

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

THE NA Way MAGAZINE®

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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.



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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From the editor



More on redesigning NA's periodical program

In last month's column, we presented a very detailed summary of the *NA Way's* history, focusing on marketing and circulation. We also presented the problems currently facing the NA Fellowship with its periodicals' program—inefficiency, duplication, and high costs to both the fellowship and its World Service Office. Finally, we reported our efforts to research ways of combining and streamlining the various publications currently being offered.

We're happy to report that we've made significant progress on this task. We're working on a complete history of *The NA Way Magazine* for presentation to the fellowship through the *Conference Agenda Report* and have also made some progress on creating a prototype of a new publication.

We're really excited about this new publication. We expect it to contain a wealth of recovery news and information that will be interesting to our worldwide fellowship. We expect it to be what the *NA Way* has always billed itself as, but has never really been: *The international journal of the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous*.

We can't promise anything now, but we are discussing several possi-

bilities. We're looking at the practicality of translating this new publication into Spanish, French, German, and Portuguese (the four languages most prevalent in NA other than English). We are evaluating the feasibility of offering this publication free to any NA member who wants to be on the mailing list. We're considering and seeking input on a variety of ways to promote fellowship participation in this journal in addition to submitting manuscripts about recovery and letters to the editor. We want this publication, above all, to really belong to the member.

Unfortunately, this column doesn't really give me the opportunity to report fully on every aspect of this project, nor can I anticipate every question that may be asked by our readers. So I invite you once again to call me any time. I'd be happy to hear from you.

CT, Editor

Freedom and gratitude: together they can

My desire is to share with you how my freedom and gratitude have come together as one. At first glance, the things I'm grateful for may seem insignificant to you. But after reading the article written by FB titled "Reflections From the Past" in the February 1995 *NA Way Magazine*, not only did I feel freedom and gratitude, I was inspired to write this piece. I hope this article will touch some of you the way FB's article did me. I want very much to give it away so I can keep it.

To begin with, I am forty years old and am currently serving time in federal prison. Staying clean here has been difficult at times. After all, I've been offered drugs on more than one occasion. Each offering, I must admit, made me give serious consideration to getting loaded. Fortunately for me, I've resisted temptation, and have had freedom from active addiction since 9 November 1993.



I'd be willing to bet that if you asked every inmate incarcerated here what their number one wish might be, they would respond that it's freedom. Well, let me be the first to tell you that I've been without freedom for the better part of my life. I stopped functioning in society many years ago. All of my morals and values disappeared. I refused to face the reality that I had become a prisoner of my addiction. I was in denial.

Today, my gratitude for having freedom from active addiction gives me hope for tomorrow. I have hope that when I'm released from this prison in December I might reap the many benefits that living the clean life offers.

It is vitally important for me to remember where I came from. During my years on the nod, I often neglected to eat every day. Today I take advantage of the meals provided here in prison. Not long ago there were

many times when I was too busy to shower or change clothes. Today I have clean uniforms to wear and I take a long, hot shower every day. And let's not forget when I was living on the streets of New York City in the middle of winter. Sometimes I'd sneak into the subway to get warm and take a nap. Today I have a bed, pillow, and blanket to keep me comfortable every night.

What about all the bridges I burned? Finally I wound up without any family or friends in my life. I never want to forget that void, that empty feeling. The despair and aloneness that I felt during those times was awful. It hurt me so much that it seemed the pain was searing right through my whole body. And all I was capable of doing at that time was using more and more to mask my pain. Today I'm on good terms and in

contact with my family. But the most unconditionally loving family I have is you guys in NA. Thank goodness I have friends in NA with whom I correspond, both by telephone and by mail. My NA friends at home in Miami have always been there for me, and continue to be there for me today.

So whenever I become very weary from the battles that rage on in my head concerning my freedom and gratitude, I need only remember one thing: What lies behind me and what lies before me are but tiny matters compared to what lies within me. And let me say that what lies within me is my gratitude for having freedom from active addiction. As long as I have this freedom, and as long as I remember that a grateful addict is a clean addict, I'll be okay. With my renewed faith in my HP, everything will work out for the best as long as I do the footwork.

JL, Florida



Recovery: the natural and spiritual result

Greetings from a first-time writer. I want to personally thank all the staff for your diligence in producing a fine magazine. The February 1995 issue was a breath of fresh air to me. The diversity and depth of the articles was commendable. They sparked a glowing warmth in my heart, and my thinking was challenged in a positive way. I need to think about my spirituality often. I am learning that honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness are the key to everything in recovery, the key to unlocking spirituality.

I will clarify where I am personally: in the throes of a life-threatening situation, a major crisis, a disaster of huge proportions. I have come to realize the validity of the disease concept of addiction.

Addiction had full control over me. It was a stranglehold over every area of my life. I am allergic to all mood-changing and mind-altering substances, including drugs and alcohol. Others can use drugs successfully. I

cannot. I cannot go back to experimental, social, recreational, or occasional using. I am not merely a drug abuser. I am an addict. This is not something I am proud of. The illusion that I can use just once is completely unrealistic. The phrase, "One is too many and a thousand never enough" is very true for me. I now understand that I have a critical disease that is incurable and will become fatal if it is not arrested through the daily practice of the Twelve Steps and active involvement in the Fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous.

The philosophy of my active addiction was purely Machiavellian: the ends justified the means. To set aside all of my values, I rationalized with situational ethics. My compulsion to use became an obsession. The chasing and racing to obtain my drug of choice included lying, cheating, stealing, and many more negative activities. It was "whatever it takes" to get my drugs. Nothing was sacred to me anymore. Watching the deterioration and utter destructiveness of this vicious cycle of addiction caused me to be exiled from everyone who truly cared for and loved me.

My active addiction destroyed everything in my life. Looking back now at what went wrong and all the triggers I pulled to end up back in my active addiction is very sobering to me today. It is very painful, but it is essential for me to share my thoughts and feelings about this ordeal. NA is the one place I can do this and not wallow in self-pity, but can gain strength, hope, empathy, love, and ideas on what works for others from accounts of their ordeals.

I am incarcerated in the Illinois Department of Corrections. The consequences for my actions are a reality, but more important than this, my being arrested was a spiritual awakening. I was in a hospital wing and someone gave me a Basic Text to read. The blinders came off my eyes and part of my wall of denial came down. I saw a ray of hope and thought that *maybe* there was another way for me to live, *maybe* I wouldn't die like I had expected to.

I had internal injuries, a concussion, and neck and nerve damage. I had dozens of stitches in my head. I weighed 110 pounds, was malnourished, and had just been detoxed from methadone at a university-affiliated hospital.

I had hit three parked cars after a high-speed police chase. I had sixty-seven charges in four counties. It was a busy thirty-day period of drugged lunacy. I was in a bad way physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and judicially.

The state's attorney and my attorney both asked the judge to order me to the drug unit of the county jail for pretrial detainment. The judge looked at me for a minute, then at the stack of documents in front of him, and said, "so ordered."

After I was physically well enough to be moved, they sent me to a drug unit. It was while I was there that the fog lifted. I went to NA meetings where outside speakers came in to share with us. I worked the first three steps as suggested. I read recovery literature. I went to groups and educational lectures. In time, I grew and developed into a human being and a

man who is grateful to be alive and in recovery today.

