

THE NA Way MAGAZINE®

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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 NA Way[®]

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volume ten, number twelve

meeting in print

Grateful to be home	2
Recovering balance	6
Typewriters & gunfire	9
Change, the NA way	10
That time... again...	12
What's in it for me	14
Assurance	16

home group

Slugg's gift	17
--------------	----

from the editor

Farewell	18
----------	----

viewpoint

Letting go	24
Urges inclusivity	25
Viewpoint response	25
Time	26

from our readers

A selection of letters and short articles	28
---	----

comin' up

A worldwide NA calendar	32
-------------------------	----

index

Titles by category, 1992	33
--------------------------	----

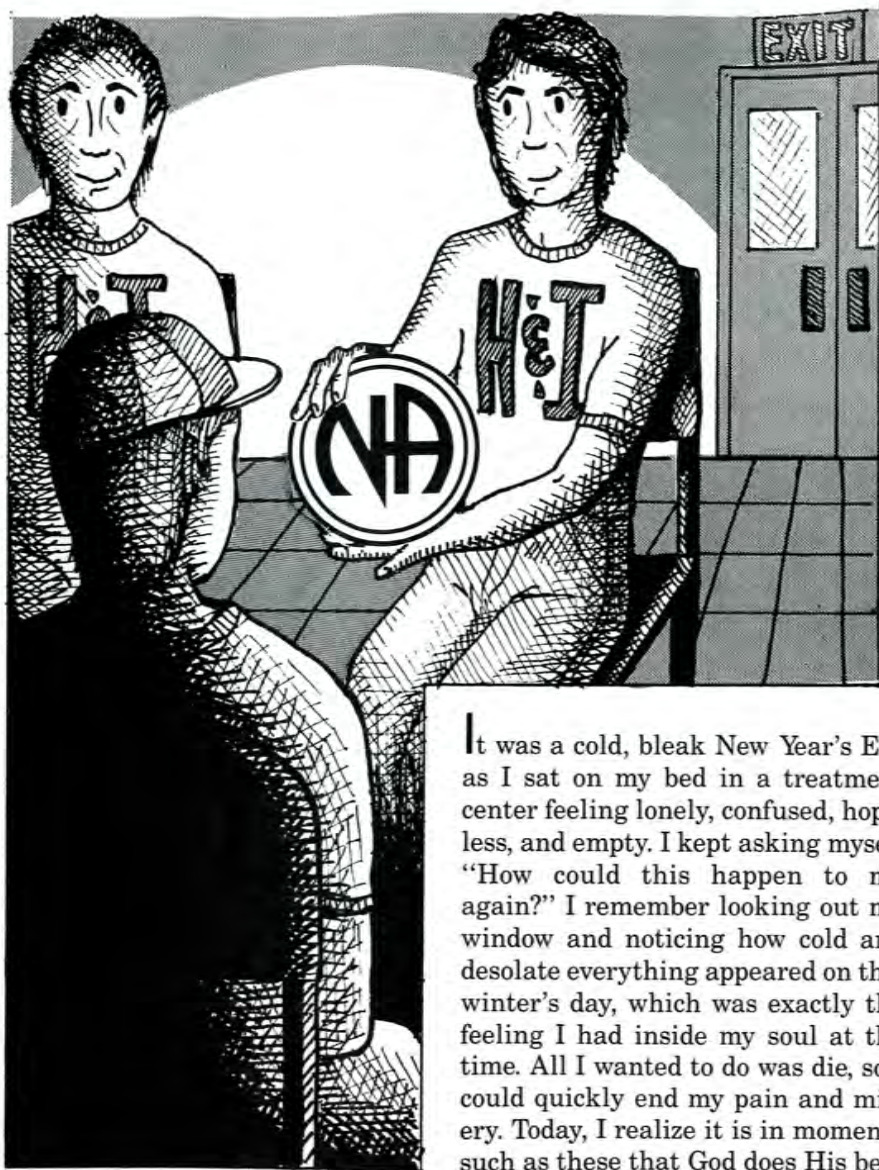
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It was a cold, bleak New Year's Eve as I sat on my bed in a treatment center feeling lonely, confused, hopeless, and empty. I kept asking myself "How could this happen to me again?" I remember looking out my window and noticing how cold and desolate everything appeared on this winter's day, which was exactly the feeling I had inside my soul at the time. All I wanted to do was die, so I could quickly end my pain and misery. Today, I realize it is in moments such as these that God does His best work with the still suffering addict.

I had been institutionalized in 1977 at the age of twenty-two for my addiction and was able to put six years of recovery together in another fellowship. The disease of addiction is very

insidious and I remember reaching a point where I believed I would never again use that particular "drug of choice," which I didn't. I was unaware at the time that my problem was not a specific substance, but rather a disease called addiction. Inevitably, I began substituting and the downward spiral of active addiction, characterized by progression and insanity, resumed until I ended up in another treatment center, badly beaten.

I remember being told on New Year's Day that there was a Narcotics Anonymous meeting being brought in that evening and I would have to attend. I was totally unfamiliar with NA, but I figured all the other patients were attending and I had absolutely nothing to lose. I walked into the room feeling as low as I had ever felt and I knew in my gut that I was physically, mentally, and spiritually bankrupt. It was the saddest period of time I have ever known in my entire life and I felt like an open wound. Little did I realize this was to be the first step of my journey back from the hell of active addiction to a life better than I ever dreamed possible.

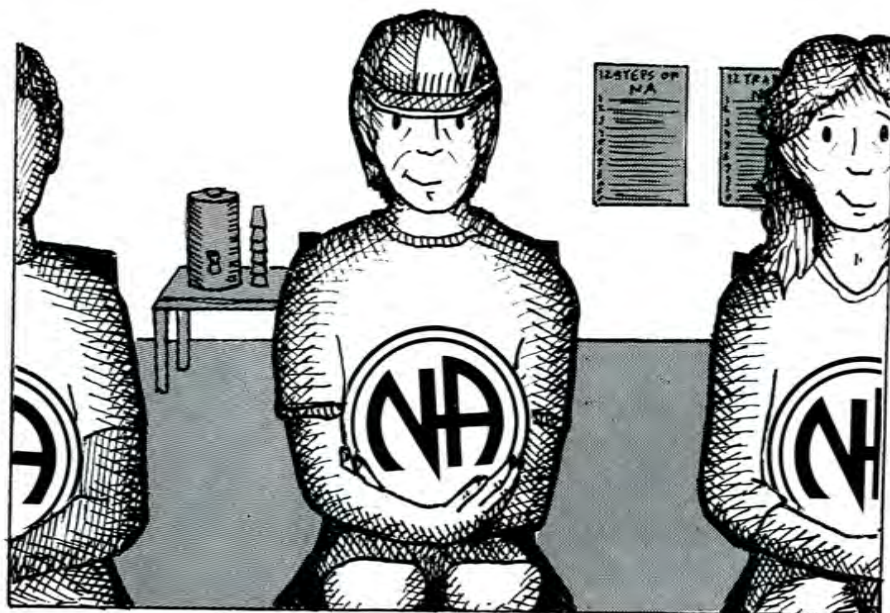
The individuals who brought the meeting in said they were recovering from the disease of addiction in Narcotics Anonymous and that they were members of the H&I subcommittee. I couldn't get over the fact that it was New Year's Day and these people were bringing a meeting into a treatment facility when, I'm certain, they had other things they could be doing. That really touched me, as did their honesty, humility, caring, sharing, and genuine enthusiasm for recovery.

The identification I experienced with the feelings they talked about moved me like never before, and the empathy I felt that evening initiated the healing process within, which I know as recovery. For the first time in a very long while I was filled with some hope and I knew deep down that I had finally found a place I could call home, the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. My thirty days in treatment was a difficult, painful time for me, but I really looked forward to the H&I meetings and they are what kept me going.

Upon leaving the treatment center, I was overwhelmed with fear and doubt, so I immediately went to an NA meeting. I remember thinking to myself as I arrived that this was the last stop for me and if this didn't work I was out of options. This fear momentarily paralyzed me. However, when I walked through the door and was warmly welcomed, all the negativity seemed to fade away. It's true that "a simple, loving hug can make all the difference in the world when you are feeling alone." I look forward to those hugs as much now as in early recovery, because they remind me that I belong. Today, I believe God performs a special magic when addicts gather together for the purpose of recovery, and I have witnessed many miracles in the rooms of NA. I am one of those miracles!

As a newcomer, other addicts loved and accepted me when I was totally incapable of loving and accepting myself, and that's what kept me coming back. I took their suggestions such as attending meetings daily, using the telephone, obtaining a sponsor,

Grateful to be home



joining a home group, becoming very active in service work, and, most importantly, not picking up, regardless of what! Celebrating clean time and receiving my key tags was very special for me because it gave me a sense of accomplishment and self-worth. I will never forget the day that the obsession to use was finally removed. I was in recovery approximately nine months and I experienced an incredible sense of freedom, relief, and well-being. The "chains" of addiction were lifted and I was free to live and enjoy this new way of life, which simply amazed me more and more with each passing day.

I developed a beautiful relationship with a sponsor, one based on honesty and trust as opposed to self-seeking and manipulation, which is something I've never before experienced with another human being.

