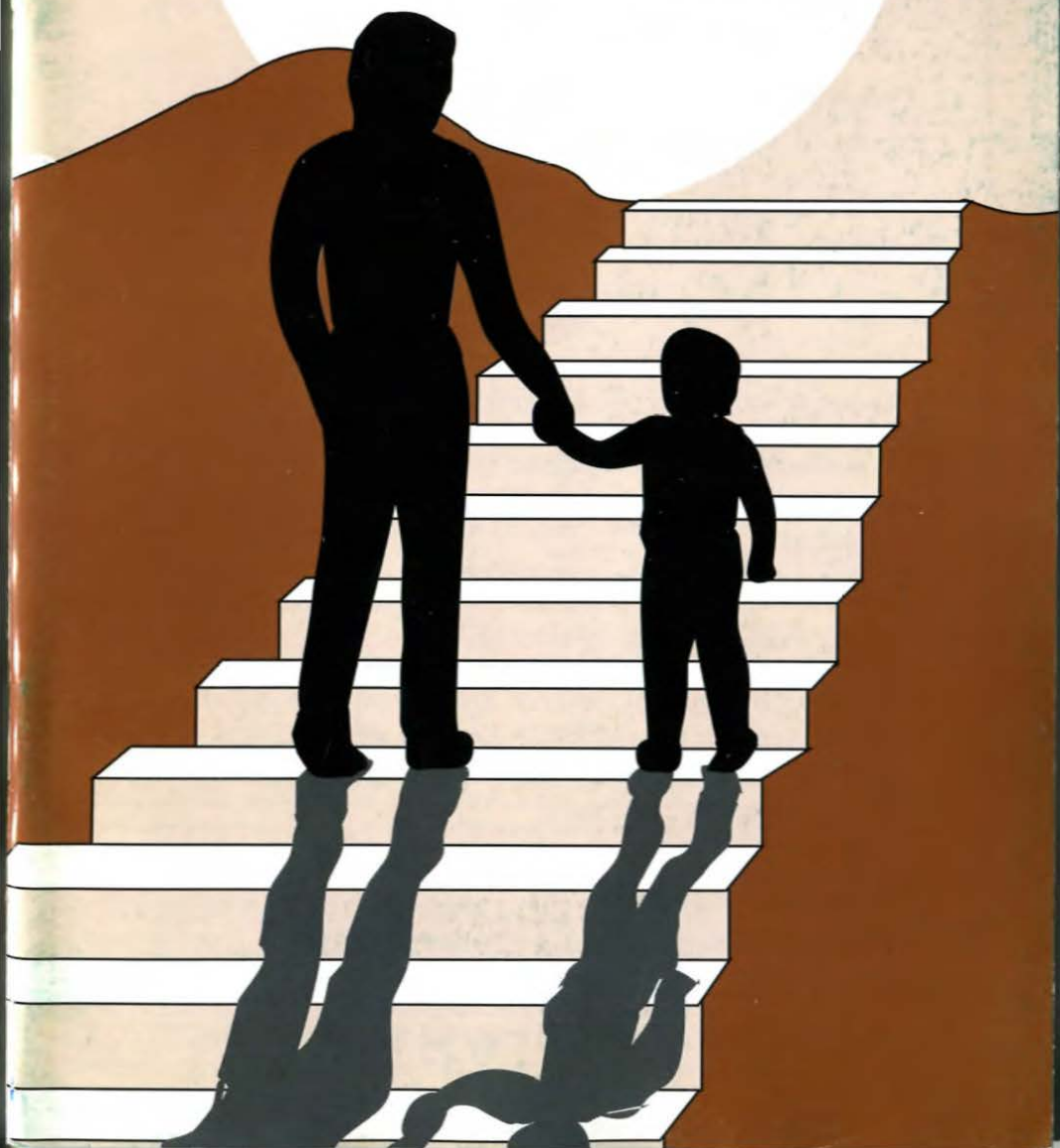


THE NA Way[®] MAGAZINE

February 1996

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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 MAGAZINE

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

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From the editor



Old-timers, newcomers

NA needs both.

And both is what we're pleased to feature in this month's issue of *The NA Way*.

The "Meeting in 'Print'" section has articles from six members who either reflect back on being new, are new, or have some experience with how to stick around.

The "Newsletters" section has a great story from *The Recoverer* about what it might be like for us who are relatively young to grow old together in NA.

And "Viewpoint" shakes up our views as always, challenging us to think about things from a newer, older, or just plain different perspective.

I'm expecting some letters in response to this issue. Our readers have never yet disappointed me in this regard, so I can say with confidence that I'll make plenty of editorial space available for your comments.

Address them to:

The NA Way Magazine

Attention: Editor

PO Box 9999

Van Nuys, CA 91409

A reminder about "Comin' Up"

The NA Way is happy to run announcements for your upcoming NA events.

We must have a minimum of two-and-a-half-month's notice in order to print your event announcement in the monthly issue of the magazine that corresponds with your event. In other words, if your event is in June, we need to know about it by 15 March in order to get it into the June issue of *The NA Way*.

If you want your event to run in more than one issue, we need even more notice. We do our absolute best to run the information as far in advance as possible. Your best bet is to let us know about your event as soon as you've set the dates for it, booked a location, and established contact phone numbers and/or an address. It's never too early to let us know.

CT, Editor

Five magic words

When I walked into my first NA meeting, I didn't know what to expect. I was skeptical, doubtful, and didn't trust anyone. After all, I could barely trust myself. I mean, how many times had I promised to stop using drugs, stop the insanity, and get on with my life—only to keep right on using? Life had already played so many tricks on me that this just had to be another. Who was in these meetings, anyway? Just a bunch of junkies, convicts, and what-have-you. I figured the only things I could learn from them were new cons or new ways to get high.

As I walked into the room in a church basement, I was startled. There were more than a hundred addicts there, all listening attentively to the speaker at the front of the room. It was a beginner's meeting, and the way the speaker was talking about using wasn't the way I used. The feelings were exactly the same, but of course, I was looking for what made me different, not what made me the same. So I didn't hear the message. It seemed like everyone in the room belonged; it was like going to a family gathering and I wasn't part of the family.

After the secretary's report, the meeting broke up into a dozen or so smaller groups, each following a "round-robin" format. I didn't quite understand what was going on and I felt lost, like an outsider, I guess like a newcomer.

When it was my turn to share, I just wanted to pretend I was invisible and hoped they'd pass right by me. I didn't know what to say, and I felt scared. I didn't know these people anyway, so why should I tell them about myself? Nonetheless, I shared. Since I heard one person talking about using drugs, I shared about using drugs, too. Though I was very familiar with my subject matter, an expert you might even say, I still felt insecure. I thought to myself that this wasn't the place for me. This is definitely *not* going to work, I thought. What the hell was I going to do? I felt helpless and lost. In a room with more than a hundred people in it, I felt alone.

After the meeting was over, I rushed my treatment center peer to finish talking so we could get back to the center. Then something happened. While talking to someone, I said five simple words that seemed to have a strange effect on everyone around me. All of a sudden people were friendlier. They started hugging me, welcoming me, and telling me that everything would be okay. All I said was, "This is my first meeting." They told me to keep coming back. They talked to me as if they knew me. Some even seemed to know how I felt without me saying a word about it. It was downright weird. They gave me their phone numbers.

I didn't want them, but I took them anyway. I was making friends and getting a support system in recovery before I even knew it.

All of a sudden, in the midst of all this confusion, there was this one man standing there. He was sharing, talking—preaching? I didn't know what it was, but there was something very spiritual about this recovering addict that attracted me. Although he was old enough to be my father, I related to him. For the first time that night, I actually understood what someone was talking about. His message was clear to me. He spoke about having faith in a Higher Power and living without the use of drugs, one day at a time. As we introduced ourselves, I felt inspired by the fact that he stopped using after forty years by applying NA's spiritual principles in his life and working the Twelve Steps.