To make a long story short, I will say this: The judge I faced had no choice—because of my previous record and the number of charges against me—but to send me to prison. Before sentencing me, the judge said, "You do not look like the shell of a person I just saw; do you have anything to say?" I thanked him for the privilege, challenge, and opportunity to participate in the rehabilitation program. I apologized for all the craziness I had caused. I asked the judge to continue to allow other addicts a chance at recovery. I said that I was disappointed that I wasn't getting sentenced to treatment, but that I would keep the program in my life regardless. I ended up with one two-year, three five-year, and two four-year sentences, all to run concurrently; part of my sentence was the opportunity to participate in any and all drug programs available. I thanked the judge.

After arriving at the correctional center, I got involved in every program there was. The group that I am most involved with is NA. I get a lot out of other groups and classes I attend, but NA is the only one where I don't have to stretch definitions of words to fit me, and NA is the only group I claim to be a *member* of. The natural and spiritual result of being for real is recovery.

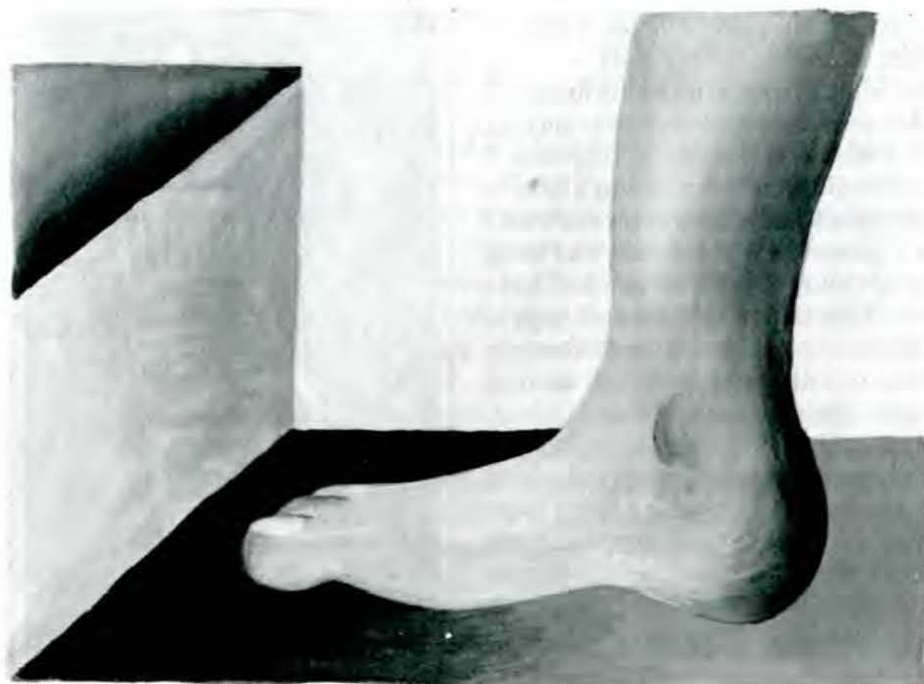
BG, Illinois

A solid First Step

In any of the few fleeting moments of sanity that I was able to obtain during the last years of my using, the First Step was the most evident thing in my life. The dark cloud of total powerlessness over my addiction and my entire life led me only to seek harder the only escape from reality that I knew—drugs! When I would have moments of sanity, which be-

came fewer and farther between, I would feel the total helplessness that only a person with this disease can experience. I wanted so badly to stop the madness, but could see no possible path that would lead me out of my hell.

I used the drugs to live and felt in my heart that without them I would no longer exist except as a form of vegetable—all the while realizing that with them I would cease to exist in any form. For years I went with the latter option and just prayed that somehow the end would not come too quickly or painfully. Every fiber in my being wanted to be "normal" like all the other people around me, but at the same time I believed the only normality I would ever find would be under the influence. I had forgotten, or perhaps never knew, how to func-



tion without some chemicals in my system. Moments of sanity became less frequent. It seemed that something in me was crying out for another way. I couldn't drown out that voice; there just weren't enough drugs to chase it away.

That was the scariest time in my life! I struggled to achieve a balance between not high and unconscious, but could not seem to reach it; not in the last few years of my using. I had a million reasons to want to stop using and only one reason why I didn't: I couldn't! I was powerless over my addiction. It ruled my every waking moment and became more important than all the millions of things on my list of reasons to get clean, including saving my own life.

After finally finding that there was an answer to this living hell, why would I even consider going back to that life? The answer for me is simple: I am an addict, and my disease is very cunning. It tries to make me forget all that pain and torment; it tells me that this time I can handle it, this time it will be different. That is why I have to tell myself and others every day that I am powerless. I am just one drug away from being in hell again. I have to ask my God to help me each day, to talk to me louder and more strongly than this disease does, to tell me how much He loves me and that He is always with me.

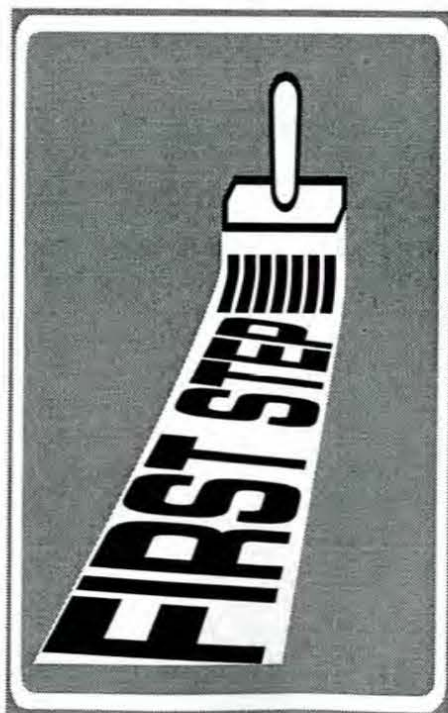
I can manage to get up today and carry on what I consider a fairly "normal" life and handle things that come to all of us, but I do this only by constantly telling myself that any power and manageability I have in my life

today will be gone the minute I use that first chemical.

My God talks to me through many channels, and the strongest one I have in my life right now is the NA program and the people in the program. Each time I sit in a meeting and feel their pain or simply hear them say they are addicts, it gives me the strength to hang in there just one more day.

I could write volumes on the experiences in my life that proved I was powerless, but I don't need to tell you any of those things, for you have lived them and you know my story; it is yours also, only with different names, faces, and places. All I need to say to you is that I'm an addict and you know the rest.

PM, Indiana



Feature

Recovery in the PRC

I can remember back to when I was new in recovery, discovering its rich tapestry of experience. One day someone asked me to write a list of the things I wanted to do in recovery. So I sat in a treatment center and wrote the list while learning how to play various card games. But I never listed some of my "crazier" goals, one of which was to carry the message into the People's Republic of China.

As the years passed and the love of the fellowship made me into a more capable being, I would sometimes think about this "lost" goal. I was accustomed to achieving my goals, or at least a reasonable substitute. I had wanted to be a counselor; I wound up being a treatment program administrator. I had wanted to be involved in world services; I wound up working on some major projects with a WSC committee. I had wanted to share my life with a soul mate; I had that, too, until addiction separated us. But what of my goal to go to China?

In our literature we are told that dreams do come true in recovery. This theme also appears on convention banners all over the world. In fact, this ideal falls within the realm of hope—hope that we can lose the incessant desire to use and find a new way of life, a new freedom that far exceeds anything we could have imagined. Once this hope becomes reality, it joins with our experience and strength. We are more able to share our joy with others.

While using, I was a maverick. I was the guy who would mix the weirdest variety of drugs, the man who the folks in the psychiatric units felt was hopeless. Indeed, *I was* hopeless, until NA found me.

