

Narcotics Anonymous White Book  
Revised

FOREWARD

This booklet is an introduction to the fellowship of Narcotics Anonymous. It is written for those men and women, who like ourselves, suffer from a seemingly hopeless addiction. There is no "Cure" for addiction, but "Recovery" is possible by a program of <sup>ABSTINENCE AND</sup> simple spiritual principles. This is not meant to be comprehensive, but it contains the essentials; that in our personal and group experiences, we know to be necessary for recovery.

SERENITY PRAYER

GOD...Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change...

The courage to change the things I can...

And the wisdom to know the difference.

WHO IS AN ADDICT?

Most of us do not have to think twice about this question. WE KNOW. Our whole life and thinking is centered in drugs in one form or another, the getting and using and finding ways and means to get more. We use to live and live to use. Very simply an addict is a man or woman whose life is controlled by drugs in some way. We are people in the grip of a continuing and progressive illness whose ends are always the same: jails, institutions and death.

WHAT IS THE NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS PROGRAM?

N.A. is a non-profit fellowship or society of men and women for whom drugs had become a major problem. We are recovering addicts who meet regularly to help each other to stay clean. This is a program complete abstinence from all drugs. There is only "One" requirement for membership, the desire to stop using. There are no musts in N.A. but 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".

There are no strings attached to N.A. We are not affiliated with any organizations, we have no leaders, no initiation fees or dues, no pledges to sign, no promises to make to anyone. We are not connected with any political, religious or law enforcement

groups, and are under no surveillance at any time. Anyone may join us regardless of age, race, color, creed, religion, ~~or~~ lack of religion. OR SEXUAL IDENTITY.

We are not interested in what or how much you used or who your connections were, what you have done in the past, how much or how little you have, but only in what you want to do about your problem and how we can help. The newcomer is the most important person at any meeting, because we can only keep what we have by giving it away. We have learned from our group experience that those who keep coming to our meetings regularly stay clean.

#### WHY ARE WE HERE?

Before coming to the <sup>WORLDWIDE</sup> Fellowship of N.A. we could not manage our own lives, we could not live and enjoy life as other people do. We had to have something different and we thought we had found it in drugs. We placed their use ahead of the welfare of our families, our wives, husbands, and our children. We had to have drugs at all costs. We did many people great harm but most of all we harmed ourselves. Through our inability to accept personal responsibilities we were actually creating our own problems. We seemed to be incapable of facing life on its own terms.

Most of us realized, that in our addiction, we were slowly committing suicide, but addiction is such a cunning enemy of life that we had lost the power to do anything about it. Jail did not help us at all. Medicine, religion, and psychiatry seemed to have no answers for us that we could use. All these methods having failed for us, in desperation, we sought help from each other in Narcotics Anonymous.

After coming to N.A. we realized we were sick people who suffered from a disease like Diabetes, ~~or Tuberculosis~~. There is no known "Cure" for these - all however, can be arrested at some point and "Recovery" is then possible.

Narcotics Anonymous has many years of experience with many thousands of addicts. This mass of intensive first hand experience is of unparalleled therapeutic value. We are here to share freely with any addict who wants recovery.

#### HOW IT WORKS

If you want what we have to offer, and are willing to make the effort to get it, then you are ready to take certain steps. These suggested steps are the principles that made our recovery possible.

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 those steps, we tried to carry this message to addicts and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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This sounds like a big order, and we can't do it all at once, we didn't become addicted in one day, so remember - EASY DOES IT.

There is one thing more than anything else that will defeat us in our recovery, this is an attitude of indifference or intolerance toward spiritual principles. Although there are no musts in N.A., there are three things that seem indispensable. These are Honesty, Openmindedness, and Willingness to try. With these we are well on our way.

We feel that our approach to the problem of addiction is completely realistic, for the therapeutic value of one addict helping another is without parallel. We feel that our way is practical,

\*See inside back cover

for one addict can best understand and help another addict. We believe that the sooner we face our problems within our society, in everyday living, just that much faster do we become acceptable, responsible, and productive members of that society.

The only way to keep from getting or continuing a habit is not to take that first fix, pill, or drink. If you are like us you know that one is too many and a thousand never enough. We put great emphasis on this for we know that when we use drugs in any form, or substitute one for another, we release our addiction all over again.