I have had the privilege of writing on all twenty-four spiritual principles under the guidance of my sponsor, which has allowed me to remain clean, change, and enjoy spiritual growth. The steps have taught me how to live with me, the traditions have taught me how to live with others, and the process has enabled me to discover what recovery is really all about. Today, I am acquiring a new image of myself, a better perspective on my life, and I'm grateful to finally be "alive."

I remember reaching a point in my recovery when I felt an overwhelming desire to give back to NA for everything it has done for me, so my sponsor suggested I become involved in H&I work. It was one of the most rewarding experiences I have ever undertaken, and it has made me realize that gratitude truly is an action word.

I am constantly reminded by fellow members that it's not about what we take, but rather what we give, and I have learned that in giving I receive back tenfold. Each time I go on an H&I commitment and gaze into the eyes of those institutionalized addicts I see myself. Their pain touches my heart, and I'm quickly reminded where my life once was. I always get very emotional when I think of the H&I members who cared enough about the still suffering addict to carry a message of hope and promise of freedom into the treatment facility I was in. No matter how hard I try, I know I can never repay my debt to Narcotics Anonymous for giving me back my life and much, much more.

As my recovery progresses, I become more aware that each new day is a gift and each day clean is an absolute miracle.

My spiritual awakening has been a continuous, ongoing process and my life is richer and better than I ever imagined. The opportunities I have available to me today far exceed the rooms of NA and many lifelong dreams are now being fulfilled. However, I never forget that all these opportunities and dreams have become a reality because of the rooms of NA, and I pray I never forget that. It's truly only by God's grace and the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous that I'm where I am at today, recovering and enjoying a new way of life. It really saddens me when I think of all the addicts who never get the opportunity to receive the gift of walking through the doors of NA. I know I have been blessed because I finally found a place I can call home. I thank God for leading me there.

Anonymous



Recovering balance

The most recent "Conference-Approved" edition of Webster's dictionary defines *balance* as "...the state of emotional and mental stability."

What is balance in recovery? When I'm functioning well in all areas of my life, I am in balance. Functioning well can mean many things, and it does not necessarily mean that things are "just fine" or "perfect." It simply means that life is manageable for the most part, and that I'm able to deal comfortably with the my trials and tribulations.

My life is based in recovery, and that recovery is made up of several components, some of which are: the program I work, the relationships in which I participate, and my working situation. There are also many sub-categories in each of these component parts.

The amount of time and energy I invest in one component of my recovery in relationship to the others, in large part, determines whether I'm in balance. All of the component parts have equal importance and effect on my general well-being.

Spending an inordinate amount of time or energy in any one of these areas, to the detriment of any other,

usually has a negative impact on the way I'm acting or feeling. For example, if I am working so many hours that I can no longer find time to go to meetings regularly or spend time with my family, or just with myself, I am out of balance or soon will be. If I am meeting my own material needs and neglecting my spiritual needs, I'm "Robbing Peter to pay Paul..." I'm out of whack.

Balance has to do with self-awareness...keeping in touch with my spiritual, emotional, physical and material needs.

This is one of those things I used to hear about as a newcomer and wonder—what are they talking about? Everyone talked about looking for balance and nobody ever seemed to find it or for that matter know what it was. It seemed like a sort of secret handshake or password or something you were entrusted with only after you stayed around a certain amount of time.

I don't know if anyone ever sits down one day and says, "Oh, today I think I'll start to work on some balance." Maybe some people do that, but for me it is just something that happens, maybe by evolutionary processes more than design.

In my case the process has gone something like this: In early recovery, I went to meetings constantly, talked about the program obsessively, socialized with only recovering people. All my time and energy were directed to this element of my recovery. All the others—job, family, etc.—received limited attention at best. While this situation would be completely out of balance in terms of my recovery today,



it was well-balanced in terms of my needs then.

The goal of recovery is balance, but sometimes I get there by going to extremes.

As time has passed, my needs have changed. The amount of time and attention required by different elements of my life also changes. For instance, in the second year I was clean, I spent a lot of time on a relationship, on service, and very little time on my professional responsibilities. This last year most of my attention has been focused on working through the steps and sharpening up my skills professionally. The area of concentration has changed in each of these years, but by and large I've felt balanced.

How have I managed to feel balanced in light of these swings in concentration? It seems to me that balance in recovery is an ever-changing process. While I look for consistency in most areas of my life, it seems to me the key to balance is constant change and adjustment based on what are my needs at the time.

How many meetings I go to, how much time I spend with my sponsor, how much step work I do, how much service work I do, how much time I spend in prayer and meditation, what I do to help others, the amount of time and energy I invest in my job, my family and myself are all factors that

affect my general well-being. The proportional mix changes every day, just as I do, just as my needs do.

The combination of meetings, work, prayer, etc., that kept me feeling good about myself a year ago may not work well for me today. My needs have changed. I have changed, and therefore what I have to do to keep myself in balance has changed.

I don't sit down and think to myself, "well, you need to go to 4.5 meetings this week, work sixty-one hours, spend at least one day this weekend with the family, read Recovery and Relapse, work on Step Eight and meditate for 3.5 hours." Maybe some people can do that; I'm not one of them. What has happened is that adjustments are made subtly and intuitively, sometimes they just happen without any conscious effort at all.

It is as though I know what to do, where to adjust, instinctively. I don't believe in the "fix principle." I don't think that if I'm feeling out of kilter I can just do a little more of this or a lot more of that and "cure" what is bothering me. I know from experience that when I pay attention to what I'm feeling, listen to signals coming from the inside, that the adjustments necessary in the right blend will take place.

D.S., Maryland

The goal of recovery is balance, but sometimes I get there by going to extremes.

Typewriters & gunfire

Ed note: The following message, written November 1st, 1992 was faxed from the capitol city, Luanda, Angola, November 5th. It is from a recovering addict who works in Angola on behalf of the government of Portugal. Civil insurrection has beleaguered the African country for many years, as organized resistance to the established government has some popular appeal.

"I have just talked on the phone with my sponsor and he suggested that this might be a good moment for me to write an article for 'The NA Way.' It is a nice, sunny All Saint's Day, but I can't leave my apartment. Heavy combat broke loose yesterday, here in Luanda. It didn't exactly come as a surprise, but some situations are easier to project than to live. There has been intense fighting, and some quite near this building. Not just machine guns, but also shells and mortars (these are the scariest—the walls and the windows shake, and the echo makes you think that it's closer than it really is). This will probably last for another day or two. Until then I have to stay put. The streets are deserted and too risky. When this eventually calms down, I hope to join my colleagues at the building where I work. Our evacuation is a possibility. Thank God I have enough water and food.

"'God.' What an important word. I have stopped believing in coincidences for some time now. I have lately been working on my written Step Two, putting down on paper the ways in which my insanity acts on my recovery, and how I have come to believe in a loving Higher Power, and here I am now, God and myself, alone in this house. And I am scared, so God is the strong one of us two, and I had better ask God for help. I am totally powerless over this situation, the "normality" of life has collapsed, and I do need help to restore and preserve my sanity.

"Yes, the steps can be the answer for even a situation like this. There's nothing more I can do but apply them to my feelings and thoughts, and my peace of mind begins to ask for Step Three action. Such a decision is needed as to consciously place my life and my will in God's hands and pray that God knows better. I have to do my part: act sanely, not panic, stay away from windows, keep in radio contact with my office, and again, pray.

"Other tools have also been of help. I have plenty of NA tapes which have helped me feel part of, and I have been working on the Portuguese translation of a new NA book. The noise of the typewriter drowns the sounds of gunfire.

"I don't have to feel alone. I may be physically on my own, but I am in touch with other human beings, many recovering addicts, and I feel God's presence through them and in my prayers."

Luanda—Angola

Change, the NA way

My personal recovery sometimes grows in leaps and bounds, and sometimes only in fractions of an inch. This is the method my Higher Power has chosen for me. There are times that I am growing so fast that I am afraid I am not comprehending all I should; then there are times that I am growing so slow that I am sure my Higher Power has forgotten about me. During these times I rely on faith that my Higher Power knows me better than I know myself and knows how to teach me.

My first year in recovery brought about a lot of changes in me: divorce, death of two friends, and problems within my biological family. Some of these changes took place quickly. The death of a friend in a motorcycle accident and the murder of another friend happened soon after I got out of treatment. During these times I began sharing in meetings.

Although I believe my original motives were to gain some comfortable pity from fellow NA members, I

received some healthy empathy. Through sharing my feelings of loss and sadness, I came to believe that it is okay to feel sad. Whether it is because of a major crisis or a minor crisis, sadness is still there. I now know that I am not weak when I feel vulnerable. My home group members shared my fear and sadness. They patiently allowed me to change my old way of thinking and let me practice new ways on them. This experience in change gave me the strength to not use, continue my daily responsibilities, and the faith that my Higher Power is out there taking care of me.

My fellow NA members also helped me go through a divorce in my first year clean. The end of my second marriage was painful, but fellow NA members who had gone through a divorce while in recovery shared and cared. Many of them invited me to play miniature golf, go for a ride, or just came to visit. I soon started feeling like I was going to get through it. This period in my recovery allowed

me to achieve some experience with patience.