In 1993 I moved to Hawaii. God brought me here so that I could do more work. As I healed, I was allowed to attend college, and recovered my old aptitude for learning. I realized that I am gifted with exceptional intelligence and curiosity. I applied for a scholarship to attend Peking University, drafted a fifty-five-page research and project proposal, and was awarded a full scholarship.

In Hawaii, our region has been participating in the Asia-Pacific Forum. Although Asia isn't even an accurate descriptive term, we knew that as an established NA community, it was incumbent on the Hawaiian fellowship to reach out and support newly emerging fellowships in the Pacific Rim. To this end, we have committed time and resources along with other

established NA communities to assist in literature distribution, translations, and fellowship intercourse between countries like India, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Japan, and many others. When I contacted a member active in the Asia-Pacific Forum and told him I was going to China, he provided me with a translation of *Welcome to NA* and *Who, What, Why, and How* in Mandarin Chinese. There was some concern that this literature would be just so much gibberish to people living in mainland China, since it was drafted using a simplified script. But I held on to the hope that it would be useful to some extent.

In May of 1995, I attended the Big Island Gathering, and then left for China. Of course, my outward focus

was on being a scholar, but even closer to my heart was the opportunity to fulfill a long-held dream. God had planned for me to carry an NA message of recovery to China.

For a number of weeks I traveled around China, collecting research notes and looking for addicts. I encountered many different subcultures when visiting Xian, Jiayuguan, Urumqi, Kashgar, and other cities. I noticed right off that the drug, alcohol, is used differently in China. At every meal, several bottles of beer are set out along with the food. Ironically, while the beer was free, I had to pay for soda (when available) and water. Needless to say, I spent a lot of money on bottled water. Some of my companions got drunk, and I shared my experience, strength, and hope with them the next day during their hangovers.

I found China to be a totally different culture. I was offered drugs in many cities, especially in Western China. The notion that one addict can pick another one out of a crowd held true despite the cultural and lingual differences. At one point, I had a frightening experience when several people attempted to force me to drink alcohol during an evening pool game with the locals. I finally convinced them in my broken Chinese that I would get very sick if I drank any alcohol. If they only knew why!

In Urumqi, I shared the literature with some non-addict Chinese friends, and explained NA to them. Despite my tentative command of Chinese, I was

able to convey the essence of the program. One of the tour guides even said that her husband was a candidate for NA!

Upon my return to Peking, I was housed on the campus of BeiDa, (Peking University). Here I would remain for three weeks to study with Chinese scholars. Would I be able to find some addicts? My days would be full of classes and site tours. My schedule allowed me only one evening free per week. So I had to put my time to good use.

I contacted the Chinese Ministry of Health and asked if there were any twelve-step programs or rehabs, thinking that I could find some addicts. They denied that there were any treatment centers, and stated that there were no drug users in Peking and no programs of any kind, because they weren't needed.

My hopes were shaken at this. I prayed and meditated. With less than two weeks left, how could I connect with any addicts? Then I remembered the old man in Kashgar who seemed to zero in on me. He knew I was an addict (it must have been the long hair). So I attempted a risky tactic; I asked some of the foreign students if they knew any Chinese who had a drug problem. This was very risky, but I knew it was a last-chance effort. Eventually I found a student who knew some Chinese addicts, and she agreed to arrange a meeting.

We met in a darkened restaurant/bar called "Characters." It had spray-painted Chinese characters all over



the place, and was obviously a student hangout. Then I met several Chinese. We waited until later, when the place began to clear, and I began talking to them. I told them about how I was never able to stop using, and that I lived on the streets. I shared how

to NA for the past thirteen years; it's because NA was the only way I could identify with other addicts and stay clean. And because of that commitment to myself, I knew that my HP would always put me where I am needed.

"We share our strength and together we are stronger."

empty I felt inside when I was using. I showed them a scar where I cut a needle out of my arm when I was sixteen. They were relating. Then I shared that I spent all my money on drugs. At this point, the girlfriend of one of the guys stood up and gave him a full-on dressing down. Then she started telling me that their relationship was in jeopardy because he couldn't stop using.

They told me about themselves. Most of the addicts in Beijing live in a compound called "Drug City." There is a real sense of desperation among these active users. Also, they told me that there were treatment centers that helped addicts, but that no one had ever gotten clean coming out of one. I started to cry. It brought back all the hopelessness that I felt during the last years of my active addiction. There's a reason why I have only gone

I shared for an hour and a half about my experiences in recovery, sometimes in Chinese, and sometimes with the help of a translator. They listened attentively. The student who introduced me to them was in tears. It was well past midnight. I showed them the IPs translated into Chinese. They read them attentively, then started asking questions. Suddenly, one of the men stood up, pointed at me, and said "thirteen years," then pointed at himself saying "two weeks," then threw his arms up and said "no way, never." I pointed at myself and then at him, and said: "thirteen years, two weeks—the same. We share our strength and together we are stronger." I told him that I would sponsor him, and send him literature and letters of encouragement. Then the other man asked me if I would do the same for him, and

I said I would. Then we hugged. Words cannot convey the impact of that moment; I can only say that I was blissed into tears. This was the first Narcotics Anonymous meeting in China!

One of the men told me about a treatment center. I asked a student at BeiDa to set up a meeting, and I was able to do an H&I meeting in the treatment center. The "rehab," if you could call it that, was nothing more than a few rooms in the back of a clinic, with about a dozen men, most in their thirties. The doctor was very interested in learning about NA, and he acceded to my request that I share with the patients as well as him. Four hours later, with the kind assistance of a student from BeiDa as translator, I was finishing up a question-and-answer period. Keeping in mind that both their questions and my responses had to be translated, I tried to keep my responses direct, simple, and to the point. I hope that I conveyed the spirit of the program in my bearing, as these fellow addicts were of the "hope to die" variety. I left copies of the IPs with the doctor, with instructions to hold a daily meeting. He said he would.

Since returning to the U.S., I have had sporadic contact with the two men I met at Characters. I suggested that they move out of "Drug City" and they have. One has a good command of English, and when I write him, he translates it into Chinese. The meetings at Characters lasted for weeks, once a week until the group folded. I felt a sense of loss and futility. It didn't last. My sponsor reminded me that I had "planted some seeds."

Sometimes such plantings take a while to sprout, but they nearly always do.

When many of my friends went to the world convention in Paris, we were privileged to share in the speaker meeting via conference call. As they shouted "aloha" to us here in Hawaii, I had a heavy heart. NA is growing all around the world, but what about China? For much of my recovery, I've wound up in the role of a pioneer or innovator. I had helped in the formative stages of groups, areas, regions, etc. I had worked on several vital literature projects. I had sponsored transvestites and dual-diagnosed addicts when no one else would. I was often on the philosophical "edge" of recovery and service.

Although exhilarating at times, being on the boundaries of NA is also a very lonely place, and often painful. There is a sense of isolation, and often I turn to the God of my awareness and my NA "love family" and ask for guidance, support, and strength. I am given what is needed to deal with my feelings and fears. But it's hard sometimes.