As I told him a little about myself, he grabbed me, hugged me, and told me to give myself a break. He said that if an old dog like him could do it,

then so could I. I asked him how. He said simply by coming to meetings and being willing. Just keep coming back and let the God of your understanding work in you and for you, he said. He told me to pray for guidance, talk to other recovering addicts, and remember that if I didn't pick up, I couldn't get high. I thought to myself, "God of my understanding?" I had never heard of that before. I had heard of a variety of gods, but never before had I heard I could have my own. This man gave me his phone number before he left and told me that I now had a friend for life.

From that day on, I went to as many meetings as I could. Since I was in a recovery house, it was a little difficult in the beginning. I felt uncomfortable, but I just kept coming.

I will never forget that first meeting, and how my Higher Power worked for me at that meeting. A loving HP knows who can help whom best. And I got just what I needed, right when I needed him.

RC, New York

"This is my first meeting"

Precious gems

I was reading a recent issue of the magazine, and was astounded at how closely I related to a certain story. It was as though I had written it myself. Then I glanced at the initials at the bottom and discovered I *had* written it myself.

I write to *The NA Way* so often, even I don't always know how many stories I have sent in, but it is an annual tradition of mine to write at my celebration of clean time. Right now as I write this, I am approaching five years. My birthday is in six days.

It is very important for me to share my birthday, and I'd like to tell you why. The area in which I live has a tradition: once-a-month birthday meetings. People usually share their birthdays only once and only with their home group's members.

The area I got clean in (not the same one as I'm living in now) celebrates much differently. There, people take four, five, seven chips or birthday cakes, one each day for a week or one at each meeting they go to regularly.

When I had thirty days, I was thrilled, but I was too self-conscious, embarrassed, and shy to stand up in front of people. I told my sponsor how

reluctant I was to celebrate my clean time by standing up in a meeting to take a keytag. Wasn't there some other way I could do it?

She told me that I was being very selfish and self-centered, letting my shyness and discomfort keep me from offering hope to the still-suffering addict by showing that it's possible to get thirty days clean. I hadn't thought of it that way, so I got over my self-consciousness and took my thirty-day keytag, sharing with all the people in the room that night.

Since then, I've always celebrated the way I was originally taught, even though I've had to be encouraged a few times. I choose several meetings that I attend regularly and celebrate at the birthday meeting. Sometimes, people challenge me about why I don't celebrate the "traditional" way at my home group.

It's not always easy to celebrate this way. Some years I've been more popular than others, and so has my way of celebrating. But I don't celebrate my birthday to be popular; I do it for the newcomer.

Last year, when I turned four, I was feeling reluctant and shy again. I was thinking that maybe I should reconsider, and do it the way the "natives" do. So one night I kept quiet when they asked, "Is anyone celebrating a yearly birthday?"

And up spoke the newcomers. "Isn't Jodi celebrating?" they asked. It started to dawn on me that what my sponsor had said so many years before was true. I realized that just as people who live in a community need older people to see that it is possible to grow old, so does the NA

community need old-timers. We have plenty of people around to show us what happens when we don't stay clean. We need living examples of long-term recovery. The people who do stay are so valuable to me.

This brings me to another important lesson I've learned this past year. During most of my crises, my sponsor will ask, "What women, who have more time than you, do you admire? Are you calling them?" Or, "What meetings are you going to that have women who are teaching you to grow with grace in your recovery?" Unfortunately, I can't lie to my sponsor, and so have been forced to answer that I don't know, haven't called, and I'm the woman with the most time, most of the time. Talk about a lack of willingness!

I have to learn to think of our members with clean time like gold, diamonds, and rubies. People don't usually throw their jewels out on a table and say, "Here they are. Take them." Just the same, I doubt that anyone has ever said, "I'm an admirable woman with lots of clean time. Let me help you in your recovery."

I've been just like a miner who spends a lot of time and effort, sweat, and tears to find a perfect gem.

So, this last year or two, I've started to become humble enough to allow some women to teach me to grow with grace in my recovery. First, I had to find some meetings where there are women who have more clean time than me. This wasn't easy; it was more comfortable to go close to home. Still, I had to try, so I started going to meetings outside my area. I also went back to meet-

ings that I hadn't been to in a while and didn't like the first time I tried them.

Then came the risky part: asking women I didn't know for their phone numbers. This seemed a lot easier when I was new than it did when I had four years. But no matter how I felt, I kept going and kept calling. I kept sifting through the dirt to find a few precious gems—women who are teaching me to grow with grace.

Today I couldn't imagine my life without them. I can see what my sponsor was talking about. Each and every one of them has a gift to offer. This year's birthday meeting will have eight to fifteen women who all share in the miracle of another day clean. Each and every one of them has helped me stay clean. This is as much their celebration as it is mine. This is a true miracle.

So every time someone tells that there aren't any people around with recovery, or long-term clean time, I just say, "Sure there are. It's just like mining for diamonds, gold, and rubies. You may have to look for a while, but once you find one, you're rich."

JM, Washington

Granted gifts

As I sit here at my home group's meeting place, my eyes catch a beautiful stained glass version of the Serenity Prayer. The four words that are in ornate script—God, serenity, courage, wisdom—are things I had only some vague hope for before I found recovery. My addiction robbed me of a relationship with God, and any possibility of being serene, or having courage and wisdom.

I would like to share with my NA family how I was freed from my self-made prison. I was introduced to another twelve-step fellowship in Houston, Texas, in the winter of 1977. By chance, a friend came by one night and invited me to go to a meeting with him. I had been beaten by my addiction over and over again. I was almost homeless, totally penniless, suicidal, hopeless, and was missing my thirty-inch ponytail, which I had cut off when I worked the oil fields in Alaska earlier that year. I had no identity; I was lost.

That night I was exposed to many of the spiritual principles that I try my best to live by today. Back then, I had no idea what this journey would entail. I had no notion of the many wonderful, and even sometimes sad,

experiences I would have in recovery. I did not hear about NA for another year or two; I guess it was struggling to keep its head above water at that time in my area.

Many of the selfless addicts who helped me during my infancy in recovery are now old-timers in NA. Those people nurtured me back to health with their love, patience, and tolerance. They shared their experience, strength, and hope with me. They put me up at their houses and apartments for several days at a time, and when I offered to pay them, they refused. They told me that when I got on my feet and had a place of my own, I could offer a newcomer a safe haven to begin recovery.

My roots in recovery are special, and I hope I never forget the growing pains. I began to understand what surrender and humility were all about. I began to work the steps, chair meetings, and work closely with a sponsor. I didn't miss a meeting for a whole year. My self-esteem grew, and I started a new career. I was fortunate enough to get into a helping profession, working with addicts just like me. I enjoyed watching the miracles happen, but I never got honest with anybody about the thoughts I was having, wanting to use drugs like a normal person.

I had to learn the hard way what reservations can do to somebody with a little time in recovery. I set myself up, and I relapsed. For eleven months I felt so much guilt and shame that I couldn't get high enough. I missed the hugs and birthday nights. I cried myself to sleep at night. I prayed, but I had cut myself

off and it seemed like no one was there. My disease had me. Relapse is so devastating to addicts who have abstained for a significant period. I'm glad our text includes the chapter, "Relapse and Recovery," and has so much on reservations.

Today, I have more than twelve years clean, and I owe it to my God, who saw fit to reintroduce me to the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. This Higher Power of mine is extraordinary, and so generous. Like it says in the Serenity Prayer, God *grants* us serenity, courage, and wisdom. I have truly been blessed with all of these.

My willingness to surrender on a daily basis reinforces my commitment to serve my Higher Power selflessly. When I accept His will, not mine, I am granted serenity. The peace of mind and calmness I feel within come from thoroughly working the steps and incorporating principles into my life. My serenity is directly proportionate to my level of awareness and acceptance. From my decision to turn my will and life over in Step Three to my praying only for knowledge of His will for me in Step Eleven, I gain a sense of relief and the ability to enjoy life on life's terms. When I live in the solution, I strengthen my internal fortitude and reliance on God's guidance.

Courage is what has made it possible for me to examine my imperfections and humanness in Step Four. With the encouragement of my sponsor and fellow addicts, I take risks in my recovery, both with my step work and in service. Being asked to share my story, sponsor another addict, or

make a Twelfth-Step call requires great courage and a lot of faith in my loving and caring Higher Power.