Patience, and lots of it, was what I needed while I was trying to decide what I wanted to do with the future that I now had. After many attempts at trying to get into various schools at the last minute, I finally got into one that offered the courses I needed. My life soon started to fall into place. I was going to the college of my choice and working on a career that I chose for myself.

The first part of my second year in recovery went along very slowly. I moved 60 miles away from my friends and family, but thanks to NA, I knew some people in my new town. I even work with a guy from my hometown NA group.

After finishing my first semester in college and being well into my second semester, I began to feel as if my recovery had slowed down so much that I might be missing out on something. So, I told myself that going to school full-time, working part-time

and attending 2-3 NA meetings kept me too busy for anything else. After making this discovery, I believed that I was doing too much and not allowing myself any leisure time. So, I started isolating. I soon started feeling scared, lonely, and unlovable. Thanks to my Higher Power, a friend in NA invited me to come to his town (a much bigger city than I lived in) for an NA dance. This helped to lift my then defunct self-esteem. I learned a lot about myself that weekend. I learned some of the areas where I had grown and some where I had not. Most of all, I went through some emotional healing that has enhanced my recovery tremendously.

Change is the most frightening example of growth for me. It is also the most rewarding. Change, the NA way, has helped me to be honest, open-minded, and willing, and this is how to recover.

D.F., Missouri

That time . . . again . . .

It's that time of the year again. And what time may that be, you're probably asking? What I've seen, over a number of years, is when the winter season comes back around, the birthdays come up.

Why is it that in the summer time, people go back out? And when winter comes back, they decide to get clean? I think when the summer is here, people start to miss the things that they used to do with their old friends.

So they start hanging around those people, maybe thinking that they won't get loaded. Maybe just going to the beach and hanging out with them. Or maybe going to the mountains. After all, just skiing won't hurt, even if it is with the "old playmates."

Then when winter comes, they can't hang out at the river, go to the beach, or any of those things that they used to do.

They end up thinking about what has happened over the summer, all the mistakes that maybe they've made. All the maybe wrong "choices" that were made.

So they end up coming back to these rooms to do something about their problem. To find that help they once knew only a short time ago. To maybe call their sponsors that they haven't talked to in a few months.

Then there are those people that chose to stick around for a little while. To get to know and work the steps into their lives. What happens? Some of them maybe celebrate their clean time.

I know for me it took some time to stay in these rooms with all the issues I had to work on. When I finally decided to do that, it became a wonderful experience. Oh sure, there are times when it's anything but wonderful.

But the one thing that makes it okay is the people I've come to know.

It took a couple years for me to get vulnerable with a selected few. When I did, I learned about the miracle that happens when I share what's going on with me. The situation that's seeming so overwhelming gets easier to walk through. With the unconditional love that is given so freely, those special few can mean everything to me at that point.

And there are those times when I wish I didn't know some of those people. They know when I'm sitting in my poop, they know when I'm running on self-will. And they call me on it every time. They make me think!

These people that stick around show a form of willingness and determination that not many others have now-a-days. It's a gift to meet these people and get to know them, as well as for them to get to know me. To be able to spend time with them, to have fun with them, to share me with them. To have a life free of drugs with them.

Sharing the experience of celebrating their accomplishment of reaching something that they've worked so hard to reach. That is so special. To watch as these people come to see and believe that maybe this just might be a better way of life for them. Instead of the self-made prisons that we are used to being in. That's something that I never found out there getting loaded.

To see their faces when sharing at the birthday meetings, to hear the feeling in what they share. To see pain, the tears, and to experience the awakening of their minds and hearts is something I can't quite explain.

I don't dread the holiday season like I used to, for that simple fact. I will get to see some people celebrate this thing called recovery. I will help some of these people celebrate this thing called recovery. I am a part of it with them.

That is the best gift I can ask for, or get. What a pleasure life can be today. All of this is out there for anyone and everyone, if they want it. I'm grateful that I can have it today. Thank you, my Higher Power for allowing me to find this gift. Please help me to keep it.

S.M., Oregon



What's in it for me?

Do you remember when you first landed in NA? You went to that first meeting scared to death, not knowing what to expect, wondering what was going to happen. Remember the secretary up there in the front of the room saying, "Good evening everybody, my name is Joe, and I'm an addict?" They read *Who is an Addict*, *Why Are We Here*, *What is the NA Program*, *How It Works*, and *The Twelve Traditions of NA*. Maybe the group secretary suggested if you were a newcomer you should pick up a schedule and a phone book, and maybe "take home some of those pamphlets over there" about *Sponsorship*, *The Triangle of Self-obsession*, *The Group*, *Living The Program*, etc.

Perhaps you can recall the first NA dance you went to...all those people laughing, talking, dancing, having a great time, living clean. How about your first convention...meetings, meetings and more meetings, pots and pots of coffee, workshops, the dances, the banquet, the "count-down," the love, fellowship, that sense of belonging?

Maybe you were incarcerated when you heard the message. A couple of recovering people brought a meeting into an institution, handed out some literature and shared their experience and hope with you. Or were you at a health fair when you saw the NA booth and spoke to a couple of members about the program and what it had to offer?

Wherever or however you came to know NA, odds are you came into contact with someone involved in our "service structure." Someone cared enough about us—even before we got here—to ensure that there was a format for the secretary to read at that first meeting, that there was coffee in the pot, that there was literature for the taking. Someone wrote the Basic Text and the Information Pamphlets. Someone printed the flyers and arranged for the DJ, the hall, the sodas and the coffee for the first dance.

Listening to some talk about service sometimes makes me wonder if we're talking about the same fellowship. "Why, it's all about ego and power," some say. "There'll always be meetings and literature. That's all I care about." I don't know if that's true or not. What I do know is that most people I know in NA service are not in it for power or self-gratification.

They're in it out of an abiding sense of love and responsibility. They're in it to learn about themselves while helping others. They're in it to ensure that when some poor addict stumbles into his first NA meeting, there'll be coffee in the pot, literature on the table and a speaker in the chair next to the meeting secretary. They're in it so that members have a chance to enjoy

social activities in a drug-free environment, in the company of other recovering people.

It is important to remember that none of these things are given, and a good bit of work is involved in providing each of these activities and recovery resources. The people who do that work are the people involved in NA service.

Carrying the message is or should be a part of everyone's program. Carrying the message through service pays huge benefits in personal growth and understanding, I believe. Working

with others toward a common purpose has taught me to keep an open mind, to be honest with myself, and reaffirms my belief that I must be willing to do whatever it takes to ensure that those who follow the path we have chosen are given the same opportunities we were. The way I have chosen to do that is by serving the fellowship as best I can. I am glad I made the *decision* to get involved three years ago. I wouldn't trade the friends I've made or the things I've learned for anything.

In loving service.

Anonymous, Maryland



Assurance

When I first came to NA five years ago, I was at the end of a long road that had left me in the depths of spiritual and emotional turmoil. My anger and self-loathing, which had existed long before I began using, and had only temporarily been obliterated by my drug use, were finally unbearable. I had no hope that my life would ever change, but somehow I ended up at a meeting anyway.

I've heard quoted many times since then that this program promises only one thing: that I don't have to use drugs. But that's not what I understood at my first meeting. A member for whom I have great respect and love showed me what I view as a "promise," and that is the "message" of NA, as written in the Fifth Tradition . . . that any addict, even I, can stop using, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live. Today I thank God and the fellowship that is true.

At the time I thought that when I stopped using drugs my life would automatically get better; much to my dismay it didn't seem to do that at all. Going to meetings and not using (no matter what) was a bitch; all these strange powerful feelings rose up like a raging sea, and it hurt. I shared about it in meetings, and the members in recovery read Recovery and Relapse (Chapter Seven) with me, they lovingly explained to me that my problem was me, that abstinence from drugs gave me an advantage over my disease that could only be capitalized

on by working the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in my life, and that experience had shown them that if I didn't do so I would go back out.

So I got a sponsor and tried it.

Since that time my life has changed so much, I feel a richness that is unexplainable. Step Eleven tells me that my goal has always been to have a conscious, working relationship with God, myself and the world, and reading that step reminds me of my previous inability to have that relationship with anybody or anything. The only way I knew was physical. I was terrified of intimate relationships, and if one came my way I would sabotage it. But I was obsessed with the idea of having an emotionally fulfilling relationship; my road out of the dilemma was one of infrequent sexual encounters that quickly became jaded and were cast aside. Thank God (again) that my group was made up of people who helped me see my need to stay out of relationships with women and to cultivate relationships with my sponsor and the other men in the program.

I see today with fresh clarity that one of the most destructive, irresponsible things I can do is to take advantage of the emotional weaknesses of others. By preying on each others' weaknesses (not limited to newcomers) I display my denial of the First Step, and drag someone else down with me.

Today I feel good in my own skin (for the most part) and I know I belong on this planet. I'm engaged to a wonderful, compassionate woman; our relationship is not founded by sex, we have the intimacy that I was always searching for, and I know that the quality of my life, rich as it is, will only get better.

T.P., Michigan

Home Group

Slugg's gift

OH GREAT, A HOLIDAY GIFT FROM MY SPONSOR.