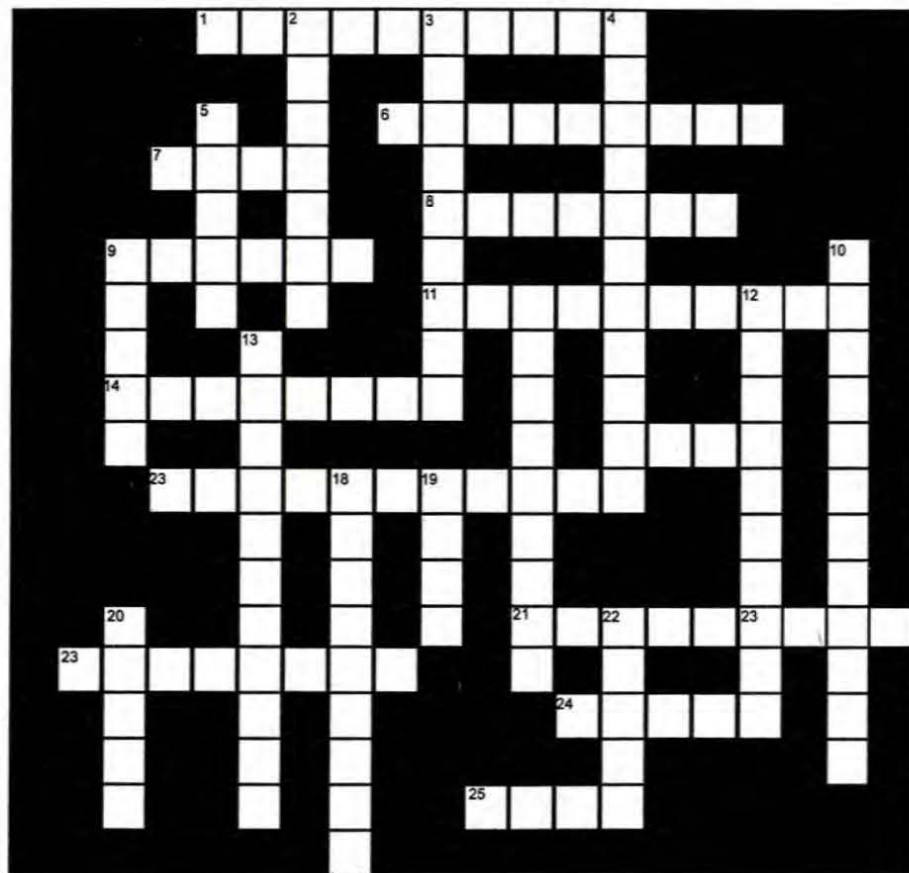
Acceptance resolves the conflict between the joy of receiving God's will and the challenge of living by it. My dream has become a path. I must go back to China. I'm needed there. People in India greet each other by saying "namaste." The NA members in India have altered it to "NA must stay." It is my hope that in China, NA will take root and grow.

CM, Hawaii

C R O S S W O R D

P U Z Z L E

BASIC TEXT



Many of the answers are from the Basic Text. Whenever a quote from the Basic Text is used, the page number appears.

Across

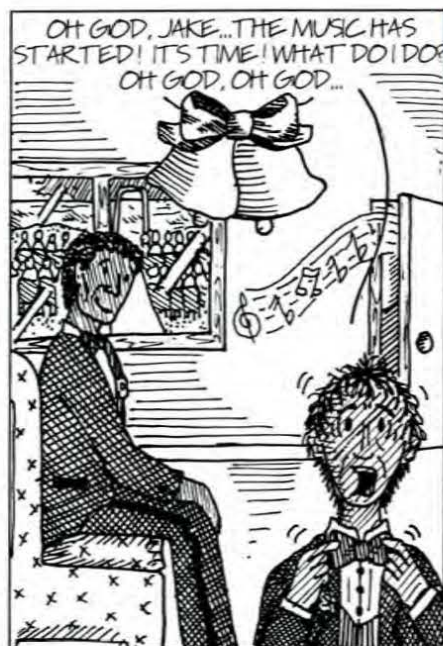
- 1) Anger springs from a lack of _____.
- 6) "_____ balance is one of the first results of meditation. . . ." (page 45)
- 7) "We work Step _____ as if there were no Step Five." (page 29)
- 8) "A spiritual awakening is an _____ process." (page 100)
- 9) Ours is a program of _____.
- 11) "Only after we surrender are we able to overcome the _____ of our disease." (page 22)
- 14) The Basic Text primarily concerns itself with the nature of _____.
- 16) A spiritual principle we should practice when we're angry.
- 17) "_____ keeps us from good will, love, and compassion." (page 98)
- 21) "We form a mutual bond, as we share our spiritual and mental _____." (page 95)
- 23) A spiritual principle we should practice when we have to wait.
- 24) "We made a decision to turn our will and our _____ lives over to the care of God as we understood Him." (page 24)
- 25) A spiritual principle we should practice when we're feeling despair.

Down

- 2) _____ to change.
- 3) "In recovery, failures are only _____ setbacks rather than links in an unbreakable chain." (page 86)
- 4) "We learn not to become _____ involved with problems." (page 87)
- 5) A searching and fearless _____ moral inventory.
- 9) _____ the message.
- 10) "This firsthand experience in all phases of illness and recovery is of _____ therapeutic value." (page 10)
- 12) "Most addicts resist recovery, and the program we share with them _____ with their using." (page 86)
- 13) _____ allows us to practice responsibility.
- 15) "An _____ becomes a relief, because the pain of doing it is less than the pain of not doing it." (page 29)
- 18) Now indulgence in our character defects clouds our ability to think _____.
- 19) "My gratitude speaks when I _____ and when I share with others the NA way." (page 105)
- 20) A spiritual principle we should practice when we're afraid.
- 22) "We are accepted and loved for who we are, not in _____ of who we are." (page 59)

Submitted by PH, New Jersey

Home Group



Newsletters



Fourth Step blues

From NA Today, the Australia regional newsletter:

The desk had been cleared, and the paper was ready. I had blue paper; more inspiring, I thought. I had a few pens ready, just in case. There I sat at dawn, looking at the blank page. Suddenly I just had to do the dishes, and while I was there I might as well scrub the kitchen out.

Day after day, I kept finding these urgent tasks to take care of—anything but my Fourth Step! The sight of that blue paper sitting on my desk soon became the focus of a resentment.

While this was happening, I seemed to be bombarded with memories of resentments, wrongs to others, incidents I'd rather I didn't remember. I instinctively knew this was Fourth Step material, but for some reason I couldn't put it on paper. Perhaps that would make it too real,

or perhaps I was concentrating on my Fifth Step too much.

Well, after a few weeks of practicing all my avoidance techniques, the pain of not doing this step became greater than the fear of doing it. I allowed myself an hour a day. I gave myself permission to expand on that time, or if absolutely necessary, do less. I continually reminded myself that I was only writing it. It was no more real now because I was putting it on paper than it had been when it was locked away behind my justifications and rationalizations.

I was angry for days, so angry that I could hardly stand it. I was sad and wanted to block out the painful feelings. I felt like I was a terrible person. Through it all I kept close contact with my sponsor and shared my feelings. She assured me that I was okay and that I could do it. It was nice to have someone in my corner when I felt so terrible about myself.

Finally it was over, which as far as I was concerned was a miracle in itself because I thought there was no end to the horror of my life. I did realize a lot of the resentment on the pages had subsided by the time I had finished.

The real relief came after doing my Fifth Step, but that's another story...

DW, Australia

A gift or hard work?

From the NA Post, the Manhattan area newsletter

Some say that the first year clean is a gift. Is it a gift? Or is it hard work?

During my first year of recovery, I didn't know how to do a lot of things. For example, I didn't know how to stay clean, deal with money, be in relationships, or deal with rejection, depression, death. I didn't know how to work the steps, and I certainly didn't know anything about the NA program. I didn't know how to turn it over. I didn't know how to keep it simple.

What I did know was that I was sick and tired of being sick and tired, and that I needed help.

All my life I did things my way and my best thinking got me into the rooms. However, I didn't want to accept suggestions so I had to learn the hard way, through my own mistakes and failures.