After years of exposure to the miracles that working the steps and living the principles can provide, I have attained a sufficient amount of wisdom. I definitely have enough to acknowledge and accept that I am powerless over the cunning enemy called addiction. Today I know that the ties that bind us together through the spiritual bond of anonymity and unconditional love are far stronger than the forces that tear us apart. Today I know that complacency breeds relapse and possibly death. Wisdom is gained from experience—especially mistakes—and I have plenty of room for growth still.

I know that all I can change are my attitudes, beliefs, and behavior. I know that when I practice spiritual principles in all my affairs, I have nothing to fear. And finally, if I've learned anything, it is that this journey is never-ending, and recovery is a blessing and a gift.

OS, Texas

Down in the dumps

I am writing this to let other addicts know that life does not necessarily become wonderful and trouble-free just because we stay clean for a while. I'm approaching four years clean, and things aren't perfect by a long shot. In fact, I'm kind of down in the dumps.

I lost my job nine months ago and have been working free-lance since then. This is really rough because I've always had jobs—even during active addiction—and good ones at that. Sometimes it baffles me that now, in recovery, I can't find good steady work. Don't they see that I'm doing the right thing now!?

You may hear people say that it gets more "real" as we proceed on life's journey. That's what's happening to me. The fact is that the jobs I've had previously are no longer as interesting to me. I want something better for myself. My motives are completely different. My main concern used to be to have money to keep my habit fed. Today, I've returned to school with the goal of eventually changing careers. This is something I never thought I would do. My fantasy would be to go to school full time and not work, sort of like starting

over at where I went off-track eighteen years ago. But that's not realistic. I've got to pay for school, and I have family obligations.

The reality is that along with recovery comes more responsibility, senses that are alive and vital, a natural concern about people and the world, and the drive to move ahead and strive for a better life. This is astounding for someone like me who spent years stuffing all emotions and avoiding responsibility. I may be feeling down right now, but it's better than feeling dead.

I've learned through working the steps and coming to meetings that there's always something I can do for myself if I'm feeling down. In fact, I'm doing it right now by writing this. We've been given back our lives for a reason. The beauty of this day will be in getting closer to discovering what the reasons are.

LF, New York



An old-timer's survival quiz

At the time of writing, I am in my ninth year of recovery from my addiction to drugs. There are those in Narcotics Anonymous who at times refer to me as an "old-timer" or "older member." This led me to ask myself if I am putting enough into my recovery program to assure my survival. Can I as an older member safely say, "I no longer have a drug problem, just a living problem"?

I found that I only had to stop and think of those old-timers I knew who have returned to the self-destructive behavior of active addiction. So I asked myself the following questions to help determine if I am safe from returning to active addiction.

O

1. Do I consider myself a member of Narcotics Anonymous?

L

2. Do I demonstrate my membership by being active in a home group?

3. When called upon, do I identify myself as an addict and do I share my recovery story on a regular basis?

4. Do I make Twelfth-Step calls?

T

5. Do I sponsor new members?

6. Do I lend my experience and knowledge to young members by talking to them after meetings, on the phone, at my house or theirs?

7. Do I maintain regular personal and social contact with other NA members?

8. Do I lend assistance in planning, attending, and supporting NA

d

9. Do I regularly support my home group and other NA functions with a financial contribution?

10. Do I place principles before personalities?

i

11. Do I continue to try and live one day at a time?

12. Do I continue to seek removal of my character defects through working Steps Five, Six, and Seven?

13. Do I continue to take personal inventory, promptly admitting it when I'm wrong?

14. Do I continue to try to practice HOW: honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness toward others and the NA program?

E

15. Do I continue to seek the help of my higher power in trying to maintain my recovery?

16. Do I continue to practice the Twelve Steps of NA to the best of my ability?

17. Do I avoid testing myself by staying away from the wrong people, places, and things that may or could lead me back to active addiction?

m

18. Do I continue to practice the NA principles I have learned in all my affairs, and continue to try to carry the NA message of recovery to the addict who still suffers?

19. Do I continue to be aware that my addiction is only arrested, not cured?

If I cannot say "yes" to at least twelve of the above questions, I feel I might not be putting enough into my program to assure survival from active drug addiction. I believe that I cannot get too much out of Narcotics Anonymous, just too little. So it appears to me that the more "yesses" I have and the greater my dedication to NA involvement, the greater my chance of survival or the survival of any NA member who is an old-timer.

HC

Putting it back together

The day after receiving my ninety-day keytag I felt an urge to express my feelings in writing. I am sitting here with both my children, and it's the first time we've visited for a whole day in many months. I'm reflecting on my past behavior, my addiction, and the way things are now. This is my first attempt to write anything—especially something that describes how I really feel.

It was a long and rough road that led to my recovery. After over twenty years of using daily, I entered a drug treatment center for the third time. However, this time was different. This time I was on my knees. I knew that I was about to die if I kept doing things my way. I was willing to shut up, listen to, and follow the directions of my sponsor and the NA text. Before, I had always made these simple directions complicated and tried to analyze everything to death, even myself almost.

Surrender doesn't happen in the mind; it happens someplace deeper

than that, maybe in the heart. Wherever it is, I feel like my surrender has finally happened in that place, and I'm relieved.

After leaving treatment I rented a small room, and lived there with other newly clean addicts. I had very little money, very little income, and few material possessions, yet I felt content for the first time in my life. I had never felt content before, even with a career, wonderful home, beautiful wife, and children.

My contentment included a feeling that everything would work itself out in time. I believed that I was right where I should have been. I totally accepted the circumstances. This feeling came about through the hope I found in the NA program, and my willingness to apply this program in my life.

Things are continuously changing for the better. My wife recently told me that she noticed me sincerely trying to live the program I had always just talked about in prior attempts to

get clean. She said that she saw changes in me and in my commitment to the program (I've been in and out for four-and-a-half years; this is the longest clean time I've ever been able to achieve). She has also begun attending twelve-step meetings for the first time in her life, and is beginning to find some hope herself. She recently asked if I wanted to move back in with her and the children. I believe we stand a chance for our relationship to continue in marriage—this time in a healthy manner.

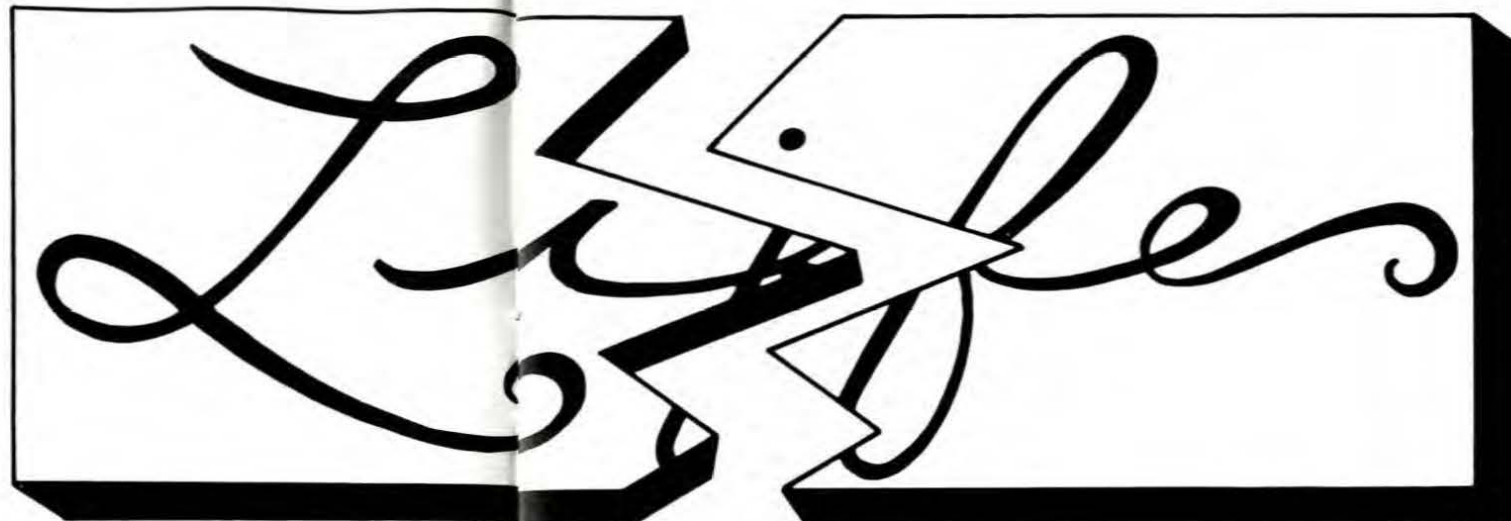
In the few weeks I've been back at the house, both of us and others have noticed positive changes in our children. It's a good feeling to know that my children now have a chance to grow up in a healthier environment, as long as I continue to live the principles of the NA program.