PROBABLY SOMETHING TO SHAME ME INTO WORKING A "PROGRAM"... A PHONEBOOK FOR ALL THOSE NUMBERS I'LL NEVER USE...



OR SOMETHING "NICE AND CONVENTIONAL"... CAN'T ANYONE GIVE ME PERMISSION TO CELEBRATE MY UNIQUENESS?!



...MAYBE MY SPONSOR KNOWS ME BETTER THAN I THOUGHT...



From the editor

This note to you is my good-bye as editor of the *NA Way*. I realized during the Dallas World Service Conference that the time to depart was nearing. Back in California, in May, I submitted a tentative resignation. I wanted time to solidify the magazine "network" as best I could, to organize a meeting of the editorial board, and to make a few suggestions. I love the magazine, and am grateful for my involvement with it, but just never got adjusted to California. It's time to get on home to North Carolina.

Addicts from several different aspects of service encouraged me to write this piece, and to write it from this personal perspective. Pretty scary. Here, indeed, sentences, and groups of sentences could be constructed without clearly displaying authorship. I ain't playing that game right now.

The folks who urged me to this effort (it really didn't take much) apparently believe that my perspective might provide some useful insight. That is possibly true. It doesn't mean I could tie my shoes, left to my own devices for a couple of weeks, but it does mean that I have been paid, and you might say, sufficiently marinated, to achieve a certain grasp of the flavor of recovery, the NA way.

I'm going to try to hit a lot of things kinda fast, so please forgive me a few choppy turns in focus!

After some learning experiences I have come to the conclusion that there is a great similarity between the accessibility of addicts' minds and hearts, and the function of a certain ornery piece of WSO typesetting equipment. The staff has learned that this truly sophisticated tool simply ignores many embellishments we attach to our wordfiles. It's not mad at us, it just doesn't need some of the intricacies we might personally think appropriate in standard word-processing files.

The *NA Way Magazine* support network, particularly review people, staff and editorial board, must regularly work within similar practical restrictions, in order to agree on what is effective content for each monthly issue. What can we pass on that you can and might use? When are "I," and "We," being virtuously represented? (There it is!) When is a principle being embodied, and when are we just exposing a body?

What I believed when I came here, and continue to propound, is that a matrix of constant, albeit abstract, principle, can sustain infinite variation of artifact.

The review panel discussed the latest crop of manuscript-input during a conference call the other day. Two pieces that were rejected were very moving, but lacked many specific references to the literal words in our steps and Basic Text. One of them was the story of the last week of this life for an addict with AIDS; the other a tale of radical anonymity, occasioned by what the writer described as years of abuse from a partner who somehow regularly learned what that addict shared in NA meetings.

Although "empathy" wasn't mentioned with its by-the-book name in the death-scene story, the description of throngs of NA home group members and the dying addict's sponsor keeping watch by the bedside might have been construed to be empathic.

Anonymity was certainly recognizable as a theme in the other rejected piece, but it may have been a little too broad; and it certainly didn't win support by dint of admiration for the meetings attended. Anyway, the panel was not in a mood to publish these offerings, and its veto removed them from consideration by the editorial board. You're not gonna see 'em here, except through this honorable mention for having been submitted at all.

In the November 1991 *NA Way* I made a suggestion such pieces might be acceptable for publication if the layout-design of the magazine were altered to graphically emphasize that each story is personal. Some new computer equipment now makes that innovation easier. If each Meeting In Print article had an individualized setting, rather than generic title and

typesize, column width, etc., perhaps the acceptance of necessarily personalized expressions of the principles inherent in our experiences, strengths and hopes would be construed less anxiously.

To use and recount words, in a purpose that attempts to reflect the truth that our survival depends on a language beyond words; and to do that in an environment where the means of production, and the product, are diversely administered, has presented a challenge. Despite my griping, the fact that none of us, individually, consistently makes good decisions is a precious thing to realize. Recognized, it's a gracious gift. My burnout would have taken three months, instead of three years, had there not existed at least a rudimentary procedure for sharing, and marking off, responsibility and authority.

The experience of being an employee of Narcotics Anonymous is one with which very few people can completely empathize. A part of the text of Tradition Eight says "Our special workers... work within our traditions and are always directly responsible to those they serve, to the fellowship." I construed my ability to respond and its appropriate exercise as a bit more than simply crossing the t's and dotting the i's that come through here. I believe the NA legacy is one without limits, that infinite re-framing is possible, if we respect the basics. Gravity does not require lockstep.

My work with the magazine has been during a tumultuous time for the fellowship and its corporate mechanism. It has required a kind of

division, or at least simultaneity, of dedication. Though no measure is likely to completely end such tension for special workers, I urge you to remember it when designing or redesigning the nature of our paid positions.

A crest of sorts, of Narcotics Anonymous material and unity, was reached in about 1989. Just ahead were the two major events of the move toward a new "management style" in the WSO, and a great wrangling over the administration of the intellectual property of Narcotics Anonymous.

Regarding the new management style, the NA Way production staff, along with the rest of the WSO employees and many, many trusted servants all over the world, went through a period of adjustment. There were times when people we didn't know very well gave unasked direction; and other times when our appropriate leaders seemed at odds with each other.

Wrangling over how to best protect fellowship property from dissolution or mismanagement, and yet make it equitably available, came to something of a head in late 1990 and early 1991. A Philadelphia judge was finally asked to hear related arguments, and a compromise was reached, but the kind of frustration we might wish remained relegated to national politics intruded in many NA communities. Though the December, 1990 issue might be one of a kind, the struggles had little *direct* effect on the magazine's destiny so far. One thing those disagreements have often done is poignantly dramatize the con-

cerns NA members (and, sometimes, their boards and committees) have for judicious forums of expression.

Our conference approved guidelines state that a section of the magazine will be available for reporting "news," and will provide space for diverse opinions. Few fellowship matters in recent years were the occasion of more "news" and "opinion" than the reproduction and distribution of NA literature outside the conference-sanctioned process.

While it seemed clear that a line of authority and responsibility for that process was in place and defensible, the mechanism for effective protection of the process, (using the greater society's standard legal redress), was cause of grave concern to addicts from every point on the ideological compass. The issues...anonymity, carrying the message, money, and our common welfare, to name a few, reverberated to the core of who we say we are. Though many impassioned statements were aired in business meetings, conferences, and parking lots, they were not generally recorded and so were amendable in later recounting or interpretation. For several months the verbal brouhaha of "who said what" seemed to be giving almost everyone a headache. *The NA Way Magazine* provided a recorded forum of diverse ideas through this time.

Those courageous proponents and opponents who allowed their statements to be published in the *NA Way* made a tangible gift to the fellowship, even those with which the majority disagreed. Adjustments for the mark we wish to hit become evident only

when we are willing to risk taking shots. If no one risked being wrong, our gatherings, and our magazine, wouldn't just be serene, they'd be struck dumb.

Editorial policy regarding news and opinion in the magazine was high on the agenda of the first-ever, face-to-face planning session of the NA Way editorial board, which was conducted in Ohio October 30-31. The three-member board, made up of the managing editor, one trustee (currently Bob M.), and one person elected by the WSC (currently Greg P.), resolved to support goals for garnering content for the magazine (the "networker" system); to explore soliciting material on particular themes, and articulated a fourteen-point, long-range, project development schedule. The transition period occurring while a new managing editor is sought was a topic of discussion; as was the possibility the board might request an advisory role in the selection. The WSO Publications Team leader participated in the Ohio discussions in order to provide continuity between editors.

Although the board has regularly conferred and always concurs before an issue of the magazine is printed, its role has historically been one of considering, approving or amending the decisions of the staff. The direction described in Ohio amounts to the assumption of a more creative and kinetic role. Plans were made to meet again in the early spring to measure progress of the project.

One almost immediately evident result of the meeting of the board will be the publication of a "survey-

feature" in the January 1993 issue. The survey (a synopsis of which may be made available to non-subscribers as well) is calculated to help the board more clearly understand the needs and desires of the magazine's readership and the NA Fellowship. Responses will also be used as the board begins to assess the current magazine guidelines, with a goal of offering for conference decision more comprehensive, and less ambiguous description.

Part of the project development plan is to draft a statement of the mission of the magazine, and elements of the survey may provide insight for the composition of that document.

The evolving coordination of an activist-oriented, stable, editorial board with what looks to be an equitable and effective decision-making process for the fellowship and its business entity, seems to provide great possibility of benefit for the magazine's administration. Though many trials lay ahead as the editorial board more fully assumes its responsibility and authority, the teeth of these two gears are positioned to mesh.

In coming years you will be faced with a decision about whether to incorporate the magazine separately from the WSO. Right now the juncture of effective authority blends "marketing," on the one hand (which is the province of the corporation); with "editorial," on the other (which is determined by the tiered efforts of the review panel and editorial board. Obviously, editorial decisions ("Hey, let's run this picture of Madonna and

Tom Cruise.") have an impact on the market for the magazine. And marketing decisions ("Hey, addictions counselors are our best customers!") affect editorial choices. You, through your representatives, will be the ultimate mediators between the supporters of these related, and sometimes slightly over-enthusiastic, elements of magazine production.