In the past, I learned that I couldn't run and hide anymore. I had to deal with feelings I never knew I had. It is said that the more we recover, the more we uncover. Every time I worked through one situation,

another occurred. It was frustrating! But by talking about the feelings with other recovering addicts, I learned how to deal with them a little better a day at a time. What didn't apply I let fly, but I had to listen to all the suggestions in order to determine what worked best for me.

I incorporated Steps One and Two into my life with little effort. They kind of worked themselves into my life. Step Three was difficult for me at first because I didn't understand what it was I was supposed to turn over. I knew Step Three was an action step, and that I had to make a decision. It wasn't going to be made for me. As I prayed to my Higher Power, the God of my understanding, things around me got better and Step Three became more clear. I prayed for strength and guidance. I began learning how to trust others with my feelings, which was very difficult for me to do.

For me, a gift is something that is given without having to work for it. I worked at my recovery. I'm an addict and the easiest and most natural thing for me to do is to pick up. Before coming to NA, I didn't know how to not pick up. But by going to meetings and talking about whatever I was going through, the desire to use drugs eventually lifted. The miracle happened because I was willing to do the footwork.

I don't know what kind of feelings I'll be having after I'm clean for five years, or whether I'll feel my first year was a gift or not. I do know that if I

hadn't decided to turn over my will, to work the Steps, to face my problems, to feel my feelings, and to reach out and ask for help when I needed it, my only alternatives would be jails, institutions, and death.

Although new problems arise every day, I'm grateful for this God-given spiritual program. I know that if I didn't have the desire to stop using and wasn't open-minded to change, I wouldn't be able to enjoy life on life's terms. I was told in early recovery that if I kept coming back, things would get better, and if things didn't get better, I would get better, and if I didn't get better, I'd still be better off! Just for today, I know that if I don't pick up, no matter what, my life will get better, my complaints will get better, and I can enjoy the gift of a new life one day at a time.

Whether a gift or hard work, it only works if you work it! So work it and live it, because you're worth it.

RC, New York



We need articles!

Remember that *The NA Way Magazine* is your meeting in print. Like any other meeting of which you're a part, you'll get the most out of this one by participating. Let your voice be part of the message that gets carried during the meeting. Write! We are in need of material right now, so don't wait.

Who writes these articles?

You do!

The articles you see in this magazine are written by NA members like yourself. You need not consider yourself a skilled writer. You don't have to know all the rules of grammar. We have an editorial team whose job it is to take care of those details. What we need is your unique perspective on the NA program. Without it, we don't have a message to carry.

What should I write about?

Write about any topic related to recovery in Narcotics Anonymous. Share with our readers the same way you would share with other addicts at any other NA meeting. Is there a topic you've enjoyed hearing or sharing about lately? Are you working a particular step, and having some eye-opening experiences? Has there been a turning point in your recovery? Tell us about it. We'd love to hear from you.

Viewpoint

So well
we've
forgotten
NA?

For months last year I read about the dire implications of the God-and-gender issue that was being debated by our fellowship.

My opinion—well, haven't a lot of us gotten pretty doggone well! We can now spend time debating the gender of a Power greater than ourselves. That's a far cry from puking our guts up or putting our values in hock to anybody of any gender just to feel okay.

Family, you may notice that I'm a bit miffed. I see our members holding grand conventions and parties, and burning up our pens writing about the nature of God. While all this is going on, I see a real need in this fellowship being forgotten or ignored.

I'm a recovering addict, clean from 31 October 1988, and I am incarcerated. The prison panel for this facility has not had a single H&I member present in a meeting for five months. Frankly, the newer members are getting tired of my assurances that this is unusual and surely temporary.

You, my family, are breaking my heart. Haven't we all done things in active addiction that could have landed us in prison? Yet H&I panels go unfilled.

There was an area service committee that had our panel for about two years. The panel rarely went a month without at least the panel chair coming. Then the regional service committee took our panel over. We haven't seen an H&I member since.

At seven years clean, I have the books, subscribe to the *NA Way*, have written articles for the local newsletter, and have a sponsor and several sponsees. I correspond with members all over the state, too. So I do know that NA is alive out there and functioning very well in many places. I practice the principles in my daily affairs and seldom act out the way I did when I first got into NA. My sponsor and I still work the steps together. He visits, too (remarkable man!), and writes letters (gasp!). So I know that there are many who still practice this program and reach out.

So is this just a sick area or region? I'm not sure. But I think maybe they're just too busy discussing the true nature/gender of God to bother about carrying a meeting into prison. Maybe the area and region are too busy planning the next big convention or dance. My experience is that doing the "look good" stuff in this fellowship can wind you up in one of these cells in a big hurry.

So I'm asking for some support from my fellowship—other members who are no better and no worse than me—for the members of NA who are being forgotten in prison. We are truly struggling, and would really be grateful for some NA love. Please don't get so well that you forget about us.

KH, California

Any addict

Greetings. Please allow me to share a perspective on what we know as "special interest" meetings.

Our literature says that any addict is welcome in NA, "regardless of age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion, or lack of religion." It promises us that "any addict can stop using drugs, lose the desire to use, and find a new way to live."

Our fellowship voted through the WSC not to hold special interest meetings at the world convention.

Hello? Any connection there? We try to focus on our similarities, not our differences.

Dictionary definitions of *welcome*: "a cordial, willing, and hospitable reception given to an arriving person; to receive or accept gladly; used to acknowledge an expression of gratitude." Definitions of *common* (as in *common welfare*): "shared equally by two or more; of or relating to the community as a whole; of no special quality or standard."

My opinion of "special interest" meetings notwithstanding, does a meeting targeting a specific group of addicts say "you're welcome here" to anyone but the special group? I don't think so. Say an addict is told, "This is a meeting for a special type of addict; there is another meeting down the road. However, if you need to stay, you may." Is that welcoming an addict to a meeting? It's like saying, "We love you, but . . ." A newcomer is not going to understand such a thing.

If we insist that we are "special" addicts, implying that we used "special" drugs or had "special" reactions to drugs, maybe we need to rewrite our literature. After all, I'm sure that hundreds of thousands of recovering addicts can tell us that our literature doesn't work the way it's written.

Although many "special interest" groups lose support because of their nature, "special interest" meetings are a reality. I struggle less today to practice NA's Tenth Tradition—actually, it gives me serenity to practice it. The plea, however, is loud and clear: Please make any addict welcome at any Narcotics Anonymous meeting, regardless of age, race,

sexual identity, creed, religion, or lack of religion. We want more of the good things the NA program has to offer. No matter how much we give, there is always another addict seeking help. If sharing the pain of our experience helps just one addict, then it was worth the suffering. If every meeting is a "special interest" meeting, what will be left for the addict still practicing the spiritual principle of anonymity?

If we go to a meeting for ourselves, we can be sure of getting very little. If we go to share in its service, we shall not come away empty. A meeting is not an isolated act of spirituality. It is or should be an integral part of the life of our fellowship. That life is active as well as contemplative and practical as well as spiritual. If an NA meeting never produced any other result save an increase in human friendship, the meeting would be justified. An NA meeting is the heart of our fellowship and the source of support for all its members.

In closing, a quote from *It Works: How and Why*: "The responsibility that balances our autonomy reflects the principles expressed in the first three traditions. Preserving the unity of the NA Fellowship comes first. Next, we seek direction from a loving Higher Power. Then, we hold meetings that welcome everyone with the desire to stop using."

JS, Massachusetts

Why not special interest groups?

Why shouldn't we form special interest groups such as men's, women's, gay and lesbian, HIV, old-timers, etc?