The substitution of one drug for another has caused a great many addicts to form new addiction symptoms or patterns, which bring as many problems as before. We seem to forget that, for us, one drug is as addictive as the next. We are people with addictive personalities. Only by abstaining from all drugs may we begin to recover from addiction.

#### WHAT CAN I DO?

Begin your own program by taking Step One from the previous chapter "How It Works". When we fully concede to our innermost selves that we are powerless over our addiction, we have taken a big step in our recovery. Many of us have had some reservations at this point, so give yourself a break and be as thorough as possible at the start. Go to Step Two, and so forth, and as you go on you will come to an understanding of the program for yourself. If you are in an institution of any kind, you have gone through complete withdrawal and have stopped using for the present. Now, with a clear mind, try this way of life.

Upon release, continue your daily program and contact a member of N.A. Do this by mail, by phone, or in person. Better yet come to our meetings. Here you will find the answers to some of the things that may be disturbing you now.

If you are not in an institution, the same holds true. Stop using for today. Most of us can do for eight or twelve hours what seems impossible for a longer period time. If the compulsion or desire to use becomes too great, put yourself on a five minute basis of not using. Minutes will grow to hours and hours to days and so you will break the habit and gain some peace of mind. The real miracle happens when you realize that the need for drugs has in some way been lifted from you. You have stopped using and have started to live.

## THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF N.A.

We keep what we have only with vigilance and just as freedom for the individual comes from the Twelve Steps so freedom for the groups springs from our traditions.

As long as the ties that bind us together are stronger than the forces that would tear us apart, all will be well.

1. Our common Welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on N.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority a loving God as He may express Himself in our Group conscience.
3. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.
4. Each Group should be autonomous, except matters affecting other Groups, or N.A., as a whole.
5. Each Group has but one primary purpose - to carry the message to the addict who still suffers.
6. An N.A. Group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the N.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property or prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every N.A. Group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Narcotics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service Centers may employ special workers.
9. N.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. N.A. has no opinion on outside issues; hence the N.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

## RECOVERY AND RELAPSE

Many consider continuous abstinence and recovery as noteworthy and therefore synonymous, while relapsers are sort of pushed aside or worse yet, used as statistics that in no way give a true picture of the possibility for recovery. A relapse and sometimes subsequent death of someone close to us can do the job of awakening us to the necessity of vigorous personal action.

Although all addicts are basically the same in kind, we do, as individuals, differ in degree of sickness and rate of recovery. There may be times when a relapse lays the groundwork for complete freedom. At other times only by a grim and obstinate willfulness to stay clean come hell or high water until a crisis passes, can that freedom be achieved. Complete and continuous abstinence, however, is still the foundation for growth. In close association and identification with others in N.A. groups, our chances for recovery and complete freedom in a changing and creating form are enhanced a hundredfold.

An addict, who by any means, can lose even for a time the need or desire to use, and has free choice over impulsive thinking and compulsive action, has reached a turning point that may be decisive in his recovery. The feeling of true independence and freedom hangs here, at times, in the balance. To step out alone and run our own lives again draws us, yet we seem to know that what we have has come from dependence on a Power greater than ourselves and the giving and receiving of help from others in acts of empathy.

Many times in our recovery our old ideas will haunt us. Life may again become meaningless, monotonous and boring. We may tire mentally in repeating our new ideas and tire physically in our new activities, yet we know that if we fail to repeat them we will surely take up our old practices. We know that if we do not use what we have, we will lose what we have. These times are often the periods of our greatest growth. Our minds and bodies seem tired of it all, yet the dynamic forces of change or true conversion, deep within, may be working

to give us the answers that will alter our inner motivations and change our lives.

Quality of recovery, not quantity of abstinence, is the most important aspect of our new lives. Recovery from addiction in reality is our goal, not mere physical abstinence. To improve ourselves takes effort and since there is no way in the world to graft a new idea on a closed mind, an opening must be made somehow. Since we can do this only for ourselves, we need to recognize two of our seemingly inherent enemies, apathy and procrastination. Our resistance to change seems built in and only a nuclear blast of some kind will bring about any alteration or initiate another course of action. A relapse may provide the charge for the demolition process, if we survive.