I thank my Higher Power and the NA program for all of this. I have a chance to start my life over at age thirty-one, without the bondage of my active addiction and self-obses-

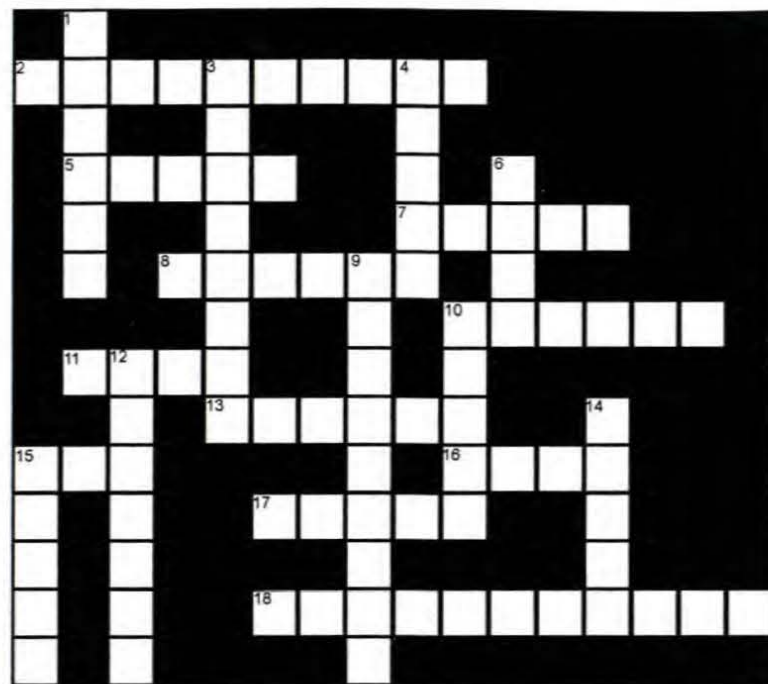
sive behavior. I'm trying to rebuild my life in the way my Higher Power wants it to be. I'm still looking for a job and doing the footwork, leaving the results up to my Higher Power. I'm also taking advantage of my free time by going to lots of meetings, trying to build a solid foundation for my recovery to grow upon. I'm learning what it is to feel alive, accept life on its own terms, and actually enjoy it.

In a couple of days, I'll be celebrating four months clean at a convention (my first) and chairing one of the marathon meeting time slots. I don't know if anyone can imagine just how much a small thing like chairing a meeting at an NA convention means to me. God is definitely working in my life and will continue, as long as I continue to allow it.

DB, Washington



CROSSWORD PUZZLE



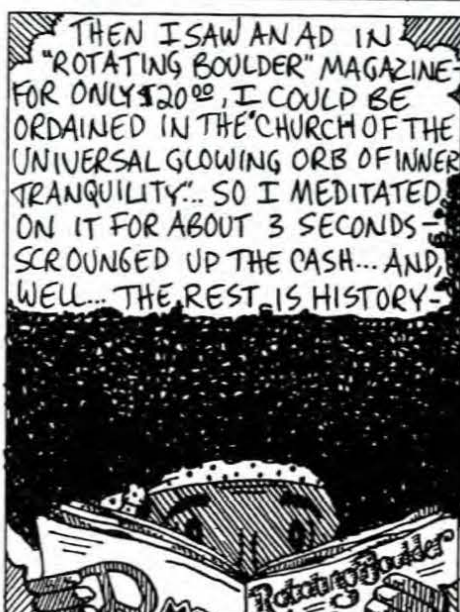
Across

- 2 Something to practice.
- 5 Anyone who still has growing to do.
- 7 No good when written by a practicing addict.
- 8 Just one of something we all have many of.
- 10 These come true in recovery.
- 11 _____ is the NA program?
- 13 Denilah's sponsor.
- 15 Surrender to _____.
- 16 Now defunct service manual had this living thing in its title.
- 17 A place addicts often find their feet.
- 18 Something indispensable.

Down

- 1 One of two things that improves our conscious contact with God.
- 3 We have twelve of these.
- 4 The _____ nature of our wrongs.
- 6 Feeling resulting from lack of faith.
- 9 How all viewpoints should be considered in decision-making processes.
- 10 Jails, institutions, and _____.
- 12 A liar's solution.
- 14 In this step, we're told how to ask.
- 15 Sounds like a particular drug, but is more often used to describe the noises addicts make when they're resisting recovery.

Home Group





Newsletters

Blue-hair fantasy

From: *The Recoverer*, the Washington/Northern Idaho regional newsletter:

Last weekend I was selling espresso at a gun and knife show in Centralia. My coffee booth was flanked on the right by an old guy selling sharpening equipment, and on the left by an even older guy selling guns and some leather goods.

My booth wasn't busy at all so I people-watched, but mostly I watched these seventy-plus-year-old guys on either side of me. Just after the show opened, another man, most certainly over the age of seventy, approached the table at the leather goods booth. These men knew each other, and the toothy smiles of recognition were promptly followed by an enthusiastic handshake. As I eavesdropped on the conversation that followed, I had to surmise that these two fellows had known each other for

many, many years. They had much in common. As they chatted, the joy in their hearts shown through to their faces. The warmth between them was genuine and true. It warmed my heart just to watch them.

Over the course of that Saturday, these two fellows greeted and chatted with a few more of their peers in the same warm way. Watching these older guys prompted me to think of my life and my friends.

My first thought was, "Geez! There sure are a lot of old geezers in this town!" My second thought was, "Will I make it to seventy?" (An amazing ponderance, for sure, since before NA, I was sure I'd die long before that!) My next thought was, "What will it be like when my peers and I are seventy or eighty years old? Will we still attend meetings? Will we still go to conventions? Will there be a special, geriatric section conveniently located by the wheelchair ramp where we will all sit together and feebly stand when our double-digit clean time is announced during the countdown? Will convention committees have to implement a special "bland menu" for us older folks who always seem to have a host of gastric problems?" My mind ran amok, but the basic question was there: "As old folks, would we still be active in NA?"

When I first got clean, I used to go to this meeting of another fellowship in Puyallup, and one of the things that I enjoyed the very most about that meeting was listening to these older gentlemen whose abstinence ran to thirty-plus years. There were sometimes as many as five of them in attendance at that meeting, and the wisdom and simplicity of their recovery was inspirational. You could easily tell that they had been friends a very long time. There was a light inside of them that spoke louder than words. When that meeting split into groups, I would always go to whatever group they went to. I learned a great deal from those men. They very clearly carried a message of hope for this addict. I continue to wonder, "Will my friends and I still be around the rooms when we get old?"

When I got clean I went to a lot of meetings. I think we all do. I noticed back then that the folks with a lot of clean time aren't in a meeting every night. I learned later that after these people had some time in recovery, they started having a life. They became a part of their communities. They had jobs and people in their lives that were outside of NA. Some had families. Because they were productive members of society, they had responsibilities and events happening in their lives that limited the nights (or days) they could attend meetings. It seems to be happening to me, too. Now, nearing my fourth year, I go to one—maybe two—meetings a week. I attend my area's activities, and I go to every convention I can get to. I sponsor women and I have a sponsor. I am involved in

service to the program, as I have been on some level since I had ninety days clean. What I am doing seems to be enough for me right now, but I wonder, will I still be going to meetings—will I still be involved in service—when I am old?