Because "anyone may join us regardless of age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion, or lack of religion." It goes against all the principles that Narcotics Anonymous is about!

The essay on Tradition Three in *It Works: How and Why* spells it out very clearly: "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using."

"...We cannot predict a higher success rate for addicts of a certain age, or those who used for a certain number of years, or women over men, or any other external factor. Just as we are not capable of measuring another's desire to stay clean, neither are we equipped to decide who should join. We are free to offer welcome instead of judgment...."

"We look for ways to help instead of judge. Our task is to fan the flame of desire, not dampen it...."

"...The group is not the jury of desire...any addict's willingness to come to a meeting ought to be a sufficient indication of desire.... No addict

dict should be denied an opportunity to stay long enough to develop that desire. We can nurture that desire with loving acceptance."

"...Tradition Three asks us to set aside our self-righteousness...."

"Humility reminds us that we are not God...."

"...The common denominator in Narcotics Anonymous is the disease of addiction. We are all equally subject to its devastation. We share an equal right to recovery. ..."

It's my belief that special interest groups tend to put the focus on our differences rather than our similarities. They create feelings of uniqueness and superiority. They separate us from our fellow addicts and the one thing we all have in common—addiction. Anybody seeking recovery from addiction has a right to be in *any* NA meeting. We lose much of the unity called for in Tradition One when we separate "different" types of addicts from the whole. None of us is unique. To "unite" means to come together. But having special interest groups pulls us apart, separates us, and labels us. This may cause more harm than help. There will always be external forces that may keep us apart.

It says in *It Works: How and Why* that "...Many recovering addicts do not have access to regular meetings because of incarceration, geography, physical disability, or employment...."

It would be a shame if our gender or sexual identity, length of clean time, or health issue became another one of those forces that keeps us from attending. As a fellowship we have enough dignity and integrity to stop this separation within our groups and

to come together, because *together* is how we do recover.

"The practice of anonymity ensures the integrity of Tradition Three. In the spirit of anonymity, we remember that no individual member or group is more important than the message we carry...."

Anonymous

Common grounds

It occurs to me that "special interest" meetings are on the controversy list again. It seems that every few years we get a new crop of angry people who have nothing better to do than inventory the recovery habits of others.

Oh, my! Maybe I'll go get loaded because *you* go to therapy. Oh, my! I can't sleep at night because *you* are a man and have a woman sponsor. Oh, my! It threatens my serenity that *you* go to special interest meetings.

All right, I'm being a little more ferocious than I intended, but I just came from a meeting (not special interest) where special interest meetings were being angrily criticized by a few people outside the meeting. My temper is a little inflamed.

It seems to me that we form special interest meetings because a need exists for them. Maybe it's because

someone who has been the victim of sexual abuse needs to begin his or her recovery in an atmosphere where there isn't anyone of the perpetrating gender in attendance. Maybe it's because someone who is gay is more conscious of being gay than anything else at a regular meeting, but is able to be more conscious of recovery at a gay meeting because sexual orientation is no longer an issue. Maybe it's because there are some issues, specifically relevant to recovery because of our gender or sexual orientation or age, that we need to share about with others who can really relate.

I have gone to women's meetings off and on in my recovery. Sometimes I have used them as a place to justify my victim-like behavior in relationships. Sometimes it has been because I wanted to share my recovery in the same exact area and knew I could find people to share it with at a women's meeting. Sometimes it has been simply because I really like hanging out with women (very different from my newcomer days, let me tell you!). I relate. I can really relax when I share. I can talk in specific (not graphic) terms about how I degraded myself in active addiction, and not have to give a disclaimer that my story is not an advertisement. I especially like women's meetings at conventions. I have heard the most powerful "pitches" ever at these meetings. The woman who shared about her baby getting hold of a hit of acid, the women who have shared about getting over—finally!—the need to choose destructive relationships, the women who have shared about being separated from their children while doing time and being reunited with

them in recovery stand out in my memory and bring tears to my eyes years later.

I have also heard men share about how they were extremely moved by a speaker at a men's meeting. I've listened to tapes from men's meetings (don't tell anyone!), and heard how the sharing was extremely powerful and very relevant to a man in recovery.

Special interest meetings aren't about shutting people out. They're about bringing people who have something in common together on safe ground.

There is one exception where I think having a women's meeting, a men's meeting, or a gay and lesbian meeting, etc., is dead wrong. That's when it's the only NA meeting within a certain radius at a certain time.

When my area (a very big area with a half-hour's drive between towns) was hosting a women's meeting on Sunday night in one of the towns, and there was no other Sunday night meeting in that town, I spoke strongly against that meeting being a women's meeting. Of course, they were following our custom of the meeting technically being open to any addict, but that really doesn't wash. I'm sure that a man attending that meeting would have felt very uncomfortable.

I agree that we should have a perfect little society in NA where no one ever feels less than comfortable in any group. But we don't. And since the rules of the universe are not suspended in NA, I think special interest meetings are a good idea.

BG, California

From our readers



A reason to celebrate

Today I have five years clean. I've tried many times before today to write to the magazine, but never sent anything in. I am writing this morning because it's a very special day for me.

Our fellowship has been in my area for about twelve years. I was told it started small and stayed that way for a while. Then the Basic Text was translated and it bloomed. I came to the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous about a year after we had our Basic Text in French.

I remember going to my first few meetings, looking at people taking keytags to celebrate their clean time. I remember thinking how good they were, that their recovery was so incredible! I listened to what these people were saying, and thought they were so wise. Today I know that compared to my insanity—I was just out of active addiction—anybody who wasn't using was wise.

I looked at people celebrating one year, two years, three years clean. These were real miracles to me. I mean, to not use for years! You had to come from another planet! They gave me so much hope. I began to believe that there was a life awaiting me if I stopped using, and I could almost see how things would get better. It's hard

for me to describe how I felt back then, but I looked at those people, people I didn't know before, and they were important for me. It is because of what I saw in them that I stayed in recovery. They were the living proof that it worked. Some are still in our rooms.

I want this day to be special for me. I have been caught up in the turmoils of life lately. Today, I want to be extra sure that I live this day, that it doesn't go by without me noticing it. Tonight, I plan to go to a meeting, and take a medallion to give back to the newcomer what I received back then: hope.

I have had thoughts like my clean time celebration is just another ego trip, and I'm nothing but a showoff. But the truth is, it would be egotistical if I stayed home and did nothing, or only invited a few friends over. I was told I had to give back what was freely given to me, and that's what I intend to do.

It's been a long time since I needed to see someone celebrate his or her clean time in order to hold on for another day, but I haven't forgotten what that was like. Why would I deny this gift to others?

When I was new, having five years clean meant you were an old-timer. NA in Quebec didn't have very many

of those then. Our NA community was still very young. I thought that five years was *it*—proof that NA worked. I thought if I got five years clean... I must have imprinted that somewhere in my mind because here I am today, five years later, and I am so moved. I have come a long way since the time when I didn't even understand the meaning of the word *gratitude*. Today, gratitude is the meaning of my life.

CP, Quebec

Relapse and making it back

My name is Andre and I'm an addict. I state this first because I have to keep reminding myself that I have a disease. I don't want to start convincing myself that because I'm getting some clean time again maybe I'm not an addict after all. It was just this kind of thinking that led to my relapse.

I like to refer to myself as an intellectual addict. I believe in the old saying, "Anything the mind can conceive, it can achieve." After accumulating some clean time, I began having some reservations in my program. I began to believe I could use socially.