The editorial board expressed unanimity in its Ohio sessions for a move toward publishing more recovery-oriented material and less news and opinion. Support for that direction was tempered by the concern that a broadly dispersed written forum for the NA Fellowship somehow continue to exist. The "Letters to the Editor" column might be put back in place, for instance, and much as it does in other magazines and newspapers, provide a relatively quick and accessible podium to minority or dissenting voices.

As for news, some fellowship vehicles other than the magazine already exist. Except for the *Newsline* they are mainly the staples of service structure participants, who then verbally report to business meetings or conferences their insight and interpretations. The *Newsline* is a broadly and freely disseminated quarterly vehicle, but is most clearly and effectively a report of WSO interface with the fellowship. A kind of "News Digest," or abbreviated page or two of bulletins, compiled by authority of the editorial board, might practically supplant the Broad Perspective and other newsy-type material in the *NA Way*, and open the future to another initiative that had general support in the Ohio meeting.

That initiative is to begin editing the magazine in a manner that would result in a product acceptable in regular NA meetings.

Though each *NA Way* issue comes out too fast to be "conference approved," the magazine's production was approved in 1982, and re-affirmed in 1983 and 1985. The process and mechanisms set in place to establish and nurture its integrity are "conference sanctioned" measures.

I suggest to you that with a conservative approach to the liberal bent of publishing forum and news sections, the effect may be an *NA Way* suitable for sparking NA meeting topics. The potentials of such suitability are not likely lost on marketing gurus.

Before signing off I'd like to get in a few comments on the "network." Faced with a serious need to conserve money, and the desire to nurture and sustain the magazine, the network seemed the appropriate mechanism. The granddaddy problem is a good, balanced, quality content. To be desired by our subscribers, the magazine's content must speak to and from the perspective of addicts seeking recovery in Narcotics Anonymous.

Monthly issues are not lengthy, and you might think it a simple matter to discover sufficient column inches to fill it out. In some ways that is true. WSO staff, if leaned upon sufficiently, might generate ten articles a month during off-duty hours. With the same approach any given region, state, country, or personal set of friends might be cajoled to submit enough material to publish an issue or two. There have even been sugges-

tions we pay a stable of writers to regularly provide written experience, strength and hope.

None of those ideas seemed to me to be the way to go.

Although it is a magazine, not really a meeting, the traditions and principles apply: That writers may freely come, and as freely go. That we keep our hope by freely giving it; and that all who seek what we have may join us. That we understand anger and resentment, and love the angry and resentful anyway.

How to get a regular pulse of monthly content while honoring such principles is the challenge. The network, started fifteen months ago, was designed and is being nurtured to meet that challenge.

Networkers are effectively group or area magazine liaisons. They self-select, most commonly at *NA Way Magazine* workshops. They need not be from any particular region, attitude or background. There are now about two hundred such NA members. They regularly receive samples, their own newsletter, and continuing pleas to encourage writers.

Because they are of every philosophical persuasion, the written sharing they encourage does not come from any particular class, color, gender or spiritual bias in our fellowship. These folks are not elected, so they have no constituents who'll reelect them. They are sustained by their own initiatives.

I'll hazard the guess that twenty percent of the material that has been published in the *NA Way* during 1992 was the result of networkers' activity, and that at least several hundred

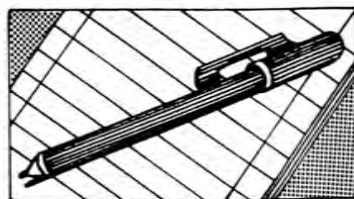
new subscriptions have been commenced through their contacts. Processes are in place to measure the effectiveness of this system, but most networkers resist clearly marking the origin of their orders and manuscripts. They do call and write to discuss their work involvement in general terms, and that is much appreciated.

Some networkers themselves have begun doing workshops and setting up information booths in convention settings and at learning days. A standard set of workshop-participant handouts, general tips and unstinting encouragement is available for such efforts by contacting the magazine staff.

At the present rate of growth there will be more than four hundred networkers in a little more than a year, and the costs for having created the system will be about equal to that of two annual subscription drives. With networkers enervating, encouraging and sustaining each other the need for subscription drives may disappear altogether. Someday any newcomer, at any established NA meeting, may have immediate access to a sample copy and an order form for the *NA Way*.

Give us a call, and keep those cards and letters coming!

Viewpoint



Letting go

I am an addict, and I love NA. My heart broke as I read "How, how, how?" and felt the frustration, anger, pain and intolerance in the author's voice.

I had to learn that NA is not a popularity contest. I don't win awards for giving the best advice, being the best looking addict in the room, sponsoring the most newcomers, making the most meetings or doing more service work than anyone else. I have learned through trial and error, with sponsees, my significant other, and service work, that my "advice" is not always wanted, welcome or necessary. Our Basic Text reminds us that, "The temptation to give advice is great, but when we do so we lose the respect of newcomers" (p.49). One night a miracle happened for me. Another addict in this program called me, one who had left town after destroying everyone in his path and relapsing. He was living back east, back from his run, and he told me over the phone, "I couldn't listen to what you said at the time, but your words traveled with me, and today I use many of the things we talked about in my daily

program. Thank you." As an addict, I often crave instant gratification and my HP knows this; as a lesson in patience, I think, HP often makes me wait to hear that my words touched some other addict.

When I was a newcomer I did have a hard time struggling with simple problems. I could not manage anything in my life; I did not possess simple life skills like knowing how to turn on the electricity in my new apartment, opening a bank account, applying for school and jobs, practicing safe sex, and so on. Things that used to confuse the hell out of me, I can now do without it consuming me. NA taught, and is still teaching me, how to live. I need to remember that what comes easily today may be another addict's worst nightmare. I give other addicts the break today, just as I learned to do for myself.

As to the questions you posed, fellow addict, I do not have the "answer." All I can share is what has worked for me. Although my problems may be different, the root is almost always the same for me: the disease of addiction. My difficulties are still symptoms of the disease, although the package may have a shiny new wrapping. To let others learn, I have become willing to mind my own business.

Anonymous

Urges inclusivity

The Basic Text says our program is all inclusive. That is how I've found I must work the program to stay sane and clean. This to me means I must practice the unconditional love of the program.

After working the steps and having had a spiritual awakening as a result, the unconditional love and being all inclusive is much easier than in the beginning. At first I didn't understand why "outsiders" were in our meeting. Or why people from other programs didn't stay there. I would rally around those few who would judge and condemn or find fault with anyone who didn't agree with "their program." Gradually I learned to welcome visiting professionals, would-be professionals, parents, people with different ideas or life styles, and yes even those from some of the other numerous Twelve Step programs. We need everyone.

The last two years have been long and hard at times. Coming to a new town with nine-and-a-half years of clean time, I was the outsider. I didn't expect to be accepted completely, at first so I decided to give it some time. On my tenth year I was to speak at my birthday. Part of this was to let people know who I am and to let them in on my past experiences.

I was willing to let people in on some of the isolation, degradation, jails, hospital stays due to overdoses or attempted suicides, and the work it has been to come out of that into a world where compassion, love, understanding and caring are my highs. Another one-and-a-half years and I'm still attempting to carry the NA message of all inclusive and unconditional love, which was taught to me. From experience I know how hard it is to grasp these concepts so I just continue to show up and be a part of, carry the message and because I care so deeply I don't judge or attempt to tear down other addicts just because their program, ideas or personality is different than what has worked for me.

May we all stay bound together through the fellowship and learn each day just a little more of our Higher Power's will for us.

D.L., Kentucky

Viewpoint response

After reading the August Viewpoint article titled "NA religions" I finished it feeling somewhat upset.

I could understand if in an Arabic translation it didn't say Allah, there may be problems, but as God is talked of in NA, I don't see any connections to the Christian God.

I don't understand where the "Christian bias" is in NA. Yes, the

Lord's Prayer is said at some meetings, but anyone is free to substitute (or abstain). I knew a Native American who said a Sioux prayer in the Lakota language.

I have nearly five years of recovery, and very early in my recovery I moved to the area I am in now. I never felt, even in my early atheistic/agnostic stages, that this program was too "God centered," in either place I lived.

I feel now, regarding whether we should pull anything out, that so far as NA is concerned regarding the Christian God that it is, at very best, extremely agnostic and probably atheist. I could be a little biased, although I have received no complaints. Early this year, my spiritual life was at a standstill, and I felt the need to enlarge it. I started going to church and eventually became a born-again Christian.

I still go to several meetings a week and am active in service work, because I need to remember what brought me to NA, as well as the feeling which is brought on by helping others.

I guess my bottom line is that I've seen Christians, non-Christians, and even atheists come into the program and not have problems with the "God of our understanding." When I came in, I learned this is only a suggested program, we can do all or part, which is what I have been known to do at times. We all make a choice, to stay clean by attending meetings and working the amount of the steps we are able to work, or ignore everything and use.

The way literature, etc., is written gave me (and everybody else) the

choice to pick any or none Higher Power I chose. The "high" I was looking for before I came to NA I found in part in NA and my God gave me everything else and more. Without God as an option, among the other Gods and Higher Power, I don't know if myself or even others would be clean, dead, or using. As far as I feel, God is in a way first like NA: You can't have what you don't want.