I hope so.

I really hope so.

Like those old guys at that Puyallup meeting, I get so much from listening to members who have been around awhile. I always learn from the newcomer as well, but for me and the path I travel today, nothing teaches and enlightens like the experience of someone who has been there. When I first attended meetings, my only focus was to learn how to exist without using drugs. Later on, I learned how to live without using drugs, and even later, I received the gift of freedom from the obsession to use. Months go by, and I don't even think about using—it just doesn't cross my mind. Today in meetings, I am looking for guidance in the challenges I face in doing "life on life's terms." I am examining my character defects. I am looking at issues held over from my past. I am looking for ways to enhance and nurture the spiritual part of my program.

As a woman, I am traveling a path of empowerment. I need old-timers, especially women old-timers, more than ever in my program and my life. With just three-and-a-half years in the program, I have to believe, too, that something I have experienced in the scant time I've been around here can help another addict on a similar path. Will I be around for them? I surely hope so. Will the old-timers

keep attending meetings so that I may continue to learn from them? It is my fondest wish.

I have this fantasy that when I am eighty years old I am attending a convention of Narcotics Anonymous. In the dream I greet another member whom I've known the whole of my life in this program. We are weathered and wrinkled, and there is a light that shines from inside of us. We attempt an enthusiastic hug over tangled walkers, and my friend speaks: "Oh Lordy, Vicaroo, I had such a time getting here! My great-grandson was late to pick me up and we got halfway out of the driveway when I realized I'd left my teeth in the house! Then, to top it off, a screw comes loose out of here (points at walker handle) and I nearly bust a hip gettin' back into the friggin' car!" (laughs)

Gently I pat her hand. I look into her eyes and see the joy on her face and the gratitude for life itself in her heart. I chuckle and reply, "Well, that's life on life's terms, honey!"

Vicaroo, Washington

Curses and blessings

From *New Attitudes*, the Northern Virginia Area Newsletter:

With the rebirth of Spring, I am reminded of how much things change. Just as the trees and bushes have grown, so have I grown through my time in NA. It's hard to look at a seed or even a sapling and imagine the beauty of the tree. Time gives new perspective to the events that form our lives. Who would have thought that two years after it happened, I would consider being arrested a good thing?

At 12:30 in the morning of 27 April 1993, I was rudely awakened by seven narcotics agents, courtesy of Fairfax County. As I held back my dogs and worried that they'd wake up my eleven-year-old daughter, they ransacked my house. They emptied my medicine cabinet, reorganized my closets onto the hallway floor, and dumped my drawers onto my bedroom floor. They stole my most precious possessions: my stash of almost a pound of marijuana and priceless paraphernalia; my chamber pipe that I had lovingly and painstakingly

filled in times of plenty and scraped in time of need; my favorite brand of rolling papers that were so hard to find.

Oh, the memories! Oh, the money I had spent. I was in such agony, I forgot to thank them.

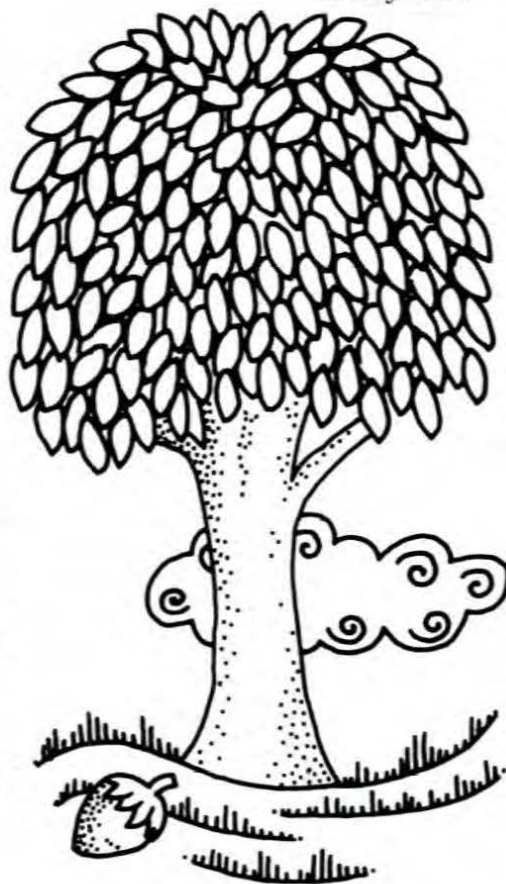
Perhaps they were angels sent by my higher power. Maybe I should have welcomed them and said, "Thank you for coming. You know, I've been using and abusing drugs for twenty-two years now, and I've known I am an addict for almost as long. Today is a good day to quit. I've been meaning to quit, but somehow I just never got around to it. I didn't have the motivation. Please take my paraphernalia. I never could have thrown it away myself. Thank you for giving me a reason and the motivation to stop." Who would have guessed that a whole new world would open up to me?

I'm glad I went to jail. I'm glad the floor where I slept on a thin, plastic mat was hard. I'm glad I was locked in a room no bigger than my bedroom with seven other women, with most of whom I would never have chosen to associate. I'm glad we had to share a toilet and a shower that were separated by a three-foot-tall half-wall from the phone that we also shared. I'm glad no one else shared my interests in news or sitcoms, and so I was subjected to soap operas and sappy dramas fifteen hours a day. I never want to forget the pain and humiliation of watching my daughter grow up and my father die through a plexiglass window in thirty-minute installments each Sunday.

This was the price I paid for smoking a little weed and dropping a little acid. It wasn't worth it. But that's what it took for me to find NA and a new way of life. I didn't know before that there was a place for me, rooms full of people that shared my obsessions.

Things are not always what they appear to be. How could anyone know that an acorn could become a mighty oak tree? How could I have known that an event that seemed at the time to be a curse could actually be a blessing? I'm glad I can look back and see.

Anonymous



Viewpoint



Maybe we should call them members

I have often heard people ask, "Where are all the old-timers?" The first time I heard it, I got really mad at the thought that experienced NA members—old-timers—had vanished from the face of NA. I wondered where they went. Did they go out and use? Go to another program? Or maybe they had become such productive members of society that they didn't need Narcotics Anonymous anymore.

I got involved in a few discussions in which it was mutually agreed that these old-timers who abandoned NA were wrong. But then I decided that I needed to take a look at how I react to and treat old-timers. Maybe there are things we do that make old-timers not want to keep coming back.

The first thing I thought of is that we confer upon them that glorious title of "old-timer," when, in reality, they are just NA members like my-

self and hundreds of thousands of other addicts around the world. By giving them such status as is inherent in the word "old-timers," we isolate them and they feel unconnected. We try at my home group to make newcomers feel as much a part of as possible, treating them as equals, giving them suggestions that have worked for us, introducing them to the program, etc.. When old-timers step in the door, we gang up on them to ask for answers to our spiritual, service, and life-crisis questions, placing them in the awkward position of being on a pedestal. Then we wonder why they don't come back.

One of my friends, who I guess could be called an old-timer, once told me that if I wanted what he had, I had to do what he did. I took that to heart because when he was getting clean, there was no one for him to look up to. He had to travel out of state to go to meetings. The only literature NA had at the time was the Little White Booklet.

Over the years, our resources in this fellowship have grown because of the hard work and dedication of members who came before us. Then, in a show of gratitude, we hurl questions at these people about where they are. Why have they quit coming around? Maybe one reason is that we drain them of all their experience,

strength, and hope—but fail to really apply it to our lives and share it with others. Maybe we place unrealistic expectations on them, expecting them to behave perfectly always and never, ever make human mistakes. Worst of all, maybe we treat them not as addicts, but as *old-timers*.