When my mother was diagnosed with lung cancer, I began to think about using again, but didn't act on it right away. I decided to wait until my mother got really sick. I believed people wouldn't really blame me for relapsing since my brother, and father had died, and now my mother was so sick. I thought people would feel sorry for me. The illusion of control took over again. Being in the program, I had the tools necessary to prevent the relapse, but by this time I

had decided this was the route I was going to take. Yes, I stopped working with others, stopped going to meetings, stopped calling my sponsor. In short, I stopped working a program. Finally, I stopped doing the most important part of any program: not using no matter what.

You might wonder why I didn't do something before things reached the point of no return. I do, too. I reflect back to when I was clean before and they told me what would happen if I ever relapsed. They were right. It all happened. I especially think about being told that when we relapse, we don't start all over again at the beginning of our addiction; we pick up right where we left off. I never realized how true that statement is until I lived it. I found myself doing things I said I would never do.

What brought me out of my relapse was the NA program. Once you've had some time in this program, you know there's a better way. I seemed to carry around a little piece of the program wherever I went. One day I realized that if I didn't make my move right then, that day, I never would. I would continue on to the bitter ends—death was all that was left for me.

The Basic Text says that relapse is not a requirement for recovery, but it might show that we need a more rigorous application of our recovery program. I hope that if newcomers read my story, they can identify with it and maybe it can help them avoid the same pitfalls that I fell in. And I hope they remember the one thing I forgot: Don't use no matter what!

AG, New Jersey

Comin' up

Calendar						
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AUSTRALIA

Western Australia: 14-16 Mar. 1997; Western Australia Area Convention; Royal Commonwealth Society Hall, Subiaco, Perth; info: 61/9/2724508 or 61/9/3353197; write: Convention, Box 668, Subiaco, Western Australia, 6008

COSTA RICA

San Jose: 15-17 Nov. 1996; 2nd Costa Rica Regional Convention; info: 506/256-8140; fax: 506/283-8663; write: Convention, PO Box 1546, 1002 Paseo de los Estudiantes, Costa Rica

INDIA

West Bengal: 10-12 Jan. 1997; 2nd Calcutta Area Convention; Kishore Bharati Krirangan, Jadavpur, Santoshpur, Calcutta; info: please address fax to Sunil J: 91/33/2454748; write: CACNA, Box 9146, Park Street, Calcutta 700 016, India

Maharashtra: 24-26 Jan. 1997; Bombay Area Convention; info: 91/22/4461709 or 91/22/6425235 or 91/22/2619195; write: BACNA, PO Box 1953, GPO Mumbai, 400 001 India

Manipur: 1-3 Mar. 1997; 1st Imphal Area Convention; Khumanlampak State Youth Center, Imphal; other hotels: Anand Continental 91/385/223422, Hotel Excellency 91/385/225401, Hotel Prince 91/385/224010, Hotel Imphal Ashok 91/385/220459; info: 91/385/221615 or 91/385/222967 or 91/385/310803; write: NACIA, Marwri Dharamsala R No.19, PO Box 93, Imphal 795001, Manipur, India

PERU

La Libertad: 14-16 Feb. 1997; 3rd Peru Regional Convention; info: 51/9957841; write: NA Oficina Nacional, Casilla Postal 18-0523, Lima 18, Peru

PHILIPPINES

Metro Manila: 17-19 Jan. 1997; 2nd Philippine Regional Convention; Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park, Makati; e-mail: tat@epic.net; fax: 63/2/8100279 or 63/2/5210592; write: Convention, PO Box 8535, Dasmariñas Village, Makati, Metro Manila, Philippines

PORTUGAL

Lisbon: 6-8 Dec. 1996; NaLinha Area Convention; Escola Hoteleira de Estoril, Estoril; info: 351/1/4191601 or 351/1/4660399; write: CANLNA, Apartado 1118-2775, Parede, Portugal

SWITZERLAND

Vaud: 21-23 Mar. 1997; 3rd Swiss Convention; Leysin; info: 41/21/6486968; write: CSNA3, PO Box 181, CH-1000, Lausanne 9, Switzerland

UNITED STATES

Alabama: 14-17 Feb. 1997; North Alabama Area Convention; Holiday Inn, Decatur; info: (205) 351-2986; write: NAACNA, PO Box 2776, Decatur, AL 35602

California: 2 Nov. 1996; Contra Costa Area Golf Tournament 1996; info: (510) 372-0420

2) 31 Jan. - 2 Feb. 1997; 2nd San Fernando Valley Area Convention; Burbank Hilton; rsvns: (800) HILTONS; info: (818) 831-7084 or visit us at our web site: www.pacificnet.net/~richmcc/na/sfv.html

3) 7-9 Feb. 1996; Central California Regional Convention; Red Lion Hotel, Bakersfield; rsvns: (800) 733-5466 or (805) 323-7111; info: (805) 486-3373 or (805) 569-9807; write: CCRCA, PO Box 3908, Simi Valley, CA 93063

4) 7-9 Mar. 1997; Southern California Regional Assembly Weekend; info: (310) 396-4812; write: Let Your Voice Be Heard, 1935 S. Myrtle Ave., Monrovia, CA 91016

5) 3-6 Apr. 1997; Northern California Regional Convention; Bill Graham Convention Center, San Francisco; Quality Hotel, rsvns: (415) 776-8200; Holiday Inn, rsvns: (415) 441-4000; info: (707) 453-0868 or (707) 447-5641; write: NCCNA, PO Box 840, Fairfield, CA 94533

6) 30 May - 1 June 1997; In Pursuit of Unity Campout; Marysville Riverfront Park, Marysville; info: (916) 742-5167; e-mail: mleahy@syix.com

Colorado: 8-10 Nov. 1996; Colorado Regional Convention; Sheraton Hotel, Colorado Springs; rsvns: (719) 526-6900; info: (303) 321-1151 or (303) 595-0382; write: CRCNA, PO Box 1437, Denver, CO 80201

Connecticut: 1-3 Nov. 1996; United Shoreline Area Convention; Yankee Inn, Niantic; info: (860) 886-7512 or (860) 437-7229

Florida: 28 Nov. - 1 Dec. 1996; Palm Coast Area Convention; Airport Hilton, West Palm Beach; rsvns: (800) HILTONS; info: (407) 845-8663 or (407) 747-1497

2) 28-30 Mar. 1997; Florida Spring Service Break; Radisson Adventure Beach Resort; North Miami Beach; rsvns: (305) 932-2233; info: (305) 270-0030; write: FSSBNA, 7812 SW 103rd Place, Miami, FL 33173

Georgia: 10-12 Jan. 1997; Central Savannah River Area Convention; Sheraton Augusta; rsvns: (800) 325-3535; info: (706) 733-2383; write: Peace in Recovery 9, PO Box 15863, Augusta, GA 30919

Hawaii: 8-10 Nov. 1996; 10th Western States PI Learning Days; Ala Moana Hotel; rsvns: (800) 367-6025 or (808) 955-4811; info: (808) 833-1845 or (808) 834-4867; e-mail: 76220.34@compuserve.com; write: WSPILD, PO Box 30711, Honolulu, HI 96820

2) 14-17 Nov. 1996; Hawaii Regional Convention; Kauai Marriott; info: (808) 821-1038; fax (808) 245-7255; write: HRCNA-5, PO Box 1854, Kapaa, HI 96746

Idaho: 28-30 Mar. 1997; Southern Idaho Regional Convention; Weston Plaza, Twin Falls; rsvns: (208) 733-0650; info: (208) 733-7031; write: SIRC, 616 Blue Lakes Blvd. N., Box 177, Twin Falls, ID 83301