D.R., Nebraska

Time

I is the foundation of we. Without one, there is no two. Without my willing participation, *we* becomes *they*. Without my willing participation the group principle is not for me, it is for *them*. The minute I pronounce any spiritual principle for the group, and not for me, I have placed severe limitation on my participation in it, limited my participation in our unity.

The individual is the foundation of the group. My personal recovery depends on my participation in NA unity. My personal recovery depends on my personal participation in the NA principles of group unity.

By limiting my participation in any of our principles of recovery, I have negotiated its prominence in my life, the importance of my participation in it, and effectiveness of the message. The effectiveness of the message depends on my ability to carry it.

The effectiveness of my ability to "carry the message" is only as strong as my participation in these principles, and their prominence in my life.

Our principles are not separate from one another, they are one. The step is not separate from the tradition any more than the cause is separate from the effect, or the atmosphere from the temperature of the day. The separation only appears in my lack of participation in them.

As a member of the group, my participation, my surrender to membership in it, is my willingness to surrender to its principles, and my participation in them. My participation in my recovery is limited only by my willingness to surrender to the group principle, our principles of NA unity.

The group principle is the first word in the NA program. "We" is the first word that indicates surrender is a necessary ingredient to recovery, and words are all that make up the Narcotics Anonymous program of recovery. The entire NA program is emphasized and re-emphasized by the necessity of surrender to the group principle.

"The steps' are for the individual. 'The traditions' are for the group." The moment I indicate a principle as for any other purpose but my personal recovery, I have weakened its purpose in my life. I have placed a limitation on my ability to accept and integrate its spiritual power into my recovery. I have externalized it. Spiritual principle must be internalized and experienced to be known. If I externalize it, I am placing a limitation on my ability to know it. I am limiting my

knowledge of principle; of Narcotics Anonymous.

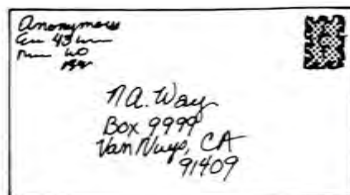
If I give "we" to my honesty, if I give "we" to my open-mindedness, if I give "we" to my willingness, I am beginning to internalize them. The principles of HOW are active ingredients in the steps and the traditions. They are not separate and cannot be separated anymore than addiction can be separate from its dependency. Personal recovery depends on NA unity. 'The steps' depend on 'the traditions', they both depend on the principles of HOW, and so does my life.

For a group of people who seem so dependent on relationships to be happy, the principles that teach us about loving human interactions between "two or more addicts meeting regularly," would seem to be particularly attractive.

Two of our more predominant 'old-timers,' with marriages that have survived recovery, are sharing at conventions about the importance of "our traditions" in the success of their marriages. Every idea must wait for its time. Maybe it is time to look at the time.

Anonymous

From our readers



Thoughts on the Twelfth Step

"Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps." To me that's an understatement, to say the least. These steps have shaken my world. Released me from the wreckage of the past. They have shown me how to live right today and leave tomorrow in the hands of the God.

"... We tried to carry this message to addicts..." As the result of the first part of this step I can share the message with other people. On the phone, in meetings, through sponsorship. I am human, I make mistakes. I can share my struggles, identify with others and feel their pain. I can let them know there is hope. There is life without using.

And "... practice these principles in all our affairs." For me: Step One—each day I don't use. Step Two—each day I pray in the morning and at night. Step Three—each day I try to do as my God would want. Step Four and Five—having worked these steps fearlessly I now maintain my recovery each day through my Tenth and Eleventh Step. Step Six—each day I recognize and allow God to remove my defects. Step Seven—each day I pray that God remove my shortcomings. Step Eight and Nine—having made the list and the amends where possible, I allow God to reveal new situations for me to stay willing and when

I am wrong, promptly admit it. Step Ten—each day I take time to look at my day, to write about the good and the things I need to improve on, the people I have wronged and what I must do to make it right and stay clean. Step Eleven—each day I pray only for the knowledge of His will, not for things. I clear my mind with thoughts of comfort, family, fellowship and God.

J.L., Maryland

Family

I've been reading *The NA Way Magazine* for a few years now and I read all the older copies that were around my group. Thank you all for your experience strength and hope, and keep it coming. I am in area service and I get called on to help attract members to sub-committee meetings and various functions the committees host. Since I started reading our magazine I've read quite a few articles on the subject of lack of participation and support in service work and I can identify with the writers of these articles. But I am slowly learning that other members will come out to join us in service in our Higher Powers' time, not ours, but we must still carry the message so these members will know where to find it when they have the desire to serve. I'm not writing this to take any member's in-

ventory. I am writing to tell you how I became interested in service, why I serve, and what service has given me.

I first became interested in service at the group level when I was a newcomer by picking up chairs and cleaning ash trays. I figured if I looked busy nobody would ask questions or expect me to carry on a conversation. Thanks to you guys and gals and our program of Narcotics Anonymous, you loved me until I could love myself, and I still count on the hugs. It's ok to get a real hug today, it's great to be able to hug another addict just because we're there for each other. After I was in the fellowship a short time I joined a home group, this was not a major decision for me as there is only one group in our town, which is fairly isolated. During my first summer in NA I had the opportunity to attend a campout put on by another group in our area and a neighboring area's convention. At these functions I was able to get a better perspective of Tradition One within our fellowship. All these members loved me unconditionally, too, not just the members of my home group. I really had to admire these people. They were not only living life on life's terms but clean and loving it. They were also doing this area service work, and still having a good time and enjoying life and the work they were doing. I asked a lot of questions during these gatherings about area service, as our group hadn't had an active GSR since I joined the program. I didn't have any real knowledge of service other than at the group level. As a lot of members shared their experience, strength and hope with me, I was able to feel the strong grasp

these members had on our spiritual principles. At our next group business meeting I questioned why we didn't have an active GSR and why we couldn't become more active within our area. One month following the meetings I was sitting at our area service committee table as GSR for my home group. I thank my HP that those loving addicts were still there for me, along with others I hadn't yet met. I slowly became acclimated with the ASC. I enjoyed and enjoy to this day the multitude of new and old addicts I meet on the recovery road. About this time I heard some off beat rumors going around about why some of us are in service. I stopped and took a long honest look at why I enjoyed service work. The first feeling I had was one of being trusted. When I was fooling with the active disease of addiction there was no trust. No one trusted me and I trusted everyone else even less. Now I had a group of people trusting me to carry their conscience as well as returning with information pertaining to NA. About a year later I was nominated for vice-chairperson of our area. I accepted and was elected. I am now, I believe, trusted by all the groups in our area. If someone had told me I would have the responsibilities I have today I would have told them to get off the drugs.

As long as I work the steps and don't pick up I can handle the responsibilities I have today and get enjoyment from them. On days when I get bored and I don't think I can handle reality, sometimes I turn to service work, which keeps me on track with the Twelve Steps of our program.

Service work has brought me closer to my HP, learning to pray for guidance and surrendering things that I am powerless over. It has shown me and shows me today that I have self worth. Service has helped me to become an active member of society again. And I am learning to have respect for all people, regardless of where they are today.

Whenever I share I know that I'm ok today. By loving myself today I know that anything is possible. Love Ya Family.

K.F., Canada—Nova Scotia

Remembering

It was the day of my second anniversary clean. The sky was slate-grey and the sun was taking the day off. It had started to rain by the time I made my way to work.

Because of a loving, caring Higher Power and the program of Narcotics Anonymous, I was able to return to school to complete the requirements for a Bachelor's degree. As part of those requirements, I was working in an internship to gain hands-on experience before making the transition into the world of work.

It was a Friday and my last day at work. My supervisor asked all the office personnel to walk over to the next building for some seemingly unimportant reason. I entered the building's cafeteria and there stood all my co-workers, surrounded by a long table of cake and hors d'oeuvres.

I sat and listened quietly while management and staff showered their praises and affirmations upon me. They thanked me for all I had accomplished and assured me that I had

been a definite asset to their agency. They presented me with a gift and they wished me all the best as I finished my college education.

It wasn't until a few minutes later, after the party was over and I was driving home, thinking about the meetings I would be attending that night, that it hit me.

Exactly, two years ago today, I had been working for that same agency in a part-time capacity. On the same day, I was faced with the humiliating task of calling that office and telling them that I, unfortunately, would not be making it in because I just happened to be in jail.

The continuous lock-up I had created for myself via the progression of my disease had transformed itself into the real thing, complete with those heavy, horrible clanging doors. After having met bail, I took what I now know to be a First Step.

This is only one of many similar experiences I have had over two short years. How can I possibly doubt the infinite love and non-ceasing care that the Higher Power of my understanding must have for me today? Through situations such as this one, my HP provides me with opportunities to heal from the past and to make amends in the best possible way for everyone concerned.

It rained all day on my second anniversary. It was an equally soggy day on my eighteen-month anniversary. Not a torrential downpour, just a steady stream of light, misty drops. My sponsor spoke at my anniversary celebration that night. I was sharing with her before the meeting that I was beginning to take the fact that it

had rained on my past two anniversaries personally. She looked at me in that way that only she does, and gently replied, "Or you could look at it like those are your Higher Power's tears of gratitude because today you are clean."

