC, PO Box 1198, Myrtle Beach, SC 29578

TENNESSEE: 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; info (615) 269-6865; , PO Box 111345, Nashville, TN 37222

2) Nov. 27-Dec. 1, 1991; 9th Volunteer Regional Convention; River Terrace Resort, Gatlinburg, TN 37738; rsvn.s (800) 251-2040; VRC 9, PO Box 90203, Knoxville, TN 37990

TEXAS: Nov. 1-3, 1991; 4th Best Little Regional Convention; Holiday Inn South, 6624 Avenue H, Lubbock, TX 79408; rsvn.s (806) 745-2208; info (806) 763-6632; Convention Committee, PO Box 175, Lubbock, TX 79408

WASHINGTON: Sep. 20-22, 1991; 8th Northern Puget Sound Area Spiritual Connection; Deception Pass State Park, Cornet Bay Environmental Learning Center, Whidbey Island; info (206) 424-1330; Registration, 100 S LaVenture -36, Mount Vernon, WA 98273

2) Oct. 18-20, 1991; 14th Pacific Northwest Convention; Sheraton Tacoma Hotel, 1320 Broadway Plaza, Tacoma, WA 98402; info (206) 572-3200; PNWCNA -14, PO Box 88, Olalla, WA 98359

WISCONSIN: Oct. 11-13, 1991; 8th Annual Wisconsin State Convention; Paper Valley Hotel, Appleton, WI; rsvn.s (800) 242-3499; WSNAC 8, PO Box 1902, Appleton, WI 54913

World Convention Speakers Needed

The program committee for the World Convention of N.A. seeks speakers and workshop leaders for future world conventions. The requirements are 5 years clean for speakers and 2 years clean for workshop leaders. Contact:

**WCC
C/O WSO
P.O. Box 9999
Van Nuys, Ca 91409-9999**

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

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.

NEWSLETTER