Being a member of Narcotics Anonymous is a privilege. Although at times it may seem burdensome, tiring, and a waste of time, I can see as I look back on my recovery that I have benefitted from everything I have done in NA. When I get to the point where I feel being in the fellowship is not a privilege, I won't be able to see what it offers. I know that in my part of the world we have drained, overworked, and used the people we call old-timers. It is my opinion that they have experienced those privileges that I am having right now. I am grateful for the foundation that they built for us. Any time they choose to be a part of, they are welcome back.

AP, Iowa

Give it back if you want to keep it

Where are the old-timers? Are there any? I know they exist because people I trust have told me about them. But I rarely see one. It seems to be a pattern. Someone comes into

NA, receives recovery, makes some real friends, gains some self-esteem and confidence, and then leaves. Don't they realize that we, the newcomers, need to see them? We need to know that it is possible to get five years, ten years, twenty years, and even more, clean.

One of the first things I heard in NA is that if you stop going to meetings, chances are that you will pick up. Is that where the old-timers went? Are they back to indulging in their old habits? That is what I tend to think. In fact, I'd say most of us newcomers think if someone isn't here, they're probably there—using.

And now people are talking about changing the program. I haven't been around long enough to know if this kind of thing is normal, but I don't like the kind of changes they're talking about. What's more, I don't believe I have the authority to argue this change. Who does? The old-timers! The ones who know this program inside and out. The ones who have years of experience working this program. I hear grumbling about this change from the token old-timers in my meetings, but there just aren't enough around and involved to actually stop the change.

Please, if you are an old-timer, share your recovery with us, the newcomers. We need desperately to see that NA is the best thing in the world. We need to know what could happen to us if we just keep coming back. Don't use the program to fulfill your needs and then desert it and us. We need you, and you should know that you need us, too.

LB, Pennsylvania

The importance of newcomers

I've always heard, and truly believe, that newcomers are the most important people in any place where recovering NA members are gathered together. We hear this at our meetings. We read it in our literature. Our sponsors tell us so. And when we first come into recovery, we want it to be so!

In the last several months, I've had a chance to really observe the importance of newcomers. First, in July, at our regional convention, I found myself feeling as though something was missing. I couldn't put my finger on it at first. Things were different. I shared it with some addicts, and even with my wife, a non-addict. After seeing that the celebration of life was just as dynamic as at other regional conventions, it finally hit me. Many of the addicts who were at my first regional convention were nowhere to be seen. Yet the convention went on and it was just as wonderful as ever. Many of the service positions were filled by relative newcomers to the task of putting on conventions.

The next time I noticed how important newcomers are was at my area's tenth anniversary celebration. I thought about those pioneering spirits who ten years ago had set out to start a new area. I mean, we're talking big-time unknowns here. And I know that the people who started the new area had very little clean time, a couple of years at the most.

The third occasion for some insight into this issue came at the December area service committee meeting. I had no real business there, other than caring about how things are coming along in the NA area that I belong to. As I tried not to get in the way, I noticed that very, very few trusted servant positions were filled by anyone from 1989, when I came into the area. Again, most were newcomers. Our Ninth Tradition principle of rotating trusted servants is alive and well.

How does all this tie in to the importance of newcomers? Well, if not for those caring, selfless servants, there wouldn't be a regional convention. Farfetched? Well, the old-timers were either too busy or had "found a life." Additionally, it took a few courageous addicts to create the new area, but it took all the newcomers who came after to make it work. That makes all those newcomers important to me, because when I moved here, I was able to continue to improve the quality of my recovery. Thanks to all the addicts who were there for me in my new area. Furthermore, this area just took an inventory of itself and, in my opinion, did a fantastic job. The majority, again, were relative newcomers to

the task of taking area inventory.

Most importantly, if that wasn't enough, think of all the times we have worked a step with a sponsee and reinforced a principle or learned a new one. Or how about working on one of our character defects while helping a sponsee with that same defect? Yeah, for this addict, the newcomers are the most important people in any room. How else can I give away what was so freely given to me?

CJ, Florida

Old and lonely

I've been reading in *The NA Way* several articles about old-timers. Usually the writer asks where they are, those selfish old crabs. How dare they take all NA has to offer and then split? I've also heard that the trustees are planning to write a paper about retaining members with substantial clean time.

There's a lot of fuss being made about us, but despite all this it seems to me that NA wants to retain old-timers about as much as a fashion model wants to retain water.

I'll tell you why I feel this way. It seems to me that old-timers are largely invisible in NA, unless you want us to speak at a meeting, sponsor you, or complain about how selfish we are for disappearing.

You want to know where we are and what we're doing? I'll be glad to tell you. Some of us are doing just fine. And some of us are in agony. We've been through and are going through horrible things: our children are using drugs and/or doing things that shock even us; their eyes are cold and dead and we don't want to think about where they were when that drive-by shooting happened last night; our teenage daughters are pregnant and think it's cute; our teenage sons have gotten someone pregnant and don't care; our parents have died, and so have some of our friends—from old age, not overdoses.

I'm sorry, but we will not seek out people who are bound to tell us in so many words that we must not be working a good program if we're upset or angry about all these things. And if we talk to other old-timers after a meeting or anywhere else around NA, we'll be accused of forming a clique. We're "acting out," we're making ourselves unique, or we're getting arrogant. But we shouldn't worry about our egos. Someone is sure to inform us that, "Clean time don't matter. We've all just got today."

I feel so alone in Narcotics Anonymous.

My friends, the people I got clean with, either live far away or are trying to cope with some of the above experiences. Newer people, people I might make friends with, well, we don't quite have the same interests or outlook on life. I don't want to sound like a snob, but I've gotten more responsible in recovery. It's not all right for me to be out late every

night at the expense of my family. It's not all right for me to invite a slew of people in for a night of videos and pizza, at the expense of my house. I know people aren't always completely conscious of what they're doing. I try to tell them in a nice way, but there is no nice way to ask someone to please use an ashtray, not the rug; to please use a trash can, not the coffee table; to please not try to discipline my child. I just end up making them feel uncomfortable, out of place, *new*.

I am not exaggerating. This stuff has happened, not just once but repeatedly, and not just with one or two people but with many.

When I share in meetings about steps, spiritual principles, solutions, I may as well be talking in Martian. And no, it's not that I expect adulation, gasps of awe, or anything like that. I just want to make eye contact with someone and exchange a look of recognition. I just want to feel like I'm understood. And I can't even share that I don't feel understood in a meeting because somebody with a third of my clean time will self-righteously proclaim that I should seek to understand, not be understood. Or worse yet, gaze at me with pity positively oozing from their pores, and serve up some watered-down spiritual bromide from the weekend seminar they recently attended.

Doing service hasn't helped me feel involved either. I did a lot of service in my first few years clean at my home group and in my area. It was okay then. There were a lot of people involved, and we had a few old-timers around that we looked to

for guidance. Really we did. I'm not imagining things or deluding myself. Unfortunately, this doesn't happen anymore. The GSRs in my area don't want to hear what old-timers have to say. They'd rather reinvent the wheel. I remember my last GSR commitment (which I completed, despite my frustration). One month, I tried to suggest that the area picnic probably shouldn't be billed as an Easter picnic, and no, putting a Mogen David and a pagan symbol on the flyer wouldn't solve the problem. The area chair told me that I needed to practice acceptance. Gee, thanks.

Another month, the area formed an ad hoc committee to address the issue of whether or not we should pay a service charge on our checking account. We had no one serving on the phonelines except the chair. We hadn't done any PI work as an area for more than three years, and we had one H&I panel that we couldn't find people to fill. I didn't try to "suggest" anything this time. I came right out and said that our priorities were skewed. Oh well, at least a couple of people thanked me for sharing. I could share a few more examples, but I've probably made my point.

Besides having ongoing conversations with my sponsor about this stuff (she helps a lot), I've tried to raise these issues with others, in my group's business meetings, or at area forums where the topic is our primary purpose. The usual response is that I've forgotten where I came from. But that's wrong. I remember vividly where I came from, and I don't want to stay there.

I haven't written this to bash NA members or NA itself, though I am extremely hopeful that if this is printed, it might result in new awareness in the fellowship, and maybe things will change. I really wanted to answer the question about where old-timers go for at least one of us, though I know from talking with other old-timers that I'm not the only one who has had the kind of experiences I've described and who feels lonely in NA.