Illinois: 9-10 Nov. 1996; Greater Illinois Regional Mini-Convention; Signature Inn, Bloomington-Normal; rsvns: (309) 454-4044; info: (309) 829-4738; write: GIRSCNA, PO Box 6326, Peoria, IL 61601

2) 14-16 Feb. 1997; 9th Chicagoland Regional Convention; Sheraton-Chicago; info: 9-5 CST (708) 848-2211; write: CRC-9, c/o CSO, 212 S Marion St. #27, Oak Park, IL 60302

Indiana: 14-17 Mar. 1997; Indiana State Convention; Radisson Hotel at Star Plaza; Merrillville; rsvns: (800) 333-3333; write: ISNAC, PO Box M-609, Gary, IN 46401

Kansas: 4-7 Apr. 1997; Mid-America Regional Convention; Dodge House, Dodge City; rsvns: (316) 225-9900; info: (913) 825-8163 or (316) 662-7491 or (316) 623-2054; write: MARCNA, PO Box 2341, Hutchinson, KS 67504

2) 18-20 Apr. 1997; MoKan Area Convention; Mount Convention Center, Atchison; info: (913) 367-3610; e-mail: Mhansen272@aol.com; write: MKACNA, 714 N 3rd Street, Atchison, KS 66002

Kentucky: 16-18 Jan. 1997; Louisville Area Convention; info: (812) 280-0523

2) 28-30 Mar. 1997; Kentuckiana Regional Convention; Owensboro; write: KRCNA, PO Box 126, Robards, KY 42452

Louisiana: 15-17 Nov. 1996; New Orleans Area Convention; Radisson Hotel, Canal Street, New Orleans; rsvns: (800) 824-3359; info: (504) 243-0885 or (504) 246-6594; write: NOACNA, PO Box 871090, New Orleans, LA 70128

Maryland: 29 Nov. - 1 Dec. 1996; Freestate Regional Convention; BWI Marriott, Baltimore; info: (410) 242-0794 or (410) 644-2561; write: FSRCA, 6400 Baltimore National, PO Box 328, Baltimore, MD 21228

2) 4-6 Apr. 1997; Chesapeake/Potomac Regional Convention; info: (202) 362-4525

Massachusetts: 7-9 Mar. 1997; New England Regional Convention; Westin, Waltham; rsvns: (800) 228-3000 or (617) 290-5600; info: (508) 975-3057; e-mail: JDEdmo@aol.com or rahvan@aol.com; write: NERC-7, 733 Turnpike Street, Box 145, North Andover, MA 01845

Michigan: 27-29 Mar. 1997; Detroit Area Convention; Westin Hotel, Detroit; rsvns: (800) 228-3000 or (313) 568-8200; info: (313) 527-8684 or (313) 925-4613 or (810) 543-7200; write: DACNA, PO Box 241221, Detroit, MI 48224

Mississippi: 8-10 Nov. 1996; Surrender by the Seashore; Seashore Methodist Assembly, Biloxi; info: (601) 452-9868 or (601) 795-6308; write: Gulf Coast Area, PO Box 444, Gulfport, MS 39502

Missouri: 6-8 June 1997; 12th Show-Me Regional Convention; Hilton Airport Hotel, Kansas City; rsvns: (816) 891-8900; info: (913) 384-0772 or (816) 363-5368; e-mail: woodyp@sound.net

New Jersey: 8-10 Nov. 1996; Northern New Jersey Area Convention; Radisson Hotel, Frontage Road, Newark; rsvns: (201) 690-5500; info: (908) 241-8021 or (908) 298-0786; write: NENJAC, PO Box 409, Roselle, NJ 07203

2) 23-25 May 1997; New Jersey Regional Convention; Cherry Hill Hilton; rsvns: (609) 665-6666; info: (908) 826-2148; write: NJRCNA, PO Box 605, Englishtown, NJ 07726

Ohio: 29 Nov. - 1 Dec. 1996; Greater Cincinnati Area Convention; Westin Hotel, Cincinnati; rsvns: (513) 621-7700 or (800) 228-3000; info: (513) 751-3412 or (513) 948-0342; write: GCACNA, PO Box 141300, Cincinnati, OH 45202

2) 3-5 Jan. 1997; Central Ohio Area Convention; Radisson Hotel Columbus North; rsvns: (800) 333-3333 or (614) 846-0300; info: (614) 794-3357 or (614) 252-1700 or (614) 231-0831; write: COACNA-8, PO Box 44344, Columbus, OH 43204

3) 28 Feb. - 2 Mar. 1997; Toledo Area Convention; Radisson Hotel, Toledo; rsvns: (419) 241-3000; info: (419) 474-2714 or (419) 534-2142; write: TACNA, PO Box 20018, Toledo, OH 43610

Oregon: 10-12 Jan. 1997; Mid-Willamette Valley Area Convention; Shilo Inn, Newport; info: (503) 390-5872 or (503) 463-6350; write: MWVACNA, PO Box 13232, Salem, OR 97309

2) 14-16 Mar. 1997; Western States Literature Conference; Holiday Inn Portland Airport; rsvns: (503) 256-5000; info: (503) 224-8345; write: Lit Conference, PO Box 90415, Portland, OR 97290

Pennsylvania: 22-24 Nov. 1996; Start to Live; Tri-State Regional Convention; Seven Springs Mountain Resort, Champion; rsvns: (800) 452-2223; info: (412) 241-5016 or (412) 488-6124 or (412) 221-1025; write: TSSRO, PO Box 121, Homestead, PA 15120

South Carolina: 14-17 Nov. 1996; Serenity Festival, Myrtle Beach; info: (803) 280-0273; write: Serenity Festival, PO Box 1198, Myrtle Beach, SC 29577

Tennessee: 27 Nov. - 1 Dec. 1996; Volunteer Regional Convention; Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza, Nashville; rsvns: (615) 259-2000; info: (615) 391-3122 or (615) 361-3783; write: VRC-14, PO Box 731, Madison, TN 37116

Texas: 1-3 Nov. 1997; Best Little Regional Convention; Lubbock; info: (806) 792-3081

2) 8-10 Nov. 1996; Fort Worth Area Convention; Ramada Inn Downtown, Ft. Worth; rsvns: (800) 272-6232; info: (817) 921-3043 or (817) 280-0767; write: FWACNA, Box 122151, Fort Worth, TX 76121

3) 7-9 Mar. 1997; Rio Grande Regional Convention; El Paso Hilton; rsvns: (800) 445-8667 or (915) 778-4241; info: (915) 833-0012 or (915) 562-4654; write: RGRCA, Box 31563, El Paso, TX 79931

Vermont: 8-10 Nov. 1996; Champlain Valley Area Convention; Ramada Hotel, Burlington; rsvns: (802) 658-0250 or (800) 876-0250; info: (802) 655-7168; website: www.together.net/~naways/cvacna cvacna.html

Virginia: 3-5 Jan. 1997; Rise to the Point of Freedom; Cavalier Hotel; rsvns: (800) 446-8199; info: (804) 467-4714 or (804) 397-7520; write: AVCNA, PO Box 64918, Virginia Beach, VA 23467

2) 3-5 Jan. 1997; 15th Annual Virginia Convention; The Cavalier, Virginia Beach; rsvns: (800) 446-8199; info: (804) 436-5776; (804) 467-4714; write: AVCNA, PO Box 64918, Virginia Beach, VA 23467

Washington: 1-2 Nov. 1996; Washington/North Idaho H&I Learning Days; info: (206) 439-8661 or (206) 781-1863

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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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