Anonymous, Georgia

Cab fare

I picked up a fare, the two people got into the car and said "The Centre please." I nodded and proceeded to drive. "Wait a minute," a voice in my head exclaimed, "I bet there is probably a clean dance happening tonight." "Great, just great! That's all I need, I'm stoned, and I bet that I will run into someone that I know." I kept on driving, anticipating that I would meet one of those smiling, happy, NA people. I drifted off into thought...I had attempted many times to clean up, treatment centres, halfway houses, out-patient, in-patient, meetings, substituting drugs, and on and on. I was constantly fighting this tug of war inside of me, called addiction. "Straighten up," "You can't do it, you might as well use anyway," "But you made it for nine months." These were the messages floating around in my head, like the classical cartoon scene of a devil (addiction) on one shoulder and an angel (sponsor) on the other. I got to a point during my using that my using friends told me to "use or get off the pot," because I was constantly in a state of quitting and relapsing. Pulling into the centre parking lot I noticed a crowd of people lingering in front of the entrance. Just as I had anticipated, there he was standing at the top of the stairs,

arms outstretched. It was my best friend, my sponsor. "C," he exclaimed. I tried to ignore him but it was inevitable. "Long time no see" he exclaimed. "Ya" I responded, with a loss for words. I could not maintain eye contact, I was ashamed of how I was feeling and the fact that I had just been using. "Come on in and say hello to everyone," he bellowed. "Ok" I responded quietly. I followed him into the big conference room used as a dance floor. People that I hadn't seen for months started approaching me saying "hi" and requesting hugs. Still ashamed, I couldn't look them in the eye. "What are they thinking?" "Will they still accept me?" These were questions that I kept asking myself. All of a sudden someone asked "Why don't you come back?" It was a shock to my addiction, my insides shuddered and shrivelled. The thought of meetings, expressing feelings, honesty, change, and all of the things that come along with the wonderful gift called recovery were not the idea of fun for my disease of addiction. Prior to the cab fare, I had been thinking, ironically, of how I was sick and tired of the so called "fun."

From that day forward I have remained clean. It has been four years now, I have been growing every day since that cab fare. Growth doesn't stop unless you decide to end it by not working your program! Thank you NA for saving my life. A special thanks to my HP for putting the people in my life that day, especially the cab fare and someone to meet me at the door.

Love from out west.

C.F., Canada

Comin'up



CALIFORNIA: Jan. 21-24, 1993; 1st Central California Regional Convention; Red Lion Inn, Santa Barbara; info (805) 487-1768 or (805) 486-1950; Convention, PO Box 1534, Ventura, CA 93002

ENGLAND: Mar. 12-14, 1993; 1st Northwest England Area Convention; Castlefield Hotel, Liverpool Road, Manchester; rsvn.s (061) 832-7073; Narcotics Anonymous, Northwest England Area, PO Box 57, Manchester ENGLAND, M60 1HP

GEORGIA: Jan. 15-17, 1993; 5th Central Savannah River Area Anniversary Celebration; "Peace in Recovery V, Recovery is Still Alive"; The Lanelmark Hotel, 640 Broad Street, Augusta, GA; rsvn.s (706) 722-5541; CSRA, PO BOX 15863, Augusta, GA 30919

2) Mar. 18-21, 1993; 12th Annual Georgia Regional Convention; Radisson Hotel, Augusta, Ga; info (404) 382-5657; rsvn.s (706) 722-8900

ILLINOIS: Feb. 26-28, 1993; 5th Annual Chicagoland Convention; "Fellowship Faith & Freedom"; Hyatt Regency, 151 E Wacker Drive, Chicago, IL 60611; rsvn.s (312) 565-1234; info (708) 848-2211; Convention, PO Box 872, Oakpark, IL 60302

2) Mar. 5-7, 1993; RRCNA II; "The Gift is in Giving"; Rockford, IL; RRCNA II, PO BOX 1891, Rockford, IL 61103-0391

INDIA—BOMBAY: Jan. 29-31, 1993; 1st Bombay Area Convention; "Freedom in Unity"; Almeida Shacks, Madh Island, Bombay; info 261 9195 or 646 0463; Bombay ASC, PO BOX 16489, Mahim, Bombay INDIA, 400 016

KENTUCKY: Jan. 15-17, 1993; LACNA III; Holiday Inn South-Airport, 3317 Fern Valley Road, Louisville, KY 40213; rsvn.s (800) 465-4329; LACNA III, PO BOX 2343, LOUISVILLE, KY 40201

MASSACHUSETTS: Mar. 5-7, 1993; 5th New England Regional Convention; "The Joy is in the Journey"; Tara Innis Hotel, Massachusetts; info (617) 647-1470 or (617) 782-0130; NERC V, PO BOX 1245, Waltham, MA 02254

NORTH CAROLINA: Mar. 19-21, 1993; 6th North Carolina Capitol Area Family Reunion; North Raleigh Hilton and Convention Center, 3415 Wake Forest Road, Raleigh, NC 27609-7330; rsvn.s (800) 872-1982; info (919) 755-5391; Registration NCCAFRNA, PO Box 818, Carrboro, NC 27510

OHIO: Dec. 31, 1992; New Year's Eve Dance; Ohio National Guard Armory, 2170 Howie Road, Columbus, OH; info (614) 252-1700

2) Jan. 1-3, 1993; Central Ohio Area Convention IV; "Point of Freedom-Living the Dream"; Radisson Hotel Columbus North, Columbus, OH; rsvn.s (800) 333-3333; info (614) 297-7472 or (614) 252-1700; COACNA IV, PO BOX 10323, Columbus, OH 43201-7323

SOUTH CAROLINA: Jan. 29-31, 1993; 13th Annual Area Convention; Holiday Inn, 4295 Augusta Road, Greenville, SC 29605

2) Feb. 19-21, 1993; 4th Annual Just For Today Convention; "Working on the Me in the Mirror"; The Hilton Resort at Palmetto Dunes, Hilton Head Island, SC; info (803) 791-9591; Just For Today IV, PO BOX 23534, Columbia, SC 29224-3534

TEXAS: Feb. 26-28, 1993; 9th Annual Texas Area Convention; "Breaking the Chains to be Free in '93"; Best Western Northgate, I-30 & Stateline, Texarkana, TX; rsvn.s (903) 793-6565; info (903) 832-6257; TACNA IX, Route 15 box 113, Texarkana, TX 75501

VIRGINIA: Jan. 8-10, 1993; 11th AVCNA "The Journey Continues"; Hyatt Richmond, Richmond, VA; rsvn.s (804) 285-1234; info (804) 756-8303; XI AVCNA, PO Box 15664, Richmond, VA 23227-5664

Annual index 1992

TOPIC/TITLE	MO.	PG.	TOPIC/TITLE	MO.	PG.
Meeting in print					
General					
Following the Way	January	2	Dual-diagnosis recovery		
Morning's Reflection	January	5	Turnaround	May	29
It Just Keeps Getting Better	January	12	Family		
Foundation Revealed	February	9	Learning Together	February	6
Driving Principle	February	12	On Bonds and Boundaries	May	15
Transitions	April	6	Letter to my Child	July	16
Keep Coming Back	April	16	We Change	November	9
Gladly Checking In	April	30	Fellowship—		
Simplicity is the Key	May	31	the therapeutic value of one		
Dear NA Way	June	7	addict helping another		
Surrender to Win	July	5	I Asked for Direction	January	14
Long Paths	July	8	One Addict Helping Another	January	20
Greedy, Not Needy	July	33	Trusting the Process	July	6
Cornerstones	July	36	In the Heat of Reality	July	14
Recognition	August	2	Till You Can Love Yourself	July	34
Note to Newer Members	September	2	Beyond Doubt	August	15
From a Member of the			With the Help of Friends	September	3
Fellowship	September	5	Disappointment	September	12
Cycling to Freedom	September	6	Recovery Atmosphere	October	2
Decisions	September	9	Winter City Meeting	October	7
Emotion and HALT	September	11	Fiction		
Perspectives	September	14	The Idealistic Meeting	April	5
Courage	November	8	Gratitude		
Patterns	November	10	Still Standing	January	32
Typewriters and Gunfire	December	9	Grateful	January	32
Addiction			Thanks	February	32
Working for the Solution	August	32	NA Saved My Life	February	32
AIDS and recovery			Blessed with Success	April	28
This Seat Taken	July	2	Thanks to H&I	April	30
Ramon—One Addict's Story	July	20	Coast-to-Coast Gratitude	April	31
AIDS—an Outside Issue or			Thanks	October	26
Not?	October	22	Home Group comic strip		
Balance			Robert's Important		
Recovering Balance	December	6	Commitment		
Change			January		
Change, the NA Way	December	10	Slugg's Higher Power		
Comics—Also see Home			February		
Group Comic Strip			Denilah Focuses		
Untitled (institutional meeting)	May	23	April		
Death			Gretta, Gretta		
Spiritual Rewards	January	16	May		
Tangible Evidence	April	2	Breakthrough		
Sharing the Pain	July	10	June		
			First Dance		
			July		
			Nurturing the Inner Slugg		
			August		
			Robert Contributes		
			September		
			Congrats!		
			October		
			Thanksgiving		
			November		
			Slugg's Gift		
			December		