So where do we go? Nowhere. We may not go to as many meetings as we used to, but we're still around. At least, I haven't left NA. I believe with all my heart that I do owe a debt to NA, that I must keep showing up and sharing, so I do, as often as I can stand it. I fortify myself with things that fulfill me: my family, my civic activities, school, my career, all those things that make up a life. I am understood in these places. There are people in these places who love me, who listen intently to what I have to say, and who really appreciate my contributions. In fact, I get from my involvement with these other things exactly what I used to get from NA.

I wish things were different. I do.

*With love, sadness, and regret,
Anonymous*



From our readers



Miracles by mail

My name is Bruce, and I'm an addict. I'm currently incarcerated, and about six months shy of completing a five-year sentence.

I'm writing to express my gratitude for an article you published in your magazine in November 1994: the one about the Pen Pals Committee in Dade County, Florida. Knowing that I was going to make Miami my new home when I got out, I wrote to Pen Pals at the address you provided.

I've been blessed. The match of recovering addicts that resulted from that one story you published couldn't have been better. I've been corresponding with JN now for about three months. Just the fact that J takes the time to write to me in prison says a lot about his program.

Writing to J has given me a real boost of confidence and security. I believe that my return to society will be easier due to the support of the NA fellowship. J sent me a local meeting list and the NA phonenumber numbers for Dade County. This is extremely important to me because I won't know anyone in Dade County, and will need to go to meetings right away. Because I have such a desire to recover and rebuild my life, I'm starting with a completely clean slate.

I've had periods of clean time before. I had four years once. I was going to college, working, and my life was better than ever. But I had no power greater than myself, and when my memories of how awful my addiction had been faded, so did my desire to stay clean. I returned to old habits: stealing, lying, and running from the consequences. Soon my problems snowballed, and I landed in jail.

Since I've been here, I've had a chance to step back and take inventory. I've become willing to be totally honest with myself. Even more importantly, I've developed a relationship with a power greater than myself. This is not "jailhouse religion." I've been there and done that. This is different; I have my own understanding of a higher power that I could never explain with words. I know because I sat down and tried, giving up after six pages. I knew that I could probably write forever, and my higher power would be all that I wrote and more. My higher power is infinite.

Since I've been incarcerated, I've had the chance to pursue an interest in computers through a class offered here. I think I've finally found my niche in life, and I'll probably pursue a career in this field. I used to envy people who knew what they wanted

to do for a living, but now I'm one of them. It's a good feeling.

We have one H&I meeting a week here in prison. The man who comes in to run it comes from a long way away. The town we're near doesn't even have a meeting, much less an area and subcommittees. I've tried to get H&I subcommittees from nearby areas to help, but it's just not workable. We're fifty miles from nowhere. I'm looking forward to the day when I step on the Greyhound bus and leave all this behind, but at the same time, I know I need to never forget it. Part of my program will be to volunteer as an active member of the H&I committee, and be on the Pen Pals Committee, too. Giving away what was so freely given to me, especially in the same way it was given to me, will help me remember.

I know from my past that recovery can be a beautiful, wonderful, and exciting process. The joy is in the journey. I lost the clean time that I had, but I gained some valuable experience that I can pass along to others. This time I'm doing is not the lock, but the key—the key that opens the door to a new life. For myself and others.

On the outside, I was a con man, mysterious, suave, and crafty. On the inside, I was a very petty thief, unsure, full of phony images and even phonier delusions. I ran from one bad situation to another, one step ahead of the consequences. My relationships were superficial, selfish and shallow, full of resentments and mistrust.

Now I'm working the steps, trusting another human being, and

slowly, gradually allowing a Higher Power to work in my life to build me up. Today I have a new perspective on life and living.

I heard somewhere that "gratitude comes from within." Now I know what that means—it means outside things can't make me feel grateful; only the deeper, more spiritual gifts have any lasting value.

My pen pal and I are becoming good friends. We share similar interests in electronics, education, and, of course, recovery. I have a feeling that when I finally run into him at a meeting, I'll know it's him, even though I've never seen a picture of him or spoken to him in person.

I believe the Pen Pals Committee is a great thing, and that those who are involved in and supportive of it deserve the gratitude and thanks of all who are reaping its benefits.

Bruce



Comin'up

Calendar						
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27	28	29	30	31		

AUSTRALIA

New South Wales: 3-5 May; Australian Regional Convention; Sydney; info: 61 2-3653652

CANADA

British Columbia: 22-24 Mar.; South Vancouver Island Area Convention; Victoria; info: (604) 479-1682; SVIACNA, PO Box 1062, 1720 Douglas Street, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada V8W 2G7

Manitoba: 7-9 June; Winnipeg Area Convention; Robert A. Stein Community Center, Winnipeg; info: (204) 586-4432; WACCNA, PO Box 25173, 1650 Main Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R2V 4C8

Quebec: 5-7 Apr.; 7th Quebec City Area Convention; Quebec Hilton; rsvns: (800) 447-2411; info: (418) 649-8865; Quebec City Area, 83 De L'Espina, Quebec City, Quebec, Canada O1L 2H3

SWITZERLAND

Baselland: 15-17 Mar.; 2nd Swiss Convention; Basel; fax: 41 61-6311556; info: 41 61-3812536; SCNA, Postfach 360, CH-4010 Basel, Switzerland

UNITED KINGDOM

Greater London: 12-14 Apr.; 7th Annual London Convention; London, England; info: 44 81-5380422; fax: 44 81-5155300

UNITED STATES

Arizona: 15-17 Mar.; 3rd Sanity is Possible Campout; White Tank Mountain, Phoenix; info: (602) 412-0184; SIPNA, Box 39075, Phoenix, AZ 85069

Arkansas: 8-10 Mar.; Arkansas River Valley Area Convention; rsvns: (501) 783-1000; info: (501) 452-6198; ARVNA, Box 5631, Fort Smith, AR 72913

California: 9-11 Feb.; 4th Central California Regional Convention; Doubletree Inn, Ventura; rsvns: (805) 643-6000; info: (805) 486-3373; CCRCNA, Box 281, Somis, CA 93066

2) 5-7 Apr.; 5th Southern California Regional Spring Gathering; Manhattan Beach Radisson Hotel; rsvns: (800) 333-3333; info: (310) 693-5110; Box 2543, Orange, CA 92669

Florida: 29-31 Mar.; Florida Spring Service Break; info: (407) 735-0601; 1425 NE 125 Terrace #212, North Miami Beach, FL 33161

2) 25-28 Apr.; North Atlanta Area 20th Annual Reunion and Fun in the Sun Convention; Panama City Beach, Florida; rsvns: (800) 224-4853; info: (904) 248-9155; Fun/Sun, 2480 Briarcliff Road, Box 243, Atlanta, GA 30329

3) 4-7 July; 15th Florida Regional Convention; Gnelele Resort, Haines City; rsvns: (813) 422-7511; info: (813) 874-2300; FRCNA, 2940 W Columbus Dr., Tampa, FL 33607

Georgia: 15-18 Feb.; 15th Georgia Regional Convention; Crowne Plaza Ravinia Hotel, Atlanta; rsvns: (770) 395-7700 or (800) HOLIDAY; info: (770) 787-7834; GRCNA, Box 1653, Monroe, CA 30655

2) 8-11 Aug.; Midtown Atlanta Area Convention; Radisson Hotel, Courtland & International Bldgs.; rsvns: (800) 333-3333 or (404) 659-6500; info: (404) 753-5206; MACNA, Box 61815, Atlanta, GE 30316

Hawaii: 22-24 Mar.; 12th Annual Gathering of the Fellowship on Oahu; Camp Mokuleleia, North Shore, Oahu; info: (808) 676-9125 or (808) 988-7194; Oahu Gathering, 1654 Alena Drive, Honolulu, HI 96817

Idaho: 12-14 Apr.; Southern Idaho Regional Convention; Holiday Inn, Pocatello; rsvns: (800) 465-4329 or (208) 237-1400; info: (208) 236-8954; Box 4342, Pocatello, ID 83201