#### WE DO RECOVER

Although "politics make strange bedfellows" as the old saying goes, addiction makes us one of a kind. Our personal stories may vary in individual pattern, but in the end, we all have the same thing in common. This common illness or disorder is addiction. We know well the three things that make up true addiction: Obsession, compulsion and self-centeredness. Obsession -- that fixed idea that takes us back time and again to our particular drug or some substitute, to recapture the ease and comfort we once knew.

Compulsion -- that once having started the process with one "fix", one pill or one drink, we cannot stop through our own power of will. Because of our physical sensitivity to drugs we are completely in the grip of a destructive power greater than ourselves.

Self-centeredness -- the idea that we could stop using on our own, despite all evidence to the contrary.

When at the end of the road we find that we can no longer function as a human being, either with or without drugs, we all face the same dilemma. What is there left to do? There seem to be these alternatives: either go on as best

we can to the bitter ends -- jails, institutions or death; or find a new way to live. In years gone by, very few addicts ever had this last choice. Those who are addicted today are more fortunate. For the first time in man's entire history, a simple way has been proving itself in the lives of many addicts. This is a simple spiritual -- not religious-- program, known as Narcotics Anonymous

We know that we are powerless over a disease which is incurable, progressive and fatal. If not arrested, it gets worse until we die. We cannot deal with the obsession, compulsion and self-centeredness. The only alternative is to stop using and start learning how to live. When we are willing to follow this course and take advantage of the help available to us, a whole new life opens up.

Today we are secure in the love of the Fellowship, we can finally look another human being in the eye and be grateful for who we are. In this way, we do recover.

#### JUST FOR TODAY

Tell yourself

JUST FOR TODAY my thoughts will be on my recovery, living and enjoying life without the use of drugs.

JUST FOR TODAY I will have faith in someone in N.A. who believes in me and wants to help me in my recovery.

JUST FOR TODAY I will have a program. I will try to follow it to the best of my ability.

JUST FOR TODAY through N.A., I will try to get a better perspective on my life.

JUST FOR TODAY I will be unafraid, my thoughts will be on my new associations, people who are not using and who have found a new way of life. So long as I follow that way, I have nothing to fear.

#### HOW IT ALL STARTED

*NEW*  
When my addictions brought me to the point of complete powerlessness, uselessness and surrender some twenty-six years ago, there was no N.A. I found



A.A. and in that Fellowship found addicts who had also found that program to be the answer to their problem. However, we knew that many were still going down the road to disillusion, degradation and death, because they were unable to identify with the alcoholic in A.A. Their identification was at the level of apparent symptoms and not at the deeper level of emotions or feelings, where empathy becomes a healing therapy for all addicted people. With several other addicts and some members of A.A. who had great faith in us and the program, we formed, in July of 1953, what we now know as Narcotics Anonymous. We felt that now the addict would find as much identification from the start as each needed to convince himself that he could stay clean, by the example of others who had stayed clean for many years.

That this was what was principally needed, has proved itself in these passing years. That wordless language of recognition, belief and faith, which we call empathy, created the atmosphere in which we could feel time, touch reality and recognize spiritual values long lost to many of us. In our program of recovery we are growing in numbers and in strength. Never before have so many addicts, of their own choice and in free society, been able to rest where they please, to maintain their recovery in complete creative freedom.

Even addicts said it could not be done the way we had it planned. We believed in openly scheduled meetings, no more hiding as other groups had tried. We believe this differed from all other methods tried before by those who advocated long withdrawal from society. We felt that the sooner the addict could face his problem in everyday living just that much faster would he become a real productive citizen. We eventually had to stand on our own feet and face life on its own terms, so why not from the start. Because of this, of course, many relapsed and many were lost completely. However, many stayed and some came back after their setback. The brighter part is the fact that of those who are now our members, many have long terms of abstinence and are better able to help the newcomer. Their attitude, based on the spiritual values of our



Steps and Traditions, is the dynamic force that is bringing increase and unity to our program. Now we know that the time has come when the old adage, "Once an addict, always an addict," will no longer be tolerated by either society or the addict himself. We do recover.

In A.A., we follow a program adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous. In the last forty years more than one million people have recovered in A.A., many of whom are as completely adjusted to life as we care to all around. We are deeply grateful to the A.A. Fellowship for showing the way for us to a better way of living.