TOPIC/TITLE	MO.	PG.	TOPIC/TITLE	MO.	PG.
Humor			Relationships, sexuality		
Descriptions of Our Truste			Turning it Over	February	31
Servants	September	15	Assurance	December	16
Illness			Self-acceptance		
Surgery in Recovery	January	15	I Can Live in my own Skin	August	30
Which Insanity	April	11	Self-Acceptance	August	31
Just for Today			Free	August	31
Just for Today	May	30	Service		
Keeping it simple			Service Junkie?	June	30
Basic Reflection	February	2	Love, Gratitude, Miracles	November	31
On Avoiding Complication	February	4	What's In It for Me?	December	14
Little Bits of Gratitude	April	8	Family	December	28
Medication and recovery			Spirituality		
The Price and the Deal	July	12	A Spiritual Connection	January	33
Available to Us All	October	25	Earnest and Honest	April	28
Meetings			The Traveler and the Journey	August	12
Working	October	26	I Came to Believe	October	28
Twelve Steps to a Meeting			Sponsorship		
of NA	November	12	Teaching to Learn	January	6
Newcomers			On Looking and Seeing	May	8
I Am a Newcomer	August	10	Fired	November	14
True or False?	October	8	Steps		
Oldtimers			Principle Perspective	May	10
News!	July	33	Step Three—A Choice	May	32
How, How, How?	July	35	Who, What, How, and We	June	2
Two Decades of Being			It's His Thing	August	6
a Newcomer	August	8	Discerning the Muse	October	4
Letting Go	December	24	Amends	November	18
Parables			On the Twelfth Step	November	31
Armadillos	May	18	Thoughts on the Twelfth Step	December	28
Personal stories			Viewpoint		
Not Alone	February	31	Anonymity		
Kept Coming Back	April	29	On Anonymity	September	16
My Story	June	10	Caffeine, nicotine, and sugar		
Self-sufficiency Is a Lie	September	8	It's Personal	January	29
Sharing the Miracle	November	4	Editorial Replies	February	29
Finding a Balance	November	6	Don't Let Me Go	May	5
Been There	November	30	Debate Continues	July	32
Grateful to Be Home	December	2	Empathy	August	26
Poetry			More Response	October	23
Today in my Life	June	31	Frankly, I Give a Damn	October	24
Recovery birthdays			Empathy	November	26
How It Feels	January	11	Children at meetings		
That Time Again	December	12	Attitude Adjustment	April	32
Remembering	December	30	Court referrals to NA		
Relapse			NA Under Surveillance?	April	27
Dropping the Mask	February	16	Gender-specific spirituality		
Experience, Strength,			As We Understand	June	18
and Hope	May	3	Who Are We?	July	30
Wisdom Grows	May	30	Comment	July	35
For Discussion	November	2	Supports Writer	August	32
Cab Fare	December	31			

TOPIC/TITLE	MO.	PG.	TOPIC/TITLE	MO.	PG.
God			Service		
NA religion	August	28	On the Regional Office	September	30
Viewpoint Response	December	25	Institutions	September	32
Literature development			Service involvement		
Worldwide in Literature?	April	22	A Letter to the Fellowship	May	25
Lord's Prayer			Not Laughing	August	27
Whose God Anyway?	February	25	ASC Not a Circus	October	27
NA language and identity			Special interests, common needs		
We Need Not Be Confused			Editorial Reply	February	26
about This	May	31	Open-mindedness	June	16
One Disease, One Program	June	12	On Specialized Groups	October	20
Urges Inclusivity	December	25	Traditions		
NA Way editorial policy			Anonymity	August	29
Dislikes Reprints,			Tradition Four	September	7
Especially Graphics	July	30	Time	December	26
On Changes	July	31	Twelve Concepts for NA Service		
Oldtimers in recovery			An Opinion on		
Editorial Replies January	24		the Twelve Concepts	May	27
What's Appropriate To			WSO price increase		
One Phase	January	30	Against Price Increase	May	26
Editorial Reply	February	30	Opinion Piece	July	31
Editorial Reply	April	32	Features		
Primary purpose			Aotearoa New Zealand NA		
I Can Leave If You Want Me To	January	18	Alive in NA	August	20
On Protecting our Roots	February	27	H&I		
The Voices in the Dark	April	20	Recovering in Prison—		
The Forgotten Many	April	22	Excerpts from Letters	September	20
Maverick Meetings	September	29	NA Way Tenth Anniversary		
Urging Acceptance	November	26	Ten Years, the NA Way	October	15
Defining a Purist	November	27	NA Way—Ten Years	November	24
Public behavior of NA members			WSC annual meeting		
Anonymity	January	27	WSC Agenda, 1992	February	20
Editorial Reply	January	26	WSC 1992	June	22
Editorial Reply	February	28	Miscellanea		
Editorial Reply	April	32	Convention announcement		
Regional assemblies			WSUC-8 Set for July	June	32
In Loving Service	June	8			
Self-support					
Funding NA Services	April	24			

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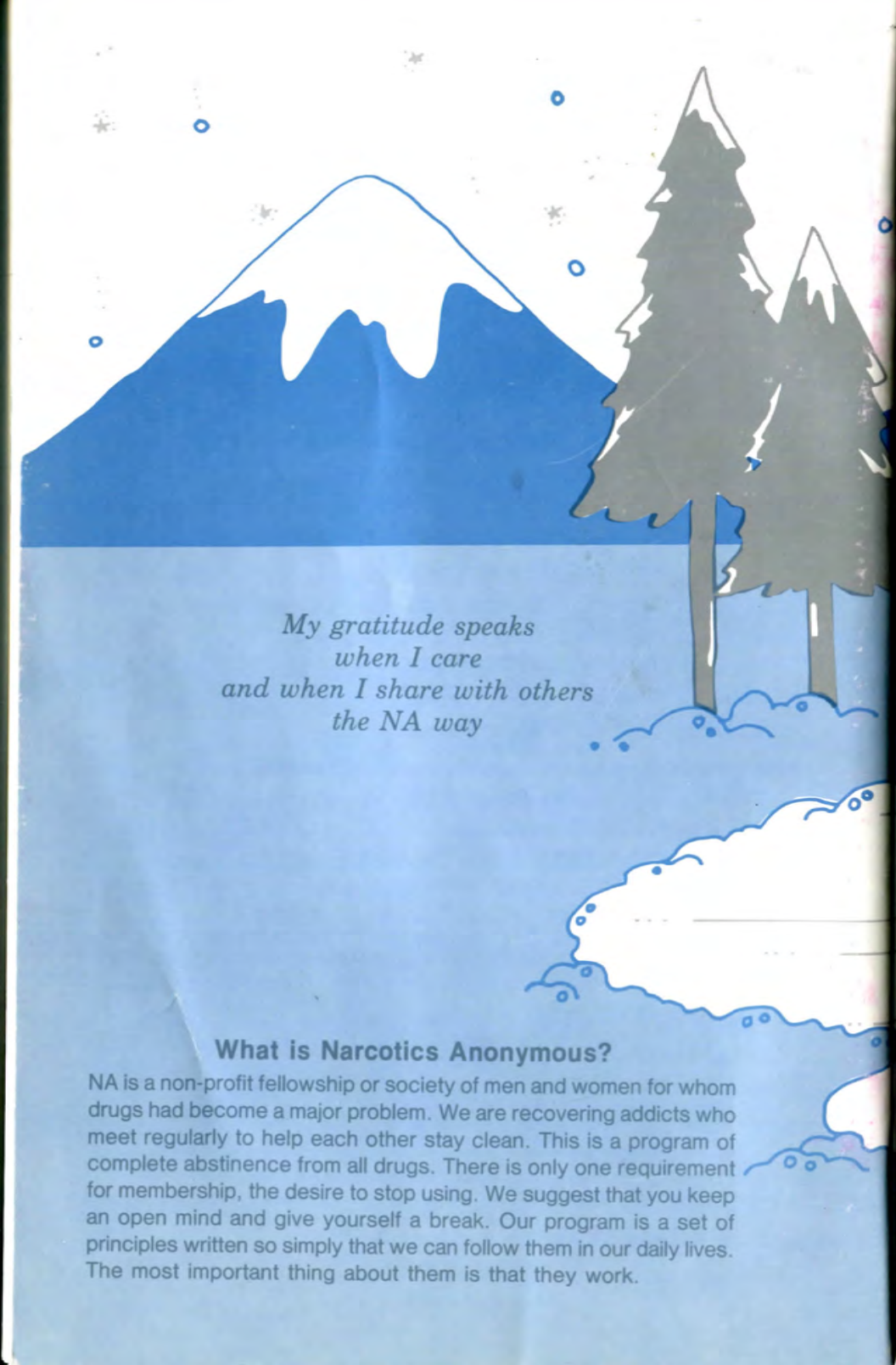
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home group

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.



*My gratitude speaks
when I care
and when I share with others
the NA way*

What is Narcotics Anonymous?

NA 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.