Illinois: 2-4 Feb.; Greater Illinois Region Presents Rock River Convention; Holidome, South Beloit; rsvns: (815) 389-3481; info: (815) 332-4130; Box 1891, Rockford, IL 61110

2) 23-25 Feb.; 8th Chicagoland Regional Convention; Sheraton Chicago; info: From 9 am to 5 pm CST call (708) 848-2211, 7 pm to midnight CST call (708) 891-0759; Regional Convention, 212 S Marion, Oak Park, IL 60304

Indiana: 29-31 Mar.; Indiana State NA Convention; Fort Wayne Hilton, Fort Wayne; info: Box 12047, Fort Wayne, IN 46802

Kansas: 5-7 Apr.; 13th Mid-America Regional Convention; Ramada Inn, Hutchinson; rsvns: (800) 362-5018; info: (316) 241-6230; MARCNA, Box 3926, Topeka, KS 66604

2) 26-28 Apr.; Living Miracles Convention; Mount St. Scholastica Convention Center, Atchison; info: (913) 367-1197; ALMCC, 714 N 3rd, Atchison, KS 66002

Kentucky: 4-7 Apr.; Kentuckiana Regional Convention; University Plaza Hotel; rsvns: (502) 745-0088; info: (502) 745-7631; KRCNA, Box 556, Bowling Green, KY 42102

Maryland: 29-31 Mar.; 10th Chesapeake Potomac Regional Convention; rsvns: (800) 654-5440; info: (301) 515-9484; CPRCNA-10, Box 8006, Silver Springs, MD 20907

Michigan: 4-7 July; 12th Michigan Regional Convention; Flint Radisson; rsvns: (800) 333-3333 or (810) 239-1234; info: (810) 545-2179; MRCNA, Box 7116, Novi, MI 48376

Mississippi: 12-14 Apr.; 14th Mississippi Regional Convention; Lake Tiak-O'Khata, Louisville; rsvns: (601) 773-7853; info: Spirit of Change, Box 5660, Brandon, MS 39047

Missouri: 16-18 Feb.; Cabin Fever Prevention Convention; Lodge of the Four Seasons, Lake of the Ozarks; info: (314) 581-5771; Cabin Fever, Box 7114, Jefferson City, MO 65109

2) 7-9 June; Show-Me Regional Convention; Holiday Inn/Exit 96, Cape Girardeau; rsvns: (314) 334-4491; info: (618) 661-1527; SMRCNA, 320 N Frederick, Box 1226, Cape Girardeau, MO 63702

Nevada: 14-17 Mar.; Las Vegas Convention; Sahara Hotel, Las Vegas; rsvns: (800) 634-6666; info: (702) 656-7909; SNCC, 4542 East Tropicana, Suite 101, Las Vegas, NV 89121

New Hampshire: 21-23 June; Granite State Area Fellowship in the Field; Bethlehem; info: (603) 645-4777

New Jersey: 23-25 Feb.; Cape/Atlantic Area Convention; Seaview Marriott Country Club; rsvns: (800) 932-8000; info: (609) 863-9156; Convention, Box 7386, Atlantic City, NJ 08404

2) 29-31 Mar.; Capital Area Convention; East Windsor; rsvns: (609) 443-8000; info: (609) 882-5692; CAC, Box 741, Trenton, NJ 08604

3) 24-26 May; New Jersey Regional Convention; Berkeley Carteret, Asbury Park; rsvns: (800) 776-6011 or (908) 776-6700; info: (908) 826-2148; Box 576, Keyport, NJ 07735

New York: 8-10 Mar.; 2nd Rochester Area Convention; Holiday Inn Airport, Rochester; rsvns: (800) 465-4329; info: (716) 467-1234; RACNA, Box 458, Rochester, NY 14603

2) 8 Mar.; Champlain Valley Area H&I Learning Day; Plattsburg; info: (518) 643-0504;

North Carolina: 26 May - 1 June; World Service Conference; Greensboro; info: (818) 773-9999; WSO, Box 9999, Van Nuys, CA 91409

Ohio: 1-3 Mar.; LEGS Area Learning Conference; Marriott Inn, Beachwood; rsvns: (216) 464-5950; info: (216) 663-8777; LEGS, Box 20547, Cleveland, OH 44120

2) 24-26 May; 14th Ohio Regional Convention; Radisson Airport, Columbus; rsvns: (800) 333-3333; info: (614) 488-1371; OCA, Box 15284, Columbus, OH 43215

3) 12-14 July; 1st Dayton Area Convention; Days Inn South, Dayton; rsvns: (513) 847-8422; info: (513) 274-3380; DASCNA, Box 578, 3470 Salem Ave., Dayton, OH 45406

4) 16-18 Aug.; Gateway to Freedom; Holiday Inn, Westlake; rsvns: (800) 762-7416 or (216) 871-6000; info: (216) 486-6644; Tri-Area Conv., Box 999, Shaker Heights, OH 44120

Oklahoma: 29-31 Mar.; 10th OK Regional Convention; Meridian Plaza Hotel, Oklahoma City; info: (405) 524-7068; OKRCNA, Box 23112, Oklahoma City, OK 73123

Pennsylvania: 9-11 Feb.; Mid-Atlantic Regional Learning Conference; Ramada Inn, Harrisburg; rsvns: (717) 234-5021; info: (717) 236-1288 or (717) 561-2065; MARCNA, Box 523, Camp Hill, PA 17001

Puerto Rico: 26-28 July; Puerto Rico Regional Convention; Condado Plaza Hotel, San Juan; rsvns: (800) 468-8588 or (809) 721-1000; info: (809) 274-0488 or (809) 721-4267; Unidos Podemos, Box 362313, San Juan, PR 00936

South Carolina: 16-18 Feb.; 7th Central Carolina Area Convention; Hilton Head Island; rsvns: (800) ISLAND1 or (803) 842-4402; info: (803) 798-5408; CCACNA, Box 23534, Columbia, SC 29224

Tennessee: 24-25 Feb.; Upper Cumberland Area 4th Anniversary; Cookeville; rsvns: (615) 526-7125; info: (615) 686-8104

2) 3-5 May; Recovery on the Ridge; Big Ridge State Park, Andersonville; info: (800) 249-0012; Box 864, Knoxville, TN 37901

3) 10-12 May; NA in May in Memphis BBQ and Campout; Meeman-Shelby State Park; info: (901) 274-5071

Texas: 17-18 Feb.; Tejas Bluebonnet Steps and Traditions Weekend; Seven Oaks Hotel, San Antonio; rsvns: (800) 346-5866 or (210) 824-5371; info: (512) 832-9914

2) 23-25 Feb.; TACNA-12; info: (903) 547-3092 or (903) 793-3421

3) 5-7 Apr.; 11th Lone Star Regional Convention; Dallas/Ft. Worth Airport Hyatt; rsvns: (214) 453-1234; info: (214) 245-8972 or (800) 747-8972; LSRSO, 1510 Randolph #205, Carrollton, TX 75006

Utah: 8-10 Mar.; 3rd Northern Utah Area Convention; Holiday Inn, Ogden; info: NUACNA, Box 242, Ogden, UT 84401

2) 19-21 July; Utah Regional Campout; Weber Memorial Park, Ogden; info: (801) 489-1321; send speaker tapes before 30 May 1996 to: URCNA, Box 994, Springville, UT 84663

Virginia: 9-11 Aug.; 10th Almost Heaven Area Convention; 4-H Education Center, Front Royal, Virginia; info: (304) 274-1522; CCC, Box 3329, Martinsburg, WV 25410

Wyoming: 27-29 Sep.; Unity Convention; info: (305) 875-5867; send speaker tapes before 1 April to: CUNA, Box 325, Green River, WY 82935

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The Twelve Traditions of Narcotics Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on NA 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 NA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An NA group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the NA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every NA 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. NA, 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 NA 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.

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***My Gratitude Speaks...
When I Care
and When I Share
with Others
The NA Way***

What is Narcotics Anonymous?

NA is a nonprofit 